File E-D-L95A_Thomas Lowe Correspondence

E-
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L95A

Copy

Union Street, Coupar Angus, Scotland.
23rd. October 1906.

Capt. John T. Walbran
Assistant Hydrographer,
Victoria, B.C.

Dear Sir:

I have received your Letter of 4th Inst. with 2 Enclosures (which are herewith returned) My letter of the 13th has, I presume, reached you ere this.

As regards Capt. Southgate, he was an Englishman, and a retired Shipmaster. When I first became acquainted with him in San Francisco he was in partnership with another Shipmaster (also retired) an American named Mitchel, carrying on an extensive ship chandlery business. I do not know (or have forgotten) the place of his naturity, nor the dates, either of his birth or death. I think it was not before 1859 that he went to Victoria, and when he left there in 1865 he w went to England. A good authority for everything relating to Capt. Southgate would be Mr. Robert J. Skinner (if he is still alive) who, I believe, is or was Provincial Inspector of Timber, or something of that kind. He was a Clerk with Southgate and afterwards with Lowe Brothers. Mr. James R. Anderson, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, is another whom you might consult with advantage. for, to my certain knowledge, his father, the late Alexander Caulfield Anderson, possessed a large collection of books and manuscripts bearing on these subjects, a perusal of some of which (if still available) would no doubt be of great service to you.

Capt. Home, I have always understood, was drowned when crossing in a small boat from Baker's Bay, Cape Disappointment, to Astoria. I well remember that on one occasion when the Despatches for the Hudson Bay House, London, were being sent off from Fort Vancouver, that Dr. McLoughlin, noticing that Capt. Scarborough (of the Schooner Cadboro) who was in charge of the batteau carrying them, was hoisting a sail, immediately ordered him to lower it and stick to the oars, until the Despatches were safely delivered on board the homeward bound ship, then lying at the mouth of the Columbia. He gave as a reason for this that Masters of sea going vessels were, as a rule, in his opinion much too venturesome in small craft; and instanced the case of Capt. Home, who drowned both

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himself and boats crew by incautiously carrying too much sail.

I never knew, nor heard of, a marine Officer, or in fact any Officer, of the name of Heriot when I was a resident of Victoria.

You say that in selecting a site for the new Post on the Island in 1842 Sir James Douglas saw the necessity of choosing one which should indisputably be in British territory.

As a matter of fact the 49th parallel of North Latitude cuts off part of the Southern coast of Vancouver Island; and it was only afterwards and as a compromise, that the whole Island became British.

I am not sure whether Clover Point was the place where Sir James Douglas first landed, nor of the exact date of of his landing, but as to the origin of the name I have no doubt it was given for the reason you assign.

Yours very truly
(Signed) Thomas Lowe

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E
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Copy

Union Street, Coupar Angus, Scotland.
6th. August 1907.

Capt. John T. Walbran
Victoria, B. Col.

My dear Sir:

I have just received your Letter of 19th Ult. (with its various enclosures), and now return your "Note on Dr. McLoughlin", as requested.

I see little or nothing in it to alter or amend, except that I am not quite sure about he and his brother David having been educated for the medical profession in Great Britain. Mrs. Dye says they were sent overseas. When Dr. McL. was about to return to Fort Vancouver, after a visit to England in 1838/9, his brother David came to London from Paris to see him off. He was then a leading Physician in Paris and had, presumably, resided there for a good while.

I notice that you always write of the Hudson's Bay Co. instead of the Hudson Bay Co. While in the Service I was directed not to use the s. It might be as well to find out the proper designation, seeing that you take so much pains in such matters.

Possibly Mr. Douglas established Fort Victoria (or Camosen) by order of Dr. McLoughlin, but more probably at the instigation of the Governor & Council in London, or of Sir George Simpson, the Oregon Boundary being then a very grave question.

