

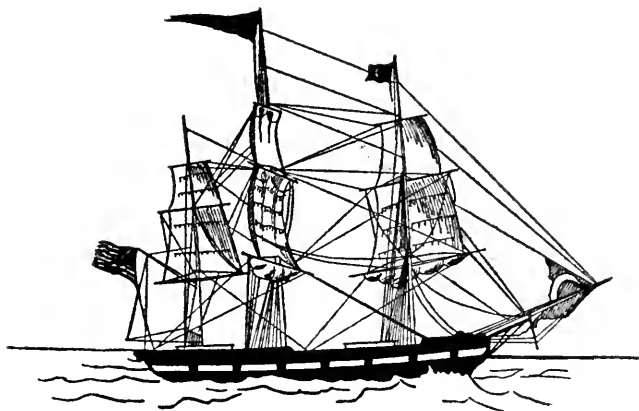
THE AMERICAN SEALERS AND THE  
DISCOVERY OF THE CONTINENT OF ANTARCTICA

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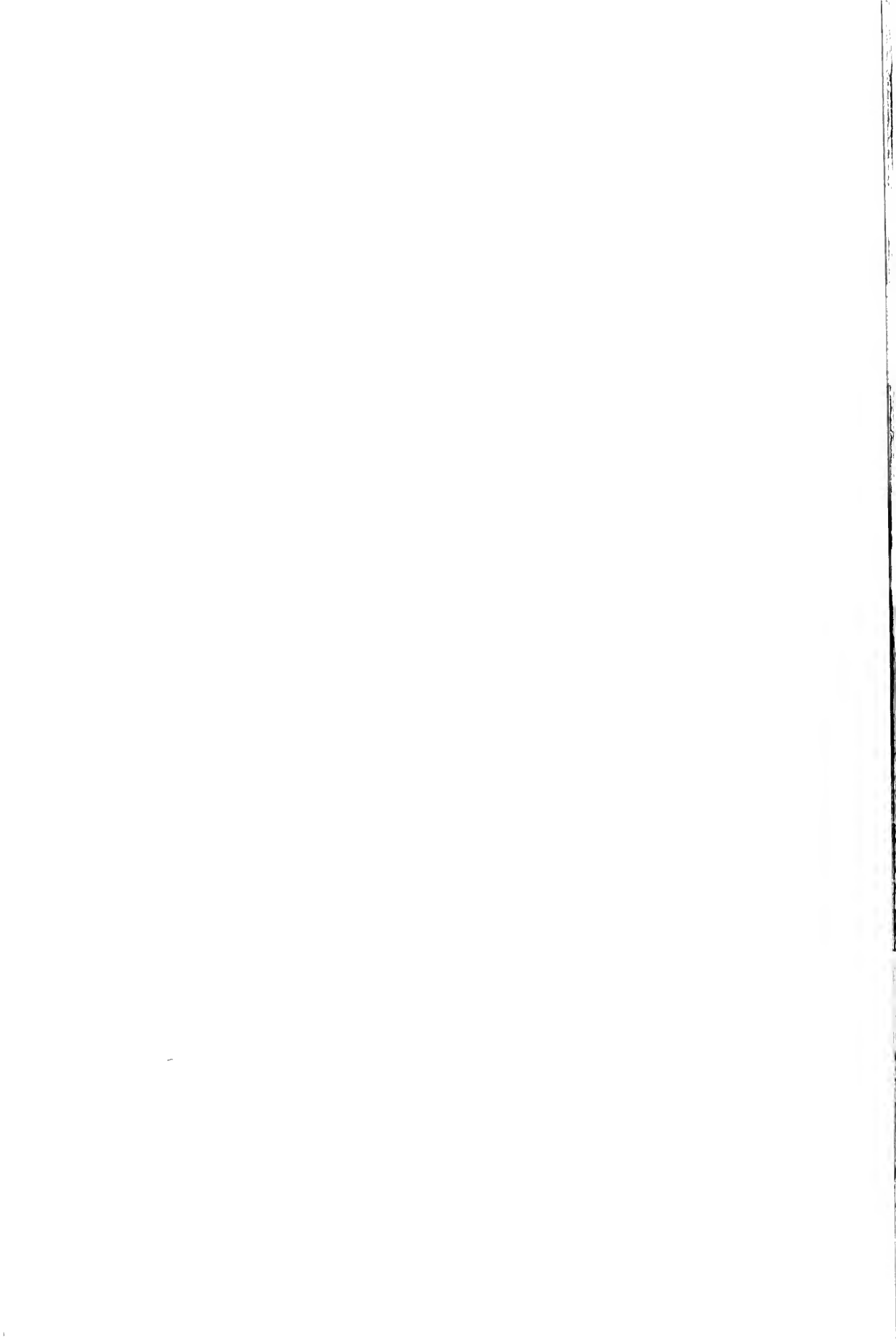
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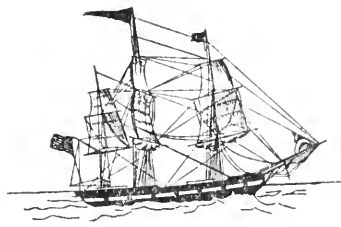
*The Huron and The Huntress*

BY EDOUARD A. STACKPOLE



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THE VOYAGE OF

*The Huron and The Huntress*

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AND THE

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CONTINENT OF ANTARCTICA

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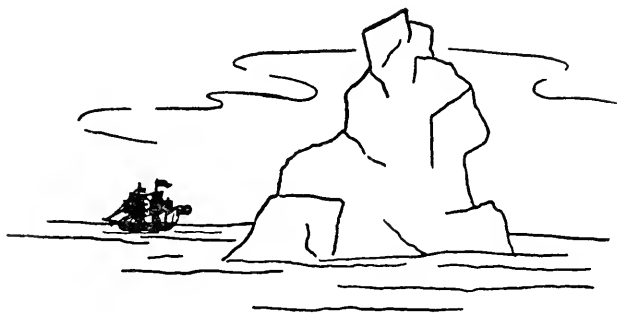
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## *Acknowledgment*

The publication of this little book on Antarctic discovery was made possible through the generous support and aid of Alexander O. Viator, Curator of Maps, Yale University Library and Director of the Cartography Laboratory at Yale. Not only did Mr. Viator allow the use of the logbook of the ship *Huron*, of New Haven, recently discovered by him, but he read this manuscript and made many valuable suggestions for its completion.

EDOUARD A. STACKPOLE



## *Foreword*

With the recent announcement that six expeditions are to be sent to the Antarctic during the coming year, including another American expedition led by Admiral Richard Byrd, a revival of interest in that great frozen land has naturally revealed itself in numerous articles in magazines and newspapers. It has also resulted in a reiteration of Antarctic claims by the several nations of the world vitally interested—especially the great powers of the United States, Russia and Great Britain.

Serious academic squabbles have been going on for over two decades as to the priority of discovery of that section of Antarctica called by the United States the Palmer Peninsula and by the British the Trinity Peninsula. The Argentinian Republic and Chile also have advanced claims to this area, as have the Russians.

The basis for the territorial claims of each nation are among the least-known phases of the "cold war." The controversial issues here have nothing whatever to do with the discovery of the Antarctic mainland, claimed by this country for Lieutenant Charles Wilkes and by Great Britain for Sir James Ross. Both these events occurred in 1840 and 1841 and at other portions of the continent.

The claims in the area of the Antarctic Peninsula involve events which took place twenty years before either Wilkes or Ross reached their icy landfalls off the larger bulk of the main continent of Antarctica. They have to do with the explorations and discoveries made by the unsung heroes of a forgotten era in our American Maritime History—the sealers.

It was early in the nineteenth century that the enterprising merchants of New England learned of the discovery of the South Shetland Islands—some four hundred miles south of Cape Horn—where great seal rookeries were located. The pelt of the fur seal brought high prices in the markets of Canton. When news of the discovery reached the seaports, there was a race to the newly-found islands. The sealers came from both Britain and America. They met in a remote part of the world to compete vigorously for their fur pelts.

But the circumstances which created this breed of sailor—this mariner-explorer—must be briefly outlined to delineate his remarkable characteristics. It was during the last decade of the old eighteenth and the first years of the new nineteenth century that this new type of seaman made his appearance in New England. He soon developed into a seafaring combination, a whaler-sealer who embarked on voyages which literally took him to the ends of the earth, boldly sailing into these uncharted seas in a never-ending pursuit of the whale, sea elephant and seal.

The adventures of these mariners were extraordinary. Some had moderately successful voyages; others made fortunes; still others met only shipwreck or similar tragedy. But all of them had unusual and colorful experiences. These nomads of the sea from the very nature of their voyaging made notable contributions toward the geographical knowledge of the world in which they lived.

With the growth of the trade with China, their valuable seal pelts replaced the vanishing sea otter skins. Seeking their prey, they went to the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and Patagonia; rounded Cape Horn to St. Marys, Mocha and the Galapagos islands; sailed to remote Desolation (Kerguelen) Island; rediscovered the Crozets; then followed the high latitudes south of Tasmania and New Zealand to the seal islands below these distant lands. Then came the discovery of the South Shetlands.

It is with the voyages of these mariners among the South Shetland Islands that we are herein chiefly concerned. On this fringe of Antarctic seas, they established camp and rendezvous, sailing through the ice-filled channels and along the rocky shores of the desolate islands; here they lived incredible lives, plundering the rookeries and exterminating the seal. And here they braved the unknown dangers of the icy, uncharted waters to the south, becoming the first among men to sight, recognize and land where rise the snowy mountains of the last great continent—Antarctica.







*Sealer's Encampment, Byers Island, Falkland Islands*  
(From a lithograph in Fanning's "Voyages," New York, 1833)

## *The South Shetland Islands*

When in 1775 the renowned Captain James Cook, one of the world's great navigators, after circumnavigating the Antarctic continent without sighting it, wrote that, although such a continent must exist, "the risque one runs in exploring a coast, in these unknown and icy seas, is so very great that no man will ever venture further than I have done,"<sup>1</sup> he was prophesying a fact which would be true for only slightly more than his own lifetime.

Cook's discovery of the South Sandwich Islands in latitude 59°25' south and longitude 27°20' west for nearly half a century was the southernmost land seen by man. Neither the great Englishman (nor his colleague, Captain Furneaux) realized that barely 160 miles south and west of his "Southern Thule" was a mountainous, peninsula-like finger beckoning him—the Antarctic Peninsula—and, like a line of sentinels between, were the chain of islands now called the South Shetlands. It remained for another Englishman, Captain William Smith, to discover the South Shetlands on a bleak February day in 1819. Smith was the master of the brig *Williams*, a merchant vessel of Blyth, England, then engaged in the South American trade between the east and west coast ports. On a voyage from Buenos Aires to Valparaiso, he decided to set a course far south of the usual tracts around Cape Horn in an effort to escape the customary head winds. On February 19, 1819, he sighted rocky, snow-capped peaks where he expected to see nothing but the dangerous icebergs and, he subsequently wrote, "having satisfied ourselves of land hauled to the Westward and made sail on our voyage to Valparaiso."<sup>2</sup>

On arrival at that port Smith reported the discovery to Captain William H. Shirreff, R.N., on board H.M.S. *Andromache*. With the caution long inherent in the Royal Navy, Captain Shirreff was skeptical of the information. Three months later, on his return voyage, Smith tried to regain his southernmost latitude but was unable to gain his landfall due to field ice.

After his arrival at Montevideo, Smith told friends of his discovery. He later wrote that several Americans at that port and at Buenos Aires learned of this and offered bribes for the information, "but your memorialist, . . . resisted all the offers from the said Americans, determined again to re-visit the new-discovered land."<sup>3</sup>

Somehow, as such secrets have a habit of doing, the word leaked out and the approximate position of the supposed land was revealed. It may have come from a sailor in a tavern, and subsequently passed on to some American merchant who in turn probably wrote home. This was in June, 1819 and Smith

in the meantime collected cargo for a return voyage to Valparaiso. It was not until early October, 1819, that he again reached the islands and on October 17 he landed and took formal possession in the name of King George III, naming them New South Britain.<sup>4</sup>

Once more at Valparaiso, Smith learned that Captain Shirreff had gone into the country. Smith wrote an important dispatch to the naval officer and while awaiting a reply took a freight of British machinery aboard, consigned to Concan Bay in the name of a young engineer, John Miers.

It was Miers, a well-read man, who persuaded Smith to rename the group the New South Shetlands.<sup>5</sup> The enthusiastic engineer was planning to charter the brig for a cruise to the islands when Captain Shirreff, having thoroughly digested Smith's dispatch, decided to charter the *Williams* in the King's name as a surveying vessel. Edward Bransfield, the *Andromache's* sailing master, was placed in command of the brig, with Smith as pilot. Midshipmen Blake, Bone and Poynter of the frigate were also assigned to the *Williams* as was Surgeon Adam Young of the H.M.S. *Slaney*.

On December 19, 1819, the *Williams* sailed. Captain Shirreff's "Instructions" leave no doubt as to his awareness of the possibility that this new land might be part of Cook's "Southern Thule." Bransfield was told to explore, chart and observe every detail.<sup>6</sup>

In the meantime, the news of the discovery was being sent to the United States as well as England. Miers himself wrote an excellent account, drawn firsthand from Smith's records and mailed it in January, 1820.<sup>7</sup> This eventually, with a small chart, appeared in a publication in Edinburgh several months later. In a letter written to Dr. Samuel L. Mitchell about this same time, a Mr. J. Robinson, an American then residing in Valparaiso, described the discovery of the islands, adding: "Perhaps new sources of wealth, happiness, power and revenue would be disclosed."<sup>8</sup> This letter, however, came to New York via England and did not arrive until September, 1820. By that time a number of New England vessels had been dispatched by American merchants who had learned of the South Shetlands from other sources. Meanwhile, Captain Smith had taken the *Williams* to the islands south of Cape Horn, where he arrived on January 16, 1820.<sup>9</sup> Bransfield immediately began his work of charting the chain of islands ranging for 300 miles in a generally south-southwest to north-northeast direction between 53° and 63° west longitude and 61° and 63° south latitude. These were eight large islands, two small, and an innumerable number of smaller islets. Tide-swept straits, twisting channels and iron-bound shores combined with ice, fog, snow, sleet and gales to make navigation extremely difficult.

The mountainous South Shetlands, covered with snow most of the year, the highest peaks in the clouds, with desolate shore and no vegetation, were a grim landfall. But their great potential was from the sea—the accessible beaches being the breeding ground for thousands of seals. Smith described these rookeries as being so closely occupied that the seals appeared to be "stowed in

bulk," and the tame seal were defenseless with no apprehension of their fate.

Here was booty, rich, limitless—a veritable harvest in gold coin. The first to reach these shores would reap fortunes. It is no wonder that the watchword of the sealer for decades had been secrecy itself; that they carefully guarded all information as to these new rookeries. A successful voyage meant a second profit with the purchase of a cargo of Chinese goods as the vessels sailed to Canton for the sale of the seal pelts to the eager hong merchants. But the hunt for the seal led to virtual extermination of the species.

While the indiscriminate slaughter of the seals in the South Shetlands was a sad feature of an otherwise thrilling story of maritime adventure, it is not the whole story. Despite their brutal trade, which made them realists in its fullest sense, the captains, officers and men were not all reckless, cynical and dissolute. True, they lived a hard life of necessity, but their fragmentary records reveal them as resourceful mariners, fully aware of their danger but willing to risk their lives in their hazardous calling.

## *The First Sealers Arrive*

While Edward Bransfield and Captain Smith were engaged in their task of charting the South Shetlands, two sealing vessels were already at the islands. This not only revealed that the guarded word about the discovery had leaked out but that it had been a secret for only a brief time.

First to arrive was the *Espirito Santo*, of Buenos Aires. As there appears to be no documentary evidence to give the picture of her voyage it is probable that this vessel sailed to the South Shetlands as a result of information received from the crew of the *Williams* while in Montevideo or Buenos Aires.

From reports left by Captain Edmund Fanning of Stonington, the American sealing brig *Hersilia*, of Stonington, while on a voyage to the Falkland Islands and other sealing locations, learned there from one of the *Espirito Santo's* crew of the existence of the new South Shetland Islands and immediately sailed thence.<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately, neither the log of the *Williams*, the *Espirito Santo* nor the *Hersilia* can be found. Of the three, utilizing all reliable evidence available, only the voyage of the *Williams* can be traced with a degree of accuracy. Having arrived at the Shetlands in January 16, 1820, the *Williams* sailed along the northern shores of the several islands, tracing the land for miles east and west—finding everywhere the same high, mountainous land, barren and with rocky beaches. Harassed by gales, beset by fogs and always aware of the dangerous coast, the *Williams* evolved a pattern which was to be followed by all other craft in this forsaken corner of the world. One of the most significant discoveries was that of a gulf, nearly 150 miles in depth “out of which we had some difficulty in finding our way back,” recorded Dr. Young. This is now justly called Bransfield Strait.<sup>11</sup>

It was while sailing in this gulf, Dr. Young wrote, that Bransfield and Smith saw land in latitude 64° to the south and called it Trinity Land. This is the basis for the British claim for the discovery of Antarctica, and the chart prepared by Bransfield in 1820 is offered in evidence.

The activities of the *Hersilia* are little known, aside from a few scattered sources. What is factual is that the brig was built in Mystic, Conn., in 1819 and duly registered in the custom house at New London. Her builder was Christopher Leeds. She was owned by eight residents of the area, headed by William A. Fanning, son of Captain Edmund Fanning. Her master, Captain James P. Sheffield, also owned a share as did Ephraim Williams, another master mariner.

The vessel was 68 feet long, 22 feet 8 inches in beam, depth of 10 feet 1 inch. Her registry tonnage was 130.<sup>12</sup>

The *Hersilia* sailed late in July, 1819 under the command of the veteran sealing master, Captain James P. Sheffield, with a crew of 19 men. Her second mate was young Nathaniel B. Palmer, then in his 20th year. The supercargo was William A. Fanning, a principal owner. Just when she arrived in the South Shetlands is not definitely known, but from headquarters at Rugged Island she got a cargo of 9,000 seal skins in three weeks' time and could have obtained thrice that but did not have the salt to cure them. The *Espirito Santo* must have fared equally well. They were pioneers in a virgin territory.

Returning home late in May, 1820, the *Hersilia* brought with her not only her cargo but the verification of any news which may have arrived in the United States before her arrival. In Captain Edmund Fanning's "Voyages and Discoveries in the South Seas," is an account of the *Hersilia's* voyage to the South Shetlands. Captain Fanning, writing as he did a full decade after this event, states that the vessel was dispatched purposely to discover any new land to the south of Cape Horn. This, of course, is hardly creditable in view of other evidence, notably in a contemporary statement contained in a letter which declares that Captain Sheffield heard a report of the new islands, went to look for them, and found them in December, 1819.<sup>13</sup>

In a letter to Captain N. B. Palmer from J. N. Reynolds, written in 1834, it is stated: "Fanning has given a new version of your first visit to the [South] Shetland Islands. Have you seen the old Dutchman's [Gherritz] chart? I don't much believe in it." This letter was quoted by Balch in his article on the Stonington sealers in the American Geographical Society's *Bulletin*, Vol. XLI, 1909.

The Fanning account states they reached the islands in February, 1820, and goes on to describe the *Hersilia* sailing south to latitude 63°; of sighting a round, mountainous island which they named Mount Pisgah Island; of finding a group they called the Fanning Islands, of coming to a harbor in one of these, named "Ragged Island," and of calling this *Hersilia* Cove.<sup>14</sup> The account continues with the sealers, from elevated positions, discovering more land to the eastward, but they were anxious to get home and report the rich rookeries and so did not make any survey.

It would appear that the Argentinian sealer *Espirito Santo*, which arrived at the South Shetlands just before the *Hersilia* and *Williams* in this first 1819-20 sealing season, may have been the same vessel as the *San Juan Nepomuceno*, of Buenos Aires, under Captain Carlos Timblom. This vessel took 14,000 skins in five weeks, returning to her home port on February 22, 1820, the sealskins being consigned to Adam Grey, an English merchant. This suggests that Grey may have been an associate of Captain William Smith. The newspaper account states that the seals were obtained in "the Patagonias," but the number of skins brought back would indicate the South Shetlands as the place where they were obtained so comparatively quickly.<sup>15</sup>

In the National General Files (Archiva General de la Nacion) of Buenos Aires, there are documents which refer to the brig *Espirito Santo* alias *Mercurio* as escaping from that port illegally in 1806. The question is whether or not this mysterious vessel could have likewise as conveniently changed its name for its sealing voyage to the Shetlands a few years later.

In the first of two important letters (dated August 25 and September 4, 1820) James Byers, a well-known New York sealing merchant, writing to Brigadier-General Daniel Parker, stated that, upon the *Hersilia's* return home, Captain Sheffield (formerly in Byers' employ) communicated the first information he had received of the new islands. Byers claimed that Sheffield offered to sail again in one of his ships and that a partner of Byers, a Walter Nexsen, went to Stonington to interview Captain Sheffield. The latter supplied pertinent information directly from his log.

This information Nexsen obtained revealed that the *Hersilia* went to 61°10' south latitude (and not 63° as Fanning reported) and longitude 57°15' west. Captain Sheffield coasted along the "great new Island or Continent" for fifty miles, saw no end southwest, returned to what Sheffield thought to be the southwest end, and came to anchor between a number of islands, a short distance from the mainland.<sup>16</sup> This is an accurate appraisal of a landfall off Livingston Island (which the sealers called Frezeland), of sailing southwest and of coming to Rugged Island and anchoring in *Hersilia* Cove. The report continued with the statement that Sheffield and his men took 9,000 seal pelts in fifteen days (but could take no more on account of running short of salt) and saw 300,000 seals. The land ran about northeast and southwest, was uninhabited and destitute of wood. All this nautical survey pretty much conforms with the facts as later proven, and the *Hersilia* explored the northern shores of the South Shetlands, where they found seals in abundance.

This August 25, 1820, letter of Byers further stated that he had received additional information from other sources, notably from another Captain Edmund Fanning, late of the schooner *Spartan* (one of Byers' vessels which had been wrecked on the Patagonian coast), and all nearly agreed on the latitude and longitude.<sup>17</sup> This Captain Fanning was a Nantucket man, a nephew and not the son of his famous namesake.

The other Byers letter (September 4, 1820), bears out the fact that, when the *Hersilia* sailed in May, 1819, no one in Stonington then knew of the existence of the South Shetlands. The brig was then sailing on the same kind of sealing voyage as her contemporaries, both in Britain and America, and to "guard against a bad voyage in not finding seal, Captain Sheffield had on board about half a cargo calculated for the Spanish market."<sup>18</sup>

But whether or not Captain Sheffield or William Fanning learned of the newly-discovered islands while in the Falklands or at Staten Land, off Cape Horn, the evidence is conclusive that somewhere in these waters they did find out in time to alter their course and make a highly profitable voyage. And with it they



won the honor of being the first American sealers in the Antarctic South Shetlands.

All of the information merely supplemented the actual report of Captain Sheffield. James Byers and his associates were shrewd merchants. They had been engaged in sealing many years and knew what the new rookeries meant—fortunes ready-made. Further than that, they had some good men and good ships available. Of the fleet they dispatched, as well as the vessels sent by merchants from Salem, Boston and Nantucket, more will be given in the pages which follow.

It is of importance to point out that Byers was well aware of the dangers of fighting between the rival sealers. He wrote General Parker in Washington: "If the British Government send any armed vessels they will not, I think, like to approach the high latitudes till about December. We Yankees you know do not fear cold weather. There is not the least doubt in my mind that but the British will attempt to drive our vessels from the Islands. Not by open hostility but by blustering and threats. The vessels from this quarter all went out armed (for their own safety) against pirates and robbers of any other description. . . . any difficulty however of this nature would very much injure the voyage and would be prevented by the presence of an American Ship of War. . . ."19

Byers was seeking U.S. Navy protection. The South American Revolution was then raging and both British and American frigates were on the west coast of South America. But neither Great Britain nor the United States sent a naval vessel into the South Shetland area.

It was a familiar story to the sealers. For over a quarter century they had been accustomed to depend only on their own resources, and the subsequent events in the South Shetlands were merely the following of the same pattern. Byers armed one of his vessels with nine-pounders.<sup>20</sup> His prophecy as to threats and blustering was all too true, as subsequent events were to prove.

