THE WILKES EXPLORING EXPEDITION

by

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The closing months of 1939 and early 1940 mark the one hundredth anniversary of the crowning achievement of the United States Exploring Expedition, or the Wilkes Exploring Expedition as it was later called. The accomplishments of this expedition under the command of Lieutenant Charles WILKES, U.S. Navy, stand perhaps as the greatest achievement in the field of exploration that this country has ever known.

In its almost ceaseless wandering for nearly 4 years, this expedition circumnavigated the globe, investigating numerous dangers reported to exist, surveying still more numerous lands, discovering many new lands, and proving the non-existence of others. Voluminous data were collected at each place visited which added greatly to the scientific knowledge of the day; and the various surveys, weather observations, and other hydrographic data collected greatly increased the store of maritime knowledge then existent.

The most notable accomplishment was the discovery of the existence of an Antarctic Continent. Although one or two short stretches of this continent had been sighted shortly before, it remained for the Wilkes Expedition to develop its extent by skirting the coast for over 1,500 miles, sighting land with sufficient regularity to demonstrate beyond doubt that this was a continuous coast line, and not that of a number of isolated islands.

Five large volumes, afterwards written by Wilkes, which comprise the narrative of this expedition, constitute a modern odyssey which entitles the expedition and its leader to a niche in the Hall of Fame along with Columbus, Cook, Magellan, and other better-known explorers. Unfortunately, however, neither the expedition nor its intrepid leader has ever received the prominence and publicity to which they are entitled. Perhaps the centennial of his voyage may have served to awaken interest in this subject and to correct injustice and neglect.

The whaling industry, then in its heyday, appears to have supplied the principal motive for this expedition, although the Act of Congress authorized it for "the safe-guarding of American whale-fisheries, the promotion of commerce, and the safety of future navigation with the extension of scientific knowledge in general". For some reason the proposal to authorize the expedition provoked a bitter debate in Congress. Two years of bickering occurred before the bill was passed in May, 1836.

The wrangling in Congress was only a forerunner, however, of what was still to come. Political interference and faulty organization and administration not only delayed, but cast doubt and ridicule on the expedition. At least three officers were successively placed in command and afterwards resigned. Almost two years passed and still little progress had been made on the project. At this time, March, 1838, the Secretary of the Navy placed Lieutenant Charles WILKES in charge of the expedition and instructed him to organize it anew.

Born in New York, April 3, 1798, Lieutenant WILKES had entered the merchant service when 17 years of age, and was appointed a midshipman in the Navy two years later. His record, prior to the expedition, included cruises in the Pacific Ocean and the Mediterranean in addition to some notable surveying duty. In 1833, he was appointed as Head of the Depot of Charts and Instruments, the forerunner of the present Hydrographic Office and Naval Observatory. By this time he had acquired a reputation as a navigator and scientist which well qualified him for the work in question. He has the distinction of being the first in the United States to set up fixed astronomical instruments and observe with them.

As regards his personal characteristics, he was a man of indomitable fearlessness and courage but possessed a fiery temper and rash impetuosity which often got him into trouble. He has been referred to as the stormy petrel of the Navy. These traits of character were very much in evidence in the Trent Affair, years later during the Civil War, when Wilkes, then in command of the *San Jacinto*, seized the Confederate Commissioners, Mason and Slidell, from a British ship, almost causing a war with that country.

In keeping with his reputation as a man of action, Wilkes immediately plunged into the work of reorganization which had baffled his predecessors. Political interference still continued, and objections were made to having an officer of such junior rank in command, but this failed to deter him in the work of organizing and equipping the expedition. The reduction in the number of vessels, which it was decided at this time to send on the cruise, was an added handicap.

No expense had been spared in purchasing the best instruments obtainable. Wilkes himself had selected most of them while in Europe before he was ordered in command. One item consisted of 29 chronometers.

