

The Life and Explorations of George

Vancouver by Chris Wagner

Born 1758 (Van-Coeverden)- Kings Lynn (went to Kings Lynn Grammar School). Mother died when 11 years old, mainly brought up by 3 older sisters

1772-1775 Junior Midshipman on Cook's 2nd Voyage, to Southern Hemisphere (age 13 years)- father had good contacts

1776-1780 Midshipman on Cook's 3rd and Last Voyage to Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) and NW Pacific

1781-1789 Lieutenant on Royal Navy ships in English Channel, but mostly in West Indies (from age of 23 years)

1790-1795 Captain (32 years old), and led 4 year voyage to NW Pacific, wintering in Hawaii (comprehensive mapping of NW coast up to Lat. 60 deg, helped to establish NW as British Colony and good relations with Hawaii)

1796- retired a broken and ill man to Petersham, near Richmond, London

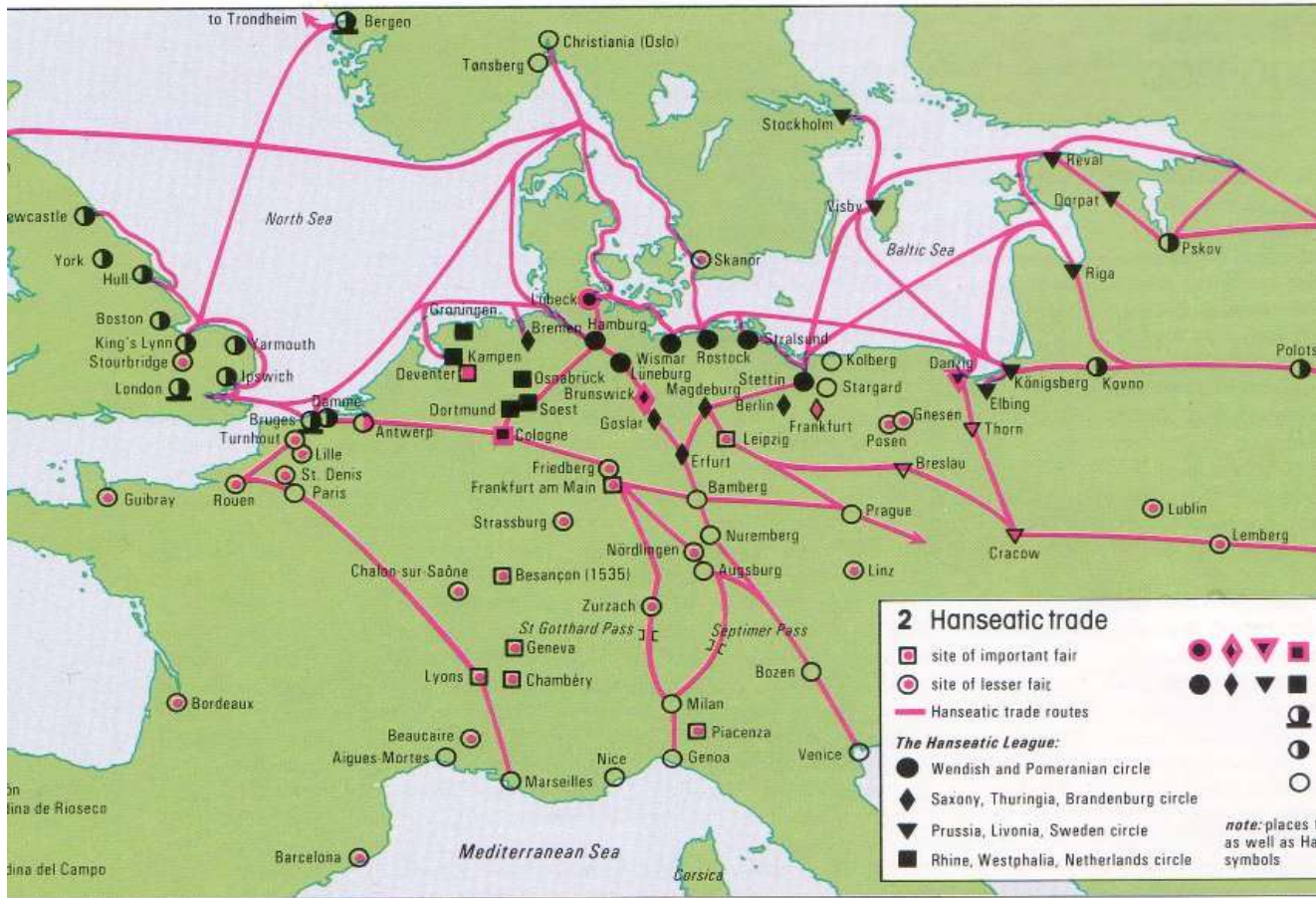
1798- died and is buried in Petersham

Sources: Various biographies and 4 volume "Vancouver-A Voyage of Discovery to North Pacific Ocean and Round the World, 1791-1795" in Cambridge University Library



