BC Historical Association 1922 Fourth Report and Proceedings Walbran

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Report and Proceedings



Edited by

Donald A. Fraser

"Help us to save the things that go;
We are the gleaners after time."
—Austin Dobson

For the Four Years ended October 11th,
1929

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in 1787, and says that after visiting Port Cox (Clayoquot) and Barkley Sound, Barkley "discovered" a large opening extending to the eastward, the entrance of which appeared to be about four leagues wide, and remained about that width as far as the eye could see, with a clear easterly horizon, which my husband immediately recognized as the long-lost Strait of Juan de Fuca, and to which we gave the name of the original discoverer, my husband placing it on his chart." In thus giving what purports to be Mrs. Barkley's account of the discovery of the strait, Dr. Newcombe uses quotation-marks, but adds this marginal note: "The author has not been able to find this reference in the transcript of Mrs. Barkley's journal in the Provincial Archives."

Captain Walbran, in "British Columbia Place Names," speaking of Barkley Sound, says, at page 33: "Barkley Sound (Indian name, Nitinat), Vancouver Island. Discovered and named in 1787 by Captain Charles William Barkley, of the British trading-ship 'Imperial Eagle,' after himself"; and farther on continues: "Captain Barkley had his bride with him, a young English lady, 17 years of age, Frances Hornby Trevor. Mrs. Barkley kept an interesting journal of the voyage, and from this book the incidents narrated here are taken." Farther down on the same page Captain Walbran writes:—

"From Barkley Sound the ship again proceeded eastward, and to the great astonishment of all on board, a large opening with a clear easterly horizon presented itself. The entrance appeared to be about four leagues wide and remained about that width as far as the eye could see. Barkley at once recognized it as the long-lost Strait of Juan de Fuca, the existence of which Captain Cook, in 1778, had so emphatically contradicted. Barkley placed the opening on his chart, naming it Juan de Fuca, and continued along the ocean coast to the south-eastward."

In the account of Captain Walbran's lecture, which the *Colonist* published on 3rd March, 1901, he is reported as saying:—

"From Barkley Sound the 'Imperial Eagle' again proceeded to the eastward, and to the great astonishment of Captain Barkley and his officers, a large opening presented itself, extending miles to the eastward with no land in sight in that direction. The entrance appeared to be about four leagues in width, and remained about that width as far as the eye could see. Captain Barkley at once recognized it as the long lost strait of Juan de Fuca, which Captain Cook had so emphatically stated did not exist."

In His Honour Judge Howay's Presidential address, given at the annual meeting, in 1925, of the British Columbia Historical Association, and published in the Association's "Third Annual Report and Proceedings," he refers to Mrs. Barkley's description of the discovery of the strait as follows:—

"Mrs. Barkley in her diary says, under date July, 1787: 'In the afternoon to our great astonishment, we arrived off a large opening extending to the eastward, the entrance of which appeared to be about four leagues wide, and remained about that width as far as the eye could see, with a clear easterly horizon, which my husband immediately recognized as the long-lost Strait of Juan de Fuca, and to which he gave the name of the original discoverer, my husband placing it on his chart.'"

There were thus four accounts giving Mrs. Barkley's description of the discovery of the strait. Those by Dr. Newcombe and Judge Howay were, from the words "a large opening," almost identical in language, and were both marked with quotation-marks. Those supplied by Captain Walbran were not marked with quotation-marks, and varied slightly in language.

At page 34 of "British Columbia Place Names," Captain Walbran refers to the fact that Mrs. Barkley accompanied her husband in the "Halcyon" on a second voyage, in 1792, and says that she "kept another interesting journal." This is the "journal," a typescript copy of which in the Provincial Archives was referred to by Dr. Newcombe.

Mr. Robert B. Walkinshaw, a well-known Seattle attorney interested in North-west history, and author of the descriptive and historical work, "On Puget Sound," recently published, and who is a frequent visitor to Victoria, accompanied the writer, in 1926, on a walk to Gonzales Hill, read the inscription on the tablet establishing the hill an official landmark commemorative of the discovery and exploration of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and became interested in the romance and mystery surrounding the early

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history of the famous strait. The writer then gave Mr. Walkinshaw a copy of the Third Annual Report of the British Columbia Historical Association, in which Judge Howay's quotation from Mrs. Barkley's journal appears. On a subsequent occasion Mr. Walkinshaw visited the Provincial Archives and read Captain Walbran's and Dr. Newcombe's references to the Barkley journal, as well as the latter's comment. Mr. Walkinshaw also read the typescript copy in the Archives of Mrs. Barkley's diary, and later, had, through the kindness of Captain Robert E. Barkley, of Westholme, Vancouver Island (Mrs. Barkley's great-grandson), opportunity of reading the diary itself.