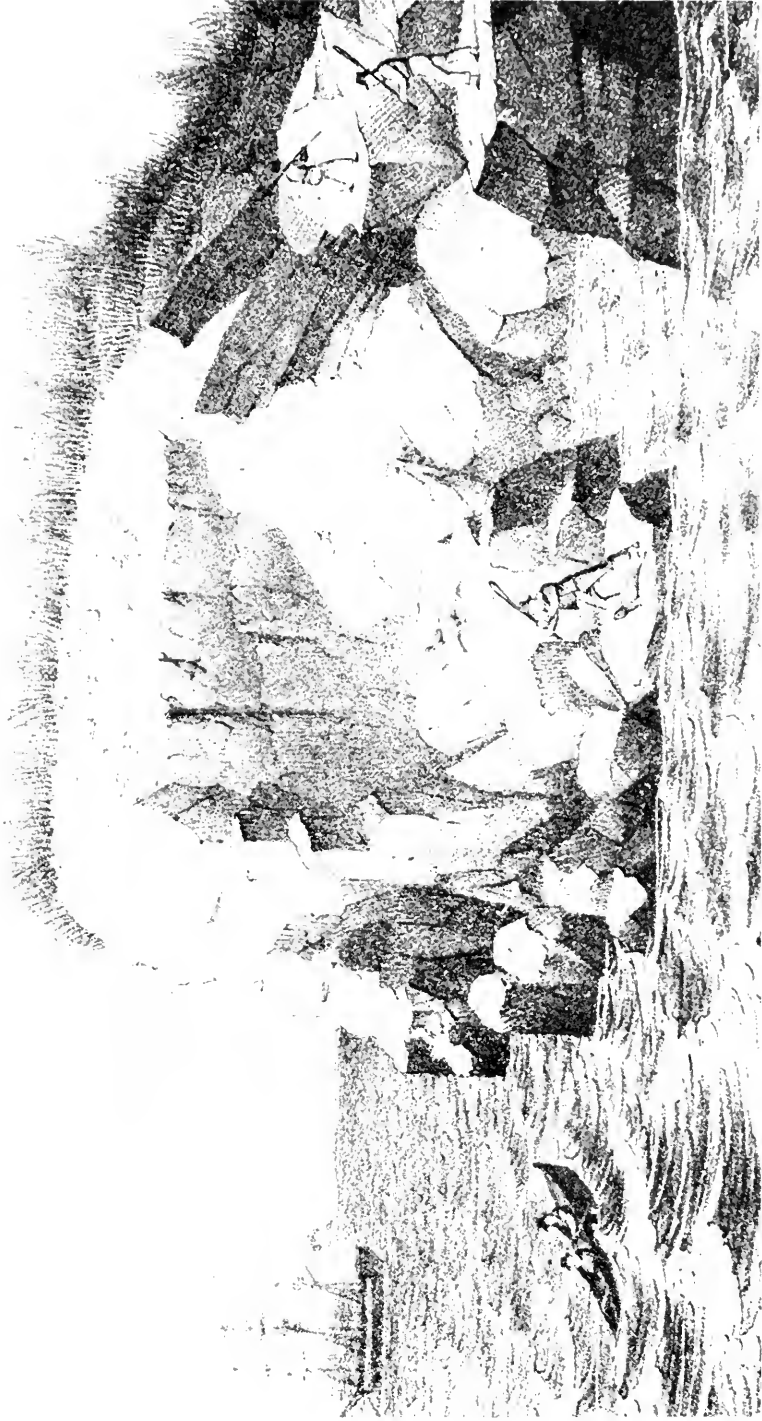
## *Second Sealing Season at South Shetlands 1820—1821*

While the initial discovery of the South Shetlands, and the independent voyages of the first three vessels there, pose important questions which may never be answered, the incidents surrounding the vessels taking part in the second sealing season—1820—1821—are materially more clear and understandable. This is due to the fact that three of the logbooks of American sealers which sailed during this second season in the South Shetlands have been literally rescued from the same fate which has claimed so many similar records—loss through neglect or by fire.

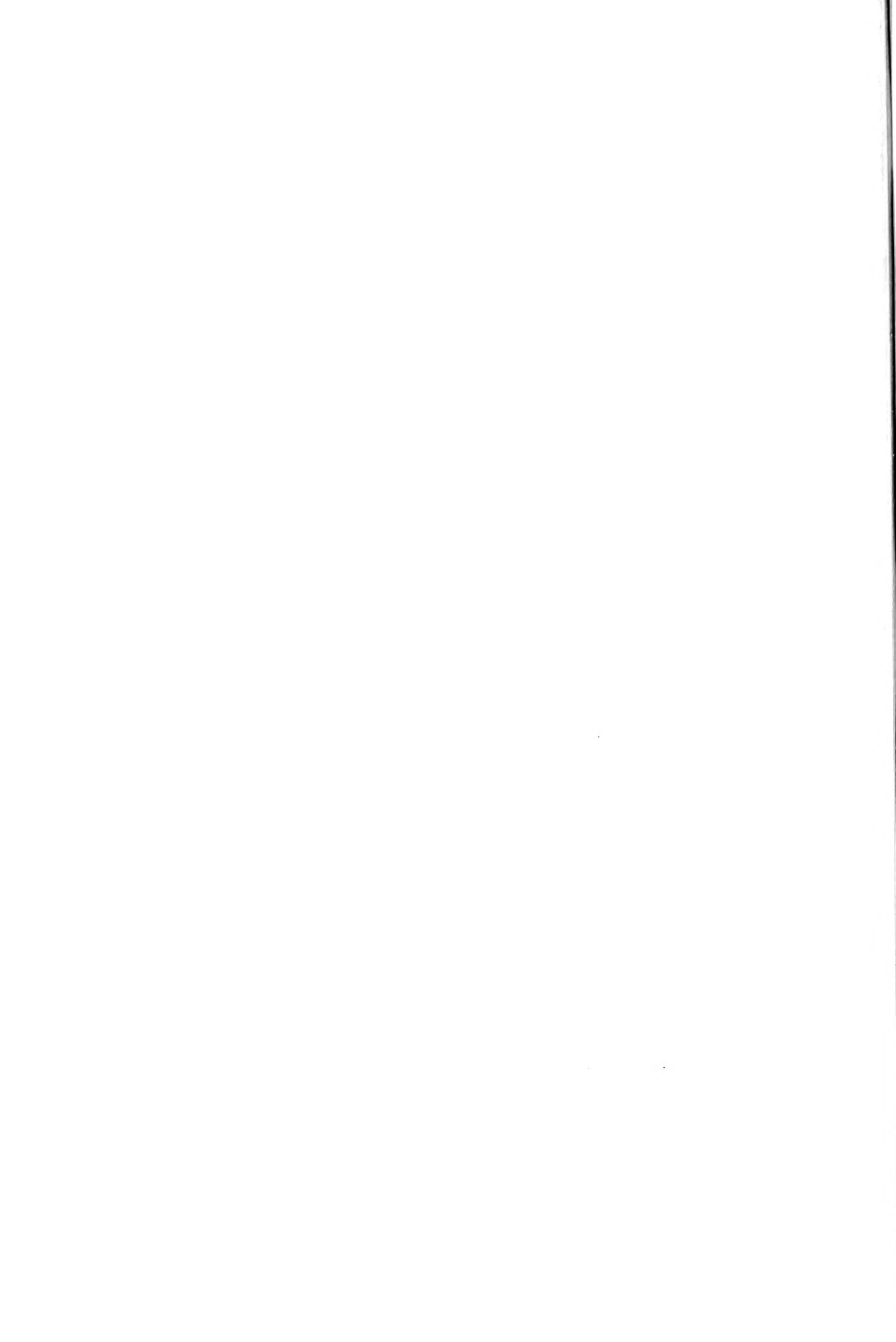
The three logs are those of the ship *Huron* of New Haven, Captain John Davis, found in 1952 by Alexander O. Vietor, Curator of Maps at Yale, and now at the Sterling Library, Yale University; of the schooner *Huntress*, of Nantucket, Captain Christopher Burdick, in the possession of the writer; and that of the sloop *Hero*, Captain Nathaniel B. Palmer, of Stonington, the original or copy of which is now located in the Library of Congress.

Because these three logs serve as narratives of the leading actors on the gloomy stage of the South Shetlands, they will be studied herein as the ship-masters played their respective roles—sometimes commanding individual cruises, sometimes as co-players together, or in other interrelated parts.

Following the custom of the sealers, some of the vessels (which were to make up the second season, 1820—1821, of sealing in the South Shetlands) were dispatched first to the Cape Verde Islands for the salt used to cure and pack the sealskins, thence to the Falkland Islands to complete their fitting out. The ships and brigs usually had the frames and planking of smaller craft carefully packed on board which were reassembled in the Falklands and then accompanied the larger vessel to the sealing location selected. These tenders were called “shallops” and were usually schooner-rigged. The Stonington, New York and Boston sealing fleets, however, included schooners which sailed with them. Nantucket, New Haven, Salem and New Bedford craft usually carried the knocked-down shallops on board. But oddly enough, on this occasion, with the news of the South Shetlands arriving at a time when swift action was demanded to catch the season, the first Nantucket vessels dispatched were schooners. The only New Haven craft (which sailed before the news of the new rookeries reached that port) probably had its shallop constructed at the Falklands with no idea of the subsequent change in the voyage.



*Seal Rookery, Beauchene Island, Falkland Islands*  
(From a lithograph in Fanning's "Voyages," New York, 1833)



As might be expected, the first fleet of American sealers sailed from Stonington in May, 1820. These were the brig *Frederick*, commanded by Captain Benjamin Pendleton, and the brig's tender, the schooner *Freegift*, under Captain Thomas Dunbar, a Westerly, R.I., man. According to the "Marine Columns" of contemporary newspapers the *Frederick* sailed first on May 18, 1820, and the schooner followed two days later. Their rendezvous was to be the Falkland Islands.<sup>21</sup>

Thomas Stevens of Deep River, Conn., who has made a special study of sealing out of Stonington, believes that the *Hersilia* arrived at Stonington on May 21, 1820, in time to pass on the valuable information that only she possessed to Captain Dunbar before the *Freegift* sailed.<sup>22</sup> Subsequently, states Mr. Stevens, the supercargo, William A. Fanning, organized the balance of this first fleet with his father, Captain Edmund Fanning. In view of the fact that Byers (in his letter to General Parker), intimated that Captain James P. Sheffield had offered to sail again in his employ, this seems to indicate that a subsequent conference with the Fannings (father and son) and other Stonington sealing masters must have decided the organization of their own fleet of three more vessels to supplement the *Frederick* and her tender, the *Freegift*. The theory that the *Hersilia* arrived just before the *Freegift* sailed is an interesting one, and could have happened. Unquestionably, the *Frederick* and *Freegift* were the first two Stonington sealers to sail for the 1820-21 season. Then two other Stonington fleets were organized, one of which joined forces with the *Frederick* and *Freegift*, with Captain Pendleton of the former as their leader, and a second fleet of three vessels under Captain Alexander Clark.

Captain Benjamin Pendleton of the *Frederick* was a veteran sealer. In 1815, he had sailed as first mate on the ship *Volunteer* of New York, with Captain Edmund Fanning of Stonington in command, the vessel being owned principally by James Byers. In 1817, Captain Pendleton assumed his first command, the brig *Jane Maria*, tender to the ship *Sea Fox*, Captain Edmund Fanning. These were also James Byers' vessels. It was Pendleton who had taken out the first Stonington-based sealing vessel—the *Frederick*—in 1818, the managing owners being Captain Fanning and his son, William. Succeeding Pendleton in charge of the *Jane Maria* for Byers had been Captain James P. Sheffield, who was then assuming his first command. The *Jane Maria* was subsequently commanded by Captain Robert Johnson. Thus, we see how closely knit were the masters of the sealing fleets at this time. The *Frederick's* first voyage had been one of great success, Captain Pendleton returning in November, 1819, with 28,000 skins obtained off the west coast of South America which were sold for \$21,378.00.<sup>23</sup>

In August, 1820, the three other vessels of this first Stonington fleet (to be designated hereafter as the Fanning fleet), sailed for the South Shetlands via the Falklands. These were the brig *Hersilia*, with Captain Sheffield again in

command; the schooner *Express*, under Captain Ephraim Williams; and the sloop *Hero*, under Captain Nathaniel B. Palmer, previously second mate of the *Hersilia*.

There was a second Stonington fleet sailing this same month. These were the ship *Clothier*, under Captain Alexander Clark of Nantucket (in command of this fleet), the brig *Emeline*, Captain Jeremiah Holmes, and the brig *Catherine*, Captain Joseph Henfield.<sup>24</sup> Little is known about this second Stonington fleet. Captain Edmund Fanning does not mention the fleet in his book. Captain Fanning was probably the outstanding citizen of Stonington in his time. But for his writings, chiefly his book, "Voyages and Discoveries in the South Seas," little would be known about many of the sealers of Stonington. Although he compiled much of his chapter on the South Shetlands in his old age, after he had outlived his son and contemporaries, much of it is valuable. His lack of dates and related sequences offers many puzzles to the historian. But comparison with other sources, chiefly logbooks, can bring into better perspective much of its important material. His confusion of the 1820-21 and the 1821-22 voyages of the Stonington sealers has caused many misinterpretations, and this has brought about considerable misunderstanding.

As for both these Stonington fleets, the comment of a neighboring editor is best quoted: ". . . May the success of this fleet be equal to the enterprising spirit of its owners."

From Nantucket during the summer of 1820 three sealing schooners sailed, but only two of these were intended for the South Shetlands—the *Harmony*, Captain Thomas Ray, which left in July, and the *Huntress*, Captain Christopher Burdick, which sailed August 4, 1820.<sup>25</sup> The schooner *William & Nancy*, Captain Folger, was at the Falklands this season, but arrived at the Shetlands much later than the other two. The whale ship *Samuel*, Captain Innot, also sailed to the Shetlands after learning of the new discovery while off Cape Horn, but she also arrived too late in the season for sealing.<sup>26</sup>

The Byers' fleet from New York was an important factor in the South Shetland exploration during this 1820-1821 season. The leading vessel was the brig *Jane Maria*, under command of Captain Robert Johnson, destined to become a leading Antarctic explorer. His companion vessels were the brig *Aurora*, Captain Macy, and schooner *Henry*, Captain B. Bruno. Another vessel to figure in the development of the South Shetland exploration was the brig *Charity*, listed as out of Baltimore but actually of New York. This mysterious craft was commanded by Captain Charles H. Barnard, perhaps one of the most adventure-encompassed mariners then alive. Seven years before he had been marooned in the Falklands when the crew of a shipwrecked British ship (which he had befriended) turned on him, forcibly took his vessel, and left him and four others to live in solitude for two years before being rescued.<sup>27</sup>

Salem was represented by a ship (which may have been the *General Knox*, Captain William B. Orne); the brig *Nancy*, with Captain Benjamin Upton as master, and his tender, the schooner *Governor Brooks*. Sailing from Boston

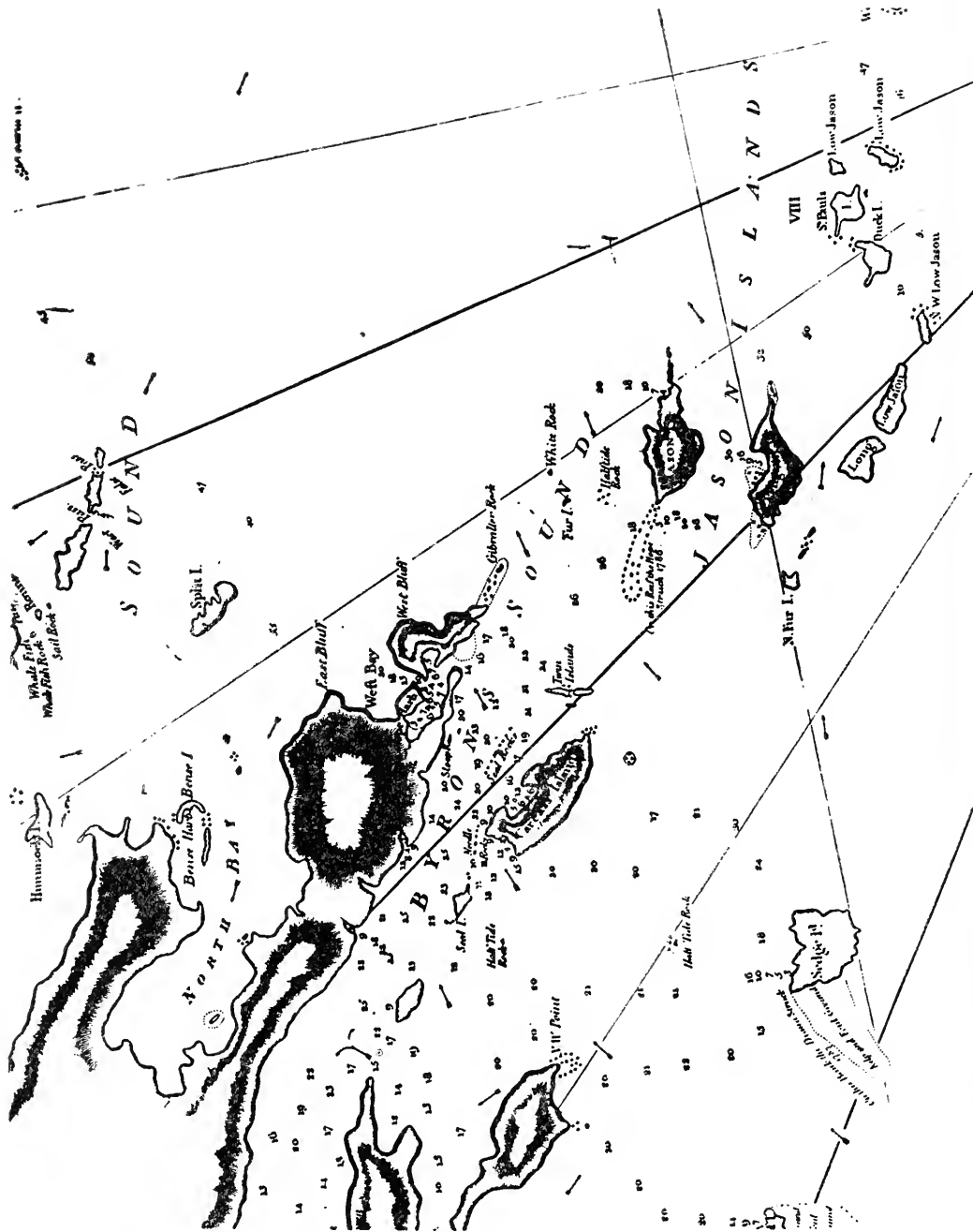
were the brig *Stranger*, Captain Adams; the ship *O'Cain*, Captain Jonathan Winship, and a schooner, believed tender to the latter vessel. New Bedford's lone entry in the field was the brig *Gleaner*, under Captain David Leslie. The port of New Haven sent John Davis in the ship *Huron*. The log of the *Huron*, together with that of the *Huntress*, serve as the basis for this monograph.

Added to this notable array were an equal number of British and Scotch sealers, including one—the *Lynx*—from Botany Bay, Australia.<sup>28</sup>

While we know of the departure of these vessels, as reported by the newspapers, their subsequent careers would be heavily masked by the mists of history but for the preservation of three contemporary logbooks. From these records, faded and in one instance almost illegible, we may reconstruct one of the most interesting years in our maritime history—the 1820–21 sealing season at the South Shetlands.

In September, 1828, an Ohio Congressman named Jeremiah N. Reynolds prepared a report to Secretary of the Navy Samuel Southard, on certain discoveries in the Pacific Ocean by the whaling masters.<sup>29</sup> In the concluding statement of this report he wrote: "I regret that I am not at liberty to communicate in writing all the interesting facts I have been enabled to collect from those engaged on the seal trade or, as they term it, the skinning business. . . . In the history of the seal trade, *secrecy in what they know* has been deemed a part and a very important part, too, of their capital . . . that islands are frequented . . . and their position known to no one on board but the captain. . . ."

This, in large measure, explains much of the paucity of information on the activities of these early visitors to the Antarctic and, by the same token, why the only reliable information is contained in the logbooks of the ships so engaged. Thus, it is necessary to use these original accounts for the true picture of what actually occurred in that memorable year of 1820–1821 at the South Shetlands. In presenting these logs, all pertinent entries are selected, so that, like a great picture puzzle, these portions may be used to fill out the features which comprise the whole.



Portion of a Chart of West Falkland Island from an actual survey by Lieutenant Thomas Edgar, of the Royal Navy.  
 Note: North at bottom of chart  
 (London, Published by Arrowsmith, 1831)



## *The Hero and Express Sail to the South Shetlands*

In order to set the pattern for selecting (and putting together) the various pieces of the puzzle, it is necessary to take the existing records in their chronological order. After the facts noted in the marine columns of the contemporary newspapers, the logbook records reveal the subsequent course of events. Following the newspaper report that the ship *Frederick*, Captain Benjamin Pendleton, and the schooner *Freegift*, Captain Ephraim Williams, sailed in May, 1820, the logbooks themselves take up the story.<sup>30</sup>

First, the log of the 47-foot sloop *Hero*, Captain Nathaniel B. Palmer, which sailed from Stonington on August 12, 1820. The brig *Hersilia*, Captain Sheffield, had sailed several days before; the schooner *Express*, Captain Dunbar, sailed in company with the *Hero* according to the latter's log.<sup>31</sup> Available material does not state where these five vessels were to eventually meet, but it does appear to have been agreed that the latter three were to rendezvous at the Falklands or Staten Land. The *Hero* was not built as a special survey vessel, as one historian claimed, but was then nearly twenty years old.<sup>32</sup>

Captain Palmer recorded his arrival at the Falklands on October 17, 1820, his landfall being at Berkley Sound. Here, as noted, he found two shallops belonging to the ship *General Knox* (of Salem); "the *Express* in company."

Three days later, he got through "Cape Tamar Pass" where he anchored inside long enough to shoot "some geese and brant, etc.," and then spoke two English sealers, the cutter *Eliza* of London and the brig *Jane* of Leith, together with a shallop belonging to the brig. At 4:00 that afternoon, the *Hero* got through the "Labyrinth" and anchored in West Point Harbor alongside the ship *General Knox*, Captain Orne, "Got out the boat and went on board."<sup>33</sup>

The sealing vessels mentioned by Palmer were all to play a part in the exploration of the South Shetlands and the Antarctic seas. The master of the brig *Jane* was the famous English sealer, Captain James Weddell, whose name was to be identified with one of the best-known features of the Antarctic, the Weddell Sea—and also affixed to a species of seal—the Weddell Seal.<sup>34</sup>

That William A. Fanning was on board the *Hero* is borne out by Captain Palmer's note; "Mr. Fanning went on shore and returned with 30 geese." Six days later (October 26, 1820), the brig *Emeline*, Captain Holmes, which sailed from Stonington with him, had just arrived. Captain Holmes had stopped in at Rio de Janeiro on the voyage down. The brig *Catherine*, the Stonington con-

sort of *Emeline*, under Captain Henfield, anchored off Volunteer Bay, close by.<sup>35</sup>

The *Hero* and *Express* then sailed for Staten Land, off the eastern coast of Tierra del Fuego, close by Cape Horn. Here they lay for three days. If an agreement had been made to rendezvous at Port Hatches here, no one will ever know, as no written evidence exists, but this had been a well-known provisioning place for sealers for many years.

On November 4, 1820, the *Hero* and *Express* got under way for their voyage to the South Shetlands. Captain Palmer recorded a five-day cruise south-southeast and on November 10, 1820, while anxiously looking for the Land, "sighted Mount Pesca (Smith Island) 30 miles away." The weather coming on thick they tacked off and on until 4 o'clock on the afternoon of November 12, when they stood in for Rugged Island, a small island off Livingston Island.

At the mouth of the harbor, the *Hero* was met by a whaleboat from the *Hersilia*, Captain Sheffield on board.<sup>36</sup> Wrote Palmer: ". . . he informed us he had run in 12 days and that the *Frederick* and *Freegift*, Capt Pendleton and Dunbar, were in a harbor on the opposite side of the strait."

The *Hero* came in to anchor alongside the *Hersilia*, followed some hours later by the *Express*. Then they lowered a whaleboat and were rowed across the strait three miles to President Harbor, where they went alongside the *Frederick* and *Freegift* and were greeted there by their Stonington compatriots. The Fanning fleet was together for the first time, and thousands of miles from the home port of Stonington.

On the western side of Livingston (largest of the South Shetland Islands) is President Harbor, called by the British "New Plymouth." A few miles away, the English sealers had already arrived and had set up camps along Livingston's north shore all the way from Start Point to Shirreff's Cape. This possession of the beaches in this region had an important bearing on the subsequent activities of the American sealers.

## *The Schooner Huntress Meets the Ship Huron at the Falklands*

Even while the Stonington vessels were getting ready to leave Staten Land for the South Shetlands, two vessels had arrived at the Falklands which were to follow them soon to the South Shetlands. Neither of these had previously met. One was the ship *Huron*, of New Haven, Captain John Davis, and the other, the schooner, *Huntress*, Captain Christopher Burdick of Nantucket. The *Huron* had sailed from her home port on March 20, 1820, and the *Huntress* on August 4, 1820.<sup>37</sup>

Due to the loss of the first pages of the *Huron's* log, covering her 1820 cruising, it is not known when she reached the Falklands. The log of the *Huntress* reveals that Captain Burdick first took the schooner to the Cape Verde Islands (September 5, 1820) where a load of salt was put on board, and then headed south-southwest for the Falklands, where he arrived on October 31, 1820.<sup>38</sup>

Sighting the land at 3:30 o'clock in the morning bearing southeast, Captain Burdick tacked off shore until 8:00 A.M., when he stood in for his landfall. "I juged it to be the Western Falkland," he recorded in his log, "and . . . at 12 m. made an opening in the Land which apear'd to form a bay at the same time made several small islands bearing west about 4 leagues. Latitude 51° 12' south."

