

1997 Annual Meeting

St. John's, Newfoundland the eastern most city in North America and one of the oldest European settlements on the continent was the site of the thirty-seventh annual meeting of the Society. The meeting was held between August 14 and 17 on the campus of Memorial University and met in cooperation with the Hakluyt Society. We were surrounded by banners celebrating the 500th anniversary of John Cabot's arrival. The fifty-six members and friends (representing 16 states, 4 Canadian provinces and 4 foreign nations) who attended found that Alberta Auringer Wood, Maps, Data and Media Librarian at the University did everything in her power to create a fine meeting. Highlights included:

Thursday, August 14

There were two optional tours which took members on the "Eastern Experience" for the day or "City Explorer" for the afternoon. At 6:00 PM registration began in Hatcher Hall, Paton College and then members proceeded to the opening reception held in the Faculty/Staff Club, Gushue Hall, Paton College.

Friday, August 15

7:00am - 8:30 am

SHD Executive Council Meeting

8:00 am - 8:45 am

Continental Breakfast

8:00 am - 10:00 am

Conference Registration

8:45 am - 9:00 am

Opening Remarks: Susan Danforth, SHD President; Alberta Auringer Wood, Local Arrangements; and Richard Ellis, University Librarian.

Session I, 9:00 am - 10:30 am - "Newfoundlanders at the Poles and Columbus and the Cabots at Newfoundland"

Moderator- Francis Herbert

Clyde K. Wells - "Newfoundland's Polar Men: R. Bartlett and V. Campbell"

Douglas T. Peck - "John and Sebastian Cabot: Like Father, Like Son?"

Keith A. Pickering - "The Navigational Mysteries and Fraudulent Longitudes of Christopher Columbus."

Session II, 10:00 am - 12:30 pm - "Navigational Techniques and Manuals from the 16th to the 19th Centuries."

Moderator- Carol Urness

John Parker - "Richard Eden and the English Arte of Navigation."

Andrew C.F. David - "James Cook and his 1762 Survey of St. John's Harbour and the Adjacent Parts of Newfoundland."

Maurice Hodgson - "Edward Belcher's A Treatise on Nautical Surveying (1835) and Its Influence on HM Surveying and Charting Methods."

Session III, 1:30 pm - 3:00 pm - "Viking Women, Basques and English around Newfoundland."

Moderator- Edward H. Dahl

Delno C. West - "Freydis Eiriksdottir: Viking Warrior Woman and First Female Entrepreneur to North America."

Michael Barkham - "The Basque Pre-Columbian Myth and Its Legacy."

Mary C. Fuller - "Writing in a Cold Climate: Two Early Texts on Newfoundland."

Session IV, 3:30 pm - 5:00 pm - "North Pacific Travelers" and "The Camino Real"

Moderator- Delno C. West

Carol Urness - "Mapping the North Pacific."

Cathryn J. Pearce and Carole Thornton - "Willing and Unwilling Travellers on the Pacific Northwest Coast, 1781-1870."

John Thrower - "The 16th Century Camino Real from Panama to Nombre de Dios."

Banquet, 7:00 pm - 10:00 pm - Faculty/Staff Club, Gushue Hall, Paton College.

Susan Danforth, presiding.

The annual banquet was preceded by a social hour and concluded with traditional Newfoundland songs by Jason Simms, a student at the University.

Saturday, August 16

Session V, 9:00 am - 10:00 am - "Lost Opportunities."

Moderator- John Parker

Paul W. Mapp - "The Parliamentary Influence of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1749."

Daniel P. Hopkins - "An Important Danish Naturalist Vanishes in the Archives with All His African Colonial Notions: Peter Thonning's Scientific Journey to Danish Guinea, 1799-1803."

Session VI, 10:30 am - 12:00 pm - "Discoveries, Maps, and Discourses on Northeastern North America."

Moderator- Robert Highbarger

Donald D. Hogarth - "Resolution Island: Its Story and Maps."

John H. Long - "The Evolution of a Map: Captain John Smith's Map of New England."

Fabian O'Dea - "The 1516 Maggiolo Map and the Landfalls of John Cabot and Gaspar Corte Real."

Edward H. Dahl - "The Contributions of George R.F. Prowse to the Study of the Exploration and Maps of Northeastern North America."

Business Meeting, 12:00 pm - 1:30 pm - Faculty-Staff Club

Following lunch and annual business meeting was held.

