

T'was A British Pig You Say...

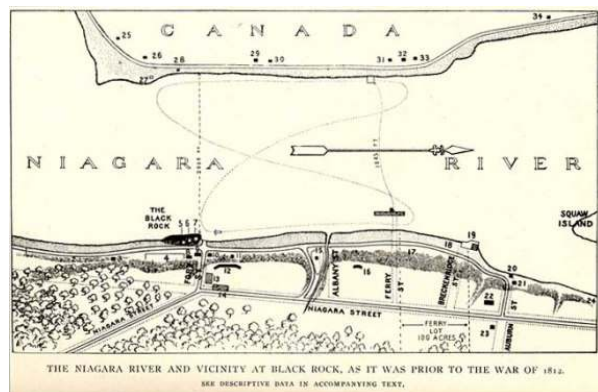
As I have written about at other places and times, my dad had a great interest in the history of his family, and it fell to me in my early childhood to be the sounding board and captive audience of one to satisfy my dad's desire to recall in great detail the stories of his family as we fished and hunted. From time to time these stories often ended with the appended postscript of "don't tell your mother about this".

To me the intrigue of this secret native American ancestry was irresistible and the stories of my logger family completely fascinating. As a result, I became interested in knowing more about my family from an early age and that curiosity has persisted throughout my life. With the wonderful help of Jaimie Hedlund, our resident family historian, I was able to learn much more and finally understand the last several hundred years of the Knights' family history in detail, and what a history it was!

Surprisingly enough my efforts to learn some of the most tantalizing facts about our family history were confounded by an unlikely villain, that being, my own ancestors! Here is just one example.

One of the most sought after and obscure pieces of information that our historian Jaimie and I searched for relentlessly for a great long time was the birth record of Silas Knight Sr., my great great grandfather, and his Metis Cree wife Phoebe Short. Silas, in his early days, ended up living somewhere close by Scio, New York, Phoebe lived about 26 miles away in Filmore and those environs. The record of their life in those areas would have been recorded in Buffalo, New York, the government center of this area. Jaime used to say, "I know its' there dammit, and by god I'm going to find it!" That was Jaime, when it came to tracking down a historical fact there was no stopping her.

Well, it seemed that during the times when Silas and Phoebe were born and growing up, things became interesting in and around Niagara Falls and the surrounding area in which they lived. Thanks, by in large to the efforts of Thomas Jefferson, the United States had succeeded in single handedly starting a war with Great Britain, known as the War of 1812. This war was fought generally along the northern border with Canada and in this same area in which they lived. War at the time was still in its' last days of being considered a "civilized affair". Certain customs and standards were expected to be diligently maintained by each side, until the Americans, in an act well beyond the bounds of these standards, took it upon themselves to burn the Upper Canadian capitol of York. This act was considered appalling and not proper warfare by British standards, and so, with the help of the Ontario citizens militias, including the



Location of The Battle of Black Rock

Lincoln Militia in particular, Britain returned the favor by traveling across the Niagara River, (apparently without going over the falls by accident), and burned the city of Buffalo, New York to the ground. So, it was kind of “one York for another” it would seem.

At any rate, a contingent of Lincoln Militia spearheading the invasion force led the way into the city of Buffalo, and it was they, as it is recorded, that set fire to the city. In their midst, likely with torch in hand, was none other than two brothers, John and Charles Knight, my great great great grandfather and great great great uncle respectively. And, through their, by some standards, valiant efforts the hall of records along with the records of Silas and Phobes life were put to the torch never to be seen again. So, it is an interesting example of how “family” can seem to get “under foot” at the most inconvenient of times.

As an interesting footnote, Charles Knight was captured during these escapades in Buffalo while trying to reboard his boat, in what was officially known as “The Battle of Black Rock”, and after serving time in a prisoner of war camp in Rensselaer, New York, he was later released in a prisoner exchange.

The Battle of Black Rock certainly was not the only time my own ancestors have influenced my research endeavors, and in a larger sense, major areas of my life and the locations in which I have lived it. I attempted to bridge the void in the written record left by the burning of Buffalo, New York, by using DNA testing to find earlier family lines that would lead me to Silas Knight Sr. in a descending way rather than the method I had employed of ascending up the family tree to earlier ancestors. DNA testing services are generally quite reliable in their accuracy. However, the level of “information mining” that each company performs does vary widely but most provide a continuous update of other tested subjects that it was discovered are part of your family line.



Through “haplogroups” and other obscure terms, test results can indicate with rather startling accuracy how closely others that have been tested are related to you. These services also provide links to family trees’ if they are available. It is through this process that I met Jean-Pierre Knight. Jean-Pierre lives in Quebec, Canada and is retired from Canadian government service, from the government agency responsible for historical records surprisingly enough. This meant that Jean-Pierre not only had access to the most in-depth records of both the Canadian government and the Hudson Bay Company, it meant that he also intimately understood how to search these records to unearth the desired information. I was so impressed, he being similar in age to myself, in essence, kind of old, well not much, but kinda, that he grasped and used technology with adroit deftness, was wonderfully engaging to talk with, and had a keen mind to unravel complex puzzles such as that found in genealogical data.

After receiving his test results and studying the closest related people that had also been tested, Jean-Pierre discovered that he and I were very closely related. So close in fact

that we surely had a common ancestor in the very recent past, recent being a century or two that is. I explained to Jean-Pierre the saga of my family, their living generally along the Canadian border in northern New York State, with some Cree ancestry, and that the history had been interrupted by the American Revolution, along with the War of 1812. I also explained that my ancestors spoke French, and that they had been resettled refugee loyalists, United Empire (UE) loyalists in particular, and as such had been issued land in Woodhouse, Ontario, Canada. Jean-Pierre explained that he had researched his family in great detail, and with his unique skills and access to the archives of Canada, had reconstructed his family's history back to the time of their entering North America. One of his earliest ancestors was documented to be Dr. Thomas Knight, a physician and surgeon with the Hudson Bay Company stationed at Moose Factory, Ontario. Moose Factory is one of the earliest outposts of the Hudson Bay Company in North America and with the cooperation of the local Cree tribe of native peoples conducted an extensive fur trade. The DNA testing confirmed that this Dr. Thomas Knight was clearly a relative and member of our Knight family line. Thus, began an interesting study of The Hudson Bay Company and Dr. Knights' history there. Thomas Knight was contracted to the Hudson Bay Company as a surgeon, traveling to Moose Factory in 1787, and served there for a period of 10 years. Dr. Knight perished at Moose Factory during the year of 1797 of an



HBC Staff House, Moose Factory, Ontario

illness that had kept him bed-ridden for some time. During his time there he had married a woman of Metis Cree descent and, as a result, had three children from this union. Two of the children later contracted as employees of the HBC as, amongst other things, canoe men, traveling widely on HBC business for a large part of their lives. More details of these children's careers are available in the DNA page of the SilasKnight.com website thanks to the wonderful research efforts of Jean-Pierre Knight.

Long before North Americans began shipping technical support careers to New Delhi, India, the British had finely honed the art of "outsourcing" to an astounding degree of perfection. While American companies might find it impressive to outsource an entire department or factory, the British blithely outsourced the exploration, colonization, and resource plundering of entire continents long before those on Wall Street ever considered it, or in fact, had even been born yet. Enterprises such as The East India Company and The Hudson Bay Company were contracted by the crown to conduct all of these aforementioned activities. After all, war, plundering, and subjugation are untidy activities at best, often wisely left to those so skilled, and with more "accommodating" chains of command. And so it was that The Hudson Bay Company was chartered to find opportunities in the Canadian north beginning with the establishment of Moose Factory in 1673 on Moose Factory Island at the mouth of the Moose River on James Bay, in Ontario.

I will mention here that one of the most renowned Canadian explorers and Hudson Bay Company directors was James Knight, born in about 1640. I have not researched his family history to know how he might be related to our family but I do strongly suspect that he is related, and as such, may have been the vehicle by which other members of the Knight family, including Dr. Thomas Knight, came under the employ of The Hudson Bay Company. Some future detective is left to solve this riddle.

The Hudson Bay Company was chartered to commercialize opportunities of interest in all lands drained by streams flowing into Hudson Bay. This did not, however, narrow the horizons of the directors and managers of the company, and as a result, the influence and activities of the HBC expanded, eventually reaching the Pacific Ocean. It is hard to imagine that commodities in many forms traversed the entire breadth of Canada, by foot, canoe, and wagon, to find their way to London. But, in fact, they did, and the Pacific Northwest proved to be a rich resource to be exploited by the employees and contractors to the HBC. Establishing a trading outpost at the current location of Fort Vancouver in today's southwest Washington State, the company's activities in the Pacific Northwest were many and varied. Trading with Native Americans extended even to the tip of land known as Cape Disappointment at the mouth of the Columbia river. The Hudson Bay Company maintained trading operations even there, finally resulting in attracting the attention of John Jacob Astor, the famed American business magnate, who established trading operations at a place on the Oregon side of the Columbia River, just across from Cape Disappointment in order to compete with the HBC in the fur trade. This Oregon settlement would grow to be known as Astoria in our current times. So, Astoria Oregon, exists at all, in part due to the efforts of the HBC. Were it not for the HBC the settlement of this area would likely have been headquartered on the Washington side of the river because the main channel of the Columbia at that time was on the Washington side. Oregon later pilfered the channel, removing it to their side of the river where it exists today, in what can only be considered as a massive failure of law enforcement at the time. I am only assuming here that the theft of a river must violate some law, maybe I'm wrong on that.

At any rate, today I live in Washougal, Washington on the Columbia River about 100 miles from the mouth of the river. One would think this is far from the long arm of the HBC, but in fact the opposite is true. Washougal only exists at all due to the Hudson Bay Company. In the early days of exploration of the Columbia River the HBC was one of the first parties to travel to this area. In a broad flat plain on the northern shore of the river, just at the confluence of the Willamette River, the HBC set up a large trading outpost at the location of what is now Fort Vancouver. This outpost served two purposes. The first was to establish trade with local natives in furs and any other commodities of interest, and the second was to insure, on behalf of the British government that no American settlers entered what would come to be known as Washington State on the northern shore of the Columbia.

American settlers at the time were fast increasing in their navigation of the Oregon Trail, and after their long journey over prairies, deserts, and mountains, would travel the last distance on the only route available, that being in a daring ride through towering rapids by raft down the Columbia River. After the passage through the Columbia Gorge the



really practical and accepted place to land rafts was the broad prairie at today's Vancouver, Washington where the river slowed and wagons could be unloaded. The southern shore of the river at this point, where Portland, Oregon exists today, was a

Fort Vancouver, Original Hudson Bay Company Site

winding network of sandbars and swampy marsh for the most part unusable. Upon landing on the north side these settlers would be met by representatives of the HBC and promptly informed they had but one choice and one choice only. That choice was to settle on the south side of the Columbia River, in Oregon Territory. To encourage conformity to this requirement, the HBC would provide supplies and other inducements so that no settlers would try to enter Washington. As such, the north side of the river, it was hoped, would be reserved for all time to the benefit of the subjects of His Majesty's empire. The outcome of these efforts of the HBC resulted in the City of Portland being built in a truly awful place. A kind of a swamp with enormous inundation and flooding an almost monthly occurrence rather than the ideally suited enormous high, dry, and flat plain of mature timber that would later become Vancouver, Washington. These early settlers no doubt, as they journeyed to the swampy marsh across the river to the south, wistfully looked over their shoulder at the beauty that was Washington. They knew however that if they tried to travel north from Vancouver the HBC would pursue them and expel them from British lands.

But, eventually, as all things do, word of this made its way to the east, and doubtless some curious soul found access to the journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, dispatched earlier to explore to the Pacific Ocean. In these journals they would have found reference to a large eddy in the river just as the Columbia exits the treacherous gorge. This eddy, if one was prepared, and the river was not in foul shape, could be entered and a landing made at the small Camas Prairie that existed at present day Washougal. Camas is a tuber that was much loved and relied upon by the local native peoples. If the immigrants successfully negotiated a landing in the eddy, wagons would be unloaded from the rafts in preparation to travel north. The settlers could then make their way, along with their wagons and provisions, through a back route behind a small extinct volcano known today as "Prune Hill", and thus enter Washington without the knowledge of the HBC. So, present day Washougal exists at all solely as its value as a smugglers port to circumvent the HBC and was originally known to the travelers on the Oregon Trail as "The Big Eddy".

Close to my present home, perhaps half a mile away, a stream ford can still be seen where the prairie schooner wagons crossed the Washougal River to enter the back trail to the broad Vancouver plain and northern Washington.

So, here again the fingers of the HBC have left their mark on almost everything in the Pacific Northwest, determining to some extent how the United States is shaped, where large cities lie, and how present-day people are impacted by the past policies of The Hudson Bay Company.

And this finally brings the story full circle to the famous British pig. The pig was the property of none other than, yes you guessed it, The Hudson Bay Company that had



The Magnificent Tamworth Pig

taken control of some portions of the San Juan Island chain, along with their 4500 sheep and, as I mentioned, at least one pig. Lyman Cutler, an American, living on San Juan Island, there under dubious circumstances no doubt, took the pigs' life for the trivial indiscretion of rooting about in his vegetable garden. A dastardly deed it was, the murder homicide, not the rooting about, considering that the pig succumbed to its wounds. How the pig was identified as a British pig remains a mystery for the ages.

