

The First Opium War

The Anglo-Chinese War of 1839-1842

Essay by Peter C. Perdue

Opium
Trade

Production &
Consumption

Hostilities

1st Unequal
Treaty

War Stories

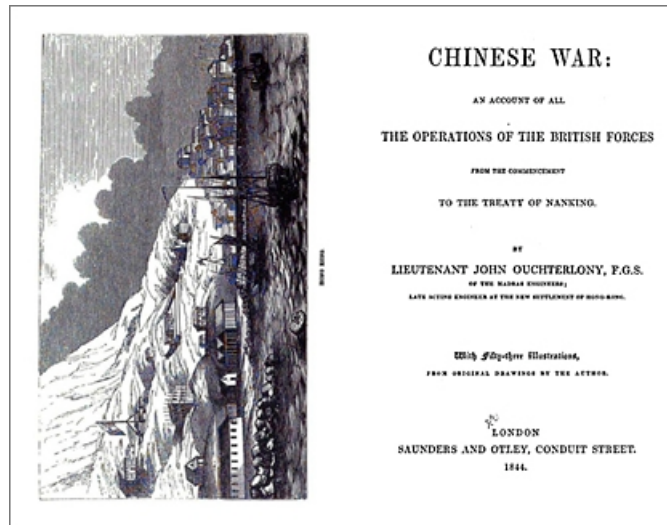
Sources
& Credits

WAR STORIES

The following first-hand—or close to first-hand—accounts of the first Opium War appeared during or immediately after the war and are, with a few exceptions, available online:

John Ouchterlony

The Chinese War: an Account of all the Operations of the British Forces from the Commencement to the Treaty of Nanking (Saunders and Otley, London, 1844).



This is perhaps the single most interesting first-hand account available online, enhanced by inclusion of 53 woodcut illustrations—many of which have been reproduced in this Visualizing Cultures unit.

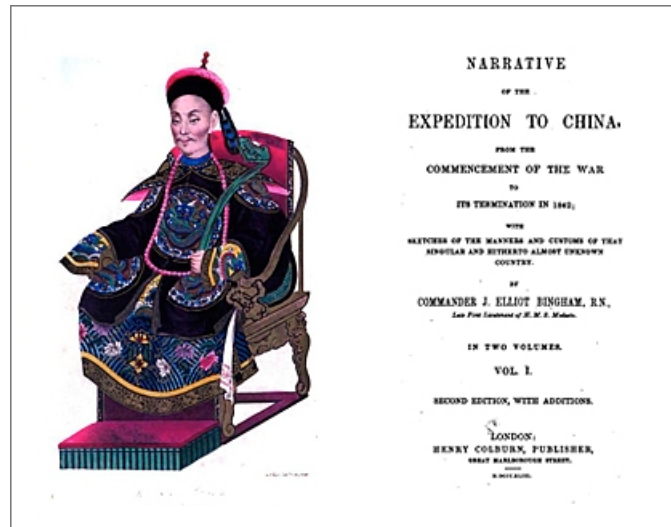
Keith Stewart Mackenzie

Narrative of the Second Campaign in China (Richard Bentley, London, 1842)



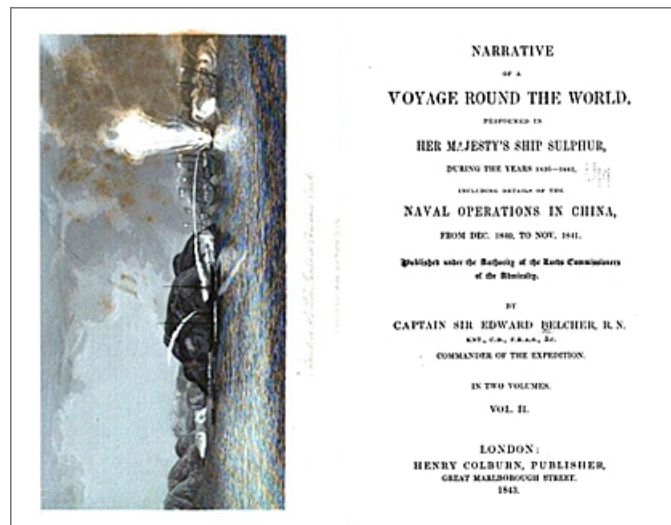
John Elliot Bingham

Narrative of the Expedition to China, from the Commencement of the War to its Termination in 1842, with Sketches of the Manners and Customs of that Singular and Hitherto Almost Unknown Country (Henry Colburn, London, 1843)



