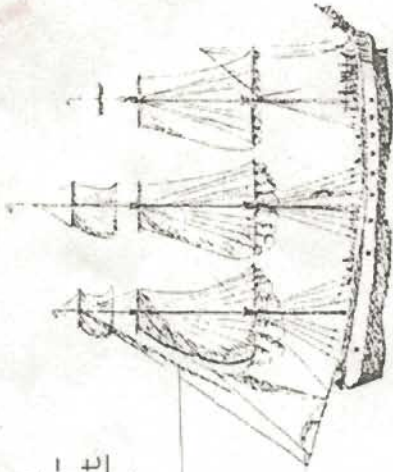


Cook, James

1784. The Journals of Captain Cook: The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery, 1776-1780. 3 volumes. London: - Strahan, Nicol and Cadell. Reproduced in, The Cook Inlet Collection. edited by Morgan Sherwood, Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Publ. Co. 1974.



**M**onday, May 25, 1778) I intended going through one of the channels that divide . . . [the Barren Isles]; but meeting with a strong current setting against us, I bore up, and went to the leeward of them all. Toward the evening, the weather, which had been hazy all day, cleared up, and we got sight of a very lofty promontory, whose elevated summit, forming two exceedingly high mountains, was seen above the clouds. This promontory I named *Cape Douglas*, in honour of my very good friend, Dr. Douglas, canon of Windsor. . . .

Between this point and Cape Douglas, the coast seemed to form a large and deep bay; which, from some smoke that had been seen on Point Banks, obtained the name of *Smokey Bay*.

At day-break, the next morning, being the 26th, having got to the Northward of the Barren Isles, we discovered more land, extending from Cape Douglas to the North. It formed a chain of mountains of vast height; one of which, far more conspicuous than the rest, was named *Mount St. Augustin*. The discovery of this land did not discourage us; as it was supposed to be wholly unconnected with the land of Cape Elizabeth. For, in a North North East direction, the sight was unlimited by every thing but the horizon. We also thought, that there was a passage to the North West, between Cape Douglas and Mount St. Augustin. In short, it was imagined, that the land on our larboard, to the North of Cape Douglas, was composed of a group of islands, disjoined by so many channels, any



one of which we might make use of according as the wind should serve.

With these flattering ideas, having a fresh gale at North North East, we stood to the North West, till eight o'clock, when we clearly saw that what we had taken for islands were summits of mountains, every where connected by lower land, which the haziness of the horizon had prevented us from seeing at a greater distance. This land was every where covered with snow, from the tops of the hills down to the very sea-beach; and had every other appearance of being part of a great continent. I was now fully persuaded that I should find no passage by this inlet; and my persevering in the search of it here, was more to satisfy other people, than to confirm my own opinion.

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(Saturday, 30) Until we got thus far [by tacking up the Inlet], the water had retained the same degree of saltness at low, as at high-water; and, at both periods, was as salt as that in the ocean. But now the marks of a river displayed themselves. The water taken up this ebb, when at the lowest, was found to be very considerably fresher, than any we had hitherto tasted; insomuch that I was convinced that we were in a large river, and not in a strait, communicating with the Northern seas. But as we had proceeded thus far, I was desirous of having stronger proofs; and, therefore, weighed with the next flood in the morning of the 31st, and plied higher up, or rather drove up with the tide; for we had but little wind.