It was the Hudson Bay Co. who established Fort Durham. The Russians may have had a Post or Posts somewhere in that neighbourhood, but I never heard of any. There were, however, rumours that some of their Establishments had at one time or other been captured by the natives, and the garrisons slaughtered.

I am glad you have satisfied yourself as to the exact location of Fort Durham. I was pretty sure that it was some distance South of the mouth of Taku River, and not even in the Inlet. I will now, therefore, take it for granted

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that the true position of my first landing on the mainland of America was, approximately, in North Latitude 58°4', and West Longitude 134°2'.

Wishing you all success with your forthcoming Book, of which I should like to have a copy, if procurable

I remain
My dear Sir
Yours Sincerely
(Signed) Thomas Lowe

P.S. I return the Newspaper cuttings you so kindly sent me.

T.L.

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Copy of Letter Sent to Capt. Walbran

Coupar Angus, Scotland, 31st. August 1906

Capt. John T. Walbran
Assistant Hydropgrapher
Victoria, B.C.

Dear Sir:

I have your Letter of the 10th Inst. regarding Lowe Inlet, and now send the particulars you require. I have also sketched the careers of my late brother James and my own, while in America. It is chiefly a matter of dates, and only useful so far that it may enable you to select from it what you may consider necessary for your purpose.

I have never yet been able to find on any Map of British Columbia the exact position either of Taku (Fort Durham) or of Fort McLoughlin. I believe the former was some 15 miles from the mouth of the Taku River, but the Indians at the time I was there (1842/43) were such a dangerous set that we never ventured far from the Fort. Both Taku and Stickene were rented from the Russians, the Hudson Bay Co. paying 2000 prime land Otter Skins annually. These skins were all collected on the East side of the Rocky Mountains, and in 1847 and 1848 it was my duty to bring them across, when in charge of the annual Express party between Fort Vancouver and York Factory. Perhaps you may have a later Map, showing the position of these abandoned Posts, and if so I would feel much obliged if you could send me one, or even a slight sketch pointing out the localities. I have no knowledge of the exact date Capt. Pender named the Inlet, nor whether it was named after bother brothers or only of one.

Yours truly
(Signed) Thomas Lowe

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Named by Capt. Pender (Nav. Lieut. R.N.)
H.M. hired surveying vessel Beaver 1867.

Lowe Inlet, Granville Channel. Named after two brothers, Thomas and James Lowe, sons of Dr. John Lowe, Coupar Angus, Perthshire, Scotland, and residents of Victoria for many years. The former was born on 30th. November 1824, and his early life was spent in the service of the Hudson Bay Co. In August 1841 he left London in one of the Company's sailing vessels sent annually round Cape Horn to Fort Vancouver, on the Columbia River, touching at the Sandwich Islands. At Honolulu he was transferred to another of the Company's ships bound for Sitka, Alaska (having Sir George Simpson on board) arriving there on 16th. April 1842. From thence he proceeded to Fort Durham (Taku) in Lat. 58 N., Long. 133.48 W. in charge of Dr. John Kenedy, where he was stationed for about 13 months, until the abandonment of that Post and also that of Fort McLoughlin (Milbank Sound) was decided upon. The Late Sir James Douglas, then Chief Factor, had been instructed to build a new Fort on the Southern end of Vancouver Island, and had selected Camuson (now Victoria) as the most suitable. He accordingly embarked the men from the two abandoned Posts, with their families and effects, onthe Steamer Beaver and Schooner Cadboro. After a tedious passage down the Coast and a good deal of trouble and some danger in getting through Johnson's Straits, the Expedition finally came to anchor in Victoria Harbour on the 3rd of June 1843. The construction of the Fort was at once begun, assisted by some 300 or 400 Sougees Indians. Mr. Lowe had been brought from Taku, Mr. Roderick Finlayson from Fort Simpson, and Chief Trader Ross from Fort McLoughlin. After the buildings at Fort Albert (as it was at first named) were well underweigh he accompanied Chief Factor Douglas to Puget's Sound, in the "Beaver", and then overland to Fort Vancouver, the head quarters on the Northern bank of the Columbia River, in what was then known as Oregon Territory, but now in the State of Washington. There he remained until 1850; making, meanwhile two trips overland (each taking up about 8 months of hard travel) across the Continent to York Factory, Hudson Bay, in charge of the Express party which annually took out the Accounts and Despatches, as also the retiring Servants, bringing back a new set of men to fill the vacancies. Then came the discovery of gold in California, and as the Country was fast filling up, and good openings presented themselves, he (in 1850) left the Service of the Hudosn Bay Co., and with two friends, both former Chief Traders, became a partner of the firm of Allan, McKinlay & Co. at Oregon City. In 1852 he went to SanFracisco and there started the firm of Allan, Lowe & Co. of which his brother afterwards in(1856) became a partner. After a residence of 8 years in San Francisco he returned to Oregon (in 1860) and at the end of 1862 joined his brother James in Victoria, and