With characteristic thoroughness, Captain Burdick sent a whaleboat in to survey the channel, his logbook reading:

" . . . The boat return'd and reported 2 fathoms in the pass & no roks & a large Sound inside whore ship & run in, sent the boat ahead & cros'd the sound to the southward which was six miles wide & 10 fathoms water Went in to a snug harbor at 5 P.M. anchored in 2 fathoms so Ends Sea Acc't."

This landfall was off Byron's Sound and the little anchorage was in Bense Harbor inside Bense Island, at the promontory between North and King George's Bay. This picturesque portion of the West Falklands was one of the most frequented rendezvous of the sealers and whalers, utilized by them for over half a century—a veritable crossroads of a watery world which only this breed of sea-nomad habitually visited. Two large islands—the English and Spanish "Maloons"—were separated by a sound, the entire region being rich in the colorful names given by pirates, merchantmen, whalers and sealers.

Such landfalls as the Jasons, Swan, Beaver, Hog, and Carcass islands, pointed the way to States, Quaker, Elephant and Port Egmont harbors. Byrons, Berkeley and King George's sounds contained islets like Horse Block, Colliers, Golden Ball, Whale, Fish and Split islands, and narrow channels were named Bald Head Roads, Hell Gates, Nine Pin and False Passage.

It is of considerable importance to note in both the logs kept by Captain Davis and Captain Burdick that these were men of more than average ability as navigators. Further, they were men whose writings display a lively curiosity, of which the following entry is a good example. On the day following his anchoring the *Huntress* in Bense Harbor, her master wrote:

“. . . took one man with me on shore and went up onto a hill one half mile high. From [it] I Could Count about fifty Islands which formed the Sound the principal part the smaler islands lay on the Southward of the Sound the land I was to anchor under, which I suppos'd to be the main Island, proved to be one large Island. It being very hazy I Could not Determine whether ther was any Islands to the Southward and Westward of me. Shot one dozen fine geese & got on board at 6 P.M. So Ends. The land to the Northard hindered gitting the Sun. Suppos'd Lat 51° 20'.”

The sudden violence of the gales which often swept the Falklands is best shown by the *Huntress* log's entry for November 2, 1820. Captain Burdick was shifting the salt in the main hold, so as to get at the heel of his mainmast, when a northwest gale developed.

“. . . At 11 A.M. gale increasing Schooner hooked her anchor. Let go the small ancor, veered out 25 x 50 on the other, which Brought the kedge ahead with 60 fathoms. At 12 it Blew tremendous the schooner started with them all. Let go the Sheat anchor & veared out on him and then I turned in. All this time we were Lying under the Lee of the Land, 3/4 mile off in less than 2 fathoms of water and good holding ground & Smooth all except the wind had the water right up. At 6 P.M. moderate. Took up Sheat anchor.”

Using the foreyard and main boom for sheers, Captain Burdick's crew “hoisted the mainmast out of the Step and cut five feet off the heal & stepped it anew, which Brought the place Sprung in the wake of the hardness.”

It was while lying at Bense Harbor, setting up his standing rigging again, that Captain Burdick reported a mysterious incident. On the morning of November 4, a small schooner was sighted off the mouth of the harbor. The *Huntress* ran up her “coulars” (American flag) and the stranger headed in to their harbor. The Nantucket skipper reported:

“. . . She run in in passing our stern I hailed her and asked, where from. She answe're'd, from West Point. She asked me the Same question in passing. I thinking she was Coming to anchor ask'd no more questions She tack'd soon after & went ahead Eas'd of her sheat & out she went without

anything more passing between us and was soon out of sight behind the Land to the N.E. I should judge she was about 40 tons, had one fish Boat on deck & Long Boat and Eight men. Whether she was an American or (not) I Could not determine as she sot no Coullas, but I should judge the former By the Bilt of the vessel. So Ends."

This was, indeed, an unusual incident. Although sealers were the most mysterious of mariners—as "secrecy was what they deemed their capital"—when two vessels from the same country met in such remote corners of the world the masters and crews were always anxious for a "gam." The mysterious action of the stranger piqued the Nantucketer's natural curiosity. The following morning at 8:00 o'clock, Captain Burdick took a whaleboat and crew and went around the island, inside which he was anchored, and surveyed the shore line.

"... I Landed on a Large Island to the Southward of me, [wrote Captain Burdick] and went to a Mountain to see what I could. But the Clouds on the mountain hindered me from seeing. Returned to the vessel at 6 P.M. without Being much wizer."

But there was a sequel to the visit of the mysterious schooner, one which brought about a decision which changed the entire course of the *Huntress'* subsequent voyage and the careers of her master and crew. That there were other vessels in the vicinity was not surprising to the Nantucketers. But the fact that their strange visitor had not "hove-to" had aroused their curiosity. Captain Burdick decided to search for the other schooner.

Three days later, Saturday, November 11, 1820, with her re-rigging completed, a number of casks of water taken aboard and the men refreshed, the *Huntress* was taken out on a cruise along which he sailed through "several passages no more than 1/4 mile wide," and five hours later came to the west end of the main island. While running up to West Point Island, Captain Burdick made out to starboard a wide channel leading between the high cliffs of West Point and the shore of the main island.<sup>39</sup> He entered the passage and soon came out into a commodious anchorage basin known as Hope Harbor. Here was the answer to his question. Lying at their anchors were two ships and their tenders and shallops. Captain Burdick reported it thus:

"... anchored in Hope harbor in West Bluff where I found two Ships and there Shallops, one from New Haven, Bound to the East'd, and the other from Salem had been lying here two years past and with a part of a load of oil and a few skins. The former left New Haven last March, was the *Huron*, Capt. Davis."<sup>40</sup>

And so, it may be said, that the two vessels which were to help make history in the South Shetlands literally searched each other out, and that this chance meeting in the Falklands was like a fateful twist—the prologue to a greater drama which was to take place in the remote regions of the South Shetlands.

With the customary laconic recording of most seafaring men of his time,

Captain Burdick said little about this first meeting with Captain Davis. The log of the *Huntress* does not disclose whether or not one of the shallops was the mysterious visitor at Bense Harbor. It merely reports that the crew became busily employed in repairing the schooner's sails and that they "cut 2 feet off mains'l, there not being hoist for it." But at some time during the next four days, the two shipmasters, Burdick and Davis, entered into an "agreement," whereby they were to sail in company to the South Shetlands, including the *Huron's* shallop, the little schooner *Cecilia*, and at the islands join their crews and hunt seals as a joint enterprise.

The little fleet—ship *Huron*, schooner *Huntress* and shallop *Cecilia*—left Hope Harbor and the Falklands on November 22, 1820, and the log of the *Huntress* notes that they took their departure from Cape Percival (New Island) latitude 51° 47' south and longitude 61° 11' west, the compass variation then being 22° east. Three days later, at 8 o'clock in the morning, they sighted Staten Land and took another land departure in latitude 54° 48' south.

The course was now set for the South Shetlands, four hundred miles to the south-southeast of Cape Horn.

## *Landfalls at the South Shetlands*

After two days' sailing on a course south-southeast, the *Huntress* log records running into thick, rainy weather. On Wednesday, November 29, they hove to, "juging it not safe to run. Saw several fur seal in the water alongside." In the afternoon it lighted up and Captain Burdick took a sight and figured her latitude as being  $61^{\circ} 26'$  south. A heavy snow storm developed during the night, and again they hove to. The log of the *Huntress* noted "being in Coulered water" and a "very thick haze to the S.S.E. At 10 A.M. the water being very much discoulered sounded 150 fathoms, no bottom."

They were in typical South Shetland weather—rain, snow, fog, a slight clearing, then the same conditions repeated in varied order. But the evidences of land had been well substantiated and at midday on November 30, 1820, Captain Burdick wrote: "made the Land bearing S.E. hauled on a wind to the Southward . . . *Huron* and Shallop in Co. Lat.  $62^{\circ} 7'$  South."

While their crews unbent the cables and got the anchors on the bows, the *Huntress*, *Huron* and shallop stood in to find a harbor. On December 3, 1820, while only three-quarters of a mile from shore, a thick fog shut in and the vessels stood off for safety. Now the shallop *Cecilia* left them to search for a suitable harbor. The heavy fog, like a giant curtain, soon hid the little shallop from view.

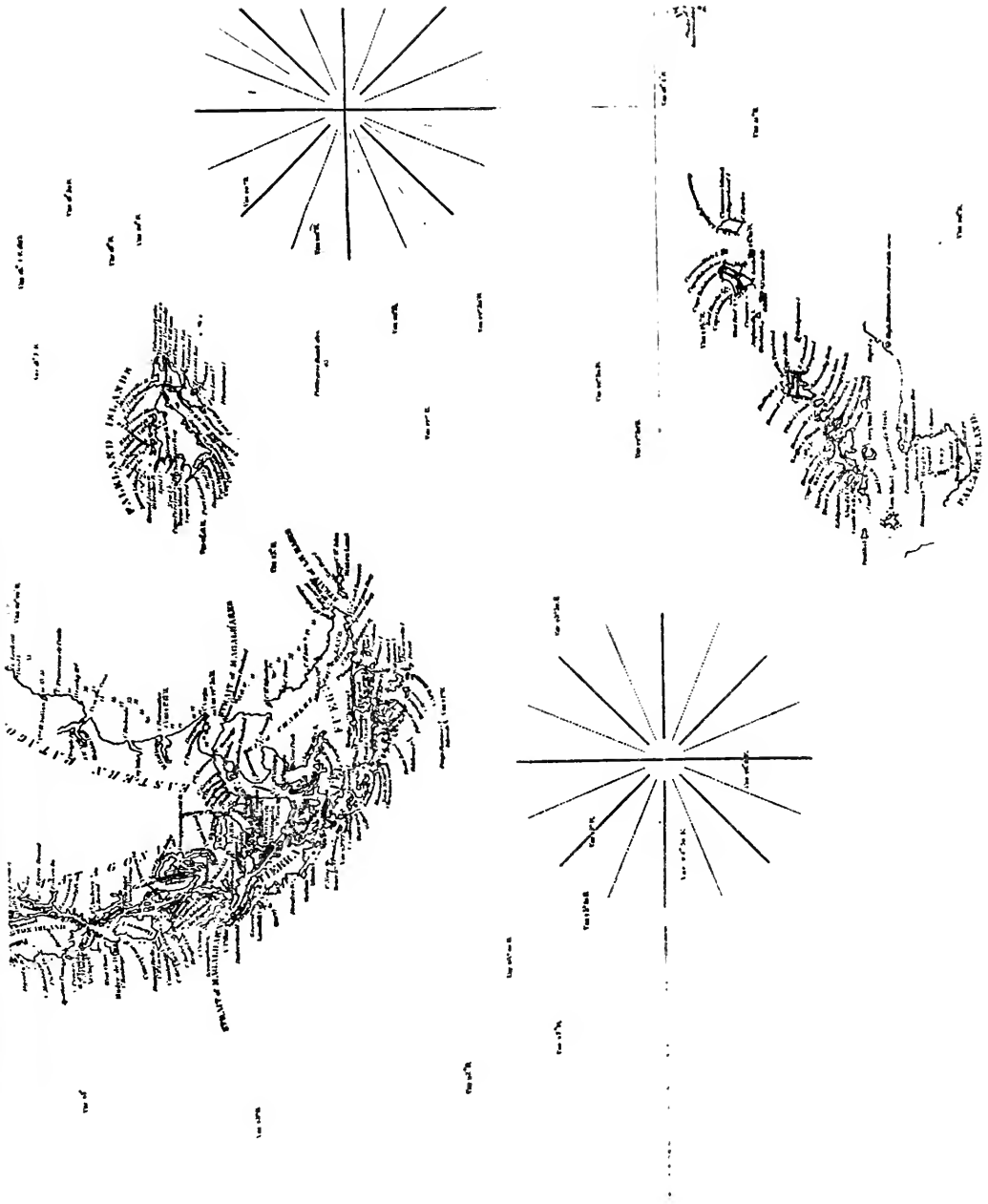
It was not until two days later that the shallop was again sighted. In the interim she had found a fine harbor at a cove on the west side of Greenwich Island, which was called Yankee Harbor.<sup>41</sup> The next twenty-four hours found the shallop hunting for the *Huron* and *Huntress*, which, all this while, had anxiously tacked off and on the wild coast. At last, early on December 7, 1820, the *Huntress* sighted the shallop and learned that a harbor had been found. The *Huron* soon came up to them. Piloting the ship and schooner toward Yankee Sound—a wide channel between Greenwich and Livingston (Freze-land) islands—the *Cecilia* shallop led the way to an anchorage basin later called by the English Hospital Cove but named by its New England discoverers Yankee Harbor. The log of the *Huntress* records ". . . came to at 6 P.M. in 16 fathoms, landlocked. Found four Stonington vessels here. So ends my sea account."

These Stonington vessels were the *Frederick*, *Freegift*, *Hersilia* and *Express*—the *Hero* being absent on its mission of picking up sealskins at the camps along the nearby shores of Livingston Island.<sup>42</sup> Since their arrival at the South Shetlands early in November, these experienced sealers had been busy. As has

THE VOYAGE OF THE HURON AND THE HUNTRESS

been noted, when the *Hero* and *Express* arrived at Hersilia Cove on Rugged Island on November 12, they found they had been preceded by some twelve days by the other three vessels in the fleet. Captain Pendleton, their leader, apparently intended using President Harbor (or New Plymouth), on Livingston Island, as the headquarters for the fleet. Spars, casks, wood and other supplies were landed here by the *Hero* and *Express*.<sup>43</sup>





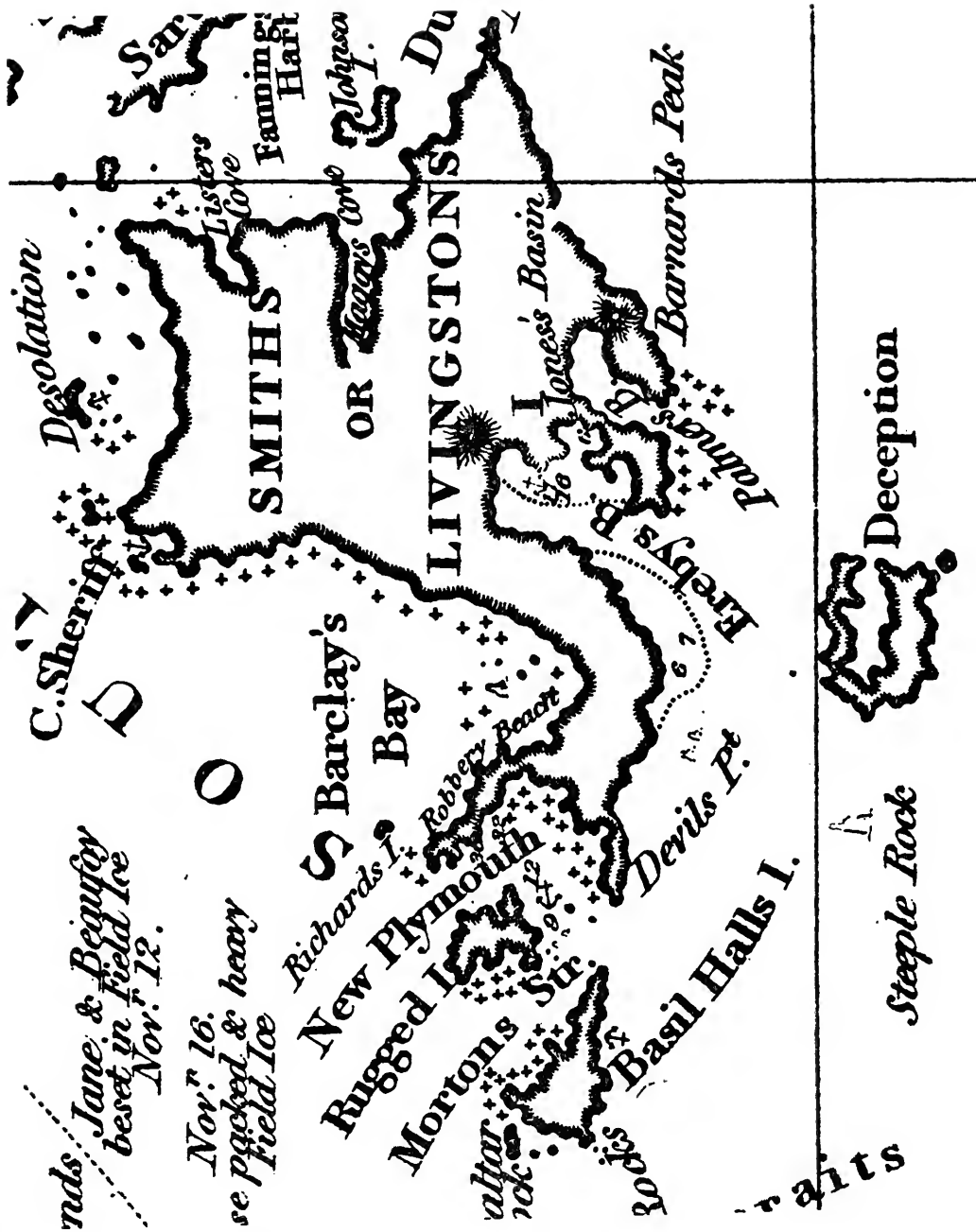
*The Falklands, Cape Horn, Staten Land and The South Shetland Islands*  
 (After Edmund Blunt, New York, 1834)

## *Captain Palmer's Exploratory Cruise in the Hero*

The Fanning fleet of Stonington vessels did not remain here long. Whether it was because some British sealers were in possession of nearby rookeries is not known, but three days later (November 15, 1820) the log of the *Hero* recorded the start of a cruise along the south shores of Livingston Island. Captain Palmer's account of this cruise indicates it was not only to seek new rookeries (which some historians have claimed) but also to look for a better harbor for the fleet. Captain Palmer's own words verify this as the log itself shows.<sup>44</sup> He sailed the sloop between Rugged and President (Snow) islands, (through Morton Strait and Hell Gates passage), and steered east for the north head of Deception Island. Running into a heavy snow storm as night fell, he tacked back to the north, then east under reefed mainsail, coming up under Livingston Island, or "Frezeland" as the American sealers called it.

Several American historians claim that it was on this cruise that Captain Palmer discovered the Antarctic Continent to the south, seventy miles away.<sup>45</sup> But his log shows that during the next twenty-four hours, Palmer explored the south coast of Livingston Island, especially its southeastern shore. The largest in the South Shetlands, this island was forty miles long, with a shore line low on the west end but rising to great heights as the land ran to the east-northeast. The shore here was indented with bays. As he explored this southern coast of Livingston Island, Captain Palmer found two good harbors for sealing craft. He records his explorations as follows in his log of the *Hero*:

Nov. 15, 1820: "These 24 hours commences with Thick weather Light breeze from N.W. at 2 P.M. clearing off [Left President Harbor] Got Underway on a cruise for Deception [Island] course East for the North head wind Light at N by W at 8 Being close in with the Land tacked to the Northw'd Middle part Thick snow storm at 12. . . . Reffd the main-sail Tacked to the Ewd at 5 made the Land stood along to the S'd and E'd saw what we thought to Be a harbor Lowered Down the Boat and Examined it but were Disappointed stood along to the southwd saw an Opening stood in found it to be a spacious harbor with very Deep water 50 to 60 fathoms got out the boat to sound found anchorage about a mile from the mouth. at 11 we came too in fifteen fathoms off the mouth of a Lagoon went on shore and got some eggs Ends with Thick weather and calm."



A portion of a chart of the South Shetland Islands drawn by Captain James Waddell showing Livingston's (Frezeland) Island, with Palmers Bay and other places frequented by the sealers  
 (From "A Voyage Toward the South Pole," 1825)

From this entry the course of the *Hero* can be clearly followed. The heavy snow storm forced him to get clear of Deception Island, and after tacking to the north at 8 P.M., he "made the Land" again at Livingston Island's south coast and followed its rocky indentations until he discovered the harbor. Charcot calls this Ereby's Bay on his chart. Livingston Island's southern coast line is over forty miles long.

Captain Palmer then continued his explorations. On Tuesday, November 16, he got under way at 2 in the afternoon with a fresh breeze from the northwest. He wrote: ". . . Beat up the Harbor, stood over to the south shore, sounded along and found no anchorage at 6 P.M. got up to the head we very suddenly shoaled our water to 2½ fathoms and came too."

Another heavy snow storm developed and Captain Palmer lay to until 5 o'clock the next morning. After taking soundings, he wrote: ". . . went to another further Dist. sounded in 15 fathoms at the entrance and 10,7-6-5 within found it to be an excellent Harbor secure from all winds. Returned on Board. . . ." This discovery was the embayed harbor which Weddell clearly marked Palmer's Harbor on his chart. American historians, Colonel Martin and Professor Hobbs, however, place Captain Palmer in the harbor of Deception Island, the former claiming he sailed down the west coast of that island and around the southern end into Deception Harbor. The logbook entries of Captain Palmer himself show this was not his course.

On the next day, November 17, Palmer got under way and stood out of his harbor, course S by E ½. At 10 A.M. he was clear of the harbor and "stood over for the Land." Several historians have placed Captain Palmer under the heights of Trinity Island, at the Antarctic Peninsula, some fifty miles away. By this reasoning they have had him sailing from Deception Island. But the log entries make no further references to this Island after he was turned away from it by the snow storm on the night of November 15, 1820. Through their assumption that he reached it, these historians have made his course decidedly different from that given above, which is the course which this writer feels the *Hero's* log substantiates. However, the single entry which they utilize to place the *Hero* over against the mainland of Antarctica, fifty miles to the south, cannot be taken as solitary evidence—it must be studied in conjunction with the previous and subsequent entries of this particular cruise of the *Hero*. The fact that the word "Land" is capitalized is no reason in itself to state that Captain Palmer meant the continent of Antarctica. Both he and others of his contemporaries used the capitalization of "Land" for islands in the South Shetland group. In this instance the "Land" was Livingston Island. His entries for the next two days show how carefully he followed his exploration of this coast line. On Friday, November 17, 1820, the log records:

"These 24 hours commences with fresh Breese from SWest and Pleasant at 8 P.M. got over under the Land found the sea filled with imense Ice Bergs—at 12 [midnight] hove Too under the Jib Laid off & on until morning. at 4 A.M. made sail in shore and Discovered-a-strait-

Tending SSW & NNE it was Literaly filled with Ice and the shore inaccessible thought it not Prudent to Venture in we Bore away to the Northw'd and saw 2 small Islands and the shore every where Perpendicular we stood across toward Freseland [Livingston Island] course NNW the Latditude[sic] of the mouth of the strait was 63.45 S End with fine weather wind SSW."

With this entry, several American historians, notably Colonel Lawrence Martin and Professor William H. Hobbs, claim that Captain Palmer discovered the Antarctic Continent. The course which they set for the *Hero* has been stated above and has received considerable approbation. Captain Nathaniel Brown Palmer was an outstanding mariner. His career rivals fiction. He was a superior shipmaster, a designer of ships, a very successful captain in the China trade, and a man of unusual ability. It is a pity that the fire which destroyed his home in Stonington also burned many of his papers. A further examination of his Antarctic exploits will be found in the Appendix. Both Martin and Hobbs have devoted much research to the Palmer cruise of November, 1820.

It is unfortunate that there is no evidence (in the logbook entries noted above) that Captain Palmer ever took a sight on these days or even kept up his position by dead reckoning. The estimate he gives for the mouth of the strait he discovered cannot be verified by any of such observations.

A further aspect to the interpretation of this particular cruise of the *Hero* is Captain Palmer's description of his course after he left his harbor on the afternoon of November 17, 1820. He states: ". . . stood over for the Land Course S by E  $\frac{1}{2}$  . . . at 8 P.M. got over under the Land found the sea filled with imense Ice Bergs—at 12 hove Too . . . Laid off & on until morning at 4 AM made sail in shore and Discovered a Strait. . . shore every where Perpendicular we stood across towards Freseland Course N N W. . . ." If he was some fifty miles away from Livingston or Frezeland Island, as several historians claim, and under the shores of the peninsula, it is obvious that he would not have carefully noted that he was going to stand "across towards Freseland." He must have been in much closer proximity to this great island.

During the next twenty-four hours, Captain Palmer saw "plenty of whales and Ice." At 2 o'clock in the morning on November 19, he took in his main-sail and "Laid off and On under Freseland," and at 4 o'clock he made sail, "Running along shore course by compass NNE" until at 6 o'clock he discovered the mouth of a harbor, where he went ashore and killed one seal. This was a cruise into Yankee Sound and he soon dropped anchor at Half Moon Island, "about 2 miles from the strait's mouth."<sup>46</sup>

This cruise can be followed clearly. Was the entrance to Yankee Sound the "strait's mouth" as Captain Palmer called it? It was not the same strait he had sighted the day before and they had found inaccessible due to ice. The latitude as given by Palmer is not the same as the actual latitude of the Sound. In fact the only contemporary description of this portion of the South Shetlands

is that given by Admiral Bellingshausen, the Russian explorer, along this same shore some two months later.

