

Education Society, named in memory of Dr. Morrison, to provide a Christian education to Chinese children. English was to be part of the curriculum but emphasis was placed on giving a rounded education so as to produce useful citizens. It is a measure of their success that a number of graduates went on to be leaders of society.

Clearly some of the protestants of Macau, missionaries, traders and diplomats, did do good although, as Harriett Lowe bemoaned, few fulfilled Morrison's highest hopes. This book is certainly useful in bringing together contemporary writings, but Victorian style is dated and many will find it ponderous. This is not a book to sit down and read from cover to cover. It is a useful reference and it is disappointing that there is no index. Nevertheless it should find a place on the bookshelves of those interested in Macau's history.

Rivalry in Canton: The Control of Russell and Co., 1838-1840 and the Founding of Augustine Heard and Co., 1840, by Tim Sturgis.

London: The Warren Press, 2006, ISBN 978 1 872022 72 7, 312 pages.

(Reviewed by Fred Grant)

Hong Kong, the consummate city of business, is but one product of the surprises, shocks, twists and turns felt on the China coast during the years 1838-42. Western traders first grappled with severe challenges arising from the international depression of 1837, and then the Xingtai (Hingtae) debt crisis. Next came the Lin Zexu opium crackdown, and then the Opium War, with opportunities and catastrophes occasioned by war. The war killed the Canton system, which received last rites in the treaties, requiring among other things that Spanish \$3 million be paid to foreign creditors of Hingtae, Kinqua II and Mowqua. Business was thereafter transformed. For the foreign traders, there were myriad new opportunities, and also new competition. The shocks of these years also spurred the modernization of China, and Chinese business. Business in China flourishes today in forms and with a vigour that would surely astonish any of the participants in the previous tightly regulated Canton System.

In *Rivalry in Canton*, author Tim Sturgis examines the challenges facing the partners of the Canton house of Russell & Co during those extraordinary years. Drawing on archival material long unavailable to scholars (the

Barings Archives in London and in Canada),¹ he provides a lively account of the problems facing the firm on three continents, and the path that saw Augustine Heard & Co born out of the predecessor firm. In the years that followed, these were the two leading United States firms engaged in trade with China. Sturgis provides a fascinating account of tensions within the original firm, demands of key clients, the comings and goings of expatriates, partnership mechanics, and conflicts over shares, all leading to schism, birth, and future competition between the two pre-eminent American China coast houses.

The book brings to life many surprises of the years 1838-40. Russell & Co partner Robert Bennet Forbes, forced back to work by the collapse of his investments in the depression of 1837, heads to China and the strong personalities of the Canton office of his firm. Partner Joseph Coolidge seems to have been quite surprised by the angry reaction of other members of the firm to his investment of £70,000 in proceeds of the London sale of a cargo, in which he followed Barings' advice over direct instructions from Howqua II, Wu Bingjian. Sturgis understates the hong merchant's anger at this error, which cost the Howqua II thousands of dollars. Partner William C. Hunter (who spoke Chinese and knew Howqua II well) vividly describes the senior hong merchant pounding his cane on the floor, demanding that Coolidge be told 'he must be more careful in future, must take care'.² The sixty-one year old Augustine Heard is surprised to find himself headed to wartime Canton from his Massachusetts retirement in June 1841, after Coolidge announced the January 1, 1840 founding of Augustine Heard & Co at Canton (authorized by Heard – but evidently not expected). Ellen Coolidge is surprised to find that Augustine Heard had already left Massachusetts by the time of her return in September 1841, and busily sends letters off to Heard explaining why it had been absolutely necessary to found the Canton firm in his name.

Author Tim Sturgis, an architect by profession, is not a China specialist and is frank to say so. He has done his homework, knows the essential sources, and has spent long hours in the archives. His book is well organized, presented in a strong running narrative, and brims with fresh material. For the China trade history adept, pages with footnotes – the bulk of the core of the book – may serve as markers denoting original content. Other strengths of the book include the proper emphasis it gives to the importance of London in the United States trade with China, and insights into key supporting roles played by women in the trade, notably Ellen Coolidge.

This fine little book is a flash from the pen, produced as part of the author's work toward a full-length biography of Russell Sturgis (1805-87), China trader and a Barings partner. As the Author's Note explains, 'The current book is something upon which he stumbled inadvertently during the process, and which he felt was too good a story not to be shared with others'. While the book is indeed a good story, it is more than that. Its core contribution, and indeed its vitality, lies in its crisp description of the business, partnership and constituent conflicts which transformed the key United States China trading firm(s) in the years 1838-42. As such, *Rivalry in Canton* may be taken as a form of corrective to William C. Hunter's nostalgic memory of amicable business passively done by foreign traders. 'His sales were pleasantness and his remittances were peace'.³ It may very well be that some of the American China traders enjoyed pleasantness and peace in the years 1838-42 – but not at the office.

Notes

1. See Ralph W. Hidy, *The House of Baring in American Trade and Finance*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949, p. xviii: 'Some day the British firm may open up its archives completely or may even permit its history to be brought down to date.'
2. William C. Hunter, *The 'Fan Kuan' at Canton Before Treaty Days 1825-1844*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1882, pp. 49-50: 'We [Russell & Co.] had shipped a cargo, principally of raw silk belonging to himself, which he had ordered from the silk country. It was sold at a large profit. His instructions were that the proceeds should be returned in East India Co. bills on Calcutta. To our surprise and his disappointment, the result of the sale was invested in a cargo of British goods. It was as injudicious an arrangement (free trade then beginning) to ship largely of English manufactures as his own shipment was sagacious, for but little silk was exported immediately after the opening of the trade. The result showed a difference of many thousand dollars to his detriment.'
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

Changing Places: The Remarkable Story of the Hong Kong Shipowners, by Stephanie Zarach.

Hong Kong: Hong Kong Shipowners' Association, 2007; 252 pages.

(Reviewed by Stephen Davies)

In his important essay in the *NEHA-Bulletin*¹ in 1998, the late Professor Frank Broeze observed that '...the return of Asia to maritime primacy, although abundantly documented in the professional maritime media, has not yet been reflected in the historical literature'. There has been much progress on that front in the decade since, though in fairness it has to be said that the world of maritime historical scholarship – in English at least – is still often depressingly Mediterraneo-Atlanticist in focus.

Is Stephanie Zarach's celebratory volume for the fiftieth Anniversary of the Hong Kong Shipowners' Association part of this belated coming of age of Asian maritime history? Other than in the larger domain of semiology, the answer is largely 'No'.

The book forcibly reminds one of Frank Broeze's characterization of much traditional shipping history as 'generally uncritical company histories that extolled the vision and virtues of their successive leaders...almost exclusively based on material that was available in the public arena, such as annual reports'. This volume is very much in that traditional vein and does nothing to provide the sorely needed update and expansion of Baruch Boxer's path-breaking and much neglected *Ocean Shipping in the Evolution of Hong Kong*.²

That said, Stephanie Zarach writes well and the book is a pleasant and well-illustrated, if unchallenging, read. There is much anecdote and other colour, though the whole is probably more of interest to shipping industry 'insiders' (and Hong Kong shipping industry insiders at that) than to maritime historians or the general reader. Potential readers do need to be warned about the misleading sub-title. This is quite emphatically NOT 'the remarkable story of the Hong Kong shipowners'. Indeed it would be fair to say that Hong Kong's own ship-owners, starting with the remarkable Kwok Ah Cheung (alias Kwok Kam Cheung, Kwok Siu Chung and Kwok Ching San) once the P&O Company's compradore, who owned some sixteen steam vessels by the time he died in 1880, are conspicuous by their absence.

Ms Zarach's book is a celebration of Hong Kong's modern post Second World War shipping industry and its dominant players. The main characters