Comparison, Vancouver and Nelson Lives

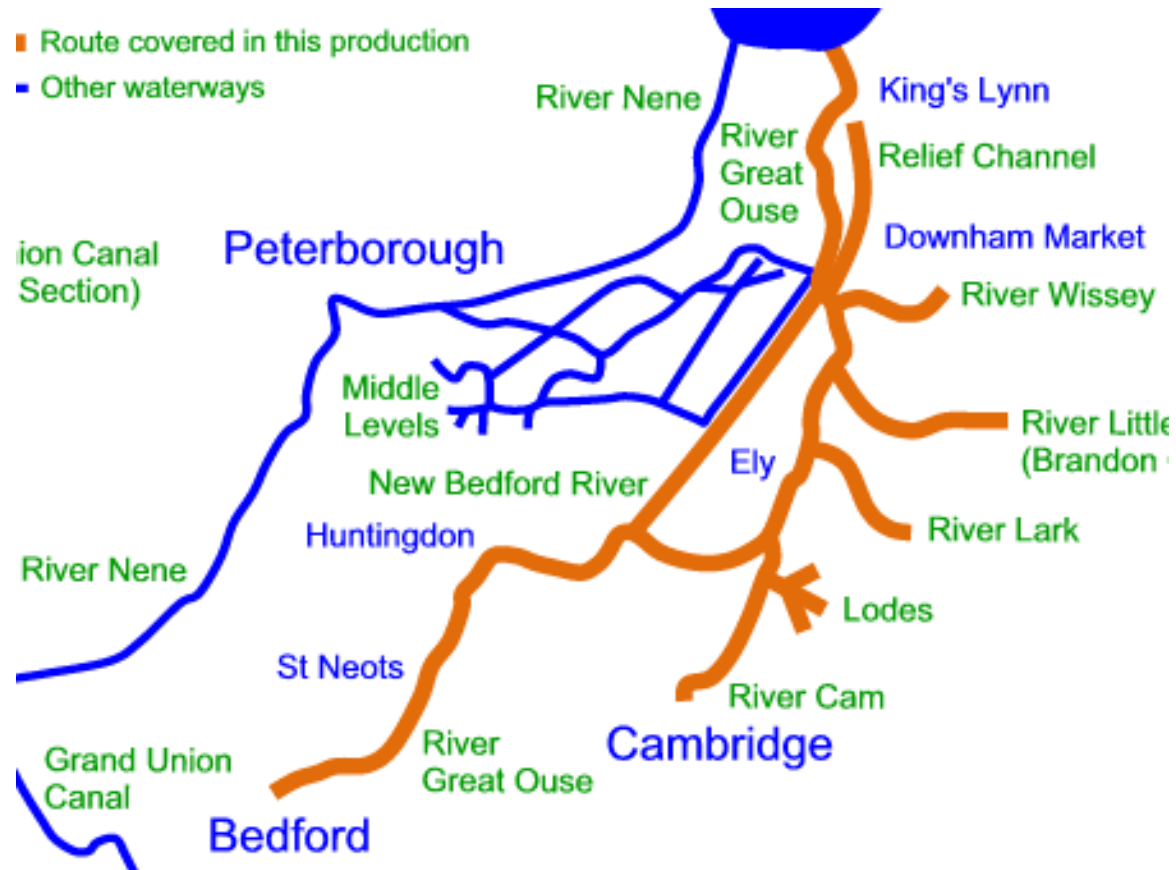
	Vancouver	Nelson
Born, North Norfolk	1757, Kings Lynn	1758, Burnham Thorpe
App. Midshipman	1770 (13 years old)	1771 (13 years old)
App. Lieutenant	1780 (after return from Cook's last voyage)	1777
App. Captain	1789	1781
West Indies	1782-83	1777-83
Next years after 1783	With Royal Navy in West Indies	Inactive, paid off 1787
commander	1791-1795, NW Pacific Exploration	1793, recalled, Napoleonic wars
Died	1798, obscurity	1805, national hero



Kings Lynn-Hanseatic League Port from 12th-16th century

1157 Henry 2 allowed League free from all tolls in London and to trade at fairs throughout England

1211 **Stourbridge Common, Cambridge** , first Trade Fair and largest in Europe, by 1589 open from 24 August to 29 September. Network of Hanseatic cities/towns/over 100



Area Served by Port at Kings Lynn

Great Ouse catchment, including River Cam from 12th century. Also probably River Nene catchment and certainly when Middle Levels drainage was constructed. Then also link to Grand Union Canal.

From Kings Lynn to Downham Market, river was tidal

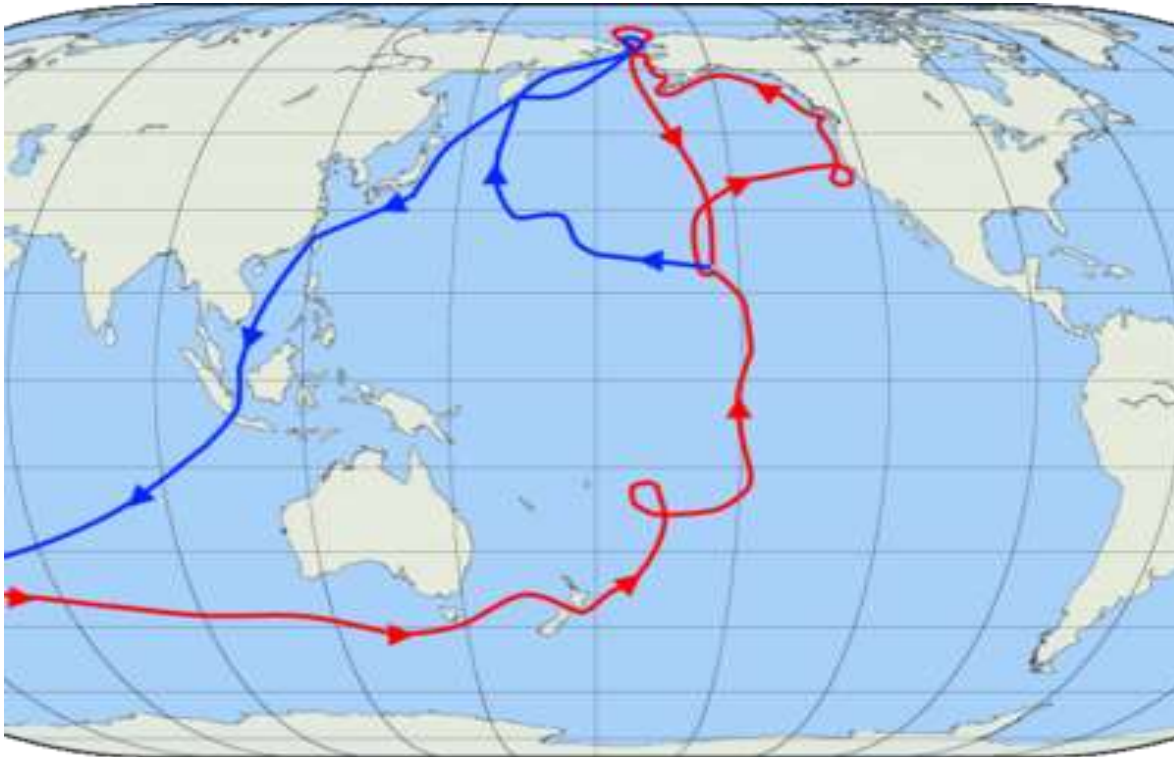
Midshipman on Cook's 2nd and Last Voyages, 1772-75 and 1776-1780

2nd Voyage to high southern latitudes and find Terra Australis, to latitudes above 45 deg.-high seas, cold and fogs. “On the brow of Resolution surrounded by large islands of ice, young V went furthest south yelling “ne plus ultra””

