Robert H. Pruyn: An Albany Yankee in the Tycoon's Court

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ROBERT HEWSON PRUYN

An Albany Yankee in the Tycoon’s Court
ROBERT HEWSON PRUYN

- Lawyer, militia general, diplomat, and politician
- Served as speaker of the New York State Assembly twice (1850 & 1854)
- Adjutant General of New York 1855-1857
- Railroad Executive later in life
ROBERT HEWSON PRUYN

- In 1861, RHP was co-owner, along with his brother in law, Charles B. Lansing, of the Albany Iron and Saw Works
- The Works were financially strapped, and Pruyn agreed to the Japanese position to pull him out of debt
• He left Albany in late 1861, accompanied by two of his sons, Edward and Robert (“Bertie”)

• Left at home were his wife, Jane (Jennie) and his youngest son, Charlie
ROBERT HEWSON PRUYN

- Pruyn wrote long, detailed letters home
- These letters are held by the Albany Institute of History and Art
THE CHALLENGES OF RESEARCH
Yedo, May 5, 1857

My Dearest Daughter,

When last I wrote to you by my annual letter, I stated that I should return some previous letter from my dear wife enclosing any annual. Though I have many expressions of this sort, none have as yet arrived. In any case, I have only had yours of January 27. I hope that you and all our dear ones are now well and that when this is received you will continue in that same state. I shall be no more distant and think that we may expect to meet again in health here.

Mr. Warren will leave for主编
Tuesday. Meanwhile, my thoughts in regard to our intercourse with the Board of Consul and others...
Dear Mr. [Name],

I hope this message finds you well and in good health. I am writing to express my appreciation and to convey my thoughts and intentions. As you may know, I have enjoyed good health throughout my stay here, and I hope to continue to do so.

I am sending you a copy of a letter that was recently transmitted. I trust that it will reach you in good order. I am also sending you a copy of a letter that was written to me by [Name]. It contains important information that I believe you will find useful.

I am planning to return to [Location] soon, and I would like to extend my gratitude to you for your kind hospitality and assistance. I am looking forward to seeing you again soon.

Please accept my best wishes for your health and prosperity.

Yours sincerely,

[Your Name]
I wish to mention that the entries amounts of 9 and 8 in the document against the采购和销售 numbers 2 and 4 are incorrect. The correct amounts should be 9 and 8 respectively.

Part of the writing is difficult to read due to the presence of any of the characters. At any time, the lowness of my presence in the business is a result of these factors. However, I always maintained these partnerships.

I did not think it necessary to take up the order of the previous item to add fuel to these differences.

As I say, what I have already said basically that had you met me in the first of February I presented a list of various allowances I have been denied. I have shown that I could not adjust fairly. But when your letter...

Dear Robert,

This is near and startling. Perhaps it may not come up tonight. If it does, before there be time for any sustenance, it must take its course. Let me see you as soon as possible. To-night.

Yours,

[Signature]
THE JOURNEY TO JAPAN
This afternoon an inter suit remains temporarily on the Rebecca Trust of the Lone Mountain Cemetery at 3/2 of Bishop Hite performing the last of 120 suits.
I hardly know what to say or how to say it. My month is passed at my thread of existence and yet to come by 8:00 A.M. all that I can say must be on the beauty of the Express Co.
My stay here is prompt daily service
where I can be steady. Nothing to do.

Love yours dearly, 

[Signature]
...nce my heart.