These vessels made up the expedition :

Vincennes, Flagship	sloop of war	780 tons
Peacock	sloop of war	650 »
Porpoise	brig	230 »
Relief	store ship.	

Later two tenders, the *Sea Gull* and the *Flying-Fish,* were added. These were former New York pilot boats of 110 and 96 tons, respectively.

In addition to the regular naval complement of officers and men, a staff of civilian scientists were carried on the *Vincennes* and *Peacock.* These included three naturalists, two botanists, a mineralogist, a philologist, a taxidermist, and two draftsmen. The collection of data on hydrography, geography, astronomy, terrestrial magnetism and meteorology was assigned to the naval personnel.

Wilkes was under no illusions as to the condition of the ships assigned him. They were ill-equipped for making a sustained cruise of this proportion and the crews were quite restive. A letter had been forwarded to the Secretary of the Navy in which they had set forth their discontent and objection to having a new younger set of officers placed over them. After the multitudinous delays which had occurred, however, Wilkes decided that the best policy was to set sail as early as possible and accordingly early in July the squadron assembled at their rendez-vous at Hampton Roads.

On July 26, 1838, President VAN BUREN, accompanied by Secretary of the Navy PAULDING and Secretary of War POINSETT, reviewed the tiny squadron. This occasion apparently added considerably to the morale of the expedition. August 10 was set as the date of readiness although few thought it could be met. Wilkes was adamant, however, and in view of previous exasperating delays, he determined to report ready on that date regardless of whether or not the ships were completely equipped. The date was met.

The letter of instructions from the Secretary of the Navy dated August 11, 1838, is a rather interesting document. It outlined the general purpose and course of the expedition, listed the many countries and islands to be visited and the numerous reported shoals that were to be investigated and their exact location established or proved nonexistent. It directed that the Southern Ocean be explored and surveyed, that the existence of all doubtful islands be checked, and laid down a general code for dealing with natives of countries or islands visited. He wrote :

> The expedition is not for conquest but discovery. Its objects are all peaceful. They are to extend the empire of Commerce and Science; to diminish the hazards of the Ocean and point out to future navigators a course by which they may avoid dangers and find safety.

Among the minor points of interest was the admonition "to teach the natives the modes of cultivation and to encourage them to raise hogs in greater abundance". Also of interest was the strict injunction that no information was to be given out regarding the cruise prior to its publication officially.

With these orders as a guide, the expedition set sail from Hampton Roads the morning of August 18, 1838, on the long voyage of discovery which was to end nearly four years later after they had completely encircled the globe. Dangers there were in plenty and enough of adventure to satisfy the boldest. Many hardships were to be endured, and internal dissension added to their troubles during the long cruise. Whatever was lacking, however,

their courage never failed them, and in spite of all handicaps, the expedition was successful in that they carried out their orders and accomplished what they had set out to do.

On arrival at any port, the routine of the expedition was generally the same. An astronomical station was set up, and as complete a survey as possible was accomplished; while the scientists went ashore and investigated the country's geology, botany, etc... A general description of the place was made with particular reference to the history, type of government, manners and customs of the natives, and the general subject of commerce. Castaways and shipwrecked sailors were often encountered and received on board. At times they were called on to handle cases where members of whaling ships or other vessels had been murdered by natives. If the native chiefs failed to take proper action, Wilkes usually took the matter into his own hands and meted out punishment.

On departure from Hampton Roads, the tiny squadron headed first for Madeira, passing within sight of the Azores en route. They arrived at Madeira on September 16 and spent about 10 days there collecting data. From this island they journeyed south to the Cape Verde Islands, passing near the Canaries and investigating various shoals and dangers reported to exist in these waters. None of these were found as reported, and the squadron anchored in Porto Praya Bay, Cape Verde Islands, on October 6.

Only one day's stop was made here before the departure of the expedition for Rio de Janeiro. Several shoals and islands, which had been reported, were investigated during this part of the cruise, but none of them could be located. Wilkes continued on and arrived off Rio on November 23, 1838. About a month and a half was spent in this region.