Remarkable training and experience from Cook covering navigation, seamanship and health of crew (scurvy and use of “saur”kraut”), to quote “It would be difficult indeed to imagine a better education for a young seaman than the three years on the *Resolution*”

Vancouver venerated Cook and was considered very talented by Cook

Last Voyage- to search out NW passage, reached Bering Strait, chosen by Cook. Witnessed his death



Midshipman on Cook's 3rd Voyage (July 1776-Oct 1780) to explore NW passage

- Outward via New Zealand, Tahiti and **Discovery of Sandwich Islands (Hawaii)** January 1778
- NW Coast ("discovered" Nootka Sound) to Cook Inlet and through Bering Strait (Aug 1778) , returned to winter in Hawaii.
- Cook 50 years old, ill, rages- killed February 1779 in Hawaii. Witnessed by Vancouver-recovered his remains.
- Also death of consort ship captain, greater responsibility for Vancouver, ships returned to Bering Sea and then returned to England by east coast of China
- **On return voyage, crew noted very high value of sea otter pelts in China**

End of Cook's 3rd Voyage (October 1780) and Sea Otter Pelt Trade

- Enduring legacy of voyage, not NW passage, was evident major wealth from sea otter pelts (3ft x 6 ft soft fur) trade with China combined with discovery of Hawaii, as ideal base for refitting
- “Urge (Rage!)” of seamen to return to Cook River (Inlet)
- With end of American War of Independence in 1783, thousands of competent sailors available, British, America, Spain (ships based at Nootka Sound) and Russia competing
- Captain Etches (British) suggested to Joseph Banks a penal colony on coast similar to Australia (1787)
- By 1789, several competing countries on fur pelts trade with China and increasingly chaotic and violent-15000 pelts annually
- **To control this, need for imperial presence and with this need to know geography of all the inlets**

Vancouver, Period 1780-1790

- December 1780 (2 months after returning and deciding on life sea)-1782, promoted to Lieutenant on *Martin* in North Sea – several European enemies during American War of Independence
- 1782-83 *Martin* in Caribbean, sea battle with Spanish
- 1783 *Fame* in Caribbean, squalor, disease in Royal Navy and press-ganged crews
- 1784-89 *Europa* (with Admiral Gardner) on West Indies Station
Over the 5 years, V undertook many surveys including full coast of Jamaica. Not possible for ships to go to northern ports during hot summer hurricane season due to American W of I.

Vancouver suffered from malaria, dysentery and other tropical diseases (West Indies Station most notoriously disease ridden)

1789 Nootka Sound Incident

Nootka Sound (or Friendly Cove)

West coast of Island (now Vancouver)- up to 3300 mm of rain, fog, storms
“known as graveyard of the Pacific”

Nootka Sound Incident-Spanish Commander, Martinez (hot-head?) seized several British ships (fur trade) and imprisoned crews. Martinez claimed territory for Spain, service witnessed by indian villagers and leader, Maquinna (rather amused)

Spanish policy of excluding all foreign ships from New World ports

After news of ship seizures, reached London in 1790, need for Britain “to provide an impressive show of imperial power”, hence the **NW Pacific Expedition**



Mission (Vancouver 34 years old)

Following **Nootka Sound Incident**, William Pitt, PM, demanded from Spain *“an immediate and adequate satisfaction of the outrages committed by Martinez”* and to *“crush any lingering Spanish claims...”*

- Summer 1790 Spain turned to France for support, but unsuccessful (France in early stages of revolution) Spain “backed down” leading to the **Nootka Sound Convention**.
- This ensured neither Britain nor Spain could claim sovereignty over all of Pacific America.- where was northern limit of Spanish sovereignty, Nootka Sound (Spain) 47 deg or 40 deg.- north of San Francisco (Britain)-

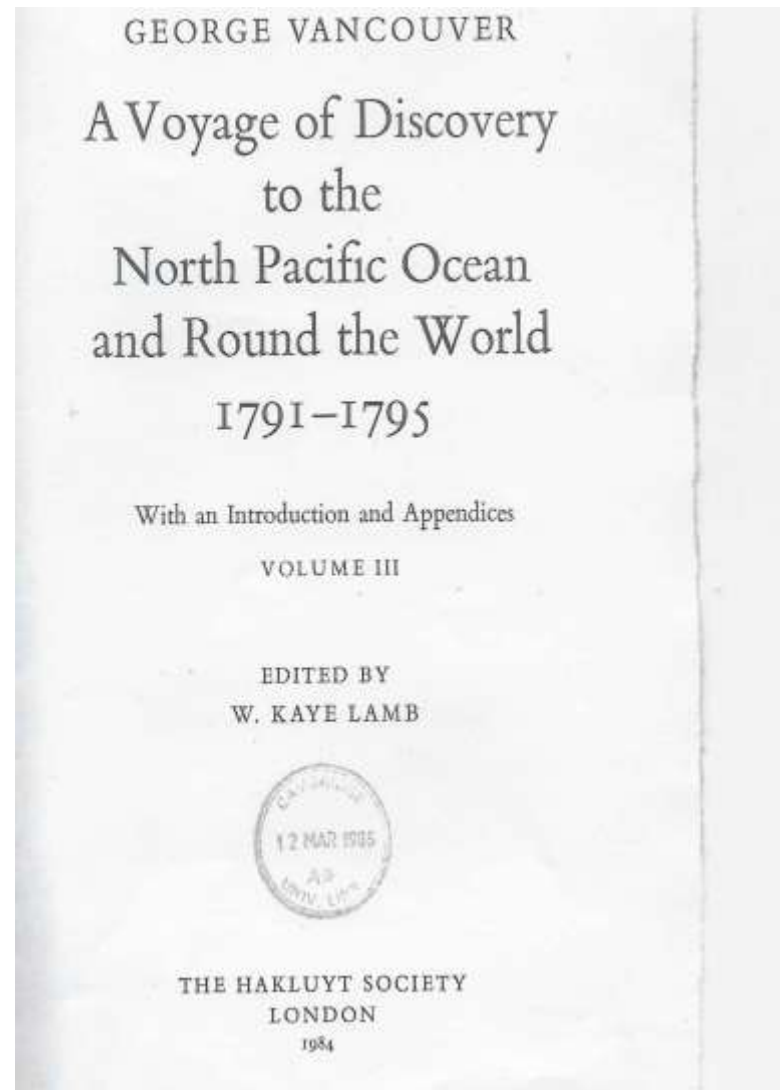
Original mission:

