

Marcus Lopeus

1788





Captain Robert Gray,

commanding the sloop, "Lady Washington"

left Boston in October 1787 on a trading voyage to the West Coast of North America, seeking otter furs. To his small crew of about a dozen men, Gray soon

added Markus Lopeus, who boarded at the Cape Verde Islands off West Africa. Rounding the tip of South America and sailing north the "Lady

Washington" traded along the coast, reaching Tillamook Bay in August of 1788. Trading with the native Tillamook went on for several days, until

a dispute over a cutlass led to the death of crewman Lopeus and the hasty departure of the "Lady Washington." Lopeus was the earliest

documented person of African descent to enter present-day Oregon. Gray returned to Boston via China, the first American to circumnavigate

the globe. On a return voyage aboard the "Columbia Rediviva" in 1792, Captain Gray entered the Columbia River, now named for his ship.



Excerpt from The Death of Markus Lopus: Fact or Fantasy? First Documented Presence of a Black Man in Oregon August 16, 1788

Markus Lopus came to and died in Oregon in 1788.

The story of the death of Markus Lopus is part of the larger story of the activities of American explorer Robert Gray on his first expedition to the Oregon coast in 1788 aboard the sloop Lady Washington. The primary source of information concerning this episode is preserved in the log kept by Robert Haswell, a 19-year-old officer on that journey.