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formed with him the firm of Lowe Brothers. In 1864 they purchased the wholesale business of G. Vignols & Co. in Wharf Street, and in 1865 that of Capt. James Johnson Southgate, as Ship Chandlers & Navy Constructors. This partnership was dissolved in 1871. Thomas retiring and leaving Victoria in January 1872 for Scotland, where he has ever since resided. As he was only 19 years of age when Victoria was founded, he is now, probably the Sole Survivor of that historic event.

James Lowe was born 12th April 1830, and was for 6 years in the Bank of Dundee, Scotland, coming to San Francisco in 1853 to join his brother in business there. He went to Victoria in the latter part of 1860 and began business there, as a Commission Merchant, on his own account, until in 1863 his brother joined him, when the firm became that of Lowe Brothers, which continued to exist until 1871. After that James remained in Victoria and formed a partnership with the late T.L.Stahlsmidt. This lasted until 1875 when he left Victoria for San Francisco, and died there on 2nd. February 1879.

(Signed) Thomas Lowe

Coupar Angus, Perthshire
Scotland. 31st. August 1906.

This is incorrect. The name was given prior to Capt. Pender's of James Lowe's arrival on the Coast, and was named after Thomas Lowe only.

Copy of proposed entry to be made in Capt. Walbran's forthcoming book on "Place Names" on N.W.Coast of America.

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E
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L95A

Copy

Coupar Angus, Scotland, 13th. October 1906

Capt. John T. Walbran
Assistant Hydrographer
Victoria, B.C.Canada

Dear Sir:

I duly received your valued communication of 16th Ulto, together with the Maps and Newspaper you so kindly sent me. You are quite right as to MaLoughlin being spelt with an o instead of an a as I seem to have done. It must have been a mere slip of the pen on my part.

Dr. John McLoughlin was born at Riviere du Loup in the Province of Quebec in 1784, but whether his father was an Irishman or a Scotsman I am unable to say. Judging from the spelling I should infer he was Irish. The following quotation is from Mrs. Eva Emery Dye's book "McLoughlin and Old Oregon", published in 1900. "While still a boy his father was drowned, and the widowed mother took her children home to her father, Malcolm Fraser. There her boys David and John grew up in their grandfather's old stone mansion overlooking the St. Lawrence, just where it widens to the Sea. They caught a military presence from the soldier grandsire who had brought a Highland regiment with him to America to colonize these seignorial manors. Here Scotish books were read and Scottish tales retold. Here the bagpipe droned and the kilt hung in the old Colonial closet. The brothers were sent overseas, were pursuing medical studies, when Napoleon began to harry England. Dr. David went into the wars and followed the iron Duke until Napoleon was gaged at St. Helena, Dr. John said "I can never fight Napoleon I admire him too much". He returned to Canada. These particulars coincide with what I have always heard. Dr. McLoughin joined the North West Fur Coy. of Montreal (afterwards merged in the Hudson Bay Company) and was for a time in charge of Fort William (Lake Superior) subsequently coming to the Pacific Coast and taking charge of Astoria, or rather Fort George, the former and present Astoria, but in 1824 moved to Fort Vancouver, which he built and made the headquarters of the Columbia Department. He remained there as Chief Factor in full charge of the whole of that Department, which embraced all the Country to the West of the Rocky Mountains until 1846, when he retired and made his future abode at Oregon City, where he died in September 1857, aged 73.