- negotiate with Spanish northern limit of border (as above)
- establish new colony on NW coast to assist fur trade;
- Search NW passage northwards from latitude 51 deg up to Cook Inlet and southwards to latitude 40 deg, carefully examining such inlets/rivers which may afford communication with interior (also up Cook’s Inlet/River)
- To defend British interests with force and to resist any Spanish claims to sovereignty

Summary of Further mission

- To be both diplomatic representative of Great Britain and scientific explorer and surveyor
- Completion of nautical survey from latitude 30 deg (Baja California) to Cooks Inlet (latitude 60 deg)

“Neither Spain nor Britain seemed concerned about thousands of people already living along the coast”



A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Round the World 1791-1795

Late Appointment of Vancouver as Captain -originally Vancouver to go as First Lieutenant under Captain Henry Roberts (ex-colleague) to South Atlantic, then command and destination changed when London heard of Nootka Sound Incident

Ships, *Discovery* and consort ship, *Chatham*

Officers: Lieutenants Madge, Baker, Puget, Manby, Whidbey (with Vancouver in West Indies), Broughton (Chatham). About 100 crew total

As typical, all officers, including midshipmen, generally chosen by Captain. Notable exceptions were;

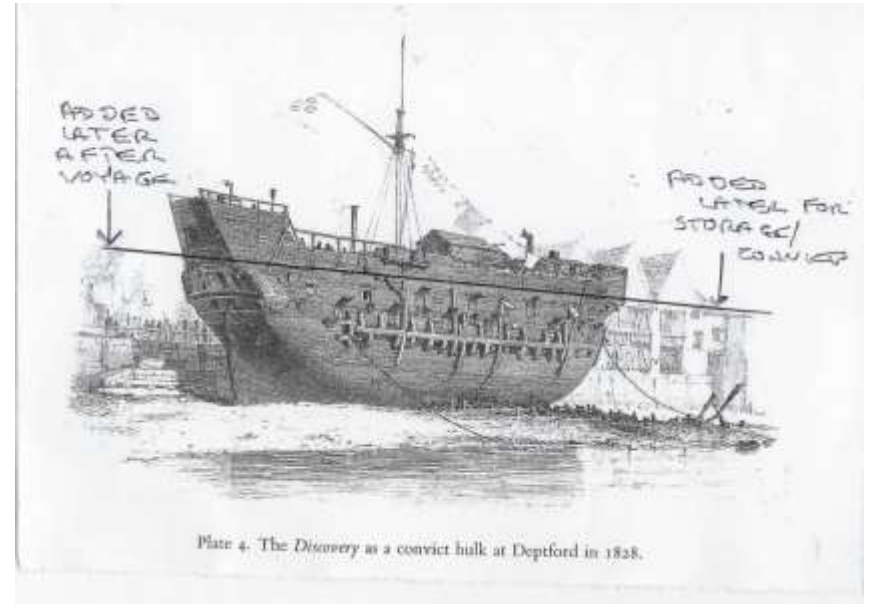
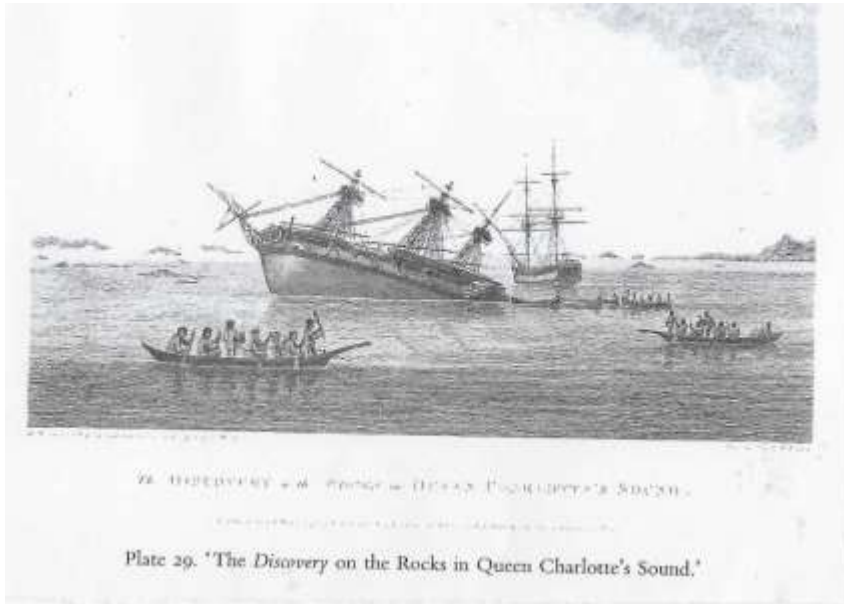
- two midshipmen, **one Thomas Pitt**, 16 years old, brought on board by father, Lord Camelford (peerage started in 1784, before MP for Old Sarum and Okehampton) – V pressured to accept .
- **Archibald Menzies**, Naturalist, appointed by Sir Joseph Banks, with requirement that answerable (and reporting directly) to Banks rather than Vancouver. Later stand-in surgeon on voyage. Banks “meddling”-12ft by 9 ft plant cage on quarterdeck (Cook had similar problem-naturalist, Forster “*many times he came close to being thrown overboard*” foisted on him by Banks)

Discovery (named after Cook's Ship)

100 ft long and weight 330 tonnes

On rocks, but with consort ship, *Chatham*
(53 ft long and 130 tons) behind

Discovery post voyage with extra deck
as convict hulk at Deptford, 1828



Outward Journey

- **Mid-March 1791**, Lord Camelford brings his son, Thomas Pitt, to Falmouth requesting his inclusion on voyage (no need as enough midshipmen)
- **Sailed 1st April** from Falmouth
- May. *Discovery* sailed well to Tenerife(cursed the “plant cabin”). Chatham slow and unstable-needed more ballast.
- Vancouver suffered serious relapses
- **August-September**, Indian and Southern Oceans (half crew ill with dysentery)
- Dusty Bay, New Zealand crew “drank a cheerful glass to memory of Captain Cook”
- **November**, Tahiti- Vancouver does not allow crews ashore-well aware of Mutiny on the Bounty 2 years earlier (Bligh had been sailing master with V on Cook’s 3rd Voyage)
- Left Tahiti **January 1792** (Thomas Pitt flogged in cabin-never forgot)- **increasingly unhappy ship**
- Vancouver ‘s personality-lack of confidence/rigid protocol
- **18th April**- reached California coast, started north and Strait of Juan de Fuca
- **February 1793** *Discovery and Chatham* back In in Hawaii