Bellingshausen's journals show him to be the first to come up to the South Shetlands from the west southwest after a voyage below the 65° parallel of latitude. He came up past Smith's Island, saw Snow Island, and sailed along the southern coast of Livingston, sighting eight American and British sealing vessels at anchor near the southeastern shore of Morton Straits. To starboard he soon saw "a high island, with steep cliffs and its heights covered with clouds Deception Island . . . separated from the high rocky headlands opposite Livingston Island by a strait 11 miles wide." This would seem to be the strait discovered by Captain Palmer, and rightfully named Palmer Strait. Bellingshausen continued with his account of meeting Captain Palmer. This meeting took place on January 20, 1821, two months after Captain Palmer first came into this strait.

Bellingshausen's journal states:

" . . . at noon we were in lat. 62°49' south, longitude 60° 18' west, course parallel to shore northeast by east . . . [This is the same course Palmer followed in gaining Yankee Strait or McFarlane Strait as the British named it] . . . at 1:30 passed across the mouth of a strait not more than 2 miles wide. The shore which we had held from 4 o'clock in the morning up to this time proved to be an island, Livingston Island, 41 miles long, lying E by N ½ E. The western end was low and covered with snow only in parts. The eastern half of the island consisted of high mountains covered with snow and ice and hidden by clouds. [Barnard Peak] The shore was rocky and sheer. [Palmer states: ' . . . and the shore everywhere perpendicular.'] The most southerly end of the island projects into the sea as two ridges and forms a bay."<sup>47</sup>

After discovering an excellent harbor, later called Yankee Harbor, across the strait from Half Moon Island, Captain Palmer went up Yankee Sound, took his whaleboat and went through the dangerous passage between Greenwich and Livingston islands to find "a fine plain, 2 miles in Length and 1 in breadth—and fine harbors."<sup>48</sup> This was the rookery at Blythe Bay. Returning to the *Hero*, he got under way and returned to President's Harbor, the same way he had come. His mission of discovery had been accomplished. Captain Pendleton then decided that the entire fleet should go to the newly-discovered Yankee Harbor in Greenwich Island. The *Hero's* log shows that this was done and that on November 23, 1820, this Fanning fleet of Stonington craft got under way, went into Palmer's Straits (between Deception and Livingston islands) at 11 A.M. on November 24, and at 4 P.M. on that same day came to anchor in Yankee Harbor. Incidentally, they first called it Port Williams. Captain Weddell, the British sealer, called it Fanning Harbor on his map of the South Shetlands. Powell called it Hospital Cove.

## *Yankee Harbor Becomes the Sealers' Rendezvous*

In this harbor, therefore, on December 8, 1820, the *Huntress* and *Huron* and their shallop finally found a haven. It was a fortunate location. The Stonington fleet had done and were doing well. The *Hero's* log shows that Captain Pendleton's fleet had already salted down 10,000 skins. This was during the twelve days between their anchoring at Yankee Harbor and the arrival of the New Haven and Nantucket craft. It was the *Hero* which took out the men and put them ashore and later returned to pick up the skins. The *Cecilia*—shallop—was the similar tender for the *Huron* and the *Huntress*.

The newly arrived sealers got to work without delay. Captain Burdick's log of the *Huntress* reveals how the joint arrangement with the *Huron* was put into practice. The entry for December 9, 1820, reads:

"Begins with brisk breses from N W Sent Mr. Coleman first mate of the *Huntress* and Eight men on board the Shallop with one Boat the Ship sent twenty-two and 2 boats at 10 A.M. the Shallop went out to find a place to Land the men for Sealing . . . ."

The men so landed would set up camps at the rookeries selected along the shore, erecting rude tents for shelter and caching their provisions. Never was there a more desolate place for such work. Dr. Young, surgeon for the *Williams* during the Bransfield voyage in the South Shetlands early in 1820, described the coast:

"The whole line of coast appeared high, bold, and rugged; rising abruptly from the sea in perpendicular snow cliffs, except here and there where the naked face of a barren rock shewed itself amongst them. In the interior, the land, or rather the snow, sloped gradually and gently upward into high hills . . . . Three days after this we anchored in an extensive bay . . . words can scarcely be found to describe its barrenness and sterility. Only one small spot of land was discovered on which a landing could be effected . . . being bounded by inaccessible cliffs . . . a single beach, on which there was a heavy surf beating, and from which a small stream of fresh water ran into the sea. Nothing was to be seen but the rugged surface of the barren rocks, upon which myriads of sea fowl had laid their eggs—the multitudes of the finest fur-seals . . . the fur is the finest and longest I have ever seen . . . ."49

In such places the sealers established their several camps, and the shallop

having landed them in a whaleboat, sailed back to Yankee Harbor. Now followed alternate periods of fierce activity and utter boredom. The method of killing and skinning the seals has been described by many writers from Captain Cook's time, but that renowned Duxbury mariner, Captain Amasa Delano, does it as well as any:

“. . . The method practised to take them was to get between them and the water, and make a lane of men, two abreast, forming three or four couples, and then drive the seal through this lane; each man furnished with a club, between five and six feet long and as they passed, he knocked down such of them as he chose, which are commonly the half-grown. . . . When stunned, knives are taken to cut and rip them down on the breast from the under jaw, to the tail, giving a stab in the breast that will kill them. After this the hands got to skinning. I have seen men, one of whom would skin sixty in an hour. They take off all the fat, and some of the lean, with the skin, as the more weight there is to the skin, the easier it will beam.”<sup>50</sup>

The curing or “beaming” process was accomplished by scraping the fatty tissue away, and then washing the surface thoroughly, and Delano states:

“This is done in the same manner in which carriers flesh their skins, after which it is stretched and pegged on the ground to dry. . . . After this they are taken out of pegs and stacked in the manner of salt cod-fish. They will sweat whilst in the pile, so as to render it necessary to open them and give them air, two or three times. After which they may be stacked in a ship's hold, and will keep for years . . . if kept dry.”<sup>51</sup>



## *The Search for New Rookeries and the Fate of the Clothier*

While the *Cecilia* was landing the men for the salting up of these camps along the south coast of Livingston Island, the two captains, John Davis and Christopher Burdick, learned firsthand from Captain Pendleton and his Stonington men of the sealing season to date. It is apparent that the newcomers found that the Stonington men were chiefly concentrated on the southwest shore of Livingston and that there were a number of English vessels which had already established camps on the north shore. This led them to make an exploratory cruise of their own. On December 13, 1820, Captain Burdick recorded in the log of the *Huntress*:

“. . . Captain Davis and myself with seven men went up Yankee Sound to the westward in a Boat [whaleboat], to Sea if we could Sea any place for Seal about 12 miles up the Sound, which brought us out on the West Side found a Scotch Brigg to anchor She had her men on Shore on a Bech But there was no Seal up found no passage out to the Westward through this Sound for anything more than a boat being full of rocks at 2 P.M. returned to our vessels with fifteen Seal the Shallop not returned. So Ends.”

This exploratory cruise is of more than passing interest. It was similar to the one which Captain Palmer had accomplished three weeks before. Fortunately both log entries are preserved, but it is unfortunate that Captain Burdick did not give the name of the “Scotch brigg.” It could have been the *Jane* of Leith under that excellent master, Captain James Weddell.<sup>52</sup>

On the following day, December 14, the *Huntress*' log notes that a strange whaleboat came into Yankee Harbor. It proved to be from: “Captain [Alexander] Clark's fleet from Stonington and reported the Loss of Capt. Clark's ship the *Clothier* which ran on a Rock in attempting to make a harbor about 15 miles to the westward of where we lay; the rest of his fleet had harbored close by the ship and was saving what they could.” The *Clothier* had been wrecked on December 9, and her loss was a serious setback to the fortunes of the second Stonington fleet.

This fleet probably reached a rendezvous here a day or so after the *Express* and *Hero* had joined the Fanning-Pendleton fleet at Rugged Island. As the brigs *Emeline* and *Catherine* (the other members of Clark's fleet), were at

the Falkland Islands while the *Hero* was there, it is fair to assume that the *Clothier* had arrived at the Shetlands before them. The place where the wreck lay came to be known as Clothier Harbor, and is on the north shore of Greenwich Island about fifteen miles from Yankee Harbor.

## Captain Burdick's First Cruise— The New York Fleet

The *Cecilia* returned on December 15, 1820, and Captain Burdick got her ready for a return cruise to the camps. She brought 66 skins, and 19 of these were placed aboard the *Huntress*, showing the proportion or lay of the respective vessels. Leaving only one man and a boy aboard the schooner, Captain Burdick set out on his first cruise in the shallop heading "southward and westward round an Island called Frezeland [Livingston], bearing SSW from our harbor." The record of the *Cecilia's* cruise is contained in the log of the *Huntress*.

The *Cecilia* sailed at 1 P.M. on the afternoon of December 16, and due to light winds and calm did not get clear of Yankee Sound until late the next day, it being necessary to tow the little schooner out around Frezeland Point.

A half mile away, the *Hero*, under Captain Palmer, sighted the *Cecilia* proceeding to the south-southwest along shore. Captain Burdick reported, at 9 P.M. on December 18, ". . . fell in with Captain Johnson's fleet of New York from Rugged Island looking for Yankee Harbor. This fleet consists of one Brig [*Charity*, Captain Barnard] two schooners [*Jane Maria*, Captain Johnson and *Henry*, Captain Bruno] and Shallop [under Captain MacKay]. Later part fresh Brezes at south."

On December 19 and 20, Captain Burdick sailed the *Cecilia* to the three shore stations set up on the south coast of Livingston Island. At the first he took off the whaleboat and crew and 82 skins; at the second station he was forced to lay off and on under sail, "it blowing a gale on Shore we Could neither Land nor they git off." Landing safely the next day, he took off the shore crew and 500 skins. The third station was only five miles further west along shore, and he took off this crew and 480 skins.

Captain Burdick made an important entry on this day. He noted that his third boat's crew had found:

" . . . about 50 men Stationed on this Beach which was about 7 miles in Extent which consisted Chiefly of the Stonington Co. which had landed 40 men. Thought I would pass round Frezeland Island to westward and return. But it Coming Calm Landed the remainder making in all 28 men and three boats. at 12 midnight started for the Harbor the same way I came."<sup>53</sup>

It was 10 o'clock the next evening (December 20) when Captain Burdick

again dropped the shallop's anchor in Yankee Harbor. He found Captain Robert Johnson's (New York) fleet, "all their to anchor." The load of skins was then transferred to the *Huron* and *Huntress*, his share being 335.

This cruise proved several things to Captain Burdick and Captain Davis. At their three camps they had collected 1,062 skins, while the Stonington camps during the same time had put aboard the *Hero* a total of 4,000 skins.<sup>54</sup> This was in addition to the 10,000 already salted away before the *Huron* and *Huntress* had arrived in Yankee Harbor. Further than this, the log of the *Hero* shows that Captain Palmer was collecting skins on the north shore of Livingston Island as well, picking up from camps between Shirreff's Cape and Williams Point in "Blythe" Bay—named from Blyth, home port of the discovery brig *Williams*—and had brought in on December 13 a total of 5,916 and 6,865 more on December 16. To this total, the record shows 8,229 skins were added to the Fanning-Stonington fleet from the camps on December 19.

# *Exploring the South Shetlands*

## *The Seal Hunters Extend the Range of their Cruising*

It is obvious that such a tremendous slaughter of the seals was not only rapidly exterminating them but that, after the Stonington camps had been established, it was increasingly difficult for other sealing vessels to get more than the "leavings." As a result, the other sealing vessels at Yankee Harbor were forced to seek new rookeries and this meant exploring the shores of other islands until they found them.

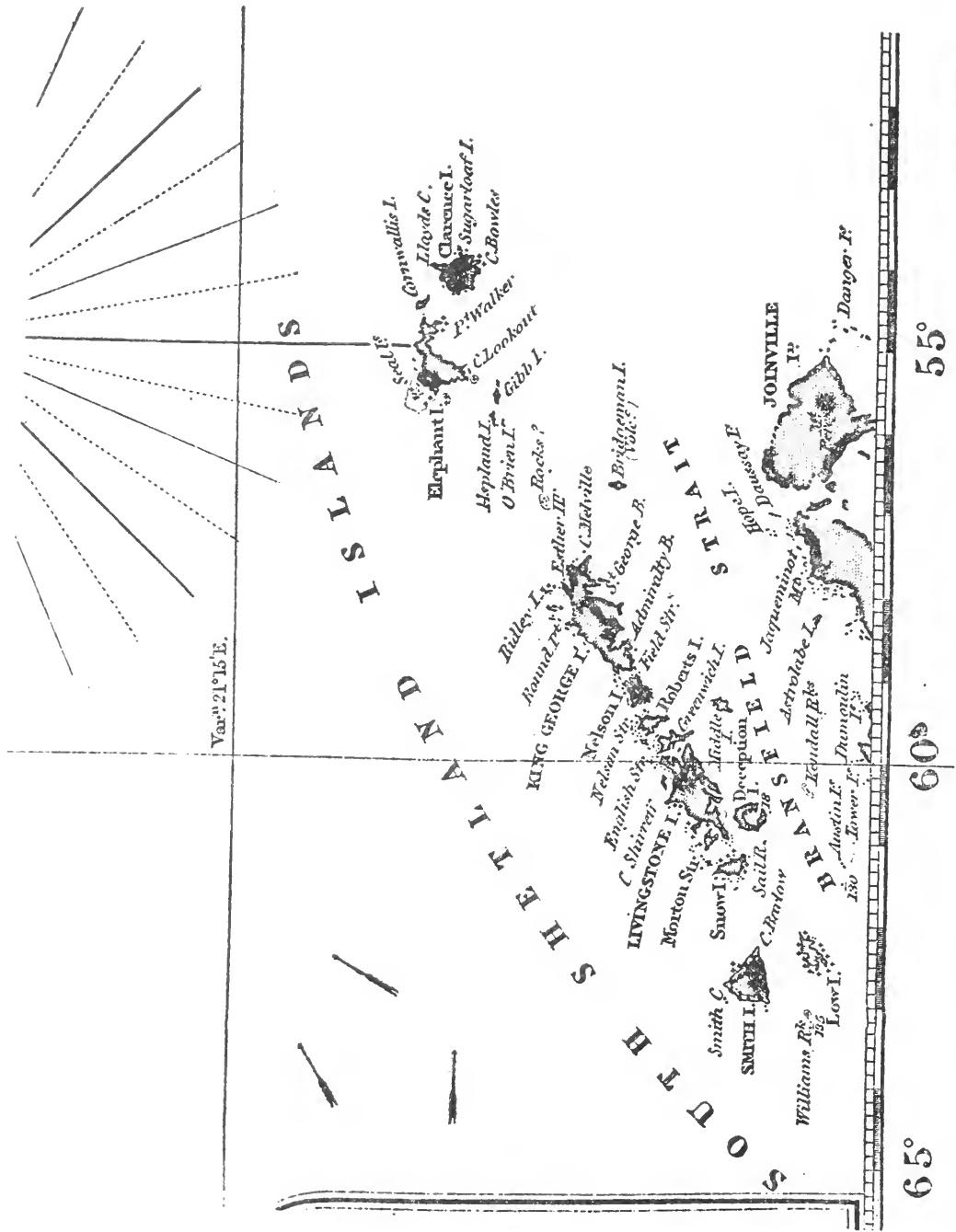
On December 22, Captain Davis began his first cruise in the *Cecilia*, returning to the South Bay of Livingston Island.<sup>55</sup> The log of the *Huntress* reported that Captain Johnson's shallop came in on December 24 with 1,600 skins, no doubt from the eastward, as neither Captain Palmer nor Burdick mentioned the New York boats as cruising along Livingston Island's shores.

While waiting for the *Cecilia's* return, Captain Burdick gives us some important glimpses of Yankee Harbor and of his work guarding his vessel. On Christmas Day, 1820, he is particularly interesting:

"Begins with strong Gales at N E with Snow and hail Me and the Boy busily engaged in scraping the ice from the Cables and Sides of the schooner The NE side of our harbor is formd By an Iceburg from three to five hundred feet high from the surface of the water, which Break off in flakes of 4 or 5 hundred tons with a report as Loud as a Cannon These pieces of ice float in the water and the wind drives them afoul of us with is very chafing Latter part moderates. Employd in mending Scrivits on the cables. So Ends this Day."<sup>56</sup>

On December 28, 1820, Captain Davis returned from the camps with 1,384 skins. It is quite clear that the seal in the camp areas were becoming scarce, and that it behooved the hunters to find new rookeries as quickly as possible, as Captain Davis left again that very same day. This cruise lasted twelve days, during which Captain Davis circumnavigated most of the South Shetlands.

". . . at 4 P.M. Capt. Davis returned with the shallop he had crused as far to the NE as the Land Extended but found now Seal to speak of. He fell in with an English Ship and Brig that wher Castaway; took part of ther Crews and put them on Board of English Vessels Lying at Raged Island. Returned by where the men where Stationed Brought in 2470 Skins—took 696 on Board being my part. He informed me that Samuel Johnson had run away. . . . The skins were found to be in Very



The South Shetlands  
 (After James Imray & Son, London, 1863)

Bad order, owing to their being so Long taken & having no salt. So Ends."

A glance at the chart of the Shetlands shows that this sealing cruise of Captain Davis was one of considerable extent. Upon leaving Yankee Harbor and sailing to the north and east, Captain Davis with his shallop passed by Greenwich, Robert and Nelson islands, then approached King George Island; rounded Cape Melville and the North Foreland, then sailed west southwest along the north shores of the Shetland chain. Between these larger islands ran English, Nelson and Filde's straits. On Nelson's Island was "Harmony Cove," another New England sealers' rendezvous, named for the *Harmony*, Captain Ray of Nantucket. Nelson's Island was called "O'Cain's" after the Boston sealing vessel of that name, under the famous Captain Jonathan Winship. On the southwest coast of King George Island was "Potter's Cove," where Captain Winship had his headquarters.<sup>57</sup>

The identity of one of the wrecked British sealers may possibly be established as the ship *Lady Trowbridge*, Captain Richard Sherrat. This rescue and transportation of the British castaways to English vessels at Rugged Island was a praiseworthy task. Captain Davis probably had an interesting account, but those details are lost, as the pages in his log are missing. It is known that the *Lady Trowbridge* was wrecked on December 20, 1820.

The desertion of Samuel Johnson is a mystery. As it is recorded that he ran away, it is probable that he may have joined an English shore gang. He is not listed in the *Huron's* roster and so must have been a member of the *Huntress's* crew.

What is now known as Nelson Straits may well have been discovered by Captain Davis as in his log entry of February 19, 1822, he refers to leaving the South Shetlands at "Davis Straits" between Nelson and Roberts islands.

## *Captain Burdick Is Caught in a Gale*

On her next cruise to the south shore of Livingston, the *Cecilia* was under Captain Burdick. He left Yankee Harbor late in the afternoon, December 17, 1820, and ran into a westerly gale before he reached the southeast point of Frezeland. The next day he steered along shore and early on the morning of December 19, "... came to anchor inside of two rocky Ledges in seven fathoms water, abreast of where our men was stationed." After taking off 981 skins, Captain Burdick again got under way. "At 10 A.M. the wind came out ENE," he records, "whether thick snow, and within fifteen minutes it Blew a tremendous gale. Got her under close ref'd sails and Stood to the Southward and Eastward on a wind. So ends with a tremendous sea and perishing cold wether."

The Nantucket Captain's entries are of unusual interest. Like Captain Davis, when he had anything to say, he wrote a vigorous, descriptive style. His log gives excellent bearings, so that his various cruising are always easily followed. For example, during the twenty-four hours when he was caught in the strong gale off southwest Livingston Island, he tells us on January 20, 1821:

"Commences with strong gales at East with thick snow and a most tremendous sea . . . at 2 P.M. whore round and headed to the Northward & Eastward at 4 A.M. lighted Saw President Island [Snow I.] about three miles on our Lee beam and Frezeland [Livingston] ahead and place where we took our seals 1½ points on our wether Bow and gale still increasing. Took in the mainsail whore round run between President Island and Frezeland among a parcel of Ledges and hauled round between Rugged Island [and] Frezeland and anchored in 7 fathoms with both anchors."

This handling of the little shallop in such dangerous waters and running her through Hell Gates is worthy of a closer examination, and the chart gives mute evidence of Captain Burdick's seamanship.

Meanwhile at Yankee Harbor, this same gale was causing much alarm. Captain Davis recorded (in his log of the *Huron*) that his anchors were dragging and that he put down a third but still could not hold the ship "... till we got very near the Beach when she Brought up, not being more than a half cable's Length from Shore, altho so near we had a 11 Fathoms of water under our stern. Ends moderate and Cloudy."<sup>58</sup>

The *Huron's* predicament was still dangerous and so all the shipmasters joined with Captain Davis and his ship-keepers to get her away from the Yankee Harbor's rocky shore. Captains Pendleton, Sheffield, and Dunbar, of



the Stonington fleet; Captains Barnard and Bruno, of the New York fleet; a Captain Withem, schooner *Governor Brooks* of Salem; and Messrs. William A. Fanning, Fox and Smith (the latter from the *Huntress*) with ten men, pitched in to get the *Huron's* anchors up and the ship warped and moored again in a safe place. After six hours the arduous task was completed.

Captain Davis ended his entry for the day, thus:

“. . . hope to see our Schooner soon as she has had Bad weather.”

Two days later, January 22, the *Cecilia* arrived. Such were the vagaries of South Shetland weather that a flat calm fell as Captain Burdick headed up Yankee Sound and he was forced to get a whaleboat out ahead to tow the shallop into the harbor.

## *The American and British Sealers Clash*

### *An Impending Pitched Battle*

It was the custom for Captains Davis and Burdick on occasion to send a whaleboat up to the west end of Yankee Sound to hunt for seals. On January 24, the *Huron's* boatswain returned from a cruise of four days along the north shore of Livingston Island, west of Williams Point, to Shirreff's Cove. He had bad news—a clash with the English sealers—and only 52 skins.<sup>59</sup> Just before he came in, another American whaleboat reported similar trouble. Captain Burdick's log gives the details:

“. . . a boat came in belonging to Captain Barnard brig *Charity* having ben rob[b]ed of Eighty Skins by the English at Sheriff's Cape and Drove off the Beach 4 P.M. our Boat came in from a Cruce with 52 [skins] having Likewis ben Drove from the beach at Sheriff's Cape by the English wher he said there was plenty of Seal.”

With the growing scarcity of seal, and the rookeries of Livingston Island the best in the Shetlands, it was inevitable that growing competition between British and American crews might lead to pitched battle.

The New Englanders in Yankee Harbor were angry. Captain Burdick puts the situation as follows:

“. . . the Masters of all the vessels in this harbor being nine in number and all Americans being notified of the Same all repaired on Board Ship *Huron*, Capt. Davis to Consult what was to be done where we all agreed as one to muster all our men from our Several Camps and as one body to go on to said beach at Sheriff's Cape and to take Seal by fair means if we Could but at all Events to take them. So Ends.”

What a picture this conjures! Nine sealing masters gathered in the cabin of the *Huron*, the yellow light of the whale-oil light bringing out the grim lines of their weather-bronzed faces—young men all, despite their experiences, and determined men as well. They would rescue English mariners cast away on inhospitable shores but they refused to allow these same men, on equal footing, to intimidate them.

Who were the nine shipmasters? The answer is contained in the pages of the three known existing logs—Captains Pendleton, Sheffield, Williams, and Dunbar, of the Stonington fleet; Captains Barnard and Bruno, of New York's fleet; Captain Davis of the *Huron*, New Haven; Captain Withem of the

*Governor Brooks*, schooner-tender of the *Nancy* of Salem; and Captain Burdick of Nantucket.<sup>60</sup>

On the following morning, January 26, 1821, the log of the *Huntress* continues the account:

" . . . At 6 A.M. Cap<sup>t</sup> Bruno of the Schooner *Henry* started in a boat with the first officer of the schooner *Express* with a Circular Letter being signed by all the masters to their respective officers at their camps to muster all their men save one man at each camp, and with their Boat to repair immediately under the guidance of Capt Bruno to a small Bay [Blythe Bay] not far from Sheriff's Cape, where Captain Davis and Captain Barnard would meet them in the Shallop with the residue of the men from the harbor. At 8 P.M. Captain Davis and Capt. Barnard started in the Shallop with 5 boats and 33 men which would make in all (when they met at the place appointed) 120 men They would have to Land and by the best information we can git the English have but about 80 men there. So Ends."

The American sealers had planned their campaign well. If there was to be a fight, the Yankees were in a position to strike hard and with force. That the appointed commanders of the expedition were Captain Davis, Captain Barnard and Captain Bruno is a point well to record. It establishes acknowledged leadership. Little is known of either Davis or Bruno, but their voyages indicate men of superior ability.

As for Captain Charles Barnard, his own book, "A Residence of Two Years in the Falkland Islands," which was printed in 1831, shows all too well his natural animosity for the British. In 1813, at the Falklands, he had rescued the officers and crew (including His Majesty's marines) of a British ship which had been cast away. With an amazing shift of circumstances, the British then stole Barnard's ship, the *Nanina*, and marooned him and four companions at New Island. After two years of an almost solitary existence, Barnard and his companions were rescued. Under such conditions, it is not difficult to imagine Barnard's frame of mind.