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I am sorry I cannot give you any authentic information as to the date of Captain Emilius Simpson's death or where he was buried, or about the incidents at Cowichan and Nanaimo to which you allude. Dr. J.S.Helmkin, I fancy, might be able to help you in these matters, or perhaps Mr. George Blenkinsop, Craigflower, if he is still alive.

It seems to me that you place the approximate site of Fort Durham too far up the Taku Inlet, or River, in the Map you sent me of British Columbia. In case its exact position is now unknown I will give you my recollection of it, which may perhaps lead to its identification. Seeing that there are so few places eligible for settlement in that vicinity I think it would not be a bad place for an enterprising man to take up his residence, if still unoccupied. My impression is that it was about 15 miles South of Taku River, but of course, in this I may be mistaken as we had no Maps at that time, or at least I never saw any. In Sir George Simpson's book "A Journey round the World" he says that on leaving Sitka they passed through Peril Straits and Chatham Sound. It was situated in a snug little Bay, with a shingly beach and a considerable space of level ground before reaching the rather steep hillside behind. Looking out across the broad channel which seperated it from what, I suppose, was Admiralty Island, there was on the left hand, somewhat to the rear, in full view, a very high mountain, and on the right, near the extreme point of the Bay on that side, a very small stream, coming from a tiny Lake not very far back. Dr. Kennedy had erected near its mouth a very effective Weir, of stakes, to capture the trout on their way up; and we used of a night to scoop out hundreds of these speckled beauties, which we opened up and spread out to dry and cure. The Indians brought us great quantities of halibut, deer, mountain goat, bear, partridges etc. so that we always had abundance of provisions, besides the crop of Potatoes from an acre or two of ground which the men of the Fort had cleared. The Fort was enclosed by a stockade, about 20 feet in height, composed of small trees from 8 to 10 inches in diameter set on end and firmly bedded in the ground. Inside of this, running all around, and reached by 2 stairways, was a planked Gallery, about breast high below the top of the Stockade. There were 2 projecting Bastions at opposite corners, built of heavy squared timber, with hinged ports for cannon and loopholes for musketry. Each Bastion commanded two seperate sides of the Fort, and the upper storey, somewhat overlapping the lower, enabled shots to be fired downwards through the outer part of the flooring to prevent shelter being taken beneath or too close in.

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Icebergs were frequently seen in the open channel, carried backward and forward by the tide. As to the Mountain referred to I have good reason to remember it.

The Indians had not by any means been properly broken in by the Russians; and, in fact, before the H.B.Co. entered into the ten years lease with them, one or two of their Forts had been taken by these savages and the garrisons butchered. At one time we were beseiged by them for nearly six weeks, and were only relieved by the opportune arrival of the Steamer from Sitka. On stormy Nights they would congregate on the weather side of the Fort and throw up lighted pine knots to be bourne by the wind to the roofs of the houses inside, which were covered with sheets of cedar bark, a very inflammable material in dry weather. Fortunately for us these gales were almost invariably accompanied by heavy rain, so that the danger of ignition was not so very great after all. It was, however, necessary to guard against any attack, especailly in the night time. The men were therefore divided into watches (that is, those who could be spared). There were26 of us in all. Dr. Kennedy taking 8 and I the same number, for four hours each on a stretch. Half of them marched in one direction on the gallery and the other half in the opposite direction, so as to pass and repass each other and keep them from sleeping. Well, one clear night, when it happened to be my watch on deck, on looking towards the mountain, what was my astonishment to see the moon arise, to all appearance, shattered and broken in bits!! The men on watch with me, mostly French Canadians, began to cross themselves and to take to their prayers, thinking, no doubt that the end of the World had come. I rushed down to awaken Dr. Kennedy, but when we reached the gallery the moon had already nearly developed into its proper shape, and the mystery was solved. On the summit of the Mountain, which was covered with snow, there must have been a tree, which, as we had no telescope, we had never observed, and thus the moon shining through the bare branches had presented the singular appearance which had given us such a shock.