Shortly after New Year's Day, anchors were again hove up and sail set to the southward. The squadron anchored off the Rio Negro anchorage for a day or so and then continued to the southward passing through the Straits of Le Maire on February 13, 1839, rounding Cape Horn and continuing on to Orange Harbor on the Southern coast of Tierra del Fuego. This place had been selected as a rendezvous preparatory to their first antarctic voyage. Just prior to arrival at this port, they experienced the first of the many remarkable mirages which they were to encounter.

After a short stop at Good Success Bay, they anchored in Orange Harbor on January 30, 1839. In addition to their routine investigations, preparations were made for the first journey into the Antarctic. Wilkes now shifted to the *Porpoise,* leaving the *Vincennes* for the time being to continue with the surveys of the various waters of Tierra del Fuego.

The instructions were to explore to the southward of " Powell's Group " and to endeavor to reach a high southern latitude. The *Porpoise,* with the tenders, left Orange Harbor on February 25, and on March 1 their first iceberg was sighted. Continuing, they sighted several islands of the South Shetland group and eventually Palmer's Land hove in sight. The weather meanwhile had been most inhospitable. Gales, fog, and the ever increasing number of icebergs rendered the continuation of the cruise precarious. Finally, despairing of finding an opening through which they could penetrate farther south, and considering the lateness of the season and the physical condition of the crew, it was decided to return to the base at Orange Harbor. With intermittent fog enveloping them on the return northward, they had several narrow escapes from collision with icebergs, and once almost grounded on Elephant Island.

Orange Harbor was reached on March 30 and was a welcome sight. Meanwhile, the *Peacock* and *Flying-Fish* had sailed farther to the westward seeking the *nec plus ultra* of Cook. Stormy weather and bitter cold made life miserable for the crews of these two ships. The ice barrier was followed for some distance and a latitude of 70° S. was reached but the lateness of the season, a few narrow escapes from collision with icebergs, and the suffering of the crew, united to cause their leader to decide to head north. Apparently Wilkes' inexperience in polar conditions had caused him to time this part of the expedition too late in the season.

The *Relief* sailed through the Straits of Magellan but the remaining ships of the squadron left their base on April 17, 1839, and with the exception of the *Sea Gull* arrived at Valparaiso on May 15. That vessel was last sighted on April 29 off Cape Horn and was never heard of again. Two officers and a crew of 15 were lost, probably due to the vessel's foundering in a storm which occurred at that place and time.

A few weeks were spent in Valparaiso, during which time Wilkes made a trip overland to Santiago. Leaving Valparaiso, the squadron headed for Callao arriving there on June 30,

and remaining about two weeks at anchor. Another trip into the interior was made by an exploring party from the expedition which penetrated the Cordilleras as far as Baños.

The expedition now left the mainland of South America and headed for the Paumoto (Tuamotu) group. This marked the first of the coral islands to be seen and there was much speculation as to what they would be like. Wilkes wrote that they had pictured them in their minds as fairy lands, but they were soon to be desillusioned. Arriving at the first of the group on August 13, an effort was made to land a party but the boat was driven off by natives armed with spears and clubs. Not wishing to force the situation, the party decided not to land. Later, parties on the different islands of the group were more successful, as the different vessels separated each with its own assigned area to survey. Friendly contacts were made with the natives but parties were ever on the lookout for treachery.

In the Tuamotu group about 6 weeks were spent, which also included a visit to Tahiti of the Society Islands. On September 27, 1839, both island groups were left behind as the squadron sailed for the Samoan Islands. Slightly over a month was spent here, all the principal islands being visited and surveyed. On November 10, 1839, the expedition headed for Port Jackson and Sydney, New Holland, or to give it its modern name, Australia, where work of fitting out for the second antarctic cruise was to be carried out. A few small islands were investigated en route.

Only about a month was utilized for the necessary preparations for the venture south into the vast unknown antarctic regions. Had they anticipated the hardships and dangers they were to encounter, it is probable that a much longer time would have been taken. These ships were never designed for cruising in the polar regions and were ill-fitted for service there. This fact, however, was not sufficient to deter Wilkes.

Two other nations, the British and French, had also planned to explore the antarctic at about this time. The French Expedition under D'Urville was in this locality at the same time as Wilkes. The British Expedition under Ross followed a year later. The south polar region was a blank on the charts of that time, although intrepid whaling ships regularly braved these cold and stormy areas in pursuit of their calling. No one knew what lay to the southward or whether there was any opening in the great ice barrier through which ships might penetrate beyond. It was for the purpose of finding the answer to this question that the three expeditions were organized.

Wilkes with his poorly equipped squadron left Port Jackson (Sydney) shortly after Christmas in 1839 after having designated Macquarie Island as a rendezvous. This island was reached about two weeks later but only served as a point for assembling his ships as they immediately pressed on to the southward. Increasing cold was now encountered, icebergs began to loom around them, and sleet and snow accompanied the storms they met as they drove steadily on. The barrier of ice next hove in sight forcing them to turn to the westward, and on January 16, 1840, in the far distance beyond the barrier, was sighted what all three ships were convinced was land looming up over the horizon. This had the appearance of an island and was so described at the time.

Following the barrier as closely as possible. Wilkes now continued to the westward hoping to find an opening through which he could proceed farther south. On January 19 land was again sighted from the *Vincennes* and later in the day from the *Peacock* — mountains looming up over the ice barrier to the southwest. This landfall was designated Cape Hudson by Wilkes. Although it was sighted from both ships, and sketches of it were published by Wilkes, this land, or at least its location, was afterwards to be the subject of a dispute which continues to this day.

Still seeking an outlet to the southward, the little ships continued beating to the westward along the ice barrier. On January 22, while investigating a small bay in the barrier ice, the *Peacock* was caught among the icebergs with the result that her rudder was crushed and considerable other damage done, as she collided with an immense ice floe. Only unsually fine seamanship and skillful handling saved the ship from entire destruction. When she was finally extricated it was found that the damage was so great that it was considered dangerous for the ship to continue her work of exploration. Accordingly, the ship headed north, abandoning any further part in the expedition until repairs could be made.

The following day, the appearance of land was again observed by the *Vincennes* but it was still impossible to make any headway towards it on account of the barrier ice. The ships

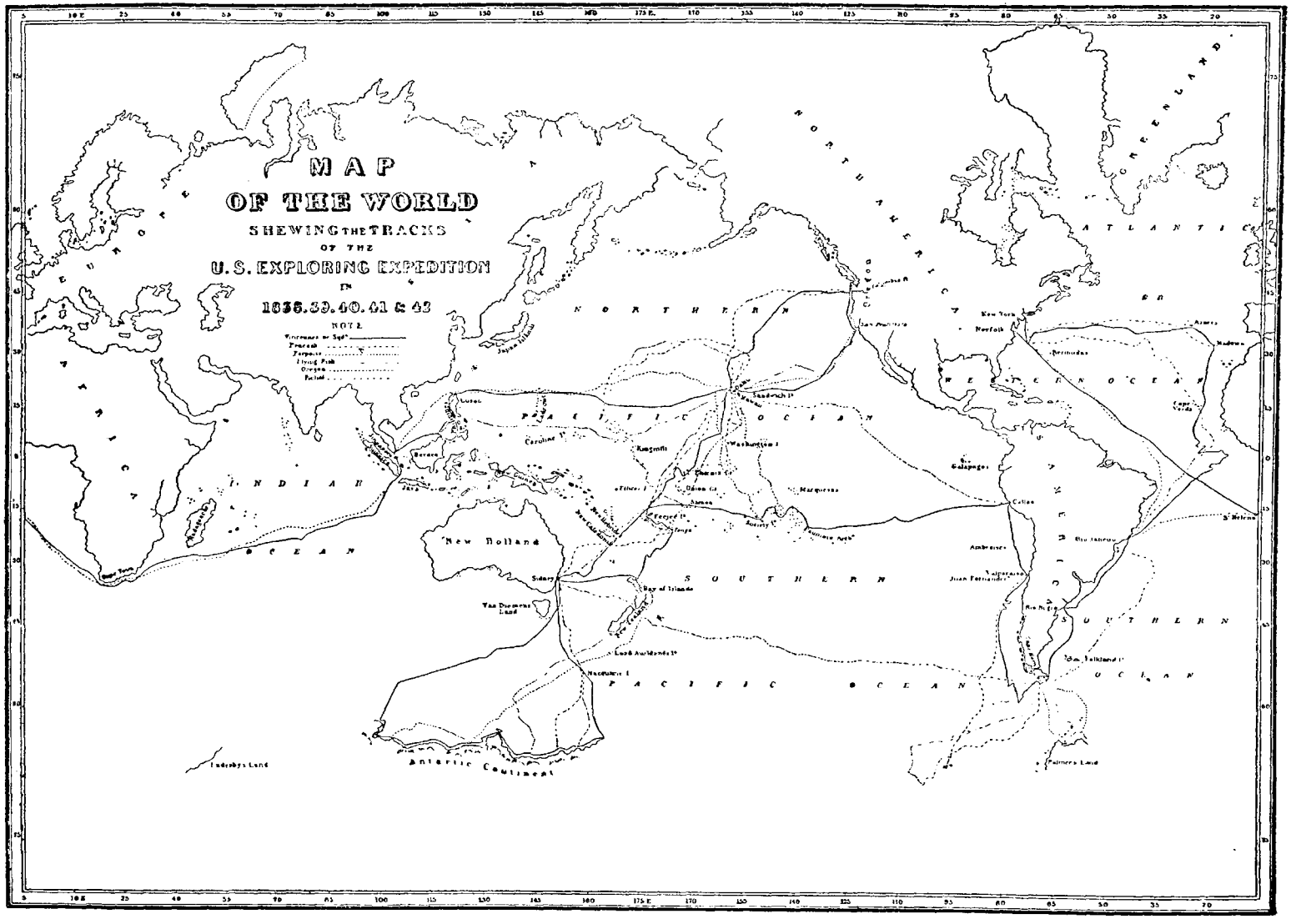

Chart of the World made by WILKES and published in the Atlas of the U.S. Exploring Expedition, showing tracks of the ships of the Expedition.

Mappemonde dressée par WILKES, *publiée dans l'Atlas de l'U.S. Exploring Expedition, et indiquant les trajets suivis par les navires de l'Expédition.*

still continued to skirt the barrier to the westward, however, and on January 28 were rewarded with a sight of land directly ahead. They approached to within half a mile of it, but the gale blowing at the time prevented lowering a boat for landing.

As the land in sight extended for a considerable distance, both to the eastward and to the westward, and considering his previous landfalls, Wilkes now for the first time concluded that he was in contact with a land of continental dimensions. "I gave the land the name of the Antarctic Continent', he wrote at this time. As the section of the coast explored by him, ranging from about 95° to 153° E. Long. constituted only a relatively small part of the Antarctic Continent itself, it has been the practice of most geographers to refer to this section as Wilkes Land. It has been suggested that the smaller sections of land, which have been explored more in detail in this area, should be known as "coasts", instead of "lands", reserving the latter designation for major divisions of the continent.

The conclusion that this was a continent with which he was in contact, did not, however, complete Wilkes' exploration in the antarctic. The blank space on the chart to the westward was still to be investigated and the ships again pushed on to develop the coast line in that direction. Stormy weather and bitter cold continued to take its toll among the crew, and the physical condition of the men was such that the medical officers wrote a letter of protest against continuing the cruise. A board of officers ordered by Wilkes to investigate this charge concurred in the recommendation of the medical officers. A less indomitable commander would probably have decided to abandon further exploration in this climate, but Wilkes was adamant and ordered the squadron to continue the cruise.

Again land was sighted on February 2, 1840, but thick weather set in and a gale, which lasted until the 7th, shut out the view and prevented any further approach towards the shore. On the latter date, the high mountains beyond the barrier were again visible and as the ships continued to the westward, still another landfall was made on February 10. Two days later land was distinctly made out which remained in sight, throughout the day. For the next few days sighting of land was a daily occurrence but all attempts to find an opening through the barrier by means of which a landing or even a closer approach could be made were frustrated.

On February 17, although what appeared to be land was sighted, the direction of the trend of the barrier ice was shifted to the northward and eastward and from now on as the expedition wended its way skirting this barrier as closely as possible, no more land was sighted. On February 21, 1840, having reached the latitude of 61° — 30' S., Wilkes decided that his mission had been completed and, calling all hands aft, he announced to their great joy that they were now to head north and continue their explorations in more hospitable and temperate areas.

About three weeks later the squadron was again in Sydney for a badly needed overhaul preparatory to resuming their explorations anew. This overhaul was completed in about 3 weeks, and on March 19 the expedition again set sail and stood towards New Zealand, anchoring in the Bay of Islands on the 30th. A week later they were again under way heading for Tongataboo Island, one of the Tonga group. During a 2 week stay at this island, Wilkes undertook to mediate in a tribal quarrel between two factions of natives with rather negative results. The Fiji Group was next visited on May 5, and, as this group was considered of considerable importance, about 3 months were utilized in collecting data and surveying the islands.

While engaged in surveying on the island of Malolo of this group, a party from the *Vincennes* and the *Leopard* were treacherously attacked by the natives and Lieutenant Underwood and Midshipman Henry (the latter a nephew of Wilkes) were killed and an enlisted man badly wounded. Wilkes immediately decided to punish the natives for this attack. A landing party was sent ashore, which burned the two villages on the island and killed 57 of the islanders before the native chiefs finally sued for peace. As a result of this incident Wilkes, on his return to the United States, was tried by a general court-martial on the charge of murder and of acting in a cruel, merciless, and tyrannical manner, but was acquitted.

Leaving the Fijis on August 10, 1840, the squadron proceeded to investigate the Phoenix Islands. Several of this group were sighted and, while no formal surveys were made of them, parties were landed in boats to reconnoiter where possible and rough sketches were made. Canton Island, then known as Mary Balcout Island, was not visited although it is shown on the charts.

The Sandwich Islands, or Hawaiian Islands, as they are now called, were reached on September 23, 1840. Wilkes apparently was not impressed very favorably with his first view of Oahu and his comments regarding it did not fit in with the title, "Paradise of the Pacific", with which others had described these islands. His plans were now overhauled after a general estimate of the situation and considering that his remaining time was limited he decided to split up his expedition. The *Peacock* was dispatched to check up on a few "holidays" in the surveying of the Samoan group and to reconnoiter the islands of the Ellice and Kingsmill (Gilbert) groups.

In addition to these instructions, Lieutenant Hudson, the commanding officer of the *Peacock,* was directed to investigate several incidents where the natives had attacked or murdered members of the crew of whaling ships and to punish the offenders if found necessary.

The *Porpoise* was directed to return to the Tuamotu group and Society Islands and to investigate certain other islands of these groups. The *Vincennes* meanwhile was to spend about 6 months in the Hawaiian Islands. During this time, the remainder of the larger islands of this group were explored and considerable surveying done. Expeditions were sent to examine Mauna Loa, Mauna Kea, and Kilauea. The ascent of the first two volcanoes was made during the winter and the weather encountered at the high altitudes was somewhat reminiscent of that experienced in the antarctic.

Meanwhile, the *Peacock* left Honolulu in December, 1840, and headed south passing again through the Phoenix Islands and surveying one or two of them. Again none of the ships of the expedition sighted Mary Balcout Island of this group.

The Samoan Islands were next visited and when the work there was completed, the ship headed first for the Ellice group and then for the Kingsmill group. On Drummond Island of the latter group a seaman from the *Peacock* was treacherously murdered. An expedition was later sent ashore, several of the native chiefs were shot, and the town was burned as a punishment. After visiting the Radack (Radak) Islands, the *Peacock* on May 8, 1841, turned north for Honolulu and then sailed to join Wilkes in the Columbia River territory of Western America.

The *Vincennes* had left Honolulu on April 5, 1841, and reached the mouth of the Columbia River 22 days later. Wilkes decided to proceed immediately to the Straits of Juan de Fuca and to begin his surveying in these waters. After almost being wrecked off Destruction Island he arrived in the Straits on May 1 and anchored in Port Discovery the following day.

All hands now turned to surveying, and for the next 6 months the various parts of the Straits of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound were surveyed and mapped. All the data they could acquire were obtained from the settlers and missionaries in that region and from various posts of the Hudson Bay Company. Three extensive exploring expeditions were made inland. One under Wilkes landed at Nisqually (near present site of Tacoma), struck downward to Fort Vancouver just north of present site of Portland, followed the Columbia River and the Willamette Valley to the Falls. A second expedition from Nisqually crossed the Cascade Range north of Mt. Rainier, continued onward to the Columbia, crossing it and later penetrating to Fort Colville almost at the northeastern corner of Washington State. Returning they penetrated into Idaho reaching Lake Cœur d'Alene, turned south following the Snake River to Fort Walla Walla, thence journeying back to Nisqually. This expedition devoted some study to the Grand Coulee which it passed en route. A third expedition followed the Columbia River up to its junction with the Walla Walla River.

The work of surveying Puget Sound had been going on at a rapid pace, and on June 16 the ships moved out into the Straits of Juan de Fuca and continued surveying there. On June 27, Wilkes received the news that the *Peacock* had been wrecked off Cape Disappointment but that all hands had been saved. Surveying was now discontinued and as soon as the ships could be assembled, the expedition got under way on August 2, 1841, arriving off Astoria on the 6th.

Wilkes now shifted his command to the *Porpoise,* dispatched the *Vincennes* to San Francisco, and proceeded to make a survey of the Columbia River. The *Porpoise* proceeded up the Columbia to Fort Vancouver, after once running aground, and while there was joined by the party which had been surveying Gray's Harbor. The survey of this river to the head of navigation went on apace. Meanwhile, an expedition was ordered now to explore overland from Fort Vancouver to San Francisco, joining the *Vincennes* there. This party

left early in September. The surveys of the Columbia and Willamette were completed on October 6 and the *Vincennes* proceeded to San Francisco, anchoring off Sausalito. A surveying expedition was shortly dispatched up the Sacramento River. They reported reaching the residence of Captain "Suter", who held an appointment as governor of this district but who claimed "supreme power" over it. From him they obtained much information of value as they continued the ascent of the Sacramento up to beyond the present site of Sacramento City. Surveys were also made of the northern section of San Francisco Bay and San Pablo Bay but very little of the southern section, although a small party from the ships visited the mission at Santa Clara.

Wilkes would find little honor as a prophet in Southern California today. "The country between it (upper California) and Mexico can never be anything but a barren waste", he wrote in his narrative at the time.

Meanwhile, the overland party which left Fort Vancouver was slowly wending its way to San Francisco. They were beset with sickness and hostile Indians as they made their way past "Shaste Peak" and the "Klamet Country" to the valley of the Sacramento, but fortunately had no casualties. This party finally reached Captain "Suters" at New Helvetia from whence they journeyed down the river to join the *Vincennes* on October 24, 1841, after almost two months absence.

