

## VOYAGE TO HUDSON'S BAY-1781

On May 31, 1781 the Hudson's Bay Company ship King George II lay at Gravesend east of the London port, in the Thames, when Captain Joseph Richards began his log for proposed journey to posts in Hudson's Bay. He was in company with two other ships, Prince Rupert bound for Churchill, and Sea Horse bound for York. Captain Richards had just received his own orders that his destination on this occasion was the three most southerly establishments in James Bay, being Eastmain, Albany and Moose, Forts.

The pause before departure had two purposes in this year. There was the customary boarding by some of the Committee members to issue last orders and despatches, as well as the issuance to the crew of their "River Pay" and an advance of one month for their trip to and from North America. The second purpose was to enable outbound ships and coastal craft to assemble in the Estuary in preparation for naval protection in the North Sea.

England was embroiled in war with the American Colonies, and France had joined in support of the colonies, among other activities blockading English shipping in the North Sea.

The Committee members boarded June 1 and when they departed later that day were given the customary salute by the ship's guns.

In the next two days, they gradually worked their way downstream as well as exchanging several items of cargo with the Prince Rupert. There is no explanation but they may have been loaded in the wrong place for their destination.

On June 4 they were still idling near the mouth of the Thames, not having yet received Navy orders to move out. The weather had begun to worsen slightly. Finally during this day they got their orders from Captain Charles Hope of His Majesty's new frigate "Iphegenia" and they prepared to sail.

Along with their own three ships, there was a variety of coastal vessels to be escorted by the Iphegenia, Latona and Cleopatra. On June 5 they "joined the Admiral in His Majesty's Ship Fortitude (74 guns) also Princess Amelia (80 guns) Buffalo (60) Preston (50) Dolphin (44) and 4 Cutters". They were well protected by this naval North Sea patrol with impressive firepower.

June 7, the Captain notes passing Flamborough Head, a small headland on the Yorkshire coast. They had made good speed with the strong winds, but on the next day they had run into a gale and heavy seas. The Captain logsic "ship a good deal of water and pitch very deep. Spritsal yard and half-dead Lights under".

The weather continued rough for the next few days, and was further complicated by fog, noted on June 12.



The weather began to clear a little on June 13 when at 9 am they first saw the sun and were able to make some navigation observations. On the next day, they still had haze and fog but were able to see and "speak with" three fishing boats from Aberdeen.

On June 15, the log entry states, "Enter'd the Windway & Runacross (Scapha flew) (sic) for Stromness".

They remained for the next ten days at Stromness, where, on June 21 they took on two more crew members, and finished stowing cargo. Another man, a sailor, joined them "to stay in the country". Their Gravesend pilot departed on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, and they were given the "all-clear" to leave the harbor.

They left at 11 am June 26, having waited "for high water – too little wind to do out against the tide". At this stage the captain notes that he has "17 seamen – passengers". All of the passengers on board were under the Captain's orders and so were available to him for any service he required.

On June 27 they went through Hoy Sound with a "Small Brigg bound on the Labrador Shore". It also had come from London. Their navy escort had been reduced to one ship, the Tartar, which saw them out on the North Atlantic. On this first day they sailed 86 miles out to sea. Until July 5, the winds were evidently favorable and most days saw them making good mileage.

On July 5 they had a minor scuffle. They met a Danish ship, out of Copenhagen, sailing from Santa Cruz. The crew and passengers were enlisted to provide firepower and a few shots were exchanged, but in the end both ships went their different ways without damage.

Two days later they encountered another Danish ship but on this occasion it was a peaceable meeting. This ship's purpose; "carries convicts stores & Provisions annually to their settlement in Davis Straits – where they winter and go on the whale fishery in the Spring".

The voyage continued making excellent mileage most days – a high of 157 miles on June 20, and a short spell of bad weather on July 17.

In late July they began their preparations for conditions in Hudson's Bay. July 24 log: "painting ice ropes & fixing ice Geer". Meanwhile the three ships maintained contact with each other.

On July 27 at noon they saw the North East bluff of Cape Resolution. On July 30, they were at a location, called by the Captain, Terra Neva, a place where they frequently met Eskimo to trade whalebone. On the following day they signaled the Eskimos to approach, and they traded "1 ton of middling siz'd bone". This location would seem to be near the entrance of Hudson's Straits, since for the next week they proceeded through the Straits, passing the "Great Island of God's Mercies", following the north shore and working their way to windward.

On Aug. 8 they passed "some stragglng pieces of ice", and identified Cape Charles. The next day they passed Digges Island, finally through the Strait, and on the day following the Captain separated from the other two ships to continue his route to James Bay, almost directly south.

From that point the voyage continued relatively uneventfully, with the exception of some heavy ice battering them somewhat on August 17, and a gale blowing up as they passed Cape Henrietta Maria on August 21.

They anchored off Eastmain on August 31 whereupon immediate unloading of cargo began, with the assistance of the sloops from the three posts in the Bay. The passengers who were to remain in the country were also disembarked, having spent three months in the passage from London to James Bay.

Although none of the passengers were mentioned by name in this log, Roberts Goodwin was one who disembarked at Eastmain where he remained for the next nine months.

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