NW Pacific Coast treacherous coast, high winds and fog)

**“Greatest Maritime survey ever undertaken”
(approx 10 000 miles of coastline covered ?)**

1st Season (1792)

- A** Puget Sound (present day, Seattle)
- B** Strait of Juan de Fuco- rumoured waterway through North America and Strait of Georgia behind Vancouver Island- -present city of Vancouver

2nd Season (1793)- (Thomas Pitt, midshipman sent home in supply ship, *Daedalus*)

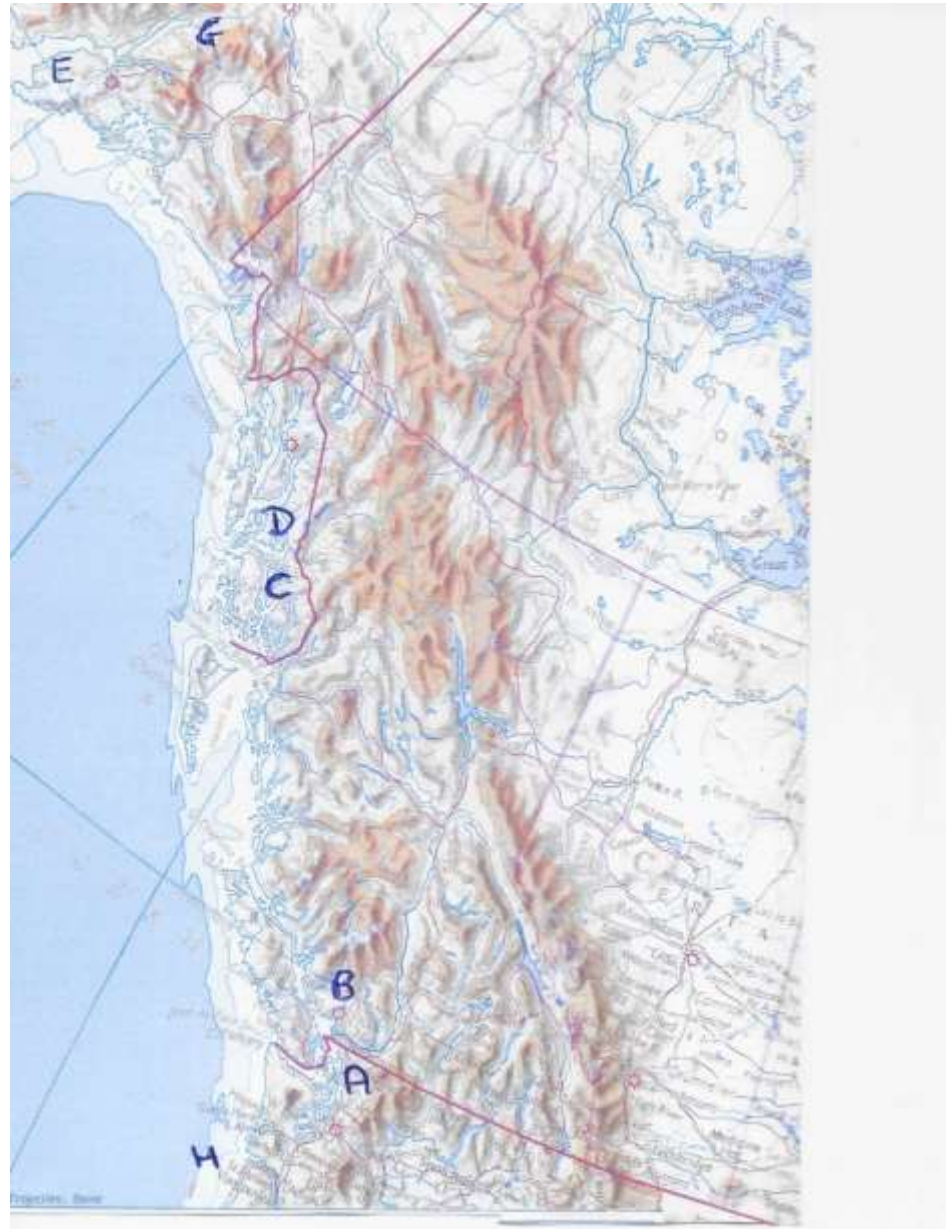
Inlets and coves for 800 miles north

- C** Skeena River to Cape Decision (july 1793)
- D** Portland Inlet

(Alexander Mackenzie, fur trader/explorer, crossed from Hudson’s Bay overland and arrived at similar time, July 1793)

3rd Season (1794)

- E** Cook Inlet (present city of Anchorage at G)
- H** Mouth of Columbia River (on return down NW Pacific Coast)



Puget Sound and Straits of Georgia (A and B) (from Voyage of Discovery)



Figure 1. Puget Sound to Birch Bay. Base map by Michael A.

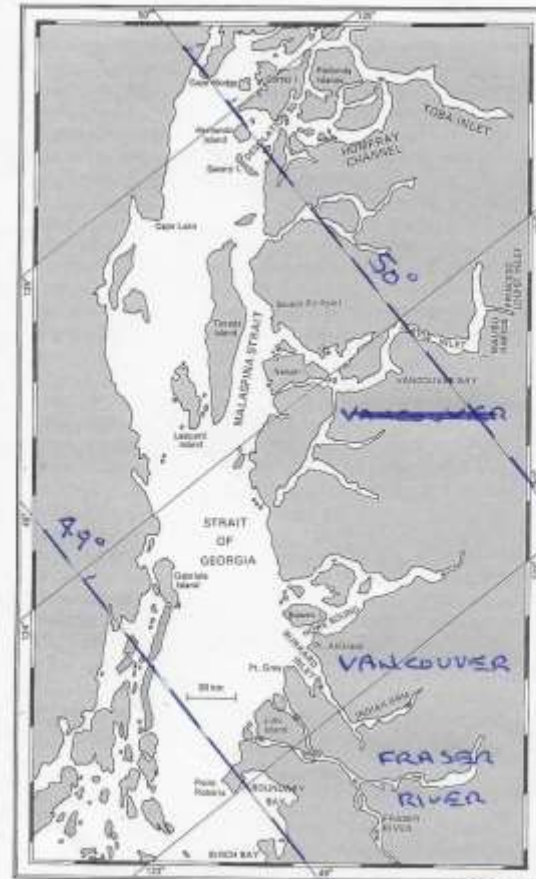


Figure 2. Birch Bay to Cape Mudge. Base map by Michael B.