Perhaps it spoke with an accent, "Auwnk Auwnk" for example. Or perhaps it was a Tamworth pig with red fur, and as such, a true "redcoat"! But at any rate, the HBC insisted that it was of British heritage, or at least title, and the donnybrook began. To these remote islands' armies were dispatched and fleets of ships appeared on the horizon, with military commanders of great repute directing these formidable engines of war. None other than George Pickett, later famous for "Pickett's Charge" at the Battle of Gettysburg, traveled to the remote islands and took personal charge of American forces in the conflict. His mission was to confirm and guarantee that every man had the right to shoot a pig rooting about in his vegetable garden. Principles of such gravity must not be subject to compromise or neglect in the eyes of the leaders in Washington D.C. led at the time by president Thomas Jefferson.

In the end not a shot was fired by either of these gathered forces, but to the credit of both sides, insults of impressive imagination were flung across apposing lines, so honor was preserved, but there was no clear winner on the day. Eventually the dispute was resolved in the grand British tradition of "outsourcing" with the final decision being left in the



The Hudson's Bay Company sheep station at Cattle Pass Peninsula, San Juan Island

hands of Emperor Wilhelm I of Germany. The Emperor and his team of arbiters constructed a map, and with traditional German engineering, divided the waterway between Canada and the United States exactly down the middle, probably with a highly

accurate ruler of German manufacture and based on the best German engineering. Had any resources local to the San Juan Island Chain been consulted on this issue it might

have been pointed out that the entire waterway assigned by the Emperor to the Canadians for their access to the sea, and the rest of their country to the West for that matter, lay over a field of impassable shallow rock reefs, being totally unnavigable at all. But government officials being, after all, government officials, Wilhelm and his team



Emperor Wilhelm I

simply decided they knew better than all other interested parties and drew up the map anyway. So, that is why, when you board a ferry today to travel from Vancouver B.C. to Victoria, B.C. that the ferry must, immediately upon leaving its' slip at the Tsawwassen Ferry Terminal in Vancouver, lower the Canadian Flag, issue several loud blasts on its air horn, contact the United States Coast Guard to request permission to enter and transit U.S. water, and then, after traveling a sillying short distance, follow the same procedure in reverse to reenter Canadian waters. I am certain that the Canadian Ferry officials must keep a picture of Emperor Wilhelm I around somewhere in order to kind of commemorate his contribution to the Canadian maritime industry.

I lived on Orcas Island in the San Juan chain for some number of years, and experienced first-hand the inconveniences that still prevailed thanks to the Hudson Bay Company and their pig. And so, in a way, in that my ancestors apparently were managers of the enterprise, I suppose I have them, in part, to thank for these occasional obstacles in my life there. Even after the many intervening years since the demise of the notorious pigs' homicide, tempers still have not cooled and a kind of cold war of niggling harassment still exists today between the two great countries in this area. An example of this took place while I lived on Orcas Island. Following is its' recounting.

Just to the north of Orcas Island is the international boundary at Turn Point, a position on water found located on a series of shallow, rocky, and dangerous reef. This large field of reefs is found exactly on the line set out by Emperor Wilhelm I to divide Canada from the United States. Two other characteristics contribute to further demarcation of this place. The first characteristic is that Ling Cod simply love these reefs, as they do all rocky reefs it seems. As a side note, to say that the local Canadians enjoy dining upon ling cod would be kind of like saying Canadians might have a slight interest in a Stanley Cup hockey match between the Montreal Canadiens and the Vancouver Canucks!

The second characteristic of Turn Point is that it lays directly in the path of the tidal flow draining literally hundreds of miles of inland sea to the North, and as such, experiences currents of tremendous volume and power several times per day causing fishing boats in pursuit of the wily ling cod to drift swiftly to and fro in pursuit of their quarry. In this instance "to" would be to the north, and "fro" would be to the south with

the net result being that boats are rapidly swept back and forth over Emperor Wilhelm's border.

Now the residents of the San Juan Islands that were "in the know" so to speak about fishing related issues, and that would mean pretty much everybody, after all, who would live in the San Juan Islands and not fish! Preposterous! At any rate, these islanders had some very pointed thoughts on the subject of Canadians and ling cod. Well, there are those Microsoft millionaires that have moved there now. They have probably formed a "save the ling cod" federation and have a neatly designed phone app for it. But, be that as it may, the San Juan veteran residents knew that their Canadian ilk to the north were regularly sneaking across the border and stealing, in broad daylight, because it is illegal to fish after dark, American ling cod right out from under the nose of loyal Americans. And it goes without saying that any ling cod caught on the American side of the line was indeed an American ling cod. It was certainly assumed to be known that

no good American ling cod would ever swim across to the dastardly Canadian side of Wilhelm's line, after all, why would they? All there are over there are Canadians for heaven's sake! Have you ever watched the Canadian television show "Red Green"?

Well, there you go!



American Ling Cod, (never been to Canada)

Taking all of this into consideration the powers within the San Juan Islands crafted a carefully laid out "sting operation" to catch the Canadians red handed, or perhaps slimy handed, in the very act of poaching a ling cod that was of American descent and residency. Turn Point was selected as the most advantageous location to execute the plan and mechanisms were set in motion to that end.

The primary mechanism employed turned out to be the San Juan County's' sheriffs' patrol boat along with several non-mechanical components called "deputies". The sheriff was in attendance considering the international nature of this mission, and a representative of the local press were also in tow, on board, not towed behind the boat, so that the brilliance and historical nature of this fool proof trap could be recorded for posterity.

As the Sheriffs boat scoured the waters of Turn Point from a distance through binoculars, they soon spotted a large yacht drifting on the tide with many fishing rods waving wildly about. The vessel sported, as luck would have it, the le Drapeau national du Canada, or Canadian flag to those not respectful enough of Canada to have the simple courtesy of being bilingual. In Canada it is a law you know! Someone on board was fighting a fish, and the boat was drifting wildly along on the change of the tide. Rapidly it was bearing down on the international border in an increasingly inevitable collision with fate. As the boat crossed the line and the fish was landed, an American ling cod by the sheriffs' reconning, the San Juan constabulary sprang into action, closing on the yacht with warbling siren wailing

and lights flashing. The stunned Canadian yacht captain immediately “hove to” and was informed over the loudspeaker of the Sheriff’s boat that they should prepare to be boarded.

As the sheriff’s deputies clambered aboard the yacht, they were met by a rather large group of nattily dressed gentlemen that looks surprisingly unlike fishermen. But they were criminals none the less, so they were informed of their complicity in this vast crime. The Sheriff went on to inform them that their vessel, along with their persons, would be taken into custody and transported to the County Seat of Friday Harbor for interrogation and the meting out of justice.

All the while this rather very polite group of gentlemen aboard the yacht stood quietly by, in full cooperation with law enforcement. However, it was making the Sheriff a wee bit nervous that some members of the group kept smiling at him and his deputies in a somewhat unsettling way, as, doubtless a pack of wolves might exchange glances upon encountering a lost and wandering herd of sheep just as nightfall arrived. The Sheriff, however, undeterred and without further need for inquiry, set off for Friday Harbor with the yacht trailing dutifully behind.

Upon arriving at the Port of Friday Harbor, the yacht was secured to the customs dock and the gang of perpetrators were shuffled off to the sheriff’s administrative headquarters so that the wheels of justice could grind into action to take down this unsavory lot. And, this is where events began to come slightly off the rails.

The initial interrogation soon revealed that these were not your ordinary group of fish poachers. Their lack of “beer can hats” might have been the first clue but one should never discount the use of creative disguises in any vast criminal conspiracy. However, it was learned through vigorous questioning that they were, in fact, the managing legal partners of one of the most famous and highly respected law firms in the grand city of Victoria, British Columbia. This law firm, having chartered the yacht, were entertaining for the day a group of their most prestigious clients, or essentially, some of the most powerful captains of enterprise in Western Canada.

You might recall the tale of the dog that chased cars? That the worst thing that could happen would be if it caught one? This is probably akin to the thoughts running through the sheriff’s mind as he took in the gist of who he had apprehended, seized, taken into custody, and facilitated their publication as “culprits” courtesy of the local press representative the sheriff had shanghaied to accompany the mission.

Needless to say, the meting out of harsh justice was quickly abandoned, the group of gentlemen returned to their yacht by police escort, and the last glimpse of Friday Harbor that the departing group had as they disappeared into the foggy mist of the San Juan Channel on their voyage back to Victoria was a contingent of the sheriff’s department standing in a neat line on the dock with carefully

crafted smiles, and waving in their most profoundly friendly way at the departing yacht and its' passengers.

This was a setback no doubt for the American side in the continued remaining bitterness started by a Hudson Bay Company pig. However, it in no way brings these past issues and transgressions to a condition of closure. The Americans have many new strategies in mind and honor will be served in due course no matter the cost or time required.