On the afternoon of January 26, at 7:00 o'clock, the *Cecilia*, with Davis and Barnard aboard (together with several mates from other vessels), and accompanied by whaleboats and 33 men, started from Yankee Harbor. Just as the expedition got well up Yankee Sound, at noon on the next day, they spoke Captain Robert Johnson, bound in for Yankee Harbor in his shallop, after having been a 22-day cruise to the south and west (more about this later). This adventuresome master of the *Jane Maria* promised to join the force of militant sealers, which then continued on its way.

At 5 o'clock in the afternoon, Saturday, January 27, 1821, the expedition got out through the western entrance to Yankee Sound. Captain Davis wrote:

" . . . made the best of our way for Bligh's Harbour [Blythe Bay?] with two boats a head a Towing it being almost Calm at 7 P.M. came too an

anchor in Bligh's Harbor in 3 fathoms . . . Ends with . . . cloudy unpleasant Weather with Snow."

While the *Cecilia* and the whaleboats waited for Captain Bruno's party to arrive, Captain Johnson came in with his shallop, ready to lend a helping hand. The log of the *Huron* continues Captain Davis' narrative:

" . . . then we got under way and stood to the South & Westward in company for Sheriff's Cape at 11 P.M. Capt. Bruno came alongside in his boat and reported that he had examined the Beaches round Sheriffs Cape and Saw but a very few Seal nothing to make an object to stop for. . . ."

That was the end of the expedition. The undeclared war ended as suddenly as it began, and the American sealers returned to their respective vessels at Yankee Harbor. The *Charity's* crew probably accepted their defeat philosophically. From other evidence they were only one of several camp crews which had to suffer a beating without recompense. A contemporary map of Livingston Island designates one section of the northwest coast as "Robbery Beach."<sup>61</sup>

In an English sealer's account of his experiences in the South Shetlands, "Narrative of . . . Thomas W. Smith," printed in Boston in 1844, there is an account of the London sealer *Hetty* and her crew's landing in Blythe Bay in 1820 (probably November & December) and of being driven from certain sections by their own countrymen in the grim competition for the seal pelts. In one instance a fight with sealing clubs resulted in severe injury to several men.

But Captain Davis was not wholly satisfied with the result. He did not return to Yankee Harbor with his companions. On the next day, he sent his first mate, Mr. Goddard, with a whaleboat and crew, ashore at Shirreff's Cape. This was the established base for the British sealers. The reconnoitering party found out why Captain Bruno had wisely advised not to proceed further with the attempt at force. Captain Davis states:

" . . . at 2 P.M. the Boat returned from Shore not being allowed to Land as the English had collected in numbers say from 60 to 75 men, all armed with Guns, Pistoles, & Swords and appeared in a hostile manner, Hoisted in the Boat and Proceeded on to the westward. . . . Capt. Johnson bore away for the North & East'd."

## *Capt. Davis Makes an Historic Decision— The Exploratory Cruise of Captain Johnson*

The day before this incident, Captain Davis had considered certain alternatives. The situation in which he now found himself he tells best in his own laconic words:

“. . . Concluded to make the best of our way for our People that is stationed on the South Beach, and then to go on a cruise to find new Lands, as the Seal is done here . . .”

This was a tremendously important decision, as his subsequent entries in the *Huron's* logbook will show. The necessity for finding new rookeries was paramount. With the end of the season in sight, it was mandatory that desperate measures be taken. The Stonington (Fanning) fleet had little to worry about as they had obtained full cargoes.<sup>62</sup> But the other vessels in Yankee Harbor were far behind in the number of skins obtained. As has been shown, Captain Davis' cruise to the northeast, along the South Shetland chain and then back to the west, had produced little or nothing. Both the north and south shores of Livingston had been worked to the ultimate near-extirmination of the seal.

In equal measure, the New York captains were well aware of the situation. That is why Captain Robert Johnson had made his own exploratory cruise to the south. This extraordinary cruise is of historic importance and represents something more than just another of those contributions made by American sealers. When he met the Davis-Barnard expedition at the entrance to Yankee Sound, on January 27, 1821, Captain Johnson had just returned from this famous cruise. Captain Davis states that Captain Johnson reported:

“. . . having been gone 20 days on a cruise to the South and Westward to look for Seal found Plenty of Land in that Direction, but no Seal . . .”

The log of the *Huntress* (January 27, 1821) gives further details:

“. . . Captain Johnson came in in Shallop from a cruce of 22 days, said he had ben to the Lat. 66° South and the Long. of 70° West and still found what [he] took to be Land but appeared to be nothing but Sollid Islands of Ice and Snow Whether he had found any Seal he did not inform, nor otherwise Land, than to say ther was none so far south as he had ben.”

Captain Davis, therefore, decided to sail south and search for land himself—

and possible new rookeries. This was not only of great importance to himself but an historic one in the history of Antarctic discovery.

On the morning of Tuesday, January 30, 1821, Captain Davis sailed the *Cecilia* through Morton Strait—between Livingston and Snow islands (called Frezeland and President islands by the Americans)—and three hours later hove to off the camp of Mr. Philips, his second mate. A total of 258 skins was brought out to the shallop. The camp of his third mate, Mr. Ripley, brought out 219 skins, and the *Cecilia* was then sailed along shore to the camp of William Coleman, mate of the *Huntress*, who had 425 skins.

After taking the skins aboard, Captain Davis steered to the south, into the unknown waters of the Antarctic seas below the South Shetland chain.<sup>63</sup>

“*And South We Steered*” —

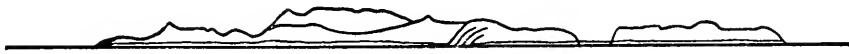
*Coleridge, The Ancient Mariner*

Captain Davis' logbook, on January 31, 1821, records:

“... Middle part clear and Pleasant at Meridian our Latt was 63°-06' South at same time Mount Pisco bore S W ½ W per compass, President Island NW by W, Deception Island NE and a new discovered Island S by W ½ W At P M discovered Land bearing from East by N to W by S. Ends with moderate breeze and clear weather.”

ILE DÉCEPTION VUE DE L'OUEST

12



Mont Pond

Dépression

(From: “Deuxieme Expedition Antartique Francais”—Charcot)

*Deception Island from the west, probably  
as seen by Captain John Davis  
on January 31, 1821*

ILES SMITH ET LOW

11



S 11 E

S 40 O

S 17 O

Pic Foster

Pic Lisco

S 55 O

I. Jameson ou Low

I. Smith

(From: “Deuxieme Expedition Antartique Francais”—Charcot)

*Smith (Mt. Pisgah) and Jameson (Low) Islands  
as probably seen by Captain John Davis  
February 1, 1821*

From these cross bearings it is a simple matter to find Captain Davis' position on the chart. The clearness of the atmosphere in the Antarctic has been testified to by eminent explorers. Here, such long-range observation tends to shorten distances, and it is more than a conjecture to believe that the "Land" Captain Davis saw east by north to west by south was the high snow-crowned coast of the Antarctic Peninsula, some 40 miles away.

In checking the latitude of  $63^{\circ} 06'$  south, as given by Davis, it is not possible to reconcile all his compass bearings with those of a modern chart. But this is not at all strange. Compass variation in this part of the Antarctic in 1821 was about  $25^{\circ}$  east. Even by allowing for this variation, his position does not fit his recorded latitude, and it is fair to assume he underestimated his distances. It must be remembered that this was the summer season in the Antarctic, and the sun never actually stayed under the horizon at night so that the hours of daylight continued into the so-called night period. This made night sailing possible in clear weather.

But the master of the *Cecilia* did not end his cruise here. There were more impressive observations to record. Continuing to the south and west, he approached the south coast of Smith Island (called by the Americans Mount Pisgah) and at noonday on February 1, 1821, put a boat crew ashore there to hunt for seals.<sup>64</sup> But they found that an English brig from Botany Bay (Australia) had established camps here, having seventeen men ashore and two whaleboats.

Leaving Smith Island, Captain Davis steered southeast for a "low Island" which he had recorded as sighting the preceding morning as "a new discovered Island." This was Jameson or, as the sealers called it, Low Island which he reached at 3 o'clock that afternoon, February 2. The wind being fair, and other weather conditions ideal, both boats were landed on the north side and 200 seals were killed. The next day, 422 skins were added, with Messrs. Goddard, Philips and Smith handling the crews. On February 4 and 5 the boats took 150 more. Captain Davis took a noon sight and figured his latitude as  $63^{\circ}25'$  south, about  $5'$  out of the present recording.

The sealers spent February 6 examining further the beaches of Low Island, during which time they took 109 more sealskins. But they did not linger further. At 7:00 o'clock that evening the *Cecilia* was headed for an island bearing southeast per compass. This was Hoseason Island, some twenty miles away, the gateway to de Gerlache Strait and Hughes Bay. In the light of documentary history, this was the first vessel known to have pursued a course into this unknown corner of the Antarctic world.<sup>65</sup>



## *First Landing on the Antarctic Continent*

From approximately 7:45 P.M. on the evening of February 6, 1821, until 10 o'clock the following morning, Captain Davis sailed the *Cecilia* on a course which took him to the shores of the Antarctic Continent. His report of this historic cruise is contained in the log of the *Huron* and is quoted in full:

"Wednesday 7th February 1821

"Commences with open Cloudy Weather and Light winds a standing for a Large Body of Land in that direction SE at 10 A.M. close in with it, out Boat and Sent her on Shore to look for Seal at 11 A.M. the Boat returned but found no signs of Seal at noon our Latitude was 64° 01' South. Stood up a Large Bay, the Land high and covered intirely with Snow the wind comming Round to the north'd & Eastward with Thick weather. Tacked Ship and headed off Shore. at 4 P.M. fresh Gale and Thick weather with Snow. Reefed the main Sail and took the Bonnet off the fore Sail. Ends with Strong Gales at ENE with Cloudy unpleasant weather attended with Snow and a heavy Sea. Concluded to make the Best of our way for the Ship. I think this Southern Land to be a Continent."

So far as firsthand, documentary accounts are concerned this is the first recorded landing on shores in this region of the Antarctic Peninsula. From the evidence the shores were those of the Continent itself. Captain Davis, therefore, becomes an important explorer. It is to this unknown American sealer that our country owes a long-delayed debt of honor. His logbook, so miraculously saved, presents stirring evidence of a superior shipmaster worthy of this deed.

Like his contemporaries, he is an unheralded mariner. These American sealers provided claims of explorations and discovery in the South Shetland and Antarctic Peninsula area of which we, as fellow Americans, may well be proud. Captain Robert Johnson's cruise to 66° south was probably down this coast, and Captain Sheffield's mate, Daniel Clark, of the *Hersilia*, also wrote of American sealers cruising to the shores of the Antarctic Peninsula, as will be noted later in the Appendix.

Where did Captain Davis land his men on that memorable Wednesday morning, February 7, 1821? A retracing of the *Cecilia's* course from Low Island reveals a number of interesting possibilities.

After leaving Low Island at about 7:45 on the evening of February 6, the *Cecilia* stood southeast by compass for another island in that direction. This course, if followed, would have taken her to Hoseason Island.

## ARCHIPEL DE PALMER (VUE PRISE DE L'ÎLE LOW)



Tower Hill

Baie de Hughes  
Terre de Banco

I. Hoseason

Cap Possession  
Déroit de Gerlache

I. Liège

(From: "Deuxieme Expedition Antartique Francais"—Charcot, 1908-1910)

*Captain John Davis, sailing southeast from Low Island, sailed towards Hughes Bay between Hoseason and Liege Islands, approaching the "Large Body of Land" which lay ahead—the Antarctic Continent Peninsula*

But Captain Davis did not record that next landfall as an island. As he approached the coast, he saw before him, rising from the sea a "Large Body of Land in that direction SE." The obvious fact that, on a southeasterly course, this had kept the *Cecilia* going off to leeward, makes it quite certain that the little schooner went directly past Hoseason Island toward the recorded: "Large body of Land in that direction SE. . . ." After passing to the east of Hoseason Captain Davis sailed between Liege and Intercurrence islands. Although Hoseason is 1,900 feet high, it was not Davis' "Large Body of Land," as no mariner would so record such a landfall later as a continent—it was the Antarctic Peninsula which he saw. At 10:00 o'clock he noted that he was "close in with it." Now he was under the rising heights of the Continent itself, most probably in the vicinity of Cape Charles (Cape Sterneck).

The historic moment of the landing was between 10:00 and 10:30 o'clock that morning: "Out Boat and sent her on shore to look for Seal."<sup>66</sup> This was his main purpose, not recording the lay of the land, taking soundings or noting shore characteristics. The whaleboat returned at 11:00 o'clock and no seals were found. Who were the men taking part in this historic landing? This will probably never be known. Mate Samuel Goddard of the *Huron* was on board the shallop. As he and his second mate, Charles Philips, with second mate Smith of the *Huntress* had gone ashore exploring Low Island, it is very probable that those same officers and a boat's crew took part in this landing. Thus, they presumably were the first human beings to step on the Antarctic Continent.

## “I Think This Southern Land to Be a Continent”

This section of the coast line has been the subject for numerous controversies. Some cartographers name it the Palmer Coast, others Graham Land.<sup>67</sup> The British sealer *Sprightly* was here in 1824 under Captain Hughes, whose name was given to the bay.<sup>68</sup> Hughes apparently charted the bay which appeared on Laurie's 1828 maps, and the island of Hoseason was named for the *Sprightly's* mate, James Hoseason. It is thought Hoseason sailed first with Smith in the *Williams*. On January 5, 1829, H.M.S. *Chanticleer* under Captain Henry Foster, a distinguished British scientist, made a landfall here and Foster went ashore at a place called Cape Possession.<sup>69</sup> An American sealer named Captain William H. Smiley claimed to have been in this Hughes Bay area in 1842 in the *Ohio* of Newport, R.I.<sup>70</sup>

The French explorer, Admiral Dumont D'Urville, in the *Astrolabe*, is credited with establishing the northeastern end of Orleans Channel,<sup>71</sup> and some thirty years later (1873) Captain Dallman, the German, in the *Gronland* is said to have located the southwestern part of Orleans Channel as it passed between Trinity Land and the Antarctic Continent, thus establishing Trinity Island as an island which he called “Palmer Land.”<sup>72</sup> But it was the *Belgica*, during the Antarctic Expedition of 1897–99, which established the existence of the strait named for its leader, de Gerlache, and explained so much of what American (and afterwards) British sealers had seen. This expedition conclusively showed the “Hughes Bay” region was in reality a large bay where the waters of the southern end of the Orleans Channel met those of the northern extremity of the de Gerlache Strait.<sup>73</sup>

Captain Davis' laconic statement which completed his February 7 entry—“I think this Southern Land to be a Continent,” definitely indicates his awareness of what he saw. His position has been proven by every Antarctic explorer who has since observed the coast in this area. The words of a member of the *Belgica* Expedition serve as a supplement to this entry from the logbook of the *Huron*.

So descriptive are the words of a member of the *Belgica's* officers, that they might have been written by Captain Davis years before. Cook, of the *Belgica*, wrote:

“At 3 o'clock in the afternoon of the 23rd, (Jan. 1898) a curious white haze appeared upon the swollen sky. A little later an imperfect outline of

land rose into this haze. It extended as far as we could see to the east and the west. The top was everywhere veiled by a high mist, and this mist had within it a mysterious light, which is one of the most startling of all with polar effects. As we drew nearer, we noticed that the land was not as it at first appeared, an endless wall of ice, but rough, irregular and disconnected, though it was buried under a mantle of glacial ice, extending to the water's edge. Here and there were large bays, and one directly over our bowsprit, was so wide that it offered us a temporary path southward. Now the maps were carefully studied that we might fix our position on paper, but in this effort we failed.

"Over the starboard bow rose two beautiful headlands, mountains of moderate height. . . . In front of these remarkable headlands there was a bay, and beyond a long series of mountains, clothed in the same sheet of perennial ice. Eastward there were a number of small islands, mostly free of ice, and beyond, low under the southeastern sky, was the dim outline of an extensive white country. We set our course somewhat east of south to examine the interruptions between the high mountainous land before us and the more even country eastward. . . .

"During the few hours of the night we rested . . . and in the morning we found ourselves well into the bight (Hughes Inlet) which we entered. . . . At 5 o'clock the sun had already arisen over the snowy heights of the east and . . . our positions at the time was in the center of a wide waste of water almost twelve miles away from the nearest land . . . every projection seemed a continuous mass of impenetrable crystal solitude. . . ."74

There can be no question as to Captain Davis' recognition of this great shore line, stretching in all its icy magnificence far into the snowy distances, with black, precipitous peaks showing above the frozen snow which held it captive. Having preceded in this place those other explorers, who so clearly described it three-quarters of a century later, the master of the *Huron* is the earliest mariner who we know to have recorded the exact location of this portion of the Antarctic Continent, and who was, in addition, responsible for the first recorded landing on these continental shores.<sup>75</sup>

## *Further Observations And the Return of the Ship*

At 12 meridian (noon) on February 7, 1821, Captain Davis took a sight and figured his latitude as  $64^{\circ} 01'$  south. He had made an error of several minutes on his observation on January 31, and a similar error here would have placed him more to the north; on the other hand, he may have been further south. He now headed the *Cecilia* "up a Large Bay, the Land high and covered intirely with snow. . ."; the weather now became foggy and the wind came around to the north and east. Davis tacked the schooner, standing offshore as the wind increased to a gale.

The little exploring schooner *Cecilia* was in an uncomfortable position late in the afternoon on February 7. Captain Davis reefed the mainsail and noted "strong gales at ENE . . . attended with Snow and a heavy Sea." He "Concluded to make the Best of our way for the Ship." The fact that the *Cecilia* was in Hughes Bay all during this time definitely places her on the southwestern side of Cape Charles (Cape Sterneck), on the coast of the Antarctic Peninsula, and east by north of Two Hummocks Island. The east-northeast gale gave him a chance to work to the west, and out of danger.

This becomes clearer by following the course which Captain Davis set during the next twenty-four hours. His entry for February 8 (civil time) began at 12 midnight and tells of the schooner being under double-reefed sails, with a strong northeast gale and snow and a heavy sea. At 3 o'clock in the morning the gale moderated and the reefs were shaken out. At 8 o'clock (A.M.) it cleared away and Captain Davis got his first bearings. He reported them, thus:

" . . . we saw Castle Rock bearing NNW and the Middle of President [Snow] Island North . . ."

In order for the *Cecilia* to have been in this position she must have been to the southeast of Low Island and northwest of Hoseason Island. As Captain Davis did not then record sighting it, the hazy weather must have shut in from the west. He does mention Low Island some time later the same day. "At 9 A.M. the wind backned to the ENE" (the log records) and increased to a strong gale: "At Meridian Strong gales heavy Sea and Thick Snow."

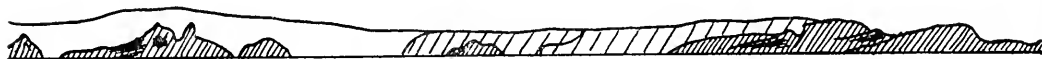
The course of the *Cecilia* could not have been much to the east and north due to the wind direction. At 8 P.M. (February 8), the weather clearing, and

the wind becoming westerly, Captain Davis got some more observations which help establish his exact position. He noted:

“ . . . Deception Island bore north, Land bearing from SSW to E by N, Low Island W by S, President Island NW [by] N and Bluff Point SE by E, off of which lays a number of Single rocks at the distance of 8 to 10 miles. Ends with light winds from the north and westward. On Bonnets and out reefs, making the best of our way for the Ship.”

At this time he was approximately in latitude  $63^{\circ}18'$  south and longitude  $61^{\circ}03'$  west. Trinity Island was the nearest island geographically. Austin Rocks (the single rocks) were off his weather beam, and Bluff Point on Trinity Island bore SE by E. Deception Island was due north, allowing for compass variation of  $25'$  easterly.

BAIE DE HUGHES (VUE PRISE DES ROCHERS AUSTIN)



I. des Deux Hummocks      D<sup>e</sup> de Gerlache      I. Brabant      I. Liège      I. Hoseason

(From: "Deuxieme Expedition Antartique Francais"—Charcot, 1908-1910)

*In returning from the cruise to the Antarctic Peninsula, Captain Davis recorded sighting the Continent again from the same vantage point of Austin Rocks from which Charcot observed it some ninety years afterward*

These bearings help to establish not only the *Cecilia's* position but the further sighting of the Antarctic Peninsula as well, this latter from south-southwest to east by north. As this fact also supports a similar observation made by Captain Burdick of the *Huntress* a few days later, it is of considerable importance to note it here.

When conditions were right for such observations, the clarity of the atmosphere in these latitudes has been amply affirmed by several Antarctic explorers. Such long-range sightings, however, tend to shorten distances. Thus, the "Land" which Captain Davis reported bearing from "S.S.W. to E. by N.," was the high mountains of the Antarctic Peninsula now called Palmer Land, some thirty miles away at this point.

During the next twelve hours the *Cecilia* clawed her way to the north, battling a northeast breeze which alternated between moderate and fresh. It was not until 2 o'clock in the afternoon on February 9 that she got into the lee of Deception Island which at 8 o'clock the previous evening (some 18 hours before) had been due north of her. The weather became foggy and unpleasant and it was rainy when Captain Davis closed his log on that day. The

skipper and his crew continued trying to get the schooner to the eastward. The next morning the wind came out from the "South and westward" enabling them to get all sail on and take advantage of the fair breeze, and at 6:30 that morning they got in past Frezeland Point on Livingston Island and entered Yankee Sound. At 9 Captain Davis sailed the *Cecilia* safely into Yankee Harbor, where they "got along side the Ship, found all well." On board the *Cecilia* were 1,670 skins, 440 of which were "for schooner *Huntress*." Captain Davis also reported that, during the shallop's absence, the brig *Aurora*, Captain Macy, had arrived at Yankee Harbor, joining the other members of Captain Johnson's New York fleet, already anchored here with the Stonington and Nantucket vessels.

## *Captain Burdick Attends an Auction and Meets a Discoverer*

During the ten days' absence of *Cecilia* on her exploratory cruise, Captain Burdick of the *Huntress* had experienced a number of more than usual incidents. He duly recorded them all. On January 28, he wrote:

“. . . the Stonington shallop [*Hero*, Capt. Palmer] came in from a Cruce to the northward and Eastward of 14 days and Reported they had found no seal. . . .”

This, then, disposed of one direction where seals had formerly been found. As there were vessels based at Harmony Cove and Potters Cove, on King George Island, northeast of Yankee Harbor, the seals in this part of the South Shetland chain had been hunted to almost complete extermination.

Two days later Captain Burdick went up Yankee Sound with Captain Barnard, of the *Charity*, in his shallop to Clothier Harbor, on the north shore of Greenwich Island, where he attended an auction of goods from the wrecked *Clothier*. His report of this event is both interesting and important. Leaving Yankee Harbor at 10:00 A.M., they arrived at Clothier Harbor at 4 that afternoon.

Captain Burdick wrote on the first day of February 1821:

“. . . This was the Vendue and things sold very high . . . bought nothing but the ship's Bell and armorer's Bellows.”

One can visualize the scene. The several sealing masters gathered at the scene of the wreck, examining the salvaged stuff on the beach, calmly bidding on something from the wrecked vessel which they wanted, against the wild backdrop of the desolate shore of Greenwich Island, with its rocky heights showing black above the white covering of the perpetual snow and ice, bleak and cold.

There was no mention of the gloomy prospect of the wreck itself or of the sealers' sympathy for Captain Clark, master of the wrecked *Clothier*. Life was rough and hard, and such misfortunes were taken with the same philosophic acceptance as was success or a broken voyage.

But, while in attendance at the “vendue,” Captain Burdick met some famous sealers. First, was Captain Jonathan Winship, of Boston, in the ship *O'Cain*.<sup>76</sup> Winship was one of the most successful American sealers, a “Nor'westman” of note, and he had arrived at the South Shetlands about the same time as the



*Huntress*, reporting a total of 7,000 skins. There were 40 men on the *O'Cain* with Captain Winship. The name of his shallop is not yet known. Another sealing master mentioned was "Captain Low in a large ship from Salem, with a small Hemordite Brig as tender, and 60 men, arrived about the same time had about 10,000 skins." Another vessel mentioned was the brig *Julian*, Captain Holmes.

But the most important portion of Captain Burdick's entry of February 1, 1821, was contained in his last sentence:

" . . . Likewise saw Captain Smith, the man that Discovered this Land first. He had two vessels and 60 men, had got 45,000 skins. Latter part strong gales. So ends."

It was two years before to the month that Captain William Smith had first "discovered this Land" in the brig *Williams*, and it was just a year before that he had sailed his brig, on a return voyage, under the commission of Captain Shirreff of the Royal Navy, with Lieutenant Edward Bransfield aboard. Now, he was back on a straight sealing voyage.