Prince of Wales Island and Portland Inlet (C and D) (from "Voyage of Discovery")

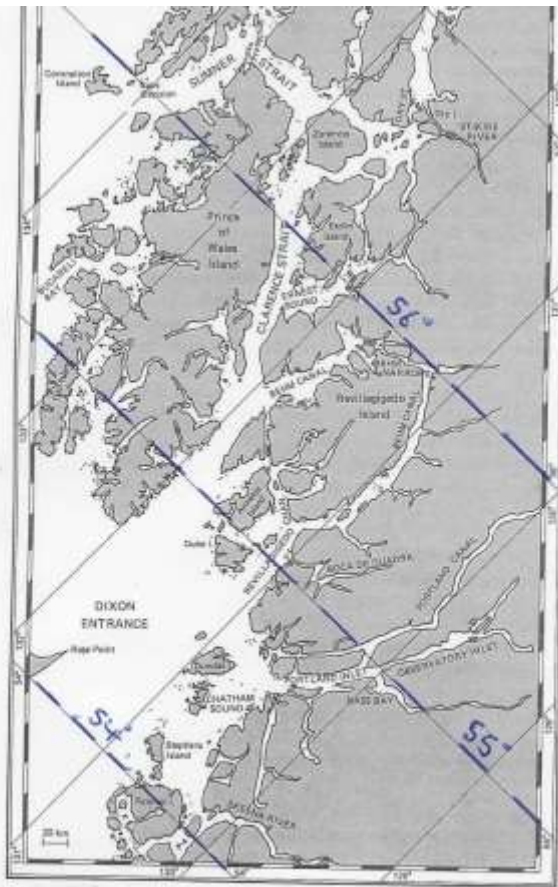


Figure 6. Skeena River to Cape Decision. Base map by Michael E. Leek.

JULY 1792 (C)

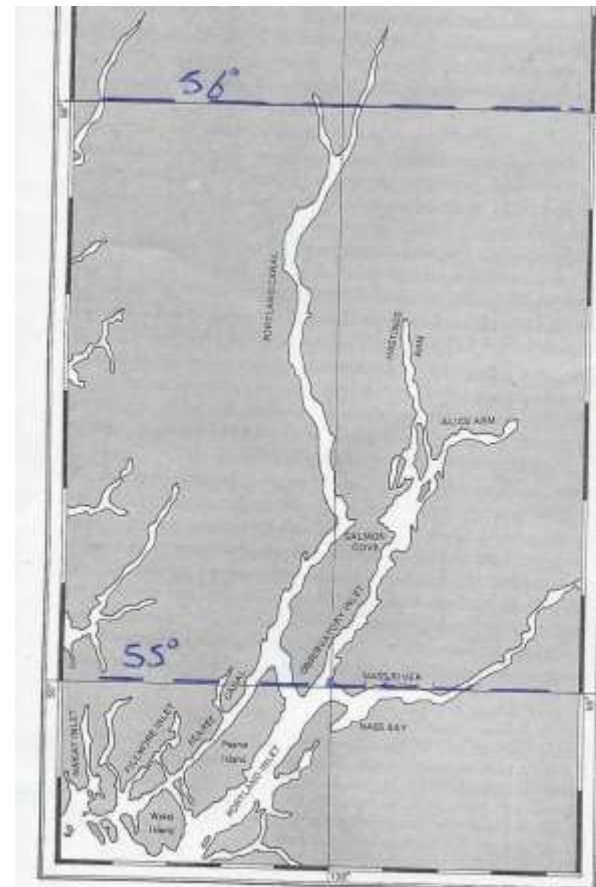


Figure 7. Portland Canal and Observatory Inlet. Base map by Michael E. Leek.

(D)

NW Coast

1792 and 1793 Seasons

1792 Season Sailed Juan de Fuca Strait and Queen Charlotte Strait- V first European into narrows where now city of Vancouver.

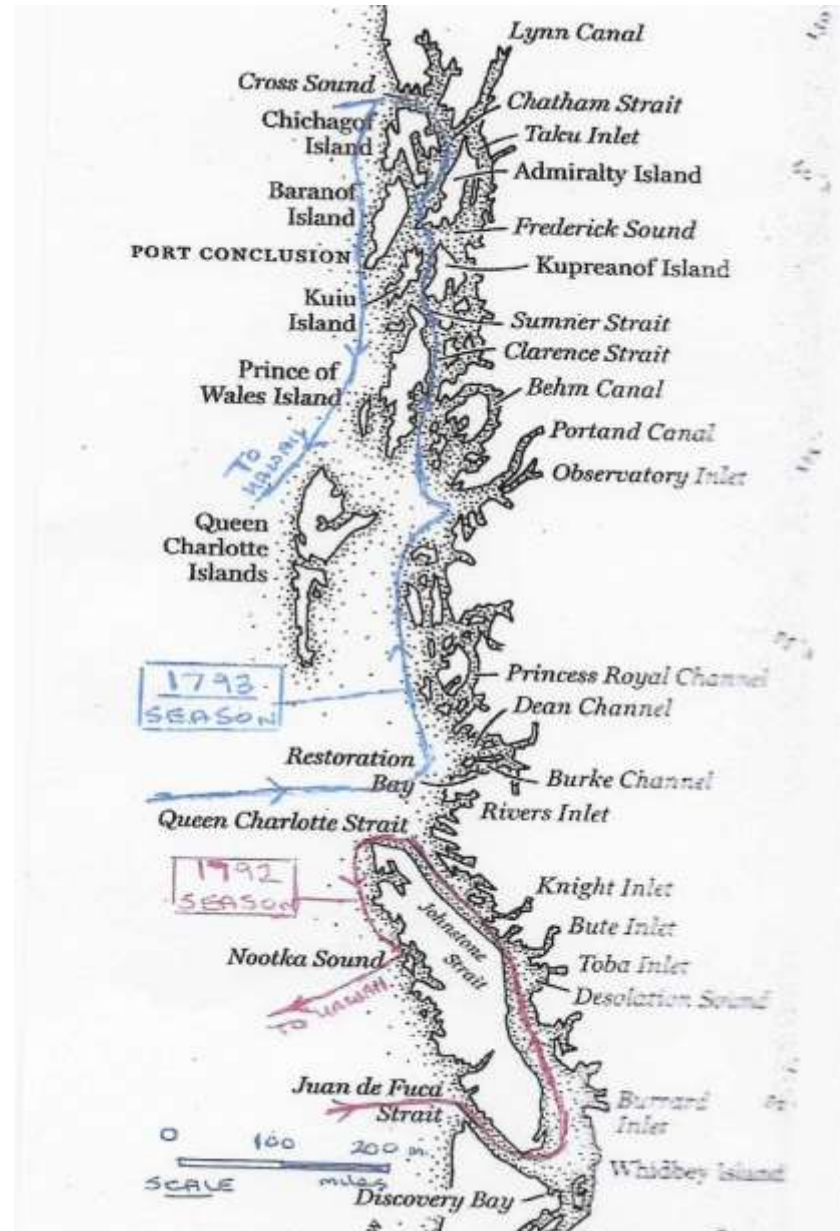
- To Nootka Sound, negotiated Nootka Sound Convention with Spanish commander.
- Good relationship with local chief, Maquinna
- Wintered in Hawaii