The weather was perfect. With the end of the business meeting the members continued their activities with a local city tour, outdoor dinner, and a boat trip outside St. John's harbor into the North Atlantic where we had the exciting experience of seeing whales all about the boat. On our return a number of members took part in the traditional Newfoundland "Screech Ceremony" on the stern of the boat and had their shot of Screech rum, a chew of Newfee steak, and kissed a cod!

Sunday, August 17 - Saturday, August 24, post meeting tour.

Ed Dahl led a number of members on a trip to northern Newfoundland and Labrador. Highlights included a flight to St. Anthony, the home of Sir Wilfred Grenfell and then a bus trip to L'Anse aux Meadows the Viking settlement site. Then the party took a ferry across the Strait of Belle Isle to Labrador and traveled by bus to Red Bay, the historic center of a 16th century Basque whaling station. When they returned to Newfoundland they visited Port aux Choix, a maritime Archaic People site and ended at Gros Morne National Park with its fantastic landscape.

The Thirty-Seventh Annual Meeting
Society for the History of Discoveries
(In Cooperation With the Hakluyt Society)
August 14-17, 1997
St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada

Paper Abstracts

Session I, August 15, 9:00 - 10:30 AM: Newfoundlanders at the Poles; Columbus and the Cabots at Newfoundland (Francis Herbert*, Moderator)

"NEWFOUNDLAND'S POLAR MEN: R. BARTLETT AND V. CAMPBELL"

By Clyde K. Wells, St. John's, NF, Canada

It may seem strange that a small province like Newfoundland, with a population that is still less than 600,000, should have had such a substantial connection with both North and South polar exploration around the turn of the century. Much of the reason for this is related to men and ships involved in the fishery. The Newfoundland connection with North polar exploration is more extensive than it is with South polar exploration. Its greatest personification has been through the activities of Captain Robert Bartlett, born in Brigus in August 1875, who captained the vessel which took Peary on his expeditions towards the North Pole, as well as making numerous other Arctic voyages. Victor Campbell, who was also born in August 1875, but in England, made his home in Newfoundland from 1924 until his death. He participated in the ill-fated Robert Scott expedition to the South Pole in 1911-13, but ensured the survival of his exploration team when unusual ice conditions prevented the return of their ship when expected, while Scott's team perished in their attempt to reach the South Pole. This paper is a commentary from a Newfoundland perspective on information taken from material written about both men, including their own words.

"JOHN AND SEBASTIAN CABOT: LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON?"

By Douglas T. Peck, Bradenton, FL, USA*

After his 1497 discovery voyage, John Cabot was hailed in England as a national hero and outstanding navigator. In later years, John Cabot's son, Sebastian, assumed the mantle of his father and was revered and acclaimed as the "Father of English Navigation." Peter Martyr and Richard Hakluyt wrote glowingly of Sebastian's accomplishments as a navigator and his fame as a navigator spread all over Europe.

But what is the historical truth in this picture? John was indeed an accomplished navigator, but his son Sebastian was a charismatic dilettante who had little or no skills in either dead reckoning or celestial navigation, and was able to obtain his reputation solely through political intrigue among the kings and nobility of Europe, who were themselves intellectually naive concerning the relatively new science of navigation.

"THE NAVIGATIONAL MYSTERIES AND FRAUDULENT LONGITUDES OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS"

By Keith A. Pickering, Watertown, MN, USA*

The log of Columbus's first voyage records a subtotal on October 1st larger than the sum of daily distances. This is resolved by assuming that unlabeled daily distances are public figures instead of private ones, which leads to a transatlantic distance of 1142 leagues - a distance Columbus recorded, but was previously unexplained. There are many conflicting reports of Columbus's eclipse longitudes of 1494. Some are obviously fraudulent, and others are reconstructed from Columbus's transatlantic distances on the first and second voyages, using the new transatlantic distance and Columbus's own conversion formula. Columbus's eclipse longitude of 1504 is reconstructed the same way.