Examination of the original of the typescript copy of Mrs. Barkley's diary in the Archives proved conclusively that it did not contain an account of the discovery of the strait. On the other hand, Captain Walbran had distinctly stated in his "Place Names" that the incidents he narrated had been taken from Mrs. Barkley's journal. No original or copy of any other diary or journal kept by Mrs. Barkley could be traced, Captain Walbran's accounts of the discovery of the strait were not marked with quotation-marks, and differed in language from those supplied, in quotation-marks, by both Dr. Newcombe and Judge Howay. In view of these circumstances Mr. Walkinshaw applied to Judge Howay for the source from which the account of the discovery of the strait accredited to Mrs. Barkley in the Presidential address had been obtained. Judge Howay replied that he had never seen Mrs. Barkley's journal, but that on receipt of Mr. Walkinshaw's letter he had searched, and found "a letter from the late Captain Walbran enclosing 'Note taken from Mrs. Barkley's journal, in which reference is made to the discovery or rediscovery of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, by the "Imperial Eagle," in July, 1787'"; and that this note, signed by Captain Walbran in 1901, gave, in quotation-marks, the exact words used in the Presidential address. Judge Howay admitted that if the quotation was not in the journal "a very difficult question" would arise, and through correspondence with the writer sought to unravel the mystery. The Archives contained only the typescript of the one diary. Examination of Dr. Newcombe's notes and manuscripts, made through the kindness of his son, Mr. W. Newcombe, revealed no information as to the source of the account of the discovery of the strait quoted in Memoir No. 1. Captain Walbran's notes and manuscripts appeared not to have been preserved.

Finally, Judge Howay found a letter which Captain Walbran had written to him in May, 1910, which definitely answers all questions, except, perhaps, whether the first journal referred to by Captain Walbran in the "Place Names" is in existence. Extracts from Captain Walbran's letter of May, 1910, proving the authenticity of the quoted account of Mrs. Barkley's description of the discovery of the strait, were then kindly furnished by Judge Howay to the writer, and are shown in the following copy of the letter from him:—

"HISTORIC SITES AND MONUMENTS BOARD OF CANADA,
NEW WESTMINSTER, B.C.,
November 28, 1927.

"*C. C. Pemberton, Esq.,*
Victoria, B.C.

"DEAR MR. PEMBERTON,—Renewing our conversations *re* Mrs. Barkley's diary, I have been looking through some old letters from Captain Walbran in the hope that I might run across his letter in which he sent me that quotation from the diary. I am glad to say that I found both the quotation and the letter itself. It is dated 5th May, 1910, and the part in question runs thus:—

"'You will be pleased to know I need not give you my "best recollection" of what was in Mrs. Barkley's journal as regards the discovery of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, for I have fortunately and quite unexpectedly come across some of my pencilled notes in which I have jotted down Mrs. Barkley's own words recording the "Imperial Eagle" meeting with the wide opening in the land which Captain Barkley recognized as the Strait of Juan de Fuca. I attached so little importance to the verbatim notes I was taking down, seeing that I was writing with the journal in front of me, that I have omitted the exact dates of the occurrences which took place after the ship sailed eastward from Barkley Sound. I thought that for my book a general summary of the facts

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way enough. It was, however, in the afternoon of the day they sailed that the strait was fallen in with. I have much pleasure in enclosing you a copy of the note I made from the journal.

"Then he gives the copy which I have published.

"Later he continues: 'I never dreamt that the journal would be burnt, as I feel sure it has been, for had it would have always been in evidence, or I would have taken many more verbatim accounts from it than I did. It was an irreparable loss to the history of this coast as the Log which is in the possession of Judge Martin ends on the arrival of the ship on this coast. Portions of the despatch box you mention, which is supposed to have contained the journal, were found, contents entirely consumed, after the fire, lying near the front door on what had been the verandah of the house; the old gentleman was seen to place it there,' etc.

"You might send this on to our friend in Seattle.

"Yours very truly,
"(Sgd.) F. W. Howay."

It is a most fortunate thing that, as a result of Mr. Walkinshaw's inquiry, Judge Howay has been able to find and produce the letter of 5th May, 1910, signed by Captain Walbran. This answers Dr. Newcombe's query; shows the source of Captain Walbran's information about the account of the discovery of the Strait of Juan de Fuca; explains why his two accounts differ from each other and from those of Judge Howay and Dr. Newcombe; gives the reason for his not using quotation-marks, and fully establishes the authenticity and accuracy of the passages Dr. Newcombe and Judge Howay had quoted.

Although the terms "diary" and "journal" are applied to Mrs. Barkley's writings, the volumes were really reminiscences written in after-years, but confirmed by reference to most authentic sources then available to her. The existing "journal" is, she states, her first reminiscence. The missing "journal," from which Captain Walbran obtained the account of the discovery and naming of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, must therefore have been a later production, and written after she had consulted letters and other authentic sources of information.

Whether the missing "journal" is still in existence somewhere, or has been destroyed, remains an unsolved mystery.

[The above paper was given by Mr. Pemberton at the regular quarterly meeting, held as a joint meeting with the Victoria and Islands Branch of the Canadian Authors' Association, on January 13th, 1928. Mr. Pemberton was assisted in the reading of illustrative extracts and correspondence by Donald A. Fraser.]

THE SITE OF LEECHTOWN.

Speech delivered by John Hosie, Provincial Archivist, at the Unveiling of the Memorial Cairn erected on the Site of Leechtown in Commemoration of the Finding of Gold there on July 17th, 1864.

[The British Columbia Historical Association erected this most impressive cairn, using the stones from the ruins of the fireplace and chimney of what had been the Gold Commissioner's house in the old mining days. On October 1st, 1928, a party of sixty members and friends, journeyed by special train on the C.N.R. line from Victoria to Leechtown for the purpose of the formal unveiling ceremony. Among them, as special guest, was Mrs. Fannie Faucault, of Walhachin, B.C., only daughter of Peter Leech, the surveyor with the party of original discoverers, after whom the river and old mining town had been named. Amid the falling rain His Honour Lieutenant-Governor R. Randolph Bruce unveiled the cairn, and Mr. Hosie delivered the following address.]

Your Honour, Ladies and Gentlemen,—We meet here to-day to dwell for a little while on a long-closed but fascinating chapter of our Island history—namely, the