1793 Season Sailed to north, about 1000 miles, but not as far as Cook Inlet (1794 Season).

- Detailed mapping (mostly with small rowing boats)
- Wintered in Hawaii

Hydrographic surveys in both seasons

- Need to confirm longitude by measurement of eclipses of Jupiter's moons
- Very accurate surveys (highly regarded-“still being used in modern day”)



Present day views



Sandwich Islands-Hawaii

(passed through March 1792, wintered 1792-93 and 1793-94)

Chart produced



**some officers climbed Mauna
Loa, 14000 ft**



Local Chiefs with whom Vancouver had good relations- “V had a natural facility for languages”

(In Hawaii, 92-93, Vancouver had to deal with killing previous year of Capt Hergest and Gooch from the supply ship, *Daedalus*)

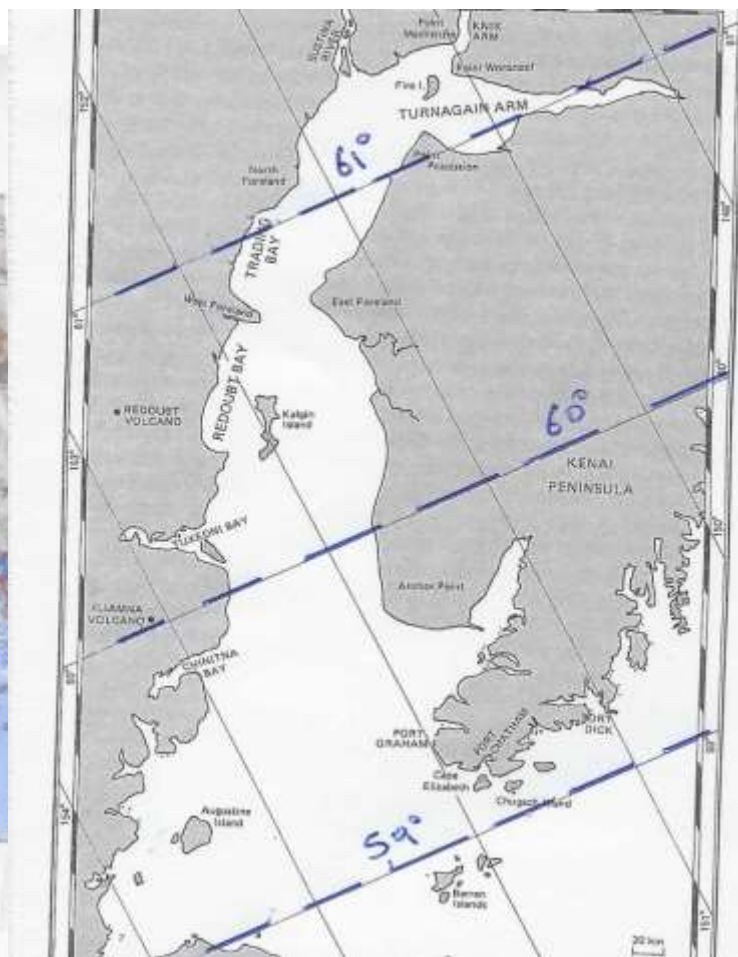
Kamehameha 1- Hawaii (wintered there, 1792-93 and 1793-94)



Maquinna, chief at Nookha Sound and part of NW Coast



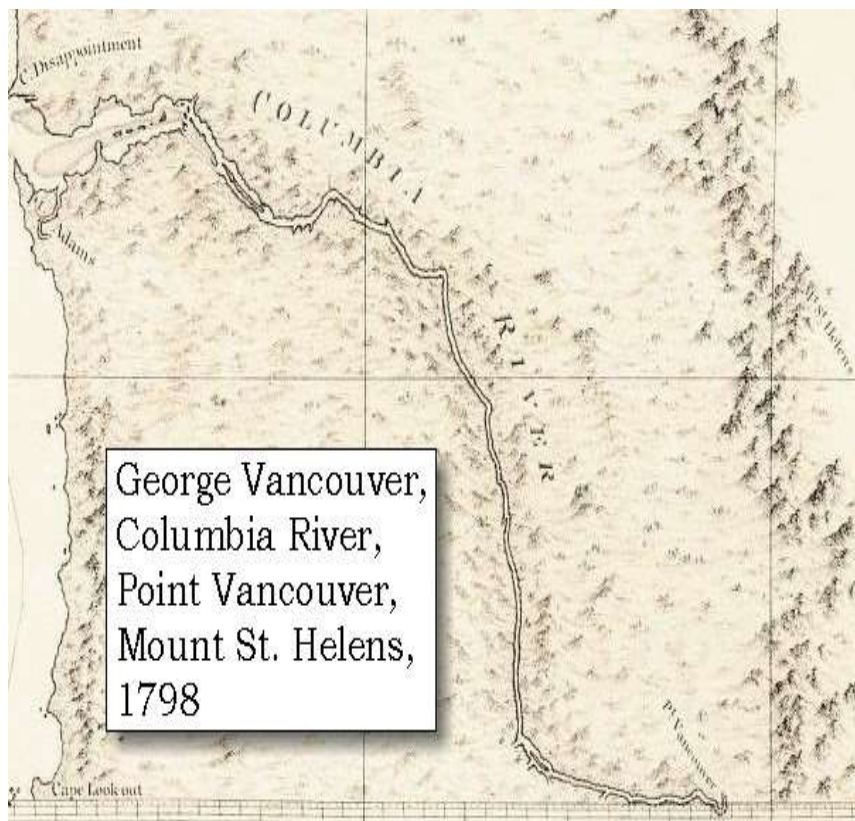
Cook Inlet-limit of Vancouver voyage (last season-1794) to North required to check for NW passage)



