

## INTRODUCTION TO THE ALASKA COAST PILOT.

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The information herein conveyed of the coast, harbors, climate, and productions of Alaska, formed the principal part of the official report of George Davidson, who was in charge of the party of the United States Coast Survey for the geographical reconnaissance of the coast of Alaska, in August, September, October, and November 1867.\* While engaged in this special work it was peculiarly desirable to collect information of those parts of the coast which must necessarily remain without direct examination for some years, to ascertain the resources, the climate, and products of the country, then almost unknown to the United States. In the absence of other official and authentic information, it has been deemed proper to retain the articles upon the climate, vegetable productions, fisheries, timber, fur-bearing animals, and population of the coast. These are important to our fishermen, whalers, fur-traders, miners, and ship-builders. Extended meteorological tables have been added as appendices; the vocabularies of Unalaska, Kadiak, Kenai, and Sitka, by Lisiansky, and of the Chin-shyáns, by Davidson, have also been added.

As fresh material is collected it will be incorporated, corrections made, and many articles not rigidly pertaining to a Coast Pilot, will be pruned or excluded.

The narratives of the old navigators, explorers, and fur-traders, have been in great part examined and collated for special descriptions of bays, harbors, straits, headlands, islands, coast line, currents, fishing banks, &c.

Among the authorities examined have been Müller, Coxe, Cooke, Meares, Portlock, Dixon, La Pérouse, Vancouver, Lisiansky, Kruzenstern, Kotzebue, Wrangell, Beechey, Seemann, George Simpson, Thomas Simpson, Venjaminoff, Tebenkoff, Holmberg, Grewingk, Annals of the Observatory at Sitka, together with many manuscript maps of the Russian-American Company, and verbal communications from the navigators of the company.

Some of the tracks of the old navigators have been plotted on the best maps extant, and great discrepancies, as in La Pérouse, reconciled. Many positions have been determined from their recorded bearings, &c.

In the official report a general description of the coast, and of the great Japan warm current throwing its waters thereon, preceded the remarks upon the climate, &c.; but it has been judged best to keep everything specially relating to the description of the coast in regular sequence. To understand the peculiarities

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\* The party were accommodated on board the United States revenue steamer Lincoln, Captain J. W. White, under the special direction of Captain W. A. Howard, United States revenue service, and their duties were subordinate to the special revenue and other duties of that vessel.