Session II, August 15, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM: Navigation Techniques and Manuals From the 16th to the 19th Centuries (Carol Urness, Moderator*+)

"RICHARD EDEN AND THE ENGLISH *ARTE OF NAVIGATION*"

By John Parker, Curator Emeritus, James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, USA*+

This paper examines the development of Eden's text, a translation of Martin Cortes's *Breve Compendio de la Sphera y de la Arte de Navegar*, Seville, 1551. Eden's translation was published in 1561 with very little editorial intervention, even including Cortes's dedication to Charles V. His own dedication reflects Eden's concern for England's lack of qualified navigators. Subsequent editions of 1572 and 1579 reflect attempts to improve the translation, and those of 1584 and 1589 closely follow the earlier editions. In 1596 John Tapp edited the text and introduced new tables and material of distinctly English interest. Similar changes were made in the 1609 and 1615 editions. The 1630 edition has not yet been examined.

"JAMES COOK'S 1762 SURVEY OF ST. JOHN'S HARBOUR AND ADJACENT PARTS OF NEWFOUNDLAND"

By Andrew C. F. David, Oak End, West Monkton, Taunton, Somerset, UK+

In August 1762, Commodore Lord Colville, Commander-in-Chief North America, sailed from Halifax in the *Northumberland* to recapture St. John's from the French. The master of the *Northumberland* was James Cook, who took this opportunity to survey Placentia Harbour, Bay of Bulls, and St. John's Harbour, and in co-operation with Joseph Des Barres, Harbour Grace and Carbonear Harbour. On his return to England, Cook laid these surveys before the Admiralty. Coupled with a recommendation from Colville, these surveys resulted in Cook being appointed in 1763 as Marine Surveyor of Newfoundland under the Governor Captain Thomas Graves. The surveys themselves are now held in the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office in a volume of remarks describing the harbours Cook surveyed.

"EDWARD BELCHER'S *A TREATISE ON NAUTICAL SURVEYING* (1835) AND ITS INFLUENCE ON HM SURVEYING AND CHARTING METHODS"

By Maurice Hodgson, Department of English, Douglas College, New Westminster, BC, Canada+

Edward Belcher (1799-1877) published *A Treatise on Nautical Surveying* in 1835 which became the standard work for HM Navy for nearly 50 years. Belcher was one of a number of young naval surveyors who worked under the guidance of the Hydrographer, Francis Beaufort, and it was Beaufort who obtained many of Belcher's

commands for him, including his first one on HMS Etna surveying in the area of the Gambia River on the west coast of Africa from 1830-33. It was while on that assignment that Belcher consolidated his surveying practices which became the basis for his book. Belcher's treatise is not particularly innovative, but like all his surveys and charts it is competent and thorough. Perhaps as interesting as his directions to young officers on how to conduct a survey are his somewhat idiosyncratic views on what constitutes the duties of a naval surveyor.

Session III, August 15, 1:30 - 3:00 PM: Viking Women, Basques, and English around Newfoundland (Edward H. Dahl, Moderator*)

"Freydis Eiriksdottir: Viking Warrior Woman and First Female Entrepreneur to North America"

By Delno C. West, Department of History, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ, USA*

This is a study of Freydis Eiriksdottir within the context of medieval exploration history and Viking culture. Existing inquiries only consider her as a literary figure. A "warrior woman," Freydis appears in two different sagas, once on the battlefield, and once as the head of a timber cutting expedition. Yet, she was the first European female entrepreneur to the Western Hemisphere around 1014 a.d. This will be a multi-disciplinary paper incorporating history, literature, gender studies and anthropology with suggestions for further research into the life of this little known character.

THE BASQUE PRE-COLUMBIAN MYTH AND ITS LEGACY

By Michael Barkham, University of the Basque Country, Onati, Guipuzcoa, Spain

To this day the claim that Basque whalers discovered Newfoundland, and therefore, America, a century or more before Columbus, survives widespread in oral and literary traditions. The aim of this paper is threefold. On the one hand, the paper addresses the issue that scholars have, until now, considered that there was only one such Basque claim. The author documents that there are, in fact, two distinct Basque pre-Columbian myths, one French Basque and the other Spanish Basque. On the other hand, the author shows when and why the two separate claims arose, arguing that they are but unsubstantiated notions which appeared in the seventeenth century. Thirdly, the paper analyses and documents how the French and Spanish Basque myths have been passed down in the literature, through the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to the present.