Here was an opportunity for a "gam" of which Captain Burdick must have taken full advantage. The extent of the "Land," the existence of possible new rookeries, and, of course, the exchange of opinion on the prospect of the complete extermination of the seal were the natural topics. The sealing masters all knew the imminent danger of this latter development in their slaughter of the seals. The ships in Clothier Harbor alone had accounted for nearly 100,000 skins.<sup>77</sup>

Captain Burdick returned to Yankee Harbor on board the Stonington shallop—the *Hero*, Captain Palmer—and they arrived back at 10:00 P.M. on February 3. The next day, he reported the schooner *Freegift*, Captain Dunbar, of Stonington, had left Yankee Harbor for North America, the first of the Fanning-Stonington fleet to sail.<sup>78</sup>

On February 5 and 6, 1821, the log of the *Huntress* recorded "moderate breezes south-southeast and pleasant wether." At this time the *Cecilia* was busily engaged in sealing at Low Island; the Stonington sloop *Hero* had resumed her cruising alongshore to the camp sites on the south beaches of Livingston Island; Captain Barnard in the *Charity* of New York and Captain Upton in the *Nancy* of Salem, were getting skins at Greenwich and Roberts islands, and Captain Winship in the *O'Cain* of Boston and Captain Ray of the *Harmony* of Nantucket were getting skins at Nelson's and King George islands, completing their cargoes preparatory to sailing for home.

## *The Russian Admiral Meets the Yankee Captain*

While the American and British sealers were busily working out of their respective camps on Livingston Island, preparatory to the arrival of their respective tenders, two strange craft were coming up to the parallel of the South Shetlands. These vessels were the frigate *Vostok*, commanded by Admiral Fabian von Bellingshausen, and her consort, the ship *Mirni*, under Lieutenant Lazareff, which comprised a Russian Polar Exploring Expedition dispatched in July, 1819, by Emperor Alexander I.<sup>79</sup>

Bellingshausen had made a notable voyage. He had crossed the Antarctic circle several times, cruised leisurely through tropical archipelagoes during the southern winter, and then reached Sydney, Australia, in September, 1819. Here, the Russians learned of the discovery of the South Shetlands by Smith.<sup>80</sup> Sailing from Sydney on November 11, 1820, the two exploring vessels crossed the Antarctic circle south of New Zealand, in lat. 60°, on December 7 at 163° east longitude. They then cruised south of 60° for the unprecedented distance of 145 degrees of longitude during a two months' period.<sup>81</sup>

Meeting the Antarctic ice pack they sailed along it to the east. Had they turned southwest they might have anticipated the discoveries of Wilkes and Ross by 20 years. Sighting the magnificent bergs, they detoured to the north and reached the open sea. On Christmas Day, 1820, they recorded 244 icebergs in sight.

On January 11, 1821, Bellingshausen crossed the Antarctic circle for the fifth time at 120° west longitude, reaching 67°50' south latitude. Here the pack again presented too formidable a front to face and the two warships had to turn north again for a time, then once again penetrated the Antarctic to 69° south.<sup>82</sup>

On January 27, 1821, Captain Robert Johnson, the American sealer, returned to Yankee Harbor, after a cruise to the south of 22 days, and reported having sailed as far as 66° south, on the parallel 70° of longitude, sighting land but, upon approaching it, had found no seals.<sup>83</sup>

Five days after Johnson's return to Yankee Harbor, February 3 (January 22 on the Russian calendar), in latitude 69° south, Bellingshausen sighted the black mountain tops of an island, rising abruptly from the sea at a distance of some twenty miles. This land was the inaccessible outpost of Antarctica, and was named Peter I Island. It was the southernmost land ever discovered

at this time. Evidence of other land was seen by the seabirds and the discoloration of the water and the Admiral wrote ". . . the land must come."<sup>84</sup>

Two days later, another island was discovered to the north, which was called Alexander I Island. This is in latitude 68° 43' south, longitude 73° 10' west, and although they were not able to approach nearer than forty miles away, the weather was so clear that the mountain tops were distinctly observed.<sup>85</sup> It was recorded as the finest day they had experienced in the Antarctic. But the pressure of the ice pack forced them away and they never approached nearer than forty miles to land sighted, and they headed for the northeast.

It was on February 5, 1821, at 7:00 in the morning that Bellingshausen caught his first glimpse of the South Shetlands, sighting Smith Island (Mt. Pisgah) from the west. At 12 noon, the *Vostok* and the *Mirni* rounded the southwestern shores of Smith Island, coasted it to the northeast, observed Boyd Strait, which they estimated at twenty miles wide. Snow (President) Island was sighted at 10:00 P.M., which they described as rising in the center ". . . and is surrounded on almost every side by rocks showing above the water."<sup>86</sup> Darkness then came on and the vessels were headed southeast until 2:00 A.M. on February 6, when they turned northwest and again approached Snow Island.

Bellingshausen's "Voyages" takes up the account:

" . . . At this time [3:00 A.M.] we were at the entrance of a strait, 3½ miles wide, running in the direction WNW [Morton Strait]. It was doubtful whether a ship could pass through this strait [Hell's Gate] because of the quantity of submerged rocks and the breakers. In front of this low-lying shore [southwest coast of Livingston Island] we saw 8 British and American sealing vessels at anchor near the northeast shore of the strait. Proceeding farther along the southern shore to the east-southeast, I soon saw to starboard of our course a high island, with steep cliffs and covered with clouds. [Deception Island] 62° 58' south latitude and 60° 55' west longitude . . . circumference of 20 miles, separated from the high rocky headlands opposite by a strait, 11 miles wide.

"At 10 o'clock, we entered the strait and encountered a small American sealing boat. . . . Soon after Mr. Palmer arrived in our boat and informed us that he had been here for four months, sealing in partnership with three American ships. They were engaged in killing and skinning seals, whose numbers were perceptibly diminishing. There were as many as eighteen vessels about at various points, and not infrequently differences arose amongst the sealers, but so far it had not yet come to a fight. Mr. Palmer told me . . . Capt. Smith, the discoverer of the South Shetlands was on the brig *William*, that he had succeeded in killing as many as 60,000 seals. . . ."<sup>87</sup>

The several attempts by American historians to elaborate this meeting between the Russian Admiral and the Yankee Captain have unfortunately destroyed the perspective of the true picture. Had Captain Palmer told Admiral

Bellingshausen that he had discovered land to the south, as has been claimed, it is fair to expect Bellingshausen to not only record such an important fact but to have turned south himself to seek it. The Russian had already penetrated the Antarctic circle several times searching for land and had purposely come to the South Shetlands to ascertain whether or not these islands had any connection with a southern continent. He would never have departed without investigating any information such as historians claim Captain Palmer gave him.

Bellingshausen's account of his voyage to the South Shetlands is far more complete in detail and date and position than most contemporary accounts. His chart of the islands, with other Russian names, is not "rather crudely mapped from a distance," as the late Professor William H. Hobbs claimed, but an excellent piece of work.<sup>88</sup>

Captain Palmer spent no longer than three quarters of an hour aboard the *Vostok*, then returned to the *Hero*.<sup>89</sup> By noon, Bellingshausen's two vessels were twelve miles further east, proceeding alongshore, and at 1:30 o'clock his journal records him off the mouth of Yankee Sound. He states: "The shore we had held from 4 o'clock in the morning up to this time proved to be an island, 41 miles long, lying E by N  $\frac{1}{2}$  E. . . ."<sup>90</sup> This, of course, was Livingston Island.

From all the evidence, it would appear that Palmer's log of the *Hero*, now in the Library of Congress, is in some respects strangely incomplete. This is further shown by the fact that there is no mention of his meeting with Bellingshausen and for several days in mid-February, 1821, only one line is entered each day, and no entries at all from February 19 to February 22.<sup>91</sup>

It is a great pity that only this incomplete record of the Fanning fleet's activities of the 1820-21 season can be found. It was Captain Benjamin Pendleton, the commander of the fleet, to whom Edmund Fanning attributes the first sighting of the Antarctic Continent from the mountains of Deception Island.<sup>92</sup> But Fanning, writing in his later years, obviously confused his recollections of the fleet's 1820-21 and 1821-22 voyages to the South Shetlands. It was during the 1821-22 season that the Fanning fleet was at Deception Island, using it as a base.

## *Captain Burdick Recognizes Land Which He Also "Supposes to Be a Continent"*

When the shallop *Cecilia* returned to Yankee Harbor early Saturday morning, February 10, 1821, Captain Davis had 1,720 skins on board to show for his cruise of January 30 through February 9, and 454 of this total was transferred to Captain Burdick and the *Huntress*.<sup>93</sup> That the two shipmasters discussed in detail the possibility of getting more seals on Low Island is obvious, because, two days later, on February 12, the *Cecilia* again left the anchorage and, under Captain Burdick, sailed for the newly-found rookeries.<sup>94</sup>

The Nantucket man recorded, ". . . started in the Shallop on a cruce to the southward and westward. Commences Shallop account . . . trying to get to Southard." The light airs from the west held him up and it was not until 7 A.M. on February 13 that he reached first mate Coleman's stand. Then it came on to blow heavily from the northeast, attended with snow, and he was forced to anchor as no boat could reach the shore due to the "rufness of the whether." At 2:00 in the afternoon first mate Coleman and second mate Burdick of the *Huntress* came aboard with 471 skins. The little shallop then got under way and stood to the southward.

On board the *Cecilia* at this time were Captain Burdick and his two mates from the *Huntress*, with mate Goddard, second mate Philips, Dr. Russell of the *Huron* and at least seventeen men from the *Huron* and the *Huntress*.<sup>95</sup> The shallop left the south shores of Livingston Island on Wednesday, February 14, at 8 P.M. On the following day, Captain Burdick made this entry in his log:

"Begins with Light airs and variable with calm pleasant wether. At Meridian Lat. by obs. 63° 17' S. President [Snow] Island Bearing North 3 Leagues, Mount Pisco [Smith Island] S W by W dist. 7 leagues, the Peak of Frezeland [Livingston] NE ½ E 11 Leagues, Deception Island N E by N 8 Leagues and a small Low Island, SSW 6 Leagues to which I am bound and Land from South to E S E which I suppose to be a Continent Later part fresh breze at North at 6 P.M. came to anchor under Low Island among a parcel of rocks. Sent the Boat on Shore. She returned with 22 Seal. So Ends these 24 hours."

From the time she left Livingston Island's south beach at 8 o'clock the previous night, until Captain Burdick made his position to be 63°17' south latitude at 12 meridian on February 15, the *Cecilia* had sailed a course almost due south. The cross bearings at this time of day place the little shallop equidistant

between Smith (Mt. Pisgah) and Deception Island and on a true north and south line between Snow (President) Island and Low Island.

That his compass bearings and observed latitude of  $63^{\circ}17'$  south cannot be reconciled does not constitute an unusual situation. Compass variation being  $25^{\circ}$  east of north helps to justify some of the positions, but not all of them. But this is not strange, considering the type of compass, the pitching deck of the little shallop, and the difficulty in getting an observation.

It must also be remembered that in these high latitudes distances are often underestimated when atmospheric conditions are right. This explains why Mt. Barnard (the peak of Frezeland on Livingston Island) was much farther off than Captain Burdick recorded, and that his compass bearings were awry in sighting Deception Island.

A scientifically trained man who sailed in this area a few years later (1838) wrote:

"When the winds have ceased to blow, and the ocean is at rest, nothing can exceed the beautiful clearness of the atmosphere in these elevated regions. The . . . snowy acclivity of the hills are distinctly visible for fifty or sixty miles."<sup>96</sup>

A twentieth century geographer also notes that the mainland of Antarctica is plainly visible from this region at a distance of forty miles.

In this case the *Cecilia* was less than about thirty miles from the Antarctic Peninsula, and the mountains rising beyond Trinity Land, running far to the south to east-southeast, were plainly visible.

Three-quarters of a century later, as Frederick Cook's description has already proven, the *Belgica* under de Gerlache followed the course of the *Cecilia* into the strait between Trinity Land and the island archipelago.<sup>97</sup> Of this voyage it is recorded, regarding the coast line of the Peninsula:

". . . the east coast of the strait traversed by us is perfectly continuous, and that its contours display the characteristic features of a region of fiords. Toward the south this land . . . (Danco Coast) is connected with Graham Land, the northern extremity of which is likewise explored by us. Toward the north, on the contrary, the continental coast line was not traced by the expedition . . . But as the inland ice rises to a very considerable height east of Hughes Inlet, I have been led to believe that land must reach in that direction as far as Louis Philippe Land. It therefore seems likely that the coastline is continuous to that point . . . and that the 'New Greenland' of the first explorers of that region is not a phantasm . . . the mountains reach to the shore everywhere. . . ."

This statement helps to verify the possible discoveries of Captain Robert Johnson (in January, 1821); the recorded discovery of the Continent by Captain John Davis (February 7-8, 1821), and the sighting of it by Captain Christopher Burdick (February 14, 1821). It also substantiates the cruises of the British sealer *Sprightly* during which Captain Edward Hughes in 1824 visited this area and called it Hughes Inlet, and his mate, James Hoseason, gave his

name to the island which Captain Davis had sailed past three years before.<sup>98</sup>

Oddly enough, the voyage of Captain John Biscoe, in the *Tula*, in 1832, reveals that he also approached closest to the mainland in the Hughes Bay area, which he describes as a deep bay, ". . . in which the water was so still that, could any seals have been found, the vessels could have easily loaded. . . ."<sup>99</sup>

This evidence supports Davis' log and refutes the claims that Hughes Bay never existed, that it was a myth invented by British cartographers.<sup>100</sup> Most important of all, of course, is the statement of Captain Davis in the log of the *Huron*: "I think this Southern Land to be a Continent," as he recognized the land mass of Antarctica.

As another strong bit of evidence, there is a letter written by Captain Donald McKay, who was with Captain Johnson on his historic cruise of January 5 through 27, 1821. This letter appears in *Niles Register* of five months later (June, 1821), dated among the Antarctic Islands "or thereabouts," latitude 63° south, longitude 61° west, which states, in part:

". . . Southward of this range of islands [the South Shetlands] at a distance of from fifty to eighty miles, lies a large body of land, yet but little known, and will probably so remain by reason of the danger and difficulty in approaching the shore, from the great quantity of floating ice with which it is surrounded. This is of the same description as that of the islands. . . ."<sup>101</sup>

Captain Benjamin Morrell's description of this coast line of the Antarctic Peninsula also came from Captain McKay's account of the Johnson voyage, and Edmund Fanning's attempt to refute it is not in keeping with the latter's character.<sup>102</sup>

The *Belgica* expedition of 1897-99, already referred to, has a telling line in describing this coast around Hughes Bay: ". . . The Antarctic lands which we visited are very mountainous and the mountains reach to the shores everywhere. . . ."<sup>103</sup>

Daniel W. Clark, who was the first mate of the *Hersilia*, wrote from the South Shetlands under date of February 18, 1821 (the letter directed to the *New Haven Journal's* editor) as follows:

". . . We have been as far south as 66 deg. and found land. How much farther the land extends I know not—it is entirely covered (except the low land and beaches where the seals come up) with snow and ice, at this season of the year which is the middle of the summer. . . ."

This letter was re-printed in English and French papers and journals. The big question concerns the word "we." Did Clark mean the American sealers or all the sealers in the South Shetland Islands at that time? It would appear to refer to the American sealers in Yankee Harbor, and with the cruises of Captain Johnson, Davis, Burdick and McKay offered in evidence there can be little doubt of the identity of the "we" in Mate Clark's important letter. Possibly the officers of all the sealing craft in Yankee Harbor knew the facts.

## *Sealing at Low Island, Then Return to Yankee Harbor*

Soon after Burdick recorded his sighting of the Continent, he approached the west coast of Low Island where he put ashore his boat crews. The logbook of the *Huntress* contains the story. He anchored the *Cecilia* "under Low Island among a parcel of rocks" and remained there until the following day when a westerly gale kicked up the anchorage and he shifted the shallop "round on the N E side and anchored at 8 P.M." By this time he had obtained 822 skins.

On February 17, after two days at Low Island, the wind came around with the northeast "blowing a hard gale right into the harbor we lay in." Hoisting in the boat Burdick got under way and beat out of the harbor. "After clearing the Land double reefed the sail and stood to Northward. So Ends with hard gale and thick Snow."

Several hours later, the *Cecilia* "made President (Snow) Island bearing N E, and stood close in with it and tacked off to Southward." The wind moderated and Captain Burdick recorded it "canting" to the south. At 4:00 that afternoon (February 18) he tacked and steered east-northeast, making Deception Island at 8 o'clock that evening. His entry closes with "making the Best of our way for Yanky harbor." It was not until 1 o'clock the next afternoon that he reached the harbor, having been forced to tow the shallop in when the wind dropped off to nothing. Such were the vagaries of Antarctic weather!

At Yankee Harbor, Captain Burdick found that the brig *Aurora*, Captain Macy of New York, and the brig *Nancy*, Captain Upham of Salem, had joined the American fleet.<sup>104</sup>

Both the *Huron's* and *Huntress's* logs record an interesting cruise for the busy *Cecilia* which began on February 22, 1821. The *Huntress* log noted:

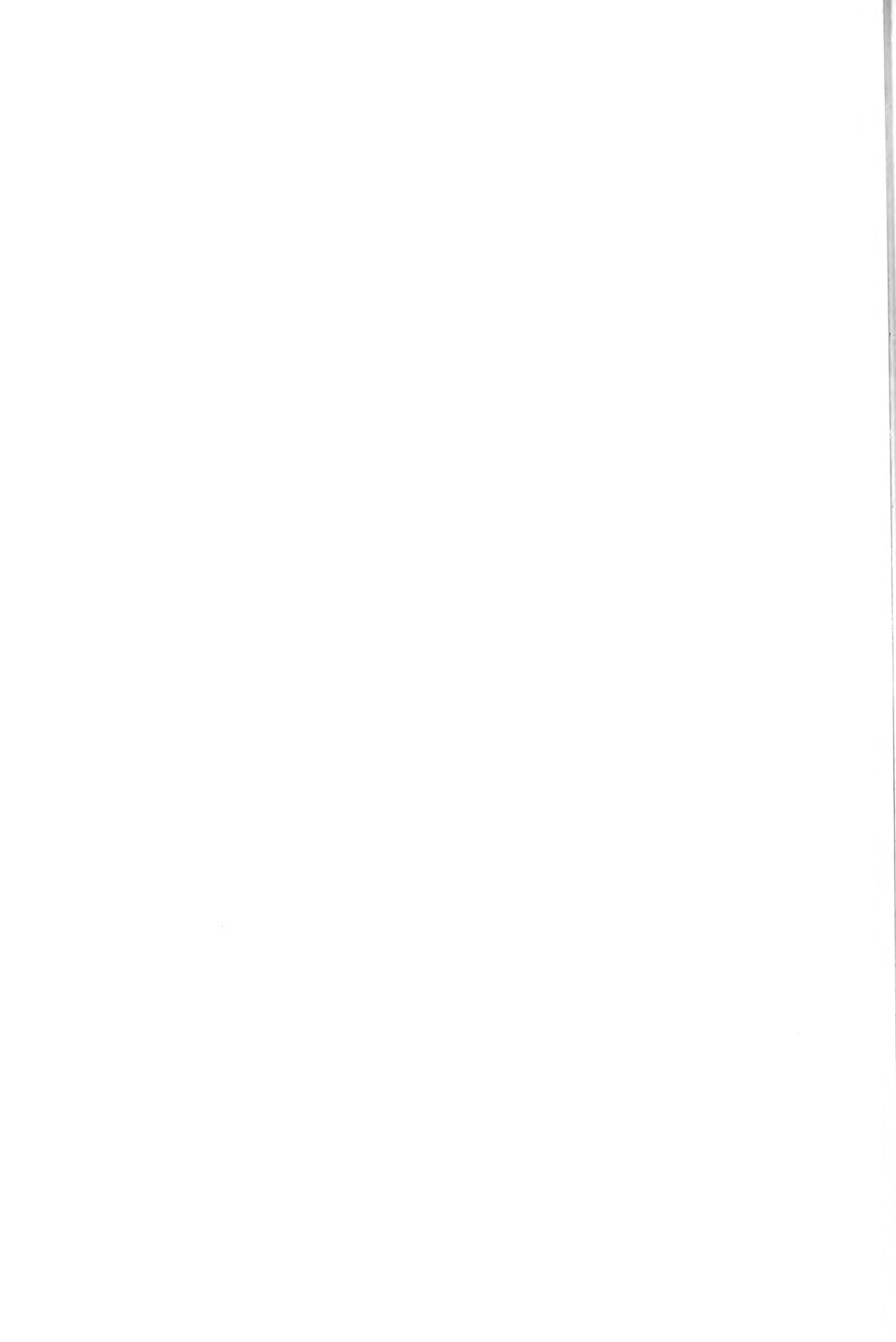
"... At 10 A.M. the shallop started on a cruce to the Northward and Eastward with a boat's crew from the Brig *Aurora* and Capt. McCay for a Pilot to some Islands to the Northward and Eastward on which he had seen some Seal. . . ."

This is supplemented by the *Huron's* log which states that twelve men from the *Huron*, six men from the *Aurora* and two men from the *Huntress* comprised the crew under Captain McKay.<sup>105</sup> This cruise lasted two days, and Captain Burdick reports:





(From "The Voyage of the U.S. Frigate *Potomac* Around the World," by J. N. Reynolds, New York, 1835)



“ . . . Shallop . . . worked in, Reported that off the N E part of this Land fell in with Capt Johnson's shallop from those Islands and he informed them that he had got all the Seal their was there. . . .”

Again, the inimitable Captain Robert Johnson appears on the scene. His ability as a navigator and explorer would be clearly shown if his logbooks could ever be found. As it is, we must rely on the scattered statements made by his contemporaries, which give us an idea of the extent of his cruising.

## *Stonington's Sealers Leave for Home and Others Prepare to Leave*

On February 22, all three surviving logs report the sailing of the Fanning-Stonington fleet from Yankee Harbor. Captain Burdick wrote: ". . . At 12 meridian the four Stonington Vessels got under way and went out, three of them for the United States and the other round the Horn." Captain Davis recorded the "brigs *Hersilia* and *Frederick*, schooner *Express* and sloop *Hero* left this harbor, (at 10 A.M.), the first [*Hersilia*] bound round Cape Horn, the three latter for the United States." Captain Palmer in the *Hero* wrote:

"at 2 A.M. entered Harmony Straits, [Nelson Strait] at 9 the S W point of O'Cain's Island [Nelson's] Bore E by S, 2 Leagues distant being 59° West Long. 62° S. Latd. from which I take a departure—the *Express*, *Hersilia* & *Frederick* in company. At 12 lost sight of Fleet."<sup>106</sup>

The remainder of the fleet still sent out boat parties searching for seals while preparing their vessels for the homeward voyage or leaving the South Shetlands. Captain Davis, on February 27, 1821, recorded "great quantity of Floating ice in the Harbour. . . . a material alteration in the weather. feel afraid that Winter is about setting in. . . ." Fierce gales swept into Yankee Sound and battered the remaining vessels. On March 3 an easterly, with sleet and snow, started them all dragging their anchors and the *Huron's* master was obliged to veer ". . . away on the sheet cable to the bitter end and got a slip Buoy on it to be ready in case they were like to come afoul of us to slip and let the Ship drop to her S W anchor." The brigs *Nancy* and *Jane Maria* did get afoul of one another, and "got clear . . . by cutting away their jib booms and spritsail yards."<sup>107</sup>

Of this same gale, Captain Burdick wrote in his log: ". . . It Blew so hard that a man could hardly stand on the Deck. Let go the small anchor under foot and clinched the End around the mast, being moored with the other two." The *Huntress* dragged and brought up about a cable's length from the shore.<sup>108</sup>

Four days later the fleet was not so fortunate. During a violent storm, the *Cecilia* and Captain Johnson's shallop were both driven ashore, and the others narrowly missed a similar disaster. Captain Davis wrote:

". . . observed the Shallop's colours hoisted in distress down yawl took lines and veered her away with two men to their assistance. The Boat was not able to get to them on account of Ice, but got near enough to

understand that they had parted one cable and had dragged the other and was then striking the bottom. Ordered them to slip other cable and Let her go on the Beach as I thought She would receive less injury on Shore than she would in her present situation. Latter part a violent gale at East with thick weather attended with snow and Sleet."<sup>109</sup>

The *Cecilia* sustained injury to her keel, aft, and rudder post and snapped off the rudder pintals "but her Bottom was not hurt." She was kedged and warped off the next day.

Now the fleet began getting under way for a more friendly part of the world. Captain Davis, on March 5, had recorded "We are now seperated from the schooner *Huntress* the time of our agreement being up that we were to join crews." The *Samuel* of Nantucket, under Captain Inott, was a late arrival at the islands (January 1821), and had delivered a packet of letters from home to Captain Burdick on February 28, the ship then being anchored in Byers' Bay, west of Yankee Harbor.<sup>110</sup>

On March 9, the *Jane Maria*, Captain Johnson, left for the home port of New York, and on March 10, the *Huntress* and the *Nancy* got under way, the latter to sail for the Falklands to winter, and Captain Burdick intended "for Staten Land and the Coast of Patagonia."<sup>111</sup>

Captain Burdick's final entry in the log of the *Huntress* at the South Shetlands was on March 11, 1821 when he wrote:

"First part light winds from the westward. At 7 P.M. Cape Huntress bore NE 2 Leagues from which I take my Departure, it being in Lat 62° 18' South, Long. 59° West or thereabouts. . . ."

This Cape is now called Harmony Point, being north and west of Harmony Cove, where Captain Burdick's fellow Nantucketer, Captain Ray, had made his headquarters during that sealing season.

