

Vancouver informs us that in April, 1792, he discovered a sail, which soon hoisted American colors and fired a gun to leeward. She proved to be the ship *Columbia*, commanded by Mr. Robert Gray, of Boston, whence she had been absent nineteen months; and this brings us to the

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Vancouver sent a boat on board of the *Columbia*, to the officer of which Captain Gray communicated information of the extent of his visit into a strait which had attracted much attention. He said "he had penetrated only fifty miles into the strait in question, in an E. S. E. direction," etc. The inlet he supposed to be the same De Fuca had discovered, which opinion seemed to be universally received by all modern writers. He likewise informed them of his having been "off the mouth of a river in latitude $47^{\circ} 10'$, where the outset or reflux was so strong as to prevent his entering for nine days." Vancouver adds: "This was probably the opening passed by us on the forenoon of the 27th, and was apparently inaccessible, not from the current, but from the breakers that extended across it."

So Vancouver had no idea of there being a river there until he was informed by Captain Gray. He afterward admits Gray discovered the river; for, after leaving Nootka, in October, 1792, he says the serenity of the weather encouraged him to hope that he might be enabled, on his way South, to "re-examine the coast of New Albion, and particularly a river and harbor discovered by Mr. Gray, in the *Columbia*, between the 46th and 47th degrees of north latitude." Here is a distinct recognition, by an officer of the British navy, of the first discovery of that river by a citizen of the United States. In the year 1787, the expedition of which the ship *Columbia* formed part, was fitted out by the sagacious liberality and enlightened enterprise of several citizens of Boston, for the purposes of commerce and discovery on the Northwest coast. From the log-book of the *Columbia* we learn that on the 11th day of May, 1792, Captain Gray discovered the mouth of the *Columbia*; and, crossing the bar, "found this to be a large river of fresh water, up which he steered." Here they remained until the 20th.

That Captain Gray was the first to discover the *Columbia* river, it is believed, is not now denied. It only remains to inquire whether the discovery has been followed up by such possession and acts of ownership as manifested an intention on the part of the Government of the United States to appropriate the territory thus discovered. A reasonable time to manifest this disposition must depend upon the circumstances of each case. In the opinion of the committee, the only equitable rule is this: that such a length of time must have elapsed after the discovery as, under all the circumstances of the party making it, shall repel the presumption of his intention to follow up the discovery by actual possession; or, in other words, that the right to take possession is abandoned. It will be recollected that, at the time of this discovery, the United States had just commenced the organization of a new Government; that for many years afterward its undivided attention was required to its relations with foreign nations, to guard its own interests from the aggressions to which they were constantly exposed by the great belligerent powers of France and England. These circumstances, and indeed the whole history of the United States for the next twenty years, sufficiently account for their inattention to this new territory, without giving any countenance to the idea that they had abandoned their claim, or in the slightest degree weakening their right growing out of the discovery. Whatever opinion may be entertained of the propriety of this rule, there can be no doubt that the first discovery, followed by the first possession, no matter at how remote a period, constitutes a perfect title; and it is equally clear, that in case of simultaneous possession by two parties, one of whom is the discoverer, the right shall be in him.

In 1803, the expedition which was placed under the direction of Captains Lewis and Clark, was planned by Mr. Jefferson and approved by Congress, who made the necessary appropriations for carrying it into effect. The object was to ascend the Missouri to its source in the Rocky Mountains, and, crossing that ridge, to explore the *Columbia* from its source to its mouth in the Pacific. This duty was performed