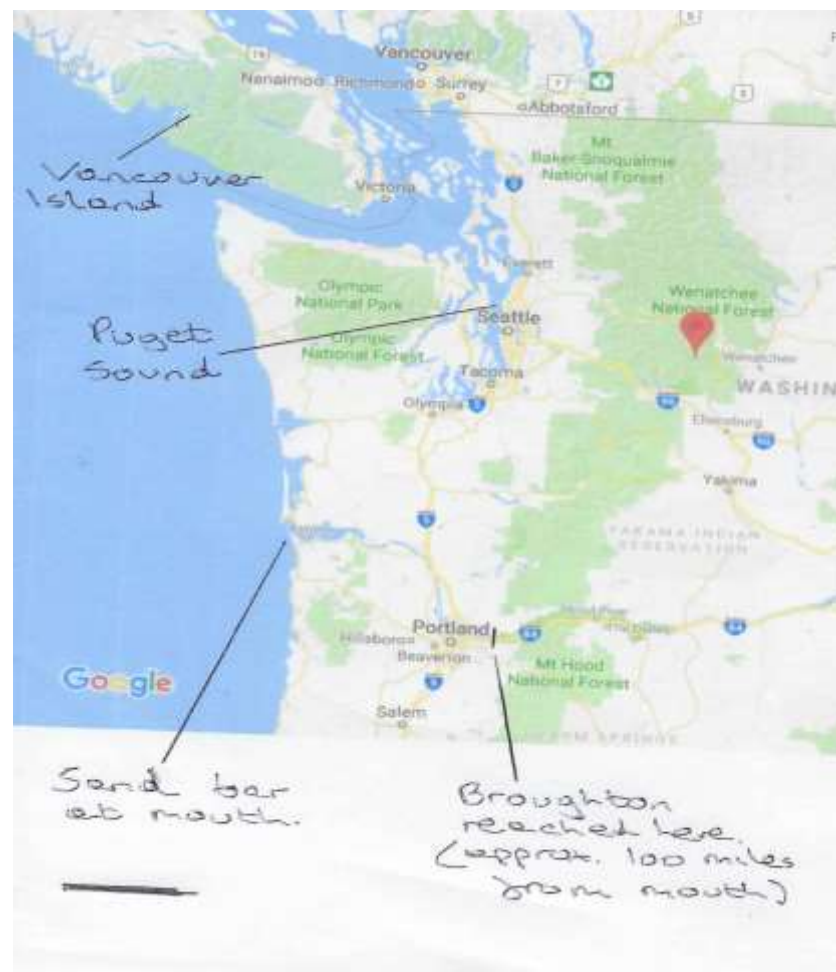
Columbia River and Strait of Juan de Fuca

(both missed on Cook's 3rd Voyage –treacherous seas and fog, “wind-blown ships, appalling squalls”-Capes Foulweather and Flattery, named by Cook)

Last Season (1794)-Lt Broughton reached 100 miles in small boats



In 1805 Lewis and Clark reached Columbia river overland



Return Voyage, April 1794-October 1795

No communications/advice from London covering from mid 1793 (negotiations with Spanish) through to 1795-very demoralising for Vancouver

- April 1794 (very cold) Cook Inlet (River)- confirmed to be blocked
- August on NW coast (detailed surveys) concern over V's health- clearly ill, erratic behaviour
- September Nootka Sound (Friendly Cove)
- Mid October San Francisco (still no communications from home).
- March 1795 Valparaiso
- May-June Around Cape Horn, (terrifying snowstorms, mountainous waves)
- Mid October, *Discovery* and *Chatham* arrived home (London) to little fanfare (war with France more important). No welcome/receptions

2nd Lord Camelford (Thomas Pitt)

- Imposed on Vancouver at Falmouth just before departure by his father, as 16 year old midshipman (not needed)
- Numerous floggings and also masthead

To quote from a Vancouver biography, *“to flog a midshipman was socially questionable, but to flog the son of a peer was to court disaster and to flog this one was sheer folly. For Thomas Pitt was closely related to William Pitt, the Prime Minister, and John Pitt, Earl of Chatham, the First Lord of the Admiralty.”*

- Sent home by Vancouver in 17 93.
- Whilst still on the Voyage, his father died and he became 2nd Lord Camelford (this was of course not known) . His sister married Lord Grenville, the Foreign Secretary.
- Camelford later joined a ship bound for West Indies, Captain Edward Riou, *Guardian*, refused to sign certificate for his promotion.
- Later he shot and killed Lieut. Charles Peterson for alleged mutiny.
- Camelford died, 3 years later, 1802, (killed in a duel) which also ended the peerage.

Nikolai Tolstoy’s biography *“The Half Mad Lord”* said *“he acted at the time in a violent and eccentric manner more appropriate to the Spanish Main a century earlier”*



Back in London, 1796-1798

- Pay since 1790 (start of voyage) delayed by two years after return
- Challenged to duel by Thomas Pitt (now 2nd Lord Camelford)
- Attacked by Lord Camelford in Conduit Street (see cartoon- next slide) and mocked in press and public gossip
- Joseph Banks set out to engineer Vancouver's disgrace (using Letters of Menzies, but Menzies not assisting)-
- Problem for Vancouver- he had been away so much, no friends/patrons in England- just his brothers
- Died 1798
- To quote *"how could a man who devoted his whole life to his country and who accomplished great things that would benefit it in the future be shunned and humiliated"*

Cartoon of Caning in Conduit Street, 1798,
(Vancouver 40 plus yrs, 2nd Lord Camelford, 22 yrs)



Grave in St Mary's Church, Petersham and Statue Outside City Hall in Vancouver



George Vancouver's statue in Kings Lynn and the statue of William Pitt-Pitt the Younger, PM 1783-1801, 1804-1806

To quote "His voyage was one of history's greatest feats of maritime daring, scientific discovery, marine cartography and international diplomacy"



Cook Inlet and Vancouver/Straits of Georgia

Cook Inlet

View of Straits of Georgia and City of Vancouver