By the way, it is very easy to distinguish between the original trees of the forest and the new growth which has sprung up where a clearing had once been made. This used to be very evident at Astoria, where much timber had been cut down early in last Century and again replaced by the same species.

The absolute necessity of keeping so many mento garrison Fort Durham was felt to be out of all proportion to

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to the profitsof the trade, and this led to the abandonment of that Establishment. Afterwards, and until the termination of the lease, the Steamer Beaver made periodical visits to that part of the country to continue the trade and collect the furs.

On leaving Fort Durham the Russian Steamer again took the "Cowlitz" in tow, this time for Fort Stikene. Arriving there on the 25th April Sir George found that there had been a wild disturbance in the garrison, and that the gentleman in charge, Mr. John McLoughlin (a son of Dr. McL.) had been shot and killed by one of the men, a French Canadian named Urbain Heroux. The Indians had also assembled to the number of about 2000 to take the Fort and help themselves to the goods and ammunition. He (Sir George) had arrived just in time to prevent such a catastrophe, and was able to make arrangements with the Indians Chiefs so as to place things on their former footing. He put Mr. Charles Dodd, chief mate of the "Cowlitz" in charge of the Fort, giving him as assistant Mr. George Blenkinsop, a well educated young man then serving as an ordinary seaman on the "Cowletz". He was afterwards stationed for a long time at Fort Rupert, and ultimately became a Chief Trader.

Sir George returned to Sitka (taking Heroux with him, to be tried in Canada) and then proceeded on his voyage to Ochotsk, and from thence overland through Siberia.

Yours very truly,
(Signed) Thomas Lowe.

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E
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L95A Copy

Union Street, Coupar Angus, Scotland.
21st. January 1907.

Capt. John T. Walbran
Asst. Hydrographer
Victoria, B.C.Canada.

Dear Sir:

I have your Letter of 2nd. Inst. and in reply would state that I never knew, or heard of any Hudson Bay Officer of the name of Low in the early days--say from 1843-1860, or at any other time; and I am quite certain that I was the only one named Lowe then in the Service.

I was well acquainted with Capt. Charles Dodd who commanded the H.B.Cos. steamship Labouchere in 1859 and whose Log Book you found at Bella Bella. He was Chief Officer of the Barque Cowelitz on which I was a passenger from Honolulu to Fort Durham in 1842. On Sir George Simpson's arrival at Fort Stikene in the Spring of that year, finding that Mr. John McLoughlin, the gentleman in charge, had been killed, Mr. Dodd was taken from the "Cowelitz" and put in command of the Post, with the late Mr. Blenkinsop as his Assistant.

I am not aware of the precise date when "Lowe Inlet" received its name, but it evidently must have been prior to Capt. Pender's Survey.

Trusting that your forthcoming Book may be found useful and meet with the approval it will justly deserve (from the care you have taken to obtain correct information about "Place Names" and matters pertaining thereto)

I remain dear Sir
Yours very truly,
(Signed) Thomas Lowe

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E
D
L95A Copy

Union Street, Coupar Angus, Scotland.
16th July 1908.

Captain John T. Walbran
Victoria, B.C.

Dear Captain Walbran:

I have just received your letter of 1st. Inst., and lose no time in replying to the various enquiries you make.