Much as I desire to come I shall

...n with a heavy heart. Farewell then, till

Then we part for ever. And the remainder of my

...my son's. I hope once more to see you, and the

...s the end of my labours. I hope once more to see you, and the

...s, and the end of my labours. I hope once more to see you, and the

...s, and the end of my labours. I hope once more to see you, and the
The four Western legations established in Japan in 1859–60 were all located in temples in Edo.
Gate way to United States Legation Yedo
Temple of Semphufugee (perfect happiness)
Showing roofs & flag staff U. S. Legation
Yedo
Larger Building Temple Semphufugee
Portion of the principal Temple Tycoons Cemetery Yedo
Avenue in the Tycoon’s Cemetery (Shiba) Yedo
Street in Yedo showing a platform 
With trees flower and paper ornaments on for a 
Festival or omatsuri
A yakunin

A betto
LEAVING EDO

- On May 24, 1863, the U.S. Legation was burned to the ground
- Pruyn suspected arson, but could not prove it.
Wed, May 18, 1863

You will not expect a long letter from one so beset with
the need to make the most of the time before the mail leaves. Under
the circumstances, I have little time to write, but will try to
make the most of the time I have.

Yesterday, the morning of the 24th of May, a small building
adjacent to our kitchen was destroyed by fire. It is said to have been accidental. The fire originated in a small building adjoining the kitchen. You will remember
that I have already informed you that all our partitions were of
plaster, which makes it difficult to determine whether the fire was
accidental. You will not be surprised to learn that the first
building on the west side of the street, 20 feet of the building
was destroyed. The roof, walls, and windows were all damaged
by the fire. The contents, including furniture, clothing, except for
some items that were in the burning building. The chimney,
which was the focus of the fire, collapsed due to the intense heat.

The last thing I gave up was the stove, which was destroyed.
But the stove was covered. The building of the stove is all that
remains, but it will be removed and returned to you. Unfortunately,
I had placed it in the path of my tenure, which was first, through
empty rooms, then outside of the building.

The stove was no more than a little rock, and the fence chain
that ran from it to the house.
Japanese officials opened Yokohama to Western merchants in 1859. Western diplomats were at first reluctant to relocate their legations from nearby Kanagawa on the official (Tōkaidō) highway but eventually did so.
Yokohama became the major site of American diplomatic activity in 1863 when anti-Western Japanese burned down the legation building in Edo.
SOCIAL LIFE

Expatriates in Yokohama maintained active social lives, including lectures, sermons, parties, amateur theatricals and even a regatta.
Amateur Theatricals.
United Service Club
YOKOHAMA.

WEDNESDAY,
The 6th day of January, 1864.

ON WHICH OCCASION WILL BE PERFORMED

BOWLD OUT,
ETHIOPIAN SERENADER'S,
And
Villkins and his Divah.

The Band of H.M.'s S. "Euryalus" will, by permission, attend.

Printed at the "Japan Commercial News" Office.
Grand Yokohama International Regatta

To be held (weather permitting)

On October 1st. and 2nd. 1863
FIRST DAY.

ROWING.

No. 1.—LAUNCH RACE.—Distance Two miles: Entrance $2. For all Launches not exceeding 42 feet in length.
   First Prize $50.
   Second Prize $30.

No. 2.—ADMIRALS’ BARGES. Dist. Two Miles. Prize $40.
   Entrance $2.

No. 3.—PINNACE and BARGE RACE.—Distance One mile: Entrance $2. Boats not to exceed 34 Feet in length Admirals’ Barges excluded.
   First Prize $840.
• Americans established diplomatic relations in 1854
• Other foreign countries—France, Britain, and Holland—soon followed suit.
• Japan suffered from civil unrest between the Shogunate and the Imperial System
• Pruyn and other foreigners in Japan were in constant danger
My dear Wife, Navy yard Oct 14 1863

To the count over closing the end of this place made known to the Court that no foreign has been mounted or killed about
Veirial from this place. Col. Nichols reached
the spot in advance of the Red Shirt force
which now rests and then found the
body of Dr. Cameron of Battalion D'Afrique
a most amiable officer of the
Family of Admiral Jones. His body
was taken to the residence of Col. Mr.
Montgomer and when I visited him
I found that Mr. Russel was not much
myself.
Pruyn left Japan in the spring of 1865, returning to Albany via Europe.

He never returned to East Asia.

He prided himself on bringing knowledge of Japan to Albany.