While at Sausalito the brig *Oregon* was acquired and added to the squadron, to replace the *Peacock*. On November 1 the squadron departed from San Francisco Bay and arrived off Honolulu on the 17th. The stop of 10 days at this port was only for the purpose of obtaining necessary supplies. On November 28 the expedition again sailed onward.

Wilkes had originally planned to stop at Japan, but the delay incident to the stranding of the *Peacock* caused him to change his plans and omit that country from his itinerary. His orders were to arrive in New York by May 31, 1842, and this left him little time. On leaving Honolulu, the squadron again split up. The *Porpoise* and *Oregon* explored the small islands and reefs of the Hawaiian group to the westward, then rounded northern Luzon and proceeded direct to Singapore.

Wilkes with the *Vincennes* and *Flying-Fish* headed southeastward, investigating various islands reported to exist in those waters but was unable to find any trace of them until he arrived at Wake Island which was reached on December 20, 1841. Boats were sent to make a quick survey which was completed that same day. Continuing they sighted Grigan, the northernmost inhabited island of the Ladrone group, and discovered Assumption Island although they did not stop there. From that island they rounded the northern end of Luzon and anchored in Manila Bay on January 12, 1842. The *Flying-Fish* separated en route passing through the southern part of the Radack group. Skirting to the northward of the Carolines she passed through San Bernardino Channel and arrived at Manila the same day as the *Vincennes*.

The short time remaining was now an important factor and prevented any considerable period being spent at any one place. The two ships therefore left Manila after a stay of only 9 days and proceeded south into the Sulu Sea making a few stops en route, various surveying jobs being meanwhile assigned to the tender. The charts of this region were found worthless and the pilots were little better. On February 2, the ships anchored off the Island of Sulu and Wilkes immediately entered into negotiations for a treaty with the Sultan governing commerce between Sulu and the United States. This was drawn up and signed and shortly thereafter Wilkes got under way for Singapore.

On arrival there on February 18, he found the remainder of his squadron awaiting him. An examination of the *Flying-Fish* resulted in her being found unseaworthy and she was accordingly sold. Only a week was available for the stop at Singapore and then the expedition sailed for Capetown. On April 13, 1842, the tiny squadron anchored in that port. Little time remained, however, and only 4 days were spent here before the ships were again under way, this time really homeward bound, as only one more stop was to be made before they reached the United States.

St. Helena was the place selected for this stop and the expedition anchored there on May 1, 1842. At this time the island appears to have been a popular anchorage for United States Ships. Mention was made that 6 American ships were anchored there on their arrival and 3 more came in the following day. A visit was made by Wilkes to "Longwood", the recent prison residence of Napoleon, whose memory was then still fresh among the inhabitants.

The closing "leg" of the cruise was uneventful. On June 10, 1842, the expedition dropped anchor off Staten Island thus writing the closing chapter of one the greatest epics of the sea. All hands were now called aft and Wilkes expressed his thanks to them all for the manner in which they had conducted themselves. A national salute was fired, and Wilkes' pennant was hauled down as he left the ship for the last time.

During the course of the expedition, hydrographic surveys were made of some 280 islands as well as of the inland waters of what is now United States territory extending from the Straits of Juan de Fuca to San Francisco Bay. The existence of the Antarctic Continent had been added to the world's knowledge of geography and 1,600 miles of its coast had been followed to substantiate the claim.

Charts to the number of 180 were constructed by Wilkes as a result of the expedition. In addition to the narrative of the expedition which consisted of 5 large volumes, some 14 volumes were published covering the researches in geology, botany, ethnology, meteorology, hydrography, etc. and 5 volumes for some reason were not published although they were listed in the series. A number of atlases were published and the proved nonexistence of many islands affected other charts to a large extent. Many botanical species were brought back and about 2,000 sketches made during the exploration.