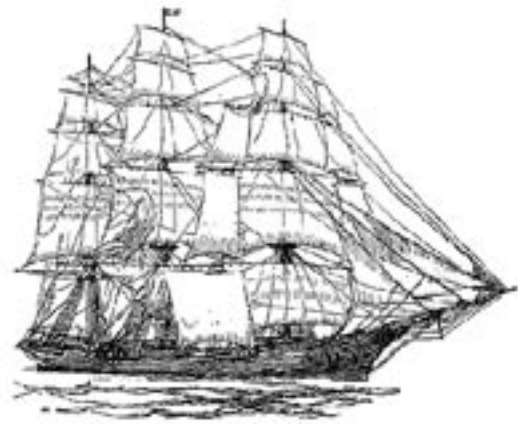


THE CHINA TRADE, 1830 TO 1860

In the years following the American Revolution, speed was the most important consideration for any ship even if it came at the expense of cargo space. Sailing ships tended to be small and swift so that they could outrun and outmaneuver British, French, or pirate vessels trying to capture them. By 1830, this threat had largely been eliminated, and a new type of clipper ship was developed. From 1841 through 1860, “extreme clippers” dominated the trade to Asia. These ships were large, carrying huge, lucrative cargoes of tea, spices, textiles, and chinaware to consumers in America and Europe.

By the 1830s, trade routes were well established between the United States and China, and the names of ports in the Eastern hemisphere, once exotic and mysterious, were becoming increasingly familiar to Americans as places of importance to the United States’ economy. During the decades preceding and during the Civil War, the United States was largely focused on domestic matters and sectionalism rather than foreign policy. But it was also during this time that Americans, who had spent most of their history looking towards the East Coast and Europe, began to see the strategic and economic importance of developing the West Coast and maintaining shipping routes to the Far East.



During the late 1850s, the United States’ trade with China declined. Domestic manufactures produced in factories in the rapidly industrializing northern states were replacing imports: cotton replaced nankeen, and American pottery factories replicated Chinese designs on porcelain, and coffee imported from central and South America was replacing Chinese tea.

The Civil War consumed the resources of the American economy. During the war years and its aftermath, European shipyards surged ahead in the manufacture of steam-powered vessels which quickly came to dominate the ocean trade routes. The United States did not catch up to Europe in this area until the 1880s and 1890s, by which time England, Spain, France, Germany, and Russia all had gained a firm foothold in the China trade.

GROUP ASSIGNMENT: TRADE WITH CHINA 1830 TO 1860

For this assignment, your group will be looking at the records of six different ships which were involved in trade with China during the decades preceding the Civil War. Not every movement of these ships has survived in the records, but enough information is contained in these summaries to determine which destinations were important for these ships. As you will see, the trip from New York to China still took a long time, and ships had to stop at ports along the way to repair the vessels and resupply with fresh water and food. These stops were vital to successful trade with China.

PART I:

Each group member will look at the itinerary of one ship. Choose one of the ships, read through its history, and answer the questions that follow the ship's log.

PART II:

Now you will pool the information together to help you answer some general questions about the routes these ships used during the 1840s and 1850s.

- A. Each group member should mark on a map all the places mentioned in their ship's itinerary. Use a different color for each ship, since many places will be marked more than once.
- B. Together, answer the following questions:
 1. Ships from Salem, Boston, Philadelphia, and New York all engaged in trade to China after the American Revolution. By the 1850s, which city had become the center of the American-China trade?
 2. At which West Coast city did the ships normally stop? Why was this a popular destination for passengers and supplies in the 1850s?

THE RAINBOW

This clipper ship was built of wood in 1845 at a shipyard in New York.

1845 February 1 – May 14

Sailed from New York to Hong Kong in 102 days.

1845 June 1 – September 17

Sailed from Whampoa to New York in 108 days.

1845 October 1 – January 8

Sailed from New York to Hong Kong in 89 days.

1846 January 24 – April 18

Sailed from Whampoa to New York in 84 days.

1847 March 17

Sailed from New York bound for Valparaiso (in Chile) and China but was never heard of again.

List the places where the Rainbow stopped:

What happened to this ship in the end?

THE STAG HOUND

This “extreme clipper ship” was built in 1850 at a shipyard in Boston. It was called an “extreme clipper” because it was more than twice as big as earlier clippers.

1851 February 1 – April 8

Sailed from New York to Valparaiso, Chile. Continued to San Francisco.

1851 June 26

Left San Francisco for Manila.

1851 October 9 – January 9

Sailed with a cargo of tea from Whampoa to New York in 94 days.

1852 March 1 – July 3

Sailed from New York to San Francisco in 124 days.

1852 July 21 – September 4

Sailed from San Francisco to Whampoa in 45 days.

1852 September 25 – December 30

Sailed from Whampoa to New York.

1853 February 25 – July 1

Sailed from New York to San Francisco in 122 days.

1854 August 25 – October 14

Sailed from San Francisco to Hong Kong.

1855 April 8 – August 27

Sailed from Woosung to London via Java with a cargo of tea.

1856 April 21 – August 21

Sailed from Whampoa to New York.

1857 January 4 – April 22

Sailed from San Francisco to Hong Kong in 50 days.

1857 August 13 – December 4

Sailed from Foo Chow to New York.

1858 February 6 – June 7

Sailed from Boston to San Francisco in 121 days.

1858 July 20 – September 17

Sailed from San Francisco to Hong Kong.

1861 August 2

Left Sunderland, England with a cargo of coal for San Francisco.

1861 October 12

The coal cargo caught fire while sailing along the Brazilian coast and the ship had to be abandoned.