Dr. John Kennedy was in charge of Fort Durham from the time of its foundation until its abandonment. He did not then hold the rank of a Chief Trader, but became one afterwards. He took Mr. Finlayson's place at Fort Simpson in 1843 and remained therefor several years (as Surgeon and second in charge under Chief Factor John Work) when he retired from the Service of the Hudson's Bay Co. and, with his family, moved to Burnbrae (near Victoria). There he took up land, and resided until his death. His family consisted of two sons, Frederick and James, and one daughter, widow of the late John Ogilvy, all, I suppose now dead.

Chief Factor Douglas went to Fort Durham with the "Beaver" and "Cadboro", and carried out the abandonment of that Post (which he had established). All the doors, window sashes, planed flooring and other articles that might be of serviceable at the new Establishment were taken on board, Captain William Brotchie was Master of the Steamer Beaver, with William Mitchell as 1st. Mate; and Captain James Scarborough Master of the Schooner Cadboro.

Herewith is a Cutting from the "Colonist"(of which I have been a subscriber and constant reader since its very first issue) of 20th May, desiring the names and addresses of all persons, now living, who took part in the early history of the Province, together with their Portraits and Biographical sketches. I enclose a couple of Photographs of myself, taken 10 years ago, one of which you may give to the "Colonist", if you choose. As for the Biographical sketch, that, I presume will be found in your forthcoming Book.

Yours very sincerely,
(Signed) Thomas Lowe

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E
D
L95A

Copy

Union Street, Coupar Angus Scotland,
28th March 1910

Dear Captain Walbran

I have your Letter of the 9th Inst. and hasten to reply to it as long as I am still able to see a little, though very imperfectly, what I write.

It would not be strictly correct to say "from the adjoining higher ground" as the wind did not come from that direction and the brands were, in reality, thrown from the comparatively level ground on the weather side of the Fort. The Indians tossed these lighted brands up in the air and trusted to the forceof the gale to carry them on the the roofs of the houses, and so burn us out. In this, however, they were not successful, but it sufficiently showed the great resentment they felt at the sudden stoppage of the liquor trade, about which I wrote you some time ago. They had besieged us for about six weeks, and the several attempts of setting the Fort on fire were made on dark and stormy nights, when they could come quite close to the Stockades. We could, of course, have fired on them, but it was the invariable policy of the Hudson's Bay Company to keep on friendly terms with the Natives everywhere, and never to take life if it could possibly be avoided.

As to rewriting the article on Fort Durham I don't know what more you could say, consistent with the scope of your work, unless what I have already stated to you in previous letters, that both it and Fort Stikene were established (in what was then Russian Territory) in virtue of a ten year's lease whereby the H.B.Co. were allowed to barter with the Natives of a certain specified region for Furs and other products of the country, on the payment annually of 2000 prime Land Otter Skins. They had also to surrender to the Russians, at cost price, whatever Sea Otter Skins they might have obtained in the ceded territory.

The Natives of this part of the Coast had always been numerous and very difficult to get on with. At Fort Durham, during the 5 years of its existence, Dr. John Kennedy was in charge, having as his assistants, successively, Roderick Finlayson, John O'Brien, and myself, with a garrison of about 25 men. Besides the risk both of life and property from

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hostile tribesmen it was found that the Steamer Beaver by making occasional visits to the locality could do all the trading about as effectively as by keeping up a costly establishment on shore, and the Fort was therefore abandoned.

Yours truly

(Signed) Thomas Lowe

Captain J?T. Walbran
Victoria, B.C.

Memo. Page 307 George Trail Allan, and Archibald McKinlay were only Chief Traders not Chief Factors. the later was the highest grade of Wintering Partners (so called to distinguish them from Ordinary shareholders of the H.B.Co.) They received a certain share of the Profits of each year (twice as much as Chief Traders) in lieu of Salary.