About eight o'clock, we were visited by several of the natives, in one large, and several small canoes. The latter carried only one person each; and some had a paddle with a blade at each end, after the manner of the Esquimaux. In the large canoes were men, women, and children. Before they reached the ship, they displayed a leathern frock upon a long pole, as a sign, as we understood it, of their peaceable intentions. The frock they conveyed into the ship, in return for some trifles which I gave them. I could observe no difference between the persons, dress, ornaments, and boats of these people, and those of Prince William's Sound, except that the small canoes were rather of a less size, and carried only one man. We procured from them some of their fur dresses, made of the skins of sea-otters, martins, hares, and other animals; a few of their darts; and a small supply of salmon and halibut. In exchange for

these they took old clothes, beads, and pieces of iron. We found that they were in possession of large iron knives, and of sky-blue glass beads, such as we had found amongst the natives of Prince William's Sound. These latter they seemed to value much, and consequently those which we now gave them. But their inclination led them, especially, to ask for large pieces of iron; which metal, if I was not much mistaken, they called by the name of *goone*; though, like their neighbours in Prince William's Sound, they seemed to have many significations to one word. They evidently spoke the same language; as the words *keeta*, *naema*, *oonaka*, and a few others of the most common we heard in that Sound, were also frequently used by this new tribe. After spending about two hours between the one ship and the other, they all retired to the Western shore.

At nine o'clock, we came to an anchor, in sixteen fathoms water, about two leagues from the West shore, and found the ebb already begun. At its greatest strength, it ran only three knots in the hour, and fell, upon a perpendicular, after we had anchored, twenty-one feet. The weather was misty, with drizzling rain, and clear, by turns. At the clear intervals, we saw an opening between the mountains on the Eastern shore, bearing East from the station of the ships, with low land, which we supposed to be islands lying between us and the main land. Low land was also seen to the Northward, that seemed to extend from the foot of the mountains on the one side, to those on the other; and, at low water, we perceived large shoals stretching out from this low land; some of which were at no great distance from us. From these appearances, we were in some doubt whether the inlet did not take an Easterly direction, through the above opening; or whether that opening was only a branch of it, and the main channel continued its Northern direction through the low land now in sight. The continuation and direction of the chain of mountains on each side of it, strongly indicated the probability of the latter supposition.

To determine this point, and to examine the shoals, I dispatched two boats, under the command of the master [Bligh]; and, as soon as the flood-tide made, followed with the ships; but, as it was a dead calm, and the tide strong, I anchored, after driving about ten miles in an East direction. At the lowest of the preceding ebb, the water at the surface, and for near a foot below it, was found to be perfectly fresh; retaining, however, a considerable degree of



saltness at a greater depth. Besides this, we had now many other, and but too evident, proofs of being in a great river. Such as low shores; very thick and muddy water; large trees, and all manner of dirt and rubbish, floating up and down with the tide. In the afternoon, the natives, in several canoes, paid us another visit; and trafficked with our people for some time, without ever giving us reason to accuse them of any act of dishonesty.

At two o'clock next morning, being the 1st of June, the master returned, and reported that he found the inlet, or rather, river, contracted to the breadth of one league, by low land on each side, through which it took a Northerly direction. He proceeded three leagues through this narrow part, which he found navigable for the largest ships, being from twenty to seventeen fathoms deep. The least water, at a proper distance from the shore and shoals, was ten fathoms; and this was before he entered the narrow part. While the ebb or stream run down, the water was perfectly fresh; but, after the flood made, it became brackish; and, toward high water, very much so, even as high up as he went. He landed upon an island, which lies between this branch and the Eastern one; and upon it saw some currant bushes, with the fruit already set; and some other fruit-trees and bushes, unknown to him. The soil appeared to be clay, mixed with sand. About three leagues beyond the extent of his search, or to the Northward of it, he observed there was another separation in the Eastern chain of mountains, through which he supposed the river took a North East direction; but it seemed rather more probable that this was only another branch, and that the main channel kept its Northern direction, between the two ridges or chains of mountains before mentioned. . . .

All hopes of finding a passage were now given up. But as the ebb was almost spent, and we could not return against the flood, I thought I might as well take the advantage of the latter, to get a nearer view of the Eastern branch; and, by that means, finally to determine whether the low land on the East side of the river was an island, as we had supposed, or not. With this purpose in view, we weighed with the first of the flood, and, having a faint breeze at North East, stood over for the Eastern shore, with boats ahead, sounding. Our depth was from twelve to five fathoms; the bottom a hard gravel, though the water was exceedingly muddy. At eight o'clock, a fresh breeze sprung up at East, blowing in an opposite direction to our course; so that I despaired of reaching the entrance

of the river, to which we were plying up, before high-water. But thinking that what the ships could not do, might be done by boats, I dispatched two, under the command of Lieutenant King, to examine the tides, and to make such other observations as might give us some insight into the nature of the river.

At ten o'clock, finding the ebb begun, I anchored in nine fathoms water, over a gravelly bottom. Observing the tide to be too strong for the boats to make head against it, I made a signal for them to return on board, before they had got half way to the entrance of the river they were sent to examine, which bore from us South 80° East, three leagues distant. The principal information gained by this tide's work, was the determining that all the low land, which we had supposed to be an island or islands, was one continued tract, from the banks of the great river, to the foot of the mountains, to which it joined; and that it terminated at the South entrance of this Eastern branch, which I shall distinguish by the name of *River Turnagain*. On the North side of this river, the low land again begins, and stretches out from the foot of the mountains, down to the banks of the great river; so that, before the river Turnagain, it forms a large bay, on the South side of which we were now at anchor; and where we had from twelve to five fathoms, from half-flood to high-water. . . .

If the discovery of this great river [or inlet, called by Lord Sandwich, *Cook's River*], which promises to vie with the most considerable ones already known to be capable of extensive inland navigation, should prove of use either to the present, or to any future age, the time we spent in it ought to be the less regretted. But to us, who had a much greater object in view, the delay thus occasioned was an essential loss. The season was advancing apace. We knew not how far we might have to proceed to the South; and we were now convinced, that the continent of North America extended farther to the West, than, from the modern most reputable charts, we had reason to expect. This made the existence of a passage into Baffin's or Hudson's Bays less probable; or, at least, shewed it to be of greater extent. It was a satisfaction to me, however, to reflect, that, if I had not examined this very considerable inlet, it would have been assumed, by speculative fabricators of geography, as a fact, that it communicated with the sea to the North, or with Baffin's or Hudson's Bay to the East; and been marked, perhaps, on future maps of the world, with greater

precision, and more certain signs of reality, than the invisible, because imaginary. Straits of de Fuca, and de Fonte.

In the afternoon, I sent Mr. King again, with two armed boats, with orders to land, on the Northern point of the low land, on the South East side of the river; there to display the flag; to take possession of the country and river, in his Majesty's name; and to bury in the ground a bottle, containing some pieces of English coin, of the year 1772, and a paper, on which was inscribed the names of our ships, and the date of our discovery. In the mean time, the ships were got under sail, in order to proceed down the river. The wind still blue fresh, Easterly; but a calm ensued, not long after we were under way; and the flood-tide meeting us off the point where Mr. King landed (and which thence got the name of *Point Possession*), we were obliged to drop anchor in six fathoms water, with the point bearing South, two miles distant.

When Mr. King returned, he informed me, that as he approached the shore, about twenty of the natives made their appearance, with their arms extended; probably, to express thus their peaceable disposition, and to shew that they were without weapons. On Mr. King's, and the gentlemen with him, landing, with musquets in their hands, they seemed alarmed, and made signs expressive of their request to lay them down. This was accordingly done; and then they suffered the gentlemen to walk up to them, and appeared to be cheerful and sociable. They had with them a few pieces of fresh salmon, and several dogs. Mr. Law, surgeon of the Discovery, who was one of the party, having bought one of the latter, took it down toward the boat, and shot it dead, in their sight. This seemed to surprize them exceedingly; and, as if they did not think themselves safe in such company, they walked away; but it was soon after discovered, that their spears, and other weapons, were hid in the bushes close behind them. Mr. King also informed me, that the ground was swampy, and the soil poor, light, and black. It produced a few trees and shrubs; such as pines, alders, birch, and willows; rose and currant bushes; and a little grass; but they saw not a single plant in flower. 