The crew reached the shore of Pernambuco, Brazil in life boats the following day.

List all the places where the Stag Hound stopped:

BALD EAGLE

This “extreme clipper” was built in 1852 in East Boston and was more than twice the size of earlier clipper ships.

1852 December 26

Sailed from New York to San Francisco in 107 days.

1853 May 8 – August 13

Sailed from San Francisco to New York in 96 days.

1853 October 1 – January 25

Sailed from New York to San Francisco in 115 days.

1854 March 1 – May 19

Sailed from San Francisco to New York.

1856 July 18

Sailed from New York to San Francisco in 120 days.

1856 December 7 – February 5

Sailed from San Francisco to Calcutta in 59 days.

1857 September 21

Sailed from Boston to Hong Kong.

1860 February 21 – June 25

Sailed from Liverpool, England to Shanghai by way of Anjer.

1861 October 15

Left Hong Kong for San Francisco with a cargo of rice, sugar, tea, and \$100,000 of treasure. Disappeared en route to San Francisco.

List all the places where the Bald Eagle stopped:

Why did the *Bald Eagle* make so many trips between the East Coast and San Francisco during the 1850s?

What happened to the *Bald Eagle* in the end?

NIGHTINGALE

This “extreme clipper” was built in Portsmouth, New Hampshire in 1851.

1851 October 18

Sailed from Boston to Sydney, Australia in 90 days.

1852 July 31 – December 11

Sailed with a cargo of tea from Shanghai to London in 133 days.

1853 August 8 – November 29

Sailed with a cargo of tea from Woosung to London in 113 days.

1854 May 20 – August 2

Sailed a general cargo and 125 passengers from New York to Melbourne, Australia.

1855 February 16 – May 21

Sailed with a cargo of tea from Shanghai to London.

1856

Sailed with a cargo of tea from Shanghai to New York.

1858 December 17 – May 18

Sailed from Boston to San Francisco in 152 days.

1861 April 21

Captured by boats from the *USS Saratoga* while engaged in slaving off Kabenda, Africa, and sold to the United States government which used it to carry coal and supplies to other ships.

List all the places where the *Nightingale* stopped:

What was the primary product acquired in the China trade?

Why was the ship stopped and captured by the U.S. government for “slaving”?

Where might these slaves have been taken if the ship had not been caught?

N.B. PALMER

This “extreme clipper” was built in 1851 in New York.

1851

Sailed from New York to San Francisco in 107 days.

1852 August 16

Sailed from New York to San Francisco, but had to stop in Valparaiso, Chile, to put off two seamen who had tried to murder the first and second mates.

1853 February 28

Struck a reef in the Java Sea, but was able to get off and made it to Batavia for repairs.

1854 January 26

Sailed from New York to San Francisco in 121 days.

1858

Sailed from New York to Hong Kong.

1858 October 25 – January 16

Sailed from Shanghai to New York.

1859 – 1870

Made at least six more trips between New York and Hong Kong.

1892

Abandoned in the North Atlantic at 45° N, 43° W.

List all the places where the N.B. Palmer stopped:

What happened to this ship in the end?

TINQUA

This clipper was built in 1852 in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The ship was named after an important business contact in China, and the figurehead at the front of the ship was a dragon.

1852 November 24 – March 19

Sailed from New York to San Francisco in 115 days.

1853

Sailed from San Francisco to Whampoa via Honolulu.

1853 August 15 – December 9

Sailed from Whampoa to New York in 116 days.

1854 February 9 – June 12

Sailed from Philadelphia to San Francisco.

1854

Sailed from San Francisco to Shanghai, stopping in Honolulu.

1854 – 1855

While sailing from Shanghai to New York with a cargo valued at \$300,000, the ship wrecked and was completely lost.

List all the places where the *Tinqua* stopped:

What happened to this ship in the end?

SEA WITCH

This clipper ship was built in 1846 in New York.

1846 December 23

Sailed from New York to Hong Kong.

1847 July 25

Sailed from Whampoa to New York in 82 days.

1848

Sailed from New York to Valparaiso, Chile, in 69 days.

1848

Sailed from Callao, Peru to Hong Kong in 52 days.

1850 March 7

Arrived in New York in 85 days from Whampoa.

1850 April 14 – July 25

Sailed from New York to San Francisco, stopping for four days in Valparaiso, Chile.

1850

Sailed from San Francisco to Hong Kong in 46 days.

1851 March 15

Sailed from Whampoa to New York in 102 days.

1851 August 1 – November 20

Sailed from New York to San Francisco in 111 days.

1853

Sailed from San Francisco to Shanghai in 41 days.

1853 March 11

Sailed from Woosung to New York in 106 days.

1853 August 9 – December 9

Sailed from New York to Hong Kong in 122 days. Off Cape Horn one of the masts was struck by lightning and had to be repaired.

1855 April 5

Left New York for Hong Kong, but put into Rio de Janeiro with the dead body of Captain Fraser who had been murdered by the first mate.

1855 December 1

Sailed from Amoy (now called Xiamen), China with 500 coolies for Havana. Wrecked on a reef 12 miles off Havana, Cuba on March 28. *

*The wreck of the Sea Witch off the coast of Cuba with 500 Chinese coolies on board brought attention to what many Americans considered a distasteful and immoral aspect of trade and emigration from China. Although it was illegal for coolies to be brought to the United States to work, they were smuggled in from Cuba to the sugar cane fields of Louisiana. The number of Chinese coolies working in the United States was very small, but the phenomenon contributed to Americans' negative view of Chinese immigration in general.

List all the places where the *Sea Witch* stopped: