To the Honorable

The House of Representatives

of the United States.

The Memorial of the
undertaken, a portion of the Officers and Crew of
the late U. S. Schooner Shako, in behalf of
themselves and their late Shipmates now serving
in other ships of the Pacific Squadron.- Res-
pectfully Sheweth,

That by the Shipwreck of the
late U. S. Schooner Shako, your Memorialists
were thrown upon the shore of Oregon with the
end of all and every thing they possessed. And as a
Point of Inquiry into the circumstances of said
Shipwreck had exonerated them from all blame
or neglect of duty, your Memorialists most
respectfully appeal to your Honorable Body for
just and moderate Remuneration for their labor
taking into Consideration the extraordinary perils
they were subjected to consequent thereof.

Neil M. Morrison, 1st. Comdg.

1st. Lieutenant

Wm. Holland 2nd. Fifer

J. M. Maury 3rd. Steward

Aly. Carter 4th. mate

Wm. Storey 5th. Fife.

J. A. Humphreys 6th. Mate

Peter Reddie 1st. Mate

William Powers 2nd. Officer

William Drake 2nd. Gunner

Aly. Plattmore. Pay. Clerk
Any person having concerns toward
Charles Bailey, Dr. Merton
with Henry Per
James Needham, Capt. Hold
John Brown, Dr. Cleaver
John Mammel, Jr. Master
John Baptiste, Ships's Cook
Anthony Smith, Seaman
Mr. Floyd, Seaman
John Gage, Seaman
Edw. Jones, Seaman
George J. Morgan, Ordinary Seaman
Gilbert A. Cotton, Ordinary Seaman
Henry Irons, Seaman
George Williams, Seaman
Wm. Harris, Edw.
Documents accompanying Memorial of the Officers and Crew of the late U.S. Schooner Sharpe.

Sir:


Extract from Minutes of Court of Inquiry

Letter from Commander in Chief of Pacific Squadron.
Astronia, Columbia River  
September 23rd, 1846

Sir,

I have been the misfortune to lose by shipwreck at the mouth of the Columbia River, the U.S. Schooner Shark, and with feelings subdued by this distressing event, take up my pen to communicate the following particulars:

Orders dated April 1st, 1846, from Commodore Stockton, commanding the Pacific Squadron, required me to ascend the Columbia River for about a hundred miles from its mouth, and so far from the duties assigned me as to leave the River again by the 1st day of September. Having complied with the preliminary part of this order, I endeavored fully to complete it by leaving Fort Vancouver at daylight of August 23, but in consequence of stopping three days to assist the Ash Battery against a band of a few miles below Vancouver, and being obliged to face my own down the River against head mists and without chart or pilot, I did not reach the Anchorage in Bhears Bay (which is just within before this appointment) until the 8th of September. I remained at anchor here until 10th, when the wind freshened up from the N. W., and although the afternoon was somewhat hazy, and the tide (being the first of the ebb) not at its most favorable, I
stage, still remembering that it would be later
and more unfavorable next evening and that
the morning breezes would never seem to take
so out I resolved to get under way and go
as far as I could before the shades of the evening en-
shroud the landmarks indistinct.

I had been on the summit
of the Cape in the forenoon, from whence
the water on the bar appeared smooth with
very moderate breakers on the sands and con-
fident in my knowledge of the direction
of the channel (having kept mid-channel
in entering the River in July) I could think
of nothing to impede my safe passage but
other than those unavoidable dangers, con-
sid-er-ate upon the change of a few of the
minds or the unknown and unexpected action
of the powerful tide. — The mind was aft
in keeping the Cape and just then the tide
set broad out to the Eastward; on getting
under the lee of the Cape, the mind became
my buffeting, blowing in jolts and requiring
the yard to be frequently hoisted on different
tasks; fearing that we should be swept
on Peacock spit, which is an extension of
sand to the Eastward of the part upon which
the Peacock was marked in 1841, I hauled
more to the Eastward to bring Green Point on
with the Cape astern, and having stationed an
officer to look out (the mainmast being in my
may) and inform me when Point Adams and
the land about Young's Point called Combe
would be near the range, and percep-
the breeze on the water, ahead, steady, I stood
along confidently about S.S. 2 by compass,
which came gradually ahead, lashed Point 
and the kedge, and at the moment I dem-
strated myself far enough south to clear the
reef breakers and before the officer had
reported the kedge and 9 Point nearly in line.
I hauled upon the starboard tack; but to
my amazement the water which had never been
up than five fathoms shoaled suddenly and
stuck! Uncertain whether more or less
reef broke a short or the South breakers, and
moming ahead, and thumping as the small
alternately rose and fell. Thence, I ordered
the weather anchor but go (chain stopped
at 15 fathoms) with the view of cheeking
her advance upon the sands until I could
sound around for the channel.

The fore and aft sails were
hoisted in, while the Whale Boat was coming
from the mast and as the greatest despatch
necessary, I myself should off in the
boat to sound. It took me but a moment
to decide that one more on the South breakers.
While endeavoring to repair the damage against
a strong tide, I perceived her moving a head
the cable having parted, and in obedience
to my signals the 1st Lieutenant W. Scheuch
promptly made all sail and endeavored to
put her about, but in consequence of the swell
and tide upon the weather the mizzen stays
and he was ordered to moor; while one
joining the evolution, I got alongside and
as me had a fine working breeze and no longer thumped on the bottom but came rapidly to the mind on the masthead, and I entered stained the hope of getting into water deep enough to anchor without fear of striking at low tide. So I raised up till I was apprised that me was moving very slowly and that in the direction of the breakers on the middle sands, the tide

Two points on the weather bore and running with a velocity of five or six knots. While on this tack me never had over 3 fathom water and as it had still to fall a fathom I dare not anchor, thinking as me did

12 feet 10 inches and having already struck in quarter less than I thought of a resort to the Blatto channel, but the water way there had appeared so shoal to leeward, and I had no sure land marks to guide me (indeed its thought by the most experienced persons on the Columbia that it western entrance (as of late years closed up) that to attempt it appeared like accelerating a catastrophe already painfully imminent.

As me shoaled the mast therefore on the middle sands we had no alternative but to tack ship to the s't

of N't, which brought the South breakers on the lee bore; but the overwhelming strength of the tide, now rising upon the weather beam, soon forced us to tack again to the Northward. -- The schooner usually so rapid
upid and sure in stays performed this evolution from impediemente of angle and current in a very sluggish manner and having lost her headway I was subject to the action of the South Eastly tide for some minutes, so that we lost much ground and could not make but a short stretch to the Northward when it became necessary to put her head once more to leeward. The wind now favoured us a point and going along By S 25 and sounding regularly in 3 fathoms with a transient cessation of breakers bordering our course I indulged the hope that the direction of the tide might have somewhat changed and we might take good passage in a safe: but this pleasurable sensation lasted only for a moment; from 3 fathoms the leadsmen gave 12 1/2 and me then struck violently on a bank having only 10 feet water; the helm was put up the mainsail taken in and as her bow fell off grating slowly over the sands the yards were squared and square set in hope of forcing her in the direction of the tide through the breakers which now crowded over her starboard headside. It was now 6 o'clock; the schooner lay with her head S by E rocked and surged by the mere so violently that for fear of losing the foremost I took in the square sail and settled the foretopmast sail yard on the halyard. We could now entertain...
no hopes of saving the vessel but her ability withstood the shock of the sea until the return of high water, and as this was more than could be reasonably expected and the masts seemed in imminent danger of going over the side, the gig was carefully hoisted out, and I ordered Acting Purser Hollins to take all his books and papers and a bag of specie, Assistant Surgeon Hudson with the sick (two patients) and my clerk W. John M. Many into her to make their way to Point Adams. The tide having taken a more westerly direction jammed the gig alongside as that when she attempted to shore off, she was swept forward and coming in contact with the rocks, anchor was stove and instantly filled. The officers and men with great difficulty recovering the vessel. Hudson holding by the end of a wet and slippery rope, often submerged to the shoulders was about to relinquish his hold from fatigue, when an active seaman secured a running bordine about his person by which he was saved. The gig with her gunwales visible drifted to sea, nor could I venture to send the Whale Boat for her valuable freight on account of the surf.

The tide had by this time attained an irresistible force, so much so that the Whale Boat which had been ordered to keep a position in case of us protected by your hull from the sea, was three carried far into the midst of the breakers outside and...
and after being some time lost sight of entirely and supposed to have strayed or
gone to sea, my by her own fine qualities as I assume, as off the good management and
vigil of her own, (a set of heling boys)
ought back to her place in safety.

Nothing could now be done,

but await patiently a change of tide, for

the cutter and launch had been hoisted
out, they might have finished alongside, or
been sent out to sea - I ordered all
hands sent off and told the men that
in circumstances required the most orderly
conduct on their part, and strict and prompt
obedience to orders, that the safety of the
vessel, perhaps of our lives depended on it,
that we had not made cast off, and
that if she held together till full flood she
might get her again into safety,
but that all events nothing could be sure

safely accomplished but by cool united
actions each man doing the duty of his
station! 9 P.M. The pumps had kept the
free until this time but the Rudder was knocked
off and she was nearly dashed by the small
rolling heavily on the hard sand and shipping
seas, which filled her stern deck up to the
tops of the combings. - The pumps could not
be thrown overboard for fear of filling her
upon them but the shot came through over the
stern and the men started below to ease her.

The same hour later the officer stationed below
came to inform me that the water was gaining
rapidly
rapidly on the jumps; they were neverthelss kept going while every preparation for getting out the Boats was completed.

Guns were fired at intervals for about an hour and a half, with the view of attracting Indian canoes off to our assistance, our own Boats being made to convey as all ashore at a time.

At 11 P.M. we had five Boat mates in the hold, the Papal had evidently bilged and I considered her irrecoverably lost. My first object therefore was to save the lives of the crew; the old Chief was done with care and expedition the Boats were hoisted out the crew and men named to go in to get safely in, with Midshipman Sims in charge. The Launch followed under Acting Master Studdock also loaded with as many men as she could carry, sixeed the Launch; The Boats were ordered if possible to keep in sight of each other to render mutual assistance, and although their route lay through heaths and valleys and a full of over four miles before them to Point Adams; I had but little doubt of their reaching it in safety and congratulated myself most heartily on getting as many of the Crew out of the Wreck. The Boats were ordered to return at daylight for those who were Left, Lieutenant Schamuk-Midshipman Davidson and 11 men remained with
with me on board.

The men in the act of cutting away the masts, when the first rollers of the flood tide brought the schooner over on her lee side, her bulwarks broke and the masts came down. A few strokes of the axe and the weather rigging cut away, the masts and by the board, which sensibly relieved the hole from its awkward position. The men now proceeded completely to cut away the masts, matted with sand boiling up the hatches. The remaining anchors were let go, to keep her from drifting into deep water, and nothing more could be done but provide for our personal safety. Each man was directed to secure himself by some small cordage, all the spars being cut adrift and hung by a rope of small rope long enough to float above the masts, so that he either broke up completely or be overflown by the incoming tide. Fortunately the wind had died away and it was only at intervals that the small broke into surf round about us. The head came under about E. N. E. and as long as she lay on her side the schooner had no water affording us dry seats, but as the tide rose she gradually righted and about 3 a.m. was on an even keel, making her bulwarks completely under water; and the men then restricted to the tops of the round houses on the greater deck and the foremost beam, the heel of the latter above.
above the knight's heads being arrack. The screeching and crashing of
Trikes and plainting below was often heard through the night and one could not
hope that she would hold together many hours longer, but I heard no symptoms of
despondency from any quarter.

At daylight our situation was sufficiently clear, the smokes increasing and began to break up. The only retreat left us, and all eyes were anxiously seeking for the boats, which soon after chased us by their appearance. The launch lay on the bar some distance off, while A.W. Bullock came along the quarter in the whale boat and in two trips conveyed us all safely away from our perilous position.

I had commanded this little Vessel two years and five months to a day, and in all that time not the smallest mutiny or accident had happened abroad. I leave it to you Sir as a Seaman and a Commander to judge what were my emotions upon looking for the last time upon the fragment of her still visible.

No officer or man had been allowed to carry off more than their clothes he stood in, lest the boats should be overloaded, nor was it feasible to rescue any thing from the hulk of the Vessel. The chronometer, baggage, etc. were stowed in the Hold, Room, Hatchway, and the boats contained with a Lieutenant, a cook, a boy
of and a stand of flours were all the property saved either public or private.

It took the launch seven
hours pulling against the tide to reach Blake's
beach, after she arrived a general muster
ordered as that every man was safe.

The }Ruse| had

was forthwith
dispatched to Astoria and succeeded in procuring
from the Hudson's Bay Co. store, a blanket
for each of us and one horse for the night
of the 11th on the beach, the sick men were
sheltered beneath the roof of a Mr. Summers' 
three officers with the butler and house clerk
left at Point Adams to explore the beach
for any articles that might come ashore from
the meadows. I moved up to Astoria with the
lawn and leaving there to intercept
fortified, pushed on to Fort Vancouver
immediately furnished by the Honourable
Hudson's Bay Co. with all necessary supplies.

I feel it my duty to add
that during the whole of this trying emergency
the officers and men I had the honor to
command gave me the most hearty and effi-
cient support, their duties were carried on
at their various stations in a prompt and
orderly manner, and I believe it will be
proven that every one "did his utmost."

To Captain Blandin of
H. B. Majesty's Sloop of War "Moderate," lying
at Fort Vancouver, I am under obligations for
a prompt supply of necessaries, which became
immediately sent down upon hearing of our
misfortune.
Hearing presented you with the foregoing detailed statement, which can have no other recommendation than its fidelity. I trust Sir, by reference to the chart it will be intelligible to you that the disaster arose from want of judgment or recklessness of danger, but from want of experience and thorough acquaintance with the tides at their various stages.

I have the honor to request (and I do it most earnestly) that you will order a court of inquiry to investigate all the circumstances connected with this very serious event.

With considerations
Of high respect,
I am, Sir, truly,
[Signature]

To the Commander in Chief
N. E. Naval Forces
Pacific Ocean

Post Scriptum. March 17—1847. In the foregoing report I resile the keep of the "Thanks to my want of experience and thorough acquaintance with the tides," but upon rejoining the squadron and forming a copy of Melville's chart, which had been my principal guide and the only one furnished me by Government, it was at once apparent, and that chart being correct, my vessel could not have grounded where she did.
did, as will be seen by the following extract from the Minutes of the Court of Inquiry:

"Extract."

"Acting Master James L. Bullock was recalled."

"At the request of Capt.Commrs. Flomson,"

"Question by Lt. Commrs. Mr. You have"

"stated in evidence that the ships ornaments"

"from Makars Bay with Cape Disappointment"

"and Queen Point in range, and that"

"before entering Point Adams on with books-

"comb, and the Repeal Stick..."

"Be good"

"enough to fix the spot on Milkes' chart,"

"when these ranges cut and state what"

"depth of water is there laid down?"

"Answer. "I have done so, and find"

"7½ fathoms laid down on Capt. Milkes'"

"chart."

"Question by same. State the exact distance"

"which appears on the chart between the point"

"cut by these ranges, and the nearest sound;"

"and the depth of water laid down, from which a Peepel drawn"

"13 feet water would bring up, estimating"

"the tide at ½ ebb."

"Answer. The was 4000 feet (about ¾,"

"½ mile) from any spot upon which she"

"could have struck, according to Milkes' chart."

"In justice to Capt. Milkes"

"I may add, that the sands about the mouth"

"of the Columbia are constantly shifting, and"

"hence a Survey which may have been done in"

"state five years ago, is now more than"

"useless."

"Respectfully,"

"(signed) A. Summerson"
Extracts from the Minutes of the Court of Inquiry convened on board U.S. Frigate Savannah at Monterey, California, to investigate the circumstances of the loss of the U.S. Sloop Squadron, Lieut. Commr. Neil M. Morrison.

Lieut. M. S. Schenck, a witness before the Court:

"Question by Lieut. Commr. Morrison: Was it possible to have saved any property, public or private, without imminent danger to the lives of the officers and crew?

"Answer: No; I think not."

Acting Master James E. Bullock, a witness before the Court:

"Question by the Court: Was it possible to obtain any pilot in the vicinity acquainted with the Bar of the Columbia?

"Answer: No.

"Question by Lieut. Commr. Morrison: Could any property, public or private, have been saved, without regarding to an extreme danger to the lives of some of the officers and men?

"Answer: I think it could not."
U.S. Ship Columbus
Monterey March 6th, 1847

Sir,

I have the pleasure to transmit herewith a certified extract from the proceedings of the Court of Inquiry, convened by order of Commodore Schubrick to inquire into the loss of the U.S. Schooner Shark while under your command.

I will add that from my previous knowledge of your character as an officer, I was quite sure that the inquiry would result (as it has resulted) in entirely exonerating you from any blame whatever.

Very Respectfully
Your Most Obedient

(signed) James Riddle

Lieut.
Neil M. Morrison
U.S. Frigate Savannah