The *Huron* continued sealing along the nearby shores until March 14, when Captain Davis observed: ". . . Wish very much to get our People in, so as to leave this Country before we get Frozen in. . . ." During the next few days he got the *Cecilia* down along the camp sites on the south shore of Livingston Island and "got his People" back to Yankee Harbor and the ship.

That the American sealing craft were remaining perilously late is shown by the account in the *Huron's* log. Gales became more frequent and on March 21, 1821, the brig *Aurora* of New York was driven ashore after dragging her three anchors. Captain Davis sent twenty men to the assistance of Captain Macy, as did the other sealing masters. Their combined efforts got the brig off on the 24th but she was in a "bad condition to go to sea," wrote Captain Davis.

On March 30, 1821, the fleet finally got under way from the South Shetlands. The log of the *Huron* records the departure, thus:

". . . the wind being Light from the westward weighed anchor and beat out of the Harbour in company with the brigs *Charity*, *Aurora*, and schooner *Henry*, Captains Barnard, Macy and Bruno at 10 A.M. got out

of the Harbour safe and stood down Sound. Sent a whaleboat and crew to assist in towing the Shallop [*Cecilia*] out at Half past 10 A.M. our Shallop got out in company with Captain Macy's shallop 11 A.M. being out of the Sound hove too to wait for our Schooner. Deception Rocks bearing NE by N 2 Leagues distance at Meridian [12 noon] she got down to us. Hoisted in the boat and made sail to the North and Eastward from 1 P.M., becalmed. then took the wind about W by S stood on till dark then wore Ship and stood to the South'd and Westward to dark to go through the straits tonight Thick weather."

The sealing fleet stood off and on until daylight. In the morning, the *Charity*, *Huron* and *Cecilia* were still together, but found they had drifted to leeward of the pass or strait (Harmony Strait) and so they stood along the shore to the north-northeast, as Captain Davis stated, "to go round the Northern and Eastern end of this group of Islands." At 4:00 P.M. the *Huron* reached the eastern end of King George's Island, largest of the Shetland chain, and Captain Davis wrote:

"off NE end of these islands extends a reef of Rocks and Brakers more than 10 miles dist at 5 P.M. the east point of Hannah Island bore West 10 miles dist., from which I take my dep. it being in Lat. 61° 52' and Long 58° West. Middle latter part cloudy weather with snow variation 28° Easterly. Lattitude pr. obs. D R 60°43' S."

And so, the *Huron* and her consort, the schooner *Cecilia* sailed away from the wintry coast of the South Shetlands after four months of hard work and adventure. They headed for the Falkland Islands, where they arrived on April 9, 1821, but not before they had encountered a hurricane which stove in the *Huron's* larboard bulwarks and "knocked down" the schooner and tore away her boat and ripped to ribbons her foresail and fore-topsail. The storm scattered the fleet and it was two days before they again spoke each other.

Arriving at New Island in the Falklands on April 10, 1821, the *Huron* and *Cecilia* went into winter quarters. Among the sealing craft which were to spend the April to October period in the Falklands were the *Charity*, *Henry* and *Aurora* of New York; the *Nancy*, of Salem, and several other British and American craft.<sup>112</sup>

The *Huron* and *Cecilia* were to spend succeeding months in the South Shetlands during the 1821-22 season from November through February, and again partake in adventurous cruising. But Captain Davis confined his efforts at this time as much to sea elephant blubber as he did to seal pelts. The slaughter of the seal during the previous season had, as prophesized, resulted in their almost total extinction. Never again would there be the rich harvest of pelts. And never again did the *Cecilia* turn her bluff bow southward into the uncharted stretches of the Antarctic seas below the Shetlands. The weather was even worse than the preceding year, and the ice conditions prevented such a dangerous journey. All of these factors led to interesting developments which have no part in this account.

America has much of which to be proud in the achievements of its mariners. The voyages of its sealing explorers offers as bright a page in this nation's maritime history as any other, for it was their almost obscure voyages which first pulled back the icy curtain of the south and revealed the unknown Continent of Antarctica.

APPENDIX A  
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## APPENDIX B

### 1. The Beginnings of American Sealing—Trade with China

Soon after Captain James Cook returned (1775) to Britain with news of the seals at South Georgia, a number of expeditions were planned by the British but were abandoned because of the war. In 1785, however, two vessels were fitted out at London “. . . under the liberty of the British East India Company, but by private adventure,” William Rotch wrote from England to Nantucket. They intended to sail “to that part of America where Captain Cook had obtained the skins, (I believe it was near California but cannot fully recollect) that they fetched so high a price in China; some of his officers are going in the ships . . . Skins are a very fine, delicate quality. . . . I intend to inform myself better in this respect & let you know.”

William Rotch had read Cook's journals and found the furs were sea otters, valued in China “at the enormous price of \$100 per skin,” and were obtained in “North Latitude 56° on the northwest coast of America.” Rotch's brother, Francis Rotch, had been to the Falkland Islands and seen the quantity of seals there. He proposed getting some of the skins and trading for them.

An authority on the sealing trade, A. Howard Clark, unwittingly was the originator of an error which several historians have since perpetuated. As part of his report, he included a portion of the journal of the ship *Neptune* of New Haven, which sailed on a sealing voyage in 1796. On board the ship was a young supercargo, Ebenezer Townsend, son of the owner, who wrote of his anchorage in the Falklands thus:

“States Harbor derives its name from a ship of that name which lay here two years to obtain sea-elephant oil and hair-seal skins. She was a very large ship, toward 1000 tons, from Boston, fitted from there soon after the Revolutionary War, and the first ship that we know of that took any fur-seal skins. She was owned by Lady Haley, living in Boston. They took about 13,000 fur-seal skins as an experiment, which were sold in New York at about half a dollar each, their value not being known. They were afterwards taken to Calcutta, and sold there as sea-otters. From Calcutta, they were taken to Canton by Captain Metcalf of New York, who started from the United States about the same time that Captain Kendricks sailed from Boston. In Canton these skins were sold at about \$5.00 each.”

Writers following Clark began stating that “Lady Haley, a Boston woman,” fitted out the ship *States* for a sealing cruise to the Falklands in 1783—“the first such cruise from America.” Actually, the “Boston woman” was in reality Madame Hayley, of London, who came from London to this country with Francis Rotch. The *States* was a Rotch ship. After reaching Boston with Mrs. Hayley and Francis Rotch the ship went to Nantucket, and from there she sailed under Captain Benjamin Hussey to the Falklands late in 1784. The ship took whales and then skins of seals, known to be numerous at the Falklands.

The first cargo of sealskins must have reached Nantucket early in 1786, for the cargo of thirteen thousand skins, sold at fifty cents each to New York—a \$6,500 shipment—eventually was put on board the brig *Eleanora*, Captain Metcalf, and reached the Canton market, where they were sold for \$65,000. One historian states “they were originally mistaken for sea-otter skins.” This is hardly creditable, as neither Captain Hussey nor Captain Metcalf can be accused of ignorance, especially in view of the Rotches' knowledge and the experience of the whalers at the Falklands. The voyages of the *States* and *Eleanora* inaugurated the Canton fur trade for the sealers.

## 2. Discovery of the South Shetlands

The discovery of the South Shetland Islands 450 miles southwest of Cape Horn which opened the way for subsequent discovery and exploration of the Antarctic continent, may have been accomplished prior to 1819. This chain of volcanic islands trending in a north-northeast-south-southwest direction between 61° and 63° south latitude and 54° and 63° west longitude, are separated from the Palmer Peninsula of Antarctica by the sixty-mile-wide Bransfield Strait. These islands may have been seen as early as 1599 by Dirck Gherritz in the Dutch ship *Blijde Bootschap* (Glad Tidings) and possibly by the crews of sailing ships in the 17th and 18th centuries; but because no proof of such discoveries is extant, Captain William Smith in the brig *William* out of Blyth, England is most commonly credited with the discovery of the South Shetlands.

In the translation of an article in *Annales Maritimes et Coloniales*, 1821, Deuxieme Partie, page 1034 we find the following:

"I have before me several reports proving that United States' vessels have been calling at southern New Shetland, which the British claim to have discovered last year, for the past ten years, or even longer, and that they take on cargo there similar to the cargo they obtain from the Crozet Islands (seal skins), using such cargo to maintain their trade with China."

In Hugh R. Mill's *The Siege of the South Pole*, on page 92, we find a similar statement regarding early American visits to the South Shetlands:

"According to a communication which was made by Captain J. Horsburgh, Hydrographer to the East India Company, to Professor Heinrich Berghaus, the distinguished author of the Physical Atlas; American Sealers had been at work in the South Shetlands since 1812, and had kept their field of operation a profound secret in order to exclude competition. . . ."

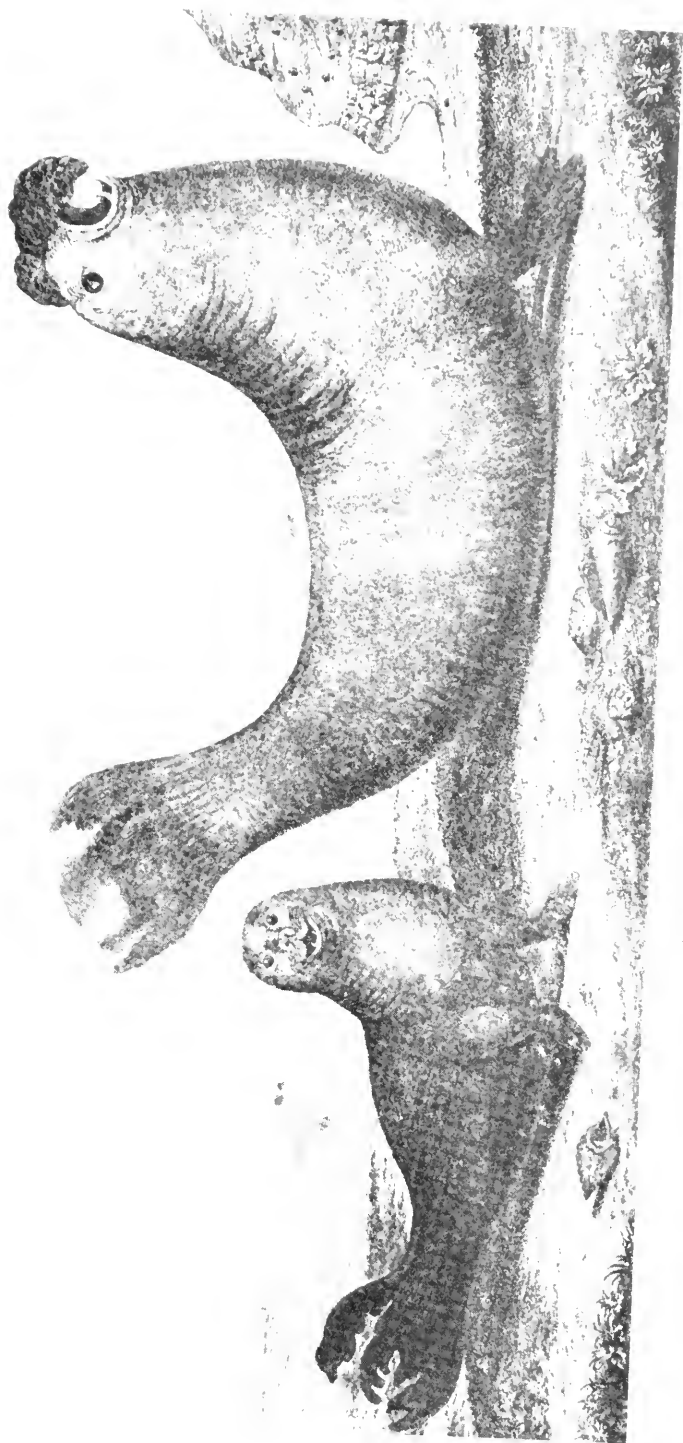
Similar claims appeared in contemporary newspapers such as the *Niles Weekly Register* (Baltimore), which continued the claims in the following articles:

"It is now well known that some of these hardy people (referring to Nantucket, Massachusetts seamen) had visited what is regarded by the English as newly discovered land, and now called New South Iceland, as early as 1800—but the great profit which they made by catching seals, sea-elephants, sea-bears &c. caused them to keep their voyages a secret. In the year just stated, nine vessels arrived with 151,000 fur-seal skins, giving it out that they had been obtained on the N.W. Coast." [November 23, 1822; page 180]

"If there is any merit in the simple fact of accidental discovery, we have no doubt that it belongs to our 'Yankee' brethren; for 'Yankee Harbor' [harbor on west coast of Greenwich Island, South Shetland Islands] is quite a famous place, and long since we were told in the public newspapers that there was a spot where 'seals were as tame as kittens.' It cannot be doubted that the discovery [of the South Shetlands] was made before October 1819 [the date that William Smith verified his discovery of February 1819], and we hope that some of our countrymen, now divested of the opportunity of keeping their discovery a secret for their own advantage, will tell us when they first knew of this land." [August 11, 1821; page 384]

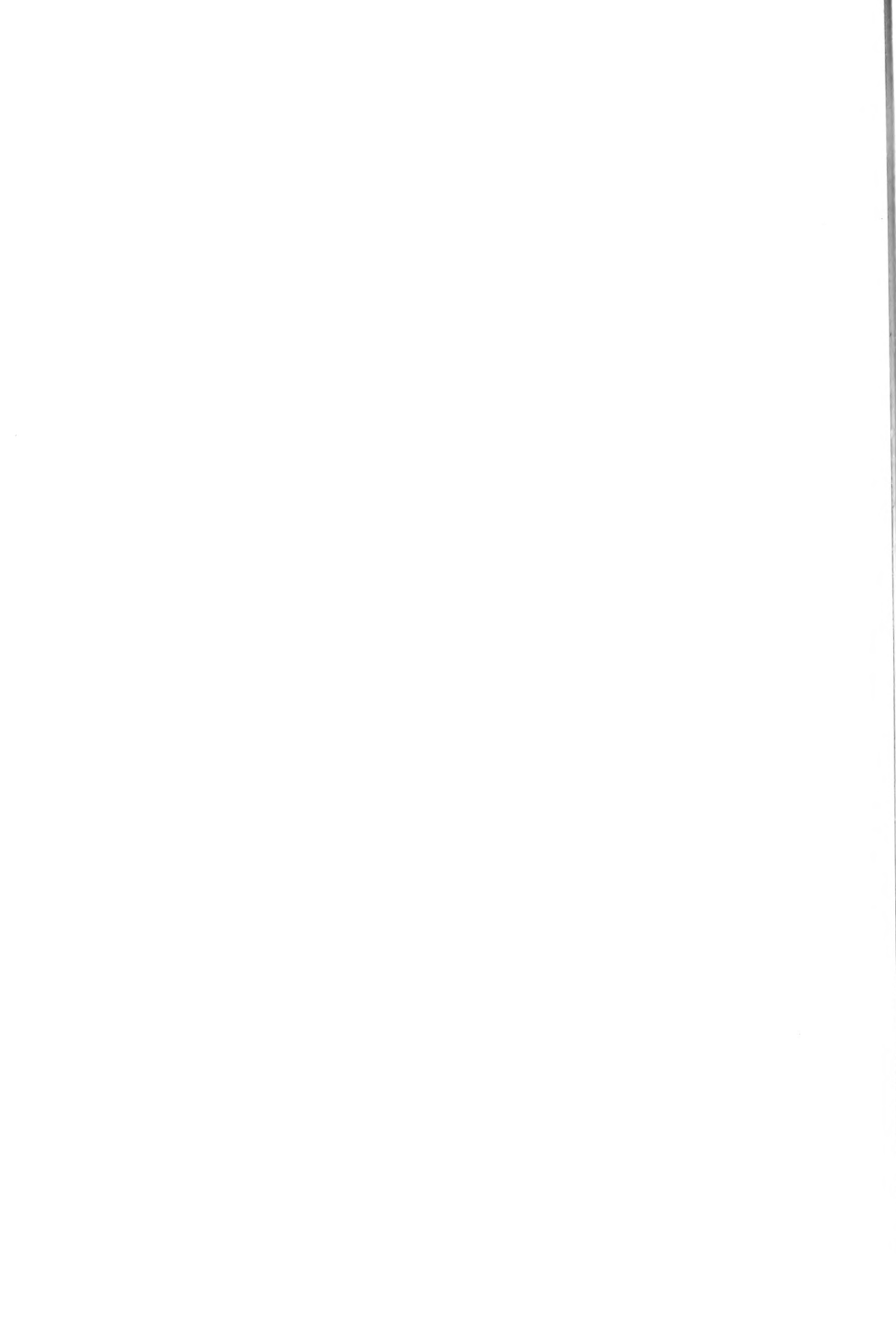
"By the favor of doctor Mitchell, we are enabled to lay before our readers the following very interesting letter from J. Robinson, esq. The magnitude of the discovery [of the South Shetlands] will not fail to arrest the attention of everyone, and the surprise is, that such an extent of ocean and so situated should not before have been known. It is said, however, to have been discovered some years since by some American whalers, and the knowledge concealed for mercantile purposes." [Sept. 16, 1820; page 43. From the *New York Columbian*.]

"Americans at Sea" A notice of the skillful and adventurous spirit of our country-



*A Male and Female Sea Elephant*

(From an engraving in Anson's "Voyage Round the World," London, 1748)



men on the ocean, under this head, a few days ago, has been copied into a multitude of papers, on account of its internal evidence of truth. Since then we gave an account, of the discovery of a new southern land, in a full belief that it would be found out that 'Jonathan,' as the Edinburg reviewers *elegantly* call the people of the United States, know of it long ago. Such seems to be the fact, as appears by the following article extracted from the N. York 'Mercantile Adviser,' one of our most respectable newspapers.

"*The discovery*—It is a singular fact that the newly discovered land in the Pacific Ocean, south of Cape Horn, has been known to brother *Jonathan*, at least so long that a voyage to and from the island has actually been completed out of the port of Stonington, Connecticut. But less ambitious about the honor than the profit, he was content, from the experience of the first voyage, to move on quietly in the purchase of ships, which he has done to the extent of seven or eight within a few months. About two years ago, a ship was fitted out of this port (New York) on shares, for 'an island unknown to anyone except the captain, where seals which had never been disturbed by man, were as tame as kittens, and more plenty than any other place upon the earth.' This was the language used to induce others to take an interest, the possessors of the secret being rich in knowledge and poor in purse. The ship, however, proceeded, but was unfortunately cast away before she reached her destination.

"When our brethren of Stonington have made as much as they wish by keeping the secret, we hope they will favor the world with some account of their discovery."  
[September 30, 1820; page 65]

All of these sources, the first one published in 1821 in France, the second one written by one of England's foremost Antarctic authorities, and the remainder in contemporary American newspapers, indicate that United States sealers, rather than William Smith, may have been the first to sight and possibly land on the islands of the South Shetland group. However, since no documentary evidence exists to prove these claims, the discovery must be credited to Smith, the Englishman.

## APPENDIX C

### Registers and Crew Lists of the Sealing Vessels

The crew list of the *Huntress* was lost when the Nantucket custom house records were carelessly destroyed (after being moved to Boston), but the log gives the names of Captain Burdick's two officers—William Coleman, first mate, a Mr. Smith, second mate, and an unidentified "boy." As the schooner *Harmony*, of Nantucket, during the same period carried a complement of sixteen men, it is believed the *Huntress* had a similar number.

In contrast, the crew list of the *Huron* has been found. Captain Davis had as his first officer Samuel H. Goddard, of Connecticut; second mate Charles Philips, and third mate Oliver Ripley, also of Connecticut. Solomon Russell, the surgeon (or doctor), was a Connecticut man; as was William Johnson, the carpenter; Samuel Wadsworth, the cooper, and Jason Bunce, the blacksmith. The boatswain, often mentioned in the log, was Charles Laing, address unknown, who was 21 years old and only 5 ft. 3½ inches tall. Of the nineteen men listed as seamen, the oldest, Daniel French, was 41; next oldest, Hiram Norton, 30 years old, and the youngest two "boys" aged 14 each—John W. Davis (probably a son of the Captain), and George Mack. The remainder averaged 21.1 years of age. Three of the seamen were 17, one 18, and one 16. The cook and steward were mulattoes, named William White and Cyrus Treadwell, respectively. Two others in the crew were colored men. In the total complement of 31 persons, one was listed as a "landsman," a nineteen-year-old man named Herbert Hinman. As an oddity, Jabez B. Fletcher, 5 and 1½ inches tall, deserted the *Huron* in the Falklands, and his place was filled by a Thomas Evans, probably from the *General Knox*.

The shallop *Cecilia* was rigged as a schooner, probably in the Falkland Islands in the fall of 1820, being constructed of material brought "knocked down" aboard the *Huron*. After two seasons in the South Shetlands and Falklands, the *Cecilia* arrived at New Haven on June 29, 1822. Her name seems to have been changed to *Young Huron* for reasons not definitely known.

#### 1—Ship *Huron* of New Haven

Built at Guilford, Conn. in 1819

Master: John Davis

Length: 89 ft. 8 in.

Breadth: 25 ft. 3 in.

Depth: 12 ft. 7 in.

Tonnage: 249 43/95

Two Decks, three masts, square stern—a billet head

Owners: Elias Shipman, John Shipman, Solomon Collis, Asa Bradley.

Registry No. 10 issued Nov. 3, 1819 to Registry No. 13

Surrendered to new registry March 20, 1820 when John Davis became master.

Owners: Included Collis, Shipman, Bradley, Joseph N. Clarke, Russell Hotchkiss, Elias Hotchkiss, Andrew Kirsten, James Goodrich, William H. Jones, William Leffingwell, Sanford Denison, Stephen and Henry Huggins, Hervey Sanford and Lucius Atwater, Norman Dexter, William Forbes, Jehial Forbes, Timothy Bishop.

Registry No. 8 issued Aug. 22, 1822, when Robert R. Macy took over as Master.

#### 2—Schooner *Huntress* of Nantucket, Mass.

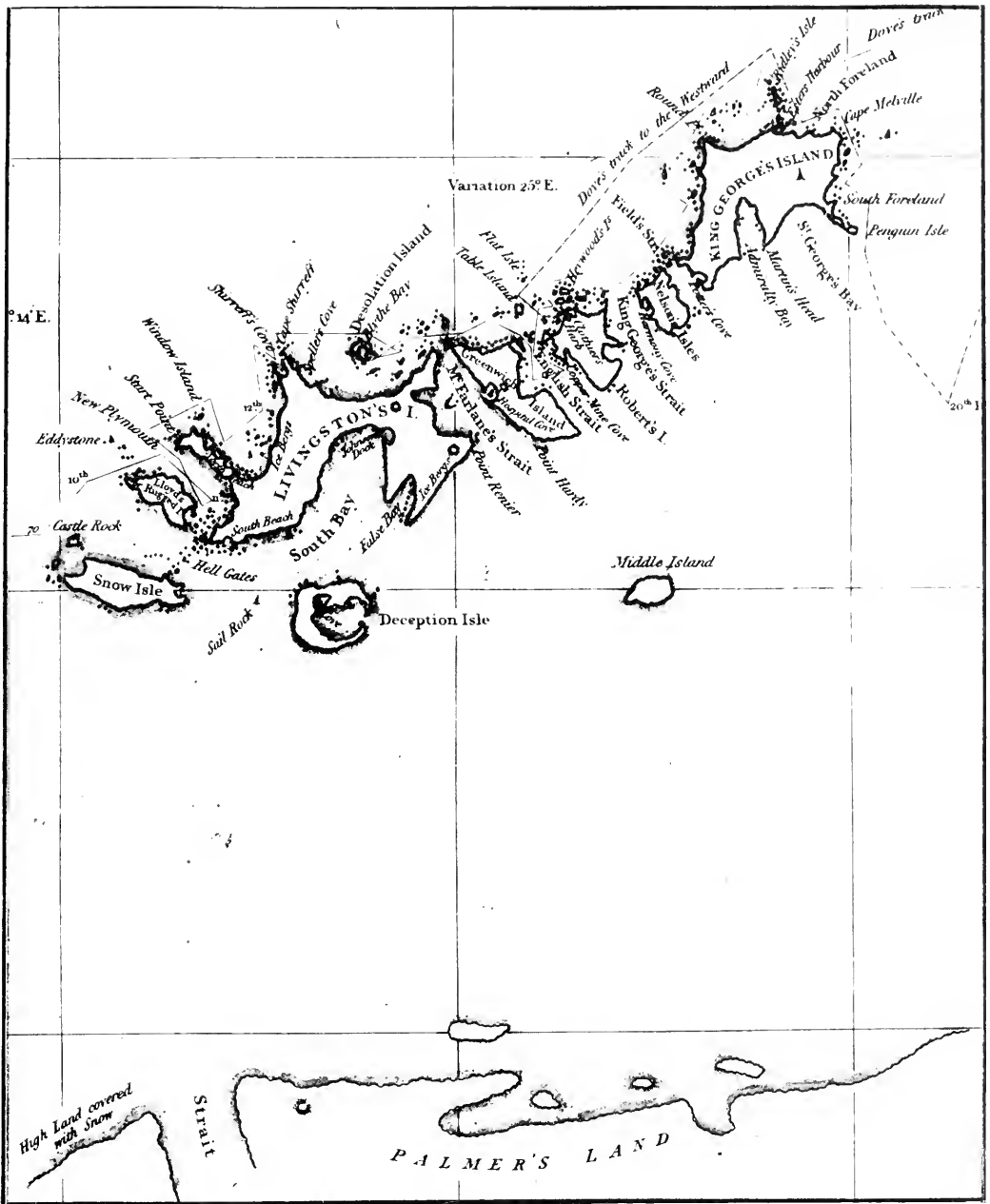
Built at Barnstable, Mass. in 1817 as per enrollment at Nantucket, Dec. 5, 1818

Tons: 80 3/95

Length: 68 ft. 3 in.

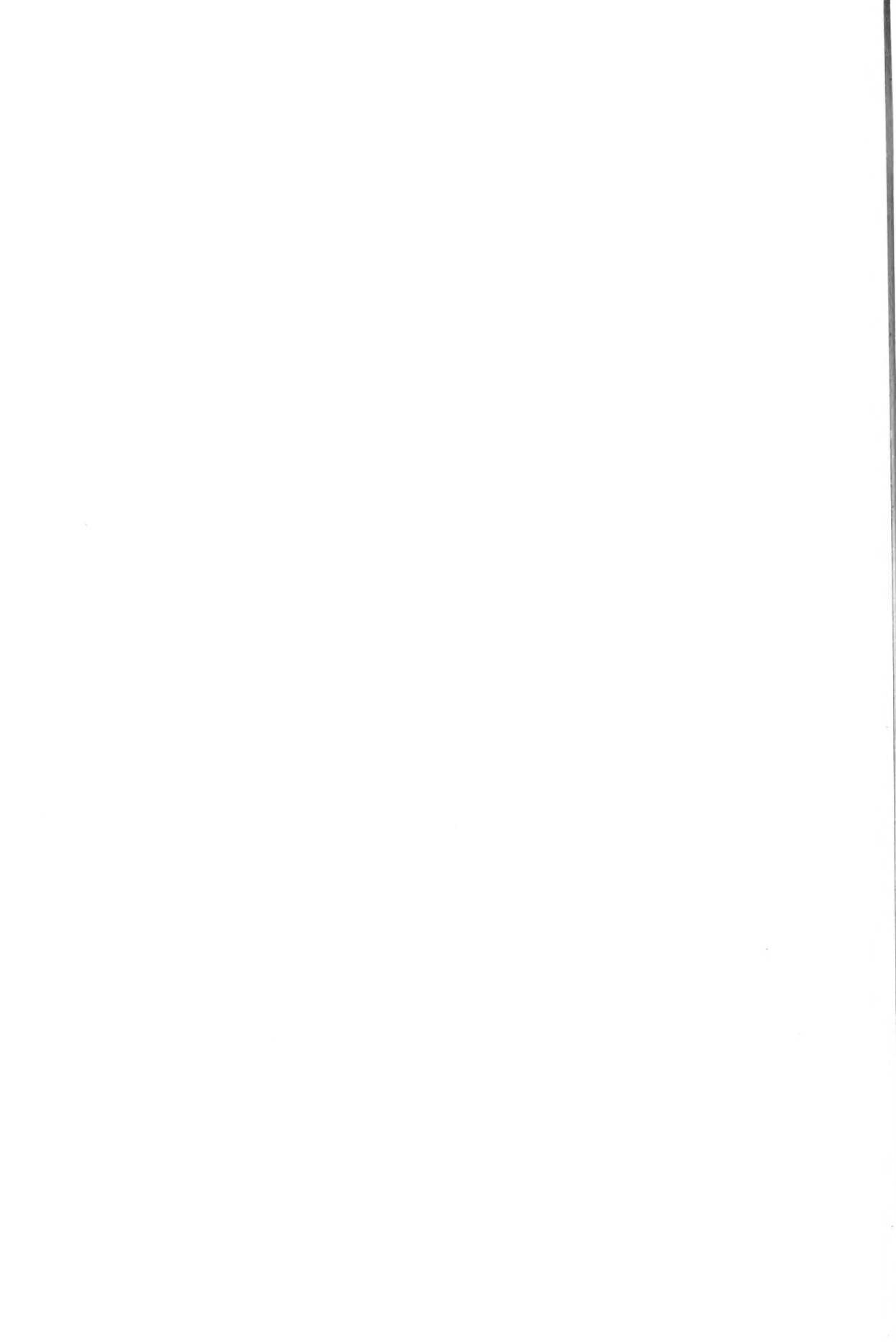
Breadth: 18 ft. 10 in.





*Portion of the Captain George Powell chart of the South Shetlands and the Antarctic Continent which was printed in England in November, 1822*

(From Edwin Balch's "Antarctica")



- Depth: 7 ft. 1 in.  
 Two masts, one deck. Square stern, no figurehead.  
 Owner: Samuel H. Macy, merchant of Nantucket with Stephen Arthur, George Macy, Christopher Burdick all of Nantucket.  
 Master: Christopher Burdick, surrendered at Nantucket, June 28, 1821.
- 3—Schooner *Express* of Stonington, Conn.  
 Length: 76 ft. 9 in.  
 Breadth: 24 ft. 5 in.  
 Depth: 8 ft. 8 in.  
 Built at Hudson, N.Y., 1816.  
 Master: Benjamin Pendleton. July 26, 1820.  
 Owners: W. A. Fanning, merchant mariner, E. Williams, N. B. Palmer and B. Pendleton, mariners of Stonington, Elisha Faxon, Jedediah Randall, Peleg Denison, George Haley, Enoch Burrows of Stonington.  
 Owner: Benjamin Pendleton, sole owner, May 28, 1821.
- 4—Ship *Frederick* of Stonington, Conn. Year, 1820.  
 Permanent Register No. 4  
 Issued at New London May 2, 1820.  
 Date Surrendered: July 20, 1821. Transfer of property.  
 Rig: Brig  
 Master: Benjamin Pendleton of Stonington.  
 Built at Guilford, Conn. in 1815  
 Length: 67 ft. 8 in.  
 Breadth: 22 ft. 4 in  
 Depth: 11 ft. 4 in.  
 Net Tonnage: 147  $\frac{24}{95}$   
 Two decks, 2 masts, square stern, head, a billet.  
 Official Number and Letters not stated.  
 Document preceding Cert. of Registry No. 3 dated May 2, 1820.  
 Issued at New London.  
 Owners: Benjamin Pendleton, and Gurden Trimbull of Stonington, Conn. with Wm. A. Fanning, E. Faxon, E. Faxon, Jr., Samuel F. Denison, James Sheffield, Giles R. Hallam, John P. Williams, Nathan Smith, Enoch Burrows, Asa Lee, Eph. Williams, Simon Carew, Jonathan Pendleton, Benjamin S. Cutler, Zeb Hancox and Thomas Perry of Stonington and Stephen White and William Fedyplace of Salem, Mass.
- 5—Ship *Clothier* of Stonington, Conn. Year, 1820.  
 Permanent Register No. 12. Issued at New London Aug. 2, 1820.  
 Surrendered at New London, May 16, 1821. Reason, Vessel stranded and lost.  
 Rig: Ship  
 Master: Alexander B. Clark  
 Home port: Stonington  
 Built at Philadelphia, Pa. in 1810.  
 Length: 94 ft.  
 Breadth: 26 ft.  $\frac{3}{10}$   
 Depth: Half the breadth  
 Tonnage: 284  $\frac{75}{95}$   
 Two decks, three masts, stern square, A woman.  
 Official Number and Letters not stated.

Document preceding Cert. of Registry No. 151 dated July 1, 1820 issued at New York.  
 Owners: William Williams of Stonington, Thomas W. Williams of New London and Alfred Welles of Hartford, Conn. with Samuel F. Denison, Simeon Curew, Asa Lee, Daniel Packer, Isaac Champlain, David S. Hart, Gurden Trimbull, Henry Smith, Nathan Smith, Peleg Denison, George Haley, Jeremiah Holmes, Oliver Burdick, Cyrus Williams, William Williams, James Thos. Perry, Benjamin Pomeroy and Jedh. Perkins of said Contn., George Lister and Reuben Brimby of New York and William Fetly, Schuyler and White of Salem, Mass.

6—Schooner *Freegift* of Stonington, Conn. Year 1820.

Permanent Register No. 5. Issued at New London on May 15, 1820.

Surrendered at New London on July 10, 1821. Reason, Transfer of property.

Rig: Schooner

Master: Thomas Dunbar, Jr.

Home port: Stonington

Built at Pawcatuck, R.I. in 1807.

Length: 50 ft. 7 in.

Breadth: 16 ft. 9 in.

Depth: 7 ft. 3½ in.

Tonnage: 52 9/95

One Deck, 2 Masts, stern square, Head—No.

Official Number and Letters not stated.

Document preceding Cert. of Enrollment dated May 6, 1818. Issued at New London.

Owners: Elisha Faxon of Stonington and Thomas Dunbar, Jr. of Westerly, R. I. with Wm. A. Fanning, Benjamin Pendleton, Giles R. Hallam, Zebenton Hancox, Zeba D. Palmer, Thomas S. Breed, Azh Stanton, Jr., Luther Fuller, Isaac Williams 2nd of Stonington and Nathan Barber, Jr. of said Westerly.

7—Sloop *Hero* of Stonington, Conn. Year 1820.

Master: Nathaniel B. Palmer

Built: Groton, Conn., 1800.

Length: 47 ft. 3 in.

Beam: 16 ft. 10 in.

Depth: 6 ft. 4 in.

Tonnage: 44 40/95

One deck, one mast, square stern, no figurehead.

Owners: W. A. Fanning, Ephraim Williams, James B. Sheffield, N. B. Palmer, mariner Elisha Faxon, Jedediah Randale, Benjamin Pendleton, Silas Hallam, George Haley and Peleg Denison.

8—*Emeline*, brig built at Lyme, 1818.

Length: 67 ft. long 4 in.

Tonnage: 108 89/95

Breadth: 21 ft. beam 4 in.

Depth: 8 ft. 9-3/4

One deck, 2 Masts, square stern, woman's bust figurehead.

Owners: W. Williams and Samuel F. Denison, Jeremiah Holmes of Stonington, Thomas Williams of New London, Gurden Trembell of Stonington, Asa Lee, Henry Smith, Peleg Denison, Benjamin Pomeroy, George Haley, Simon Carew, Nathan Sanborn, William Williams, Jedediah Perkins of Norwich, Alfred Wales, George Aston, Reuben Bemely of New York State.

## APPENDIX D

### The Falkland Islands

Among the little-known places of the earth that have become important in the world of "news" are the Falkland Islands, a British crown colony lying in the South Atlantic off the South American coast about 300 miles east of the Straits of Magellan. The colony consists of a group of some 100 islands of which East Falkland and West Falkland are the two largest. The smaller islands are mainly rocks and reefs; the two main islands provide pasturage for cattle.

East Falkland Island has two fine inlets, Berkeley Sound and Port William. Port Louis, formerly the seat of government, is at the head of Berkeley Sound. The little town of Stanley, now the government seat, is in Port William. Next to Stanley in size is the village of Darwin, a village of Scottish shepherds, and the main station of the Falkland Island Company, the principal traders of the islands. The majority of the inhabitants, some 2,000 in number, are Scottish and their occupation is mostly given over to sheep raising, wool being the largest export.

The history of the islands dates back to 1592, when their discovery was first reported. In 1594 Sir Richard Hawkins sighted the islands, and in 1598 Sebald de Wert, a Dutch sailor, named them the Sebald Islands and this name appears on Dutch maps.

In 1690, Captain Strong visited the islands and named the passage through which he came "Falkland Sound." From this the group of islands took its name. De Bouganville, a Frenchman, took possession and established a colony at Port Louis in 1764, and two years later the islands were ceded to Spain.

In 1767, Commodore Byron took possession of the islands on the point of prior discovery and formed a settlement at Port Egmont, on the small island of Saunders. They were driven out by the Spaniards, but in 1771 Spain yielded her rights to Great Britain by convention.

In 1820, Buenos Aires disputed the British right, claiming that Great Britain had lost her right by not colonizing the islands. The dispute was settled in 1833 and since that time the Falkland Islands have been a regular British Colony.

## APPENDIX E

### Captain Palmer's Sealing Voyages of 1820-21 and 1821-22

Several pages could be written on the American and British controversy on the discovery of the Antarctic Peninsula, but this is not our purpose. As one outstanding American geographer, the late S. Whittemore Boggs of the U.S. State Department, wrote:

“. . . Palmer has assumed the most prominence among early American sealers in Antarctica mainly because first-hand evidence of his accomplishments has been preserved and has been available to the student of the Antarctic for several years. However, it is just as likely that any of the other sealers in the South Shetlands in the 1820-21 season undertook similar, and possibly even more creditable, exploratory cruises than did Palmer in the *Hero*, but because their logbooks, diaries, and other first-hand accounts have been lost or destroyed, these other men must remain in the background.”

Without question, the name “Palmer's Land” was affixed to the Peninsula by the early geographers, led by Powell of England in 1822.

Both Professor William Hobbs and Colonel Lawrence Martin have presented the case for Captain Palmer, basing their claims on the November 17, 1820, cruise of Palmer from President Harbor to Yankee Harbor and return. Colonel Martin advances the theory that the *Hero* went to Deception Island down its west coast and up around to the entrance of the harbor created by the breached crater of this volcanic island. Martin then believes that Palmer cleared Deception Island and steered south by one-half east and reached the coast of Trinity Island some forty miles away, discovered the eastern entrance to Orleans Channel, found this strait literally filled with ice and returned across Bransfield Strait to Livingston Island.

But to return to the first claims for the discovery of the Peninsula, Congressman J. N. Reynolds, in his historic report to the Secretary of the Navy in 1828, wrote:

“On the northern part of Palmer Land, and in latitude 66° 05' S., and about 63° W. longitude, Captain Pendleton discovered a bay, clear of ice, . . . but did not ascertain its full extent south.”

Edmund Fanning, in his “Voyages Around the World,” describes the sailing of this 1820-21 fleet from Stonington, and wrote: “From Captain Pendleton's [the senior commander's] report as rendered on their return, it appeared that while the fleet lay at anchor in Yankee Harbor, Deception Island, during the season of 1820 and 21, being on the look-out from an elevated station, on the mountain of the island during a very clear day he had discovered mountains (one a volcano in operation) in the south; this was what is now known by the name of Palmer's Land. . . . To examine this newly discovered land, Captain N. B. Palmer, in the sloop *Hero*, . . . was despatched . . .”

Captain Palmer's logbook is evidence enough of where he sailed, and the confusion between the 1820-21 season in the South Shetlands and that of the following year is here most evident. It was not until the succeeding year (1821-22) that the Stonington fleet went to Deception Island and used it as its base. The sealers' logbooks show this conclusively and, further, upon the return of the fleet in 1822, the following report appeared in the April 24, 1822, issue of the *New London Gazette*:

“We have been favored with interesting particulars respecting a Southern Continent by Capt. Nathaniel B. Palmer of the sloop *James Monroe*, lately arrived at Stonington from the South Shetlands. Capt. Palmer proceeded in the *James Monroe* from

the Shetland Isles to the Continent and coasted it, from abreast the Isles to the Eastward, as far as 44 West Longitude. . . . There is now no doubt that there exists a South Continent and that Capt. Cook's Southern Thule belongs to it. Capt. Palmer could discover the mountains covered with snow in the interior, as he sailed along the coast."

In this 1822 report, Captain Palmer verifies the sighting of the mainland by the American sealers of 1821.

The British sealer Captain Powell met Palmer in the South Shetlands in December 1821, and the two cruised east to discover the South Orkneys. In his resultant map of the South Shetlands and vicinity, Captain Powell was the first to note and name the region now known as Palmer Land. The chart was published by Laurie in 1822. Captain Powell noted on this chart:

"We are equally ignorant of the extent of Palmer's Land, both to the South, east and west, the latter having been seen at a great distance only."

As for the assumption that Captain Palmer was in Deception Island harbor in November, 1820, it must be mentioned that Fanning, Balch and Spears, three of the first proponents of the claim of discovery of Antarctica by Palmer, have all been mistaken in assuming this fact. Even Colonel Martin admits that the "situation has been inaccurately described in previous accounts" (by these three) "who thought Pendleton and the fleet were at Deception Island when Antarctica was discovered."

The contemporary evidence shows that it was not until the next season that the enterprising Stonington fleet used Deception Island's fine harbor for its base.

Captain John Davis himself has the first and best description of Deception's harbor. He wrote in the *Huron's* logbook, as of December 30, 1821, the following:

". . . At 4 A.M. Entered the Dragons mouth and entered into the spacious Bay of Deception. At a Distance Deception has the appearance of a considerable large Island but when you enter this Bay the beholder is struck with astonishment for in the room of a large Island he finds nothing but a mere rim of an Island formed around the Bay which has been Sounded with one Hundred and twenty Fathom of line and no Bottom found. I have no doubt this Bay has been formed by an ancient Existed volcano and must have been one of the Largest known in the World as it has every appearance to establish the truth . . . many Places along the shore still Emits a continual smoak and the Water and sand in a number of Places inside this Bay is so hot that a Person cannot hold his hand in it for the space of two seconds. At the Head of this Bay are two Lagoons which forms most Excellent and commodious Harbors in one of these I found the Stonington Squadron. . . ."

Several other sources also mention the Stonington fleet as using Deception Harbor during the 1821-22 sealing season in the South Shetlands. The *Huron's* log further points out that the ice conditions were much worse than the previous season, so that, from various bits of evidence, the 1820-21 season was a remarkable one for its mildness.

From further evidence (preserved at the British Museum) in the account of Captain Robert Fildes, an English sealer, the present writer believes that Captain McFarlane, in the sealing brig *Dragon*, of London, was the person for whose vessel the entrance to the harbor at Deception Island was named. Captain Fildes arrived at Blythe Bay, on the north coast of Livingston Island, on December 4, 1820, and found the *Dragon* had been at the South Shetlands for seven weeks, during which time Captain McFarlane had taken over 5,000 seal-skins on this beach alone. Fildes listed 14 British sealing craft, one being the *Lynx* from Botany Bay, Australia, the vessel Captain Davis found at Smith Island. The British called

the strait separating Livingston from Greenwich Island "McFarlane Strait," while the Americans called it "Yankee Strait." As Captain Davis in the *Huron's* log noted, the entrance to the harbor at Deception Island was called the "Dragon's Mouth," no doubt after McFarlane's vessel. This designation on the part of an American is significant, especially as Captain Davis, through his rescue of the British sealers cast away by wreck on King George's Island, had a good opportunity to exchange ideas with the English sealers after bringing the shipwrecked crews to New Plymouth harbor.



## APPENDIX F

What were the subsequent fates of the various men and ships taking part in this important year of discovery (1820–21) in the South Shetlands? Of Captain John Davis little is known. The *Huron* returned to New Haven in 1822, after a second season under Captain Davis at the South Shetlands. She was then sold and her new master was Captain Robert Macy of Nantucket. Captain Nathaniel B. Palmer made a third voyage to the Antarctic (1821–22) in the sloop *James Monroe*, during which time he joined with the British sealer Captain George Powell to discover the South Orkneys as well as skirting the Antarctic Peninsula. His subsequent career as a clipper-ship skipper and owner reveal him as a most enterprising man. The *Hero* was sold at Coquimbo, South America, in 1822, following that second sealing season at the Shetlands.

The *Hersilia*, under Captain James Sheffield, did not return to Stonington with her companions following the 1820–21 season, but sailed for the west coast of South America, where she was captured by the Spanish pirate Benevedes. Sheffield and most of his officers and crew were forced to sail the pirates from Auroco and return to that port, where the *Hersilia* dragged her anchors one night and drove ashore. Captain Sheffield and eleven of his own crew pretended to assist in salvaging the brig but instead escaped in two whaleboats under cover of darkness. They made their way up the coast for twenty days and spent five nights in the open sea to avoid recapture, finally reaching Valparaiso, where Sir Thomas Hardy, commander of the British squadron there who heard of their story, welcomed them aboard the *Conway*, Captain Hall. This was a strange turn of fate as a decade before Sir Thomas commanded a British fleet which bombarded Stonington, Captain Sheffield's home port.

Hardy offered to send the *Conway* to Auroco as Commodore Ridgely of the U. S. *Constellation* was occupied by other troubles. But when the *Conway* reached the pirate stronghold the *Hersilia* was found burned together with the ship *Ocean*. The pirate Benevedes had also murdered Captain Russell of the Nantucket whaleship *Hero* and the cabin boy, as well as Captain Clark of the *Perseverance*.

Captain Sheffield and mate Daniel Clark returned home in the Nantucket whaler *Washington* with eight of her crew members on board. Two members, B. Edward Stanton and David Kellogg came home in the *Constellation*. Those of the crew who were captured by the pirates were forced to march with them as volunteers. Daniel P. Stanton got away after eleven days of such service; Benjamin Rogers also escaped overland to Valparaiso, and Nathaniel Richards similarly got clear, afterward shipping on a Rhode Island brig.

Captain Sheffield died a few years later, a comparatively young man, and unfortunately little record of his voyages remain. As the master of the *Hersilia*, the first American sealing vessel into the South Shetland area, he deserved wider recognition by his contemporaries and has earned a place in our maritime history, especially in his home port of Stonington.

Captain Robert Johnson in the *Jane Maria* returned to New York from the South Shetlands on May 12, 1821, with a cargo of skins for James Byers. He returned to the Shetlands during the next season (1821–22), and came back to New York in April, 1822, accompanied by the *Wasp*, under Captain Benjamin Morrell. On the next voyage to the South Seas, Captain Johnson took out the *Henry*, and Morrell was his consort in the *Wasp*. This time (1822–1824) they sailed to the remote Auckland Islands, south of Tasmania and New Zealand. The *Wasp* was sold at Valparaiso by Morrell in 1824. Captain Johnson then (June 1824) sailed again for the Aucklands. The last ever heard of Captain Robert Johnson and the schooner *Henry* was that they were headed due south from the Antipodes Islands, on an exploration cruise for new sealing islands. On this voyage he disappeared. Thus perished an intrepid mariner and courageous commander.

It is not at all strange that these staunch sealing craft came to untimely ends. The very nature of their calling made every voyage extremely hazardous. The *Huntress*, however, was sold by Captain Burdick upon his return to Nantucket and became a packet between that Island port and Boston and the Maine coast. The schooner met her fate on Cape Cod during a blizzard in December, 1825, all hands perishing. When discovered on the beach a day after the storm, the helmsman was found frozen to death at the wheel, and only three bodies were recovered from the wreck. Thus, after going through the dangers of uncharted Antarctic seas, the *Huntress* met an untimely fate only four years after her return from the South Shetlands.

Captain Christopher Burdick lived less than ten years following his voyage in the *Huntress*. He entered the coasting trade in 1822, and was quite successful. That he had a brig named after him is some indication of his ability as a mariner, and of the esteem in which he was held by his contemporaries. On a voyage to Tampico, Mexico, in 1831, he contracted yellow fever and died at that port. His body was brought home in a barrel of pickle and was interred at the Prospect Hill Cemetery, Nantucket. He left a widow and three children.

As for the Englishman, Captain William Smith, the discoverer of the South Shetlands, his last days in England were clouded by the refusal of the Admiralty to pay him any remuneration for the use of his brig *Williams* during the Bransfield exploration in 1819-20, beyond the regular charter price. Smith ended his days in a British charity home or almshouse.

Captain George Powell, the British sealer, during the season of 1820-21 was at the South Shetlands first in the cutter *Eliza* and (in the 1821-22 season) in the *Dove*. It was during his second season in the South Shetlands, 1821-22, that he discovered the South Orkneys with Captain Nathaniel B. Palmer of Stonington, then in the *James Monroe*. Powell's cruisions in the Shetlands were along the northern shores of the islands, and his famous map was a combination of his own observations and descriptions given him by his contemporaries who had sailed south of the Shetland chain. His chart was published in November, 1822, by Laurie of London. On it is shown that portion of the Antarctic Peninsula to which Powell affixed the name *Palmer Land*, obviously from the fact the information obtained came from his fellow sealer and explorer, Captain Palmer. It is this chart which states, in part: "We are equally ignorant of the extent of Palmer's Land, both to the South, east and west, the latter having been seen at a great distance only." Another edition of this chart, published in 1828, had the Hughes Bay area added. One has only to compare the outline of Livingston Island's southern coast with that portion as shown on Weddell's chart to see that the latter had been there while Powell probably had not. Captain Powell might have been, like Captain Robert Johnson, a notable explorer but for his early death at the hands of South Sea natives only two years after this last voyage to the South Shetlands.

The British sealer Captain James Weddell was the first sealing master to proceed directly from London to the South Shetlands, according to the late Arthur R. Hinks. His book, already cited, published in 1825, tells of work there for three seasons 1820-21, 1821-22, and 1822-23, but has more information on the later voyage when he penetrated to 74° south latitude to the east of the Antarctic Peninsula to what is now called the Weddell Sea. It should be noted that in drafting his chart of the South Shetlands, Weddell was aided by Captain Charles Barnard, the American master of the brig *Charity*, who wrote: "This gentleman Weddell was my particular friend, and meeting with him in the Falklands, I furnished him with some sketches for his chart of the South Shetland Islands, and several other places which he has not mentioned in his narrative." This statement may be found in Barnard's book, "A Narrative of Suffering and Adventures," cited in the Notes.