"WRITING IN A COLD CLIMATE: TWO EARLY TEXTS ON NEWFOUNDLAND"

By Mary C. Fuller, Assoc. Professor, Literature, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, USA**

In this paper, I will discuss two early modern texts on Newfoundland. "Quodlibets," by Robert Hayman, and "The Newlander's Cure," by Sir William Vaughan. Both writers were actively involved with the colonizing ventures of the early seventeenth century, Hayman as a planter, Vaughan as an investor and promoter. Yet these two texts differ markedly from the prosaic descriptions and proposals of contemporaries like John Hughthorpe and Richard Whitbourne: one is a book of poems, the second a farrago of advice on diet and spiritual health. Hayman and Vaughan share an interest in thinking about how planting in a cold climate can be profitably imagined, rather than actually undertaken. Their work engages important ideas about climate, latitude, physiology, labour, and diet, and seeks to find ways of thinking about Newfoundland as, in one way

or another, an advantageous place for the English not just to fish but actually to settle and plant. Seen in the broader context of early English writing on northern America, the eccentricities of Hayman's and Vaughan's texts prove to have affinities with central ways of thinking about colonial plantation.

Session IV, August 15, 3:30 - 5:00 PM: North Pacific Travellers; the Camino Real (Delno C. West, Moderator*)

"THE FIRST KAMCHATKA EXPEDITION AND THE MAPPING OF THE NORTH PACIFIC"

By Carol Urness, James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, USA*+

Misunderstandings concerning the success of the First Kamchatka Expedition (1725-30) are noted as the background for discussion of the map made by Midshipman Peter Chaplin during this Russian Navy expedition. The map shows Russia from Tobolsk to Kamchatka and the Chukchi Peninsula. It is placed in the context of other eighteenth century maps of Russia. Comments by Georg Wilhelm Steller, Gerhard Friedrich Muller, Peter Simon Pallas, Sven Waxel and others help to establish the historical setting. The paper is based on research for an English translation (with Tatiana Fedorova, Bertrand Imbert and Viktor Sedov) of the Chaplin logbook of the expedition.

"WILLING AND UNWILLING: WOMEN TRAVELLERS ON THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST COAST, 1781-1870"

By Cathryn J. Pearce, Kenai Peninsula College, University of Alaska - Anchorage, USA+ and Carole Thornton, University of Victoria, Victoria, BC+

Slaves, servants, prostitutes, and wives — all are a part of the tapestry of Pacific Northwest maritime history. Ranging from native women bought and sold as slaves, to Hawaiian and Aleut women hired as shipboard servants, to wives of captains and navigators, their experiences have often been excluded from mainstream history. Yet Russian, British, and American records show a high incidence of women on board ships, from fur trading vessels to whaling ships. Casual reference within the records, which include ships' logs, and official Russian American Company correspondence and reports, indicate that the presence of women on board ships at sea was not as unusual as popular opinion holds today. This paper will examine the instances of these women travellers, highlight their experiences, and acknowledge their presence within the maritime community of the Pacific Northwest Coast.

"THE 16th CENTURY CAMINO REAL FROM PANAMA TO NOMBRE DE DIOS"

By John Thrower, Whetley Orchard, Powerstock, Dorset, England*+

In 1587 Baptista Antonelli recommended to King Phillip II that Porto Belo should become the main port for the export-import business across the isthmus; the change was effected in 1596. Prior to this, over 70 years of mule-train traffic had used the little port of Nombre de Dios. During this period there were several raids by the English on and along the Camino. The culmination was the forced retreat of Sir Thomas Baskerville's troops in January 1596. Very little of the land sections of the Camino now remain. But, remarkably, clear stretches of trail still survive for examination near the sites of two raids by Francis Drake in 1573 and the defeat of the English at the Capritilla Pass in 1596. Also some remaining parts of the old city of Nombre de Dios can, even now, be found. Recent visits to these sites will be illustrated, described and discussed in relation

to the 16th Century records

Session V, August 16, 9:00 - 10:00 AM: Lost Opportunities (John Parker, Moderator*+)

"THE PARLIAMENTARY INFLUENCE OF THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY"

By Paul Mapp, Department of History, Harvard University, Cambridge MA, USA+

In 1749 Parliament decided to leave intact the Hudson's Bay Company's exclusive right to the trade of Hudson Bay and its hinterlands. This trading monopoly had come under fire because of the Company's failure to explore the regions south and west of Hudson Bay. Current scholarly accounts of Parliament's decision emphasize Parliament's appreciation of the Hudson's Bay Company's reliable financial performance and demonstrated ability to overcome the rigors of the Bay's climate. On the basis of an examination of the stock ledgers of the Hudson's Bay Company, this paper argues that powerful parliamentary, ministerial, and court figures had a financial interest in the Company, and that this interest provides an additional factor explaining Parliament's decision.

"AN IMPORTANT DANISH NATURALIST VANISHES IN THE ARCHIVES WITH ALL HIS AFRICAN COLONIAL NOTIONS: PETER THONNING'S 'SCIENTIFIC JOURNEY' TO DANISH GUINEA, 1799-1803"

By Daniel P. Hopkins, Department of Geosciences, University of Missouri-Kansas City, Kansas City, Missouri 64110 USA*

Peter Thonning, a naturalist sent to the Guinea Coast in 1799 to investigate the economic potential of the Danish slaving enclave there, brought back an extraordinary herbarium and material for an ambitious natural history and geography, but he has remained obscure. The substance of his study can be recovered from the archives of the Guinea Commission, whose research, an important synthesis of colonial ideas after the abolition of the slave trade, he guided. The Commission's blueprint for an extensive plantation colony in West Africa was ignored, and Thonning's work was forgotten. Denmark disposed of its African possessions four decades before the 'scramble' for Africa.

Session VI, August 16, 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM: Discoveries, Maps, and Discourses on Northeastern North America (Robert Highbarger, Moderator*)

"RESOLUTION ISLAND: ITS STORY AND MAPS"

By Donald D. Hogarth, Department of Geology, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON, Canada*+

Resolution Island is off the southeastern tip of Baffin Island and lies at the eastern entrance to Hudson Strait. For early explorers it marked the beginning of what was thought to be the Northwest Passage. Initial description was made by George Best (1578) after a two week visit. His site was revisited by Thomas James (1631). Best's landfalls were placed on east Greenland, less commonly on southern Newfoundland, and it was not until 1789 that Alexander Dalrymple showed their true location. Since 1578, the shape of Resolution

underwent continuous cartographic regression, with major distortion by William Parry (1824), an image corrected only in the second Air Navigation Chart (1946).

"THE EVOLUTION OF A MAP: CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH'S MAP OF NEW ENGLAND"

By John H. Long, The Newberry Library, Chicago, IL, USA *

When it first appeared in 1616, Captain John Smith's map of New England was designed to promote the founding, under his direction, of a permanent English colony. By the time he died in 1631, the map's plate had been revised six times (and would undergo two revisions more), several English settlements were firmly established in New England, and Smith himself had become reconciled to never realizing that dream of colonial leadership. This paper argues that the development of Smith's post-Virginia career shaped his map of New England, reflecting the change from aspiring colonial leader to author and colonial publicist.

"THE 1516 MAGGIOLO MAP AND THE LANDFALLS OF JOHN CABOT AND GASPAR CORTE-REAL"

By The Hon. Fabian O'Dea, St. John's, NF, Canada

The quincentenary of John Cabot's voyage from Bristol has been the occasion for discussions concerning his landfall in the northwest Atlantic. The contemporary information is ambiguous. However, a little-known world map made by the great Genoese mapmaker, Vesconte Maggiolo, at Venice in 1516 may provide the clue to the landfall and even that of Gaspar Corte-Real a few years later.

"THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF GEORGE R. F. PROWSE TO THE STUDY OF THE EXPLORATION AND MAPS OF NORTHEASTERN NORTH AMERICA"

By Edward H. Dahl, Early Cartography Specialist, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Ont., Canada *

The Newfoundlander George Robert Farrar Prowse may well be the man whose attention was focussed on the early maps of northeastern North America more single-mindedly than any other individual to date, yet his contributions are less well known than those of his peers, among them W. F. Ganong (*Crucial Maps*), Henry Biggar (on Jacques Cartier), and Justin Winsor (who wrote the eight-volume *Narrative and Critical History of America*). Prowse was a man of strong opinions and convictions, a man who had no hesitation in titling a publication simply *Sebastian Cabot Lied*. In the introduction to Ganong's *Crucial Maps* in 1964, Theodore E. Layng wrote: "However much students may grouse at the eccentricities of Prowse's *Cartological Materials*, they know it to be an essential part of their stock-in-trade." Since just over a half-century has passed since Prowse wrote to one of Canada's Governors General, whom he had met in the late nineties, that his *Cartological Materials* "is of the most extreme dry-as-dust type, the kind, even if it should have some value, the conclusions of which will begin to filter into general historical works in about fifty years," the time seems to have arrived to re-examine his largely neglected work.

* Society for the History of Discoveries member

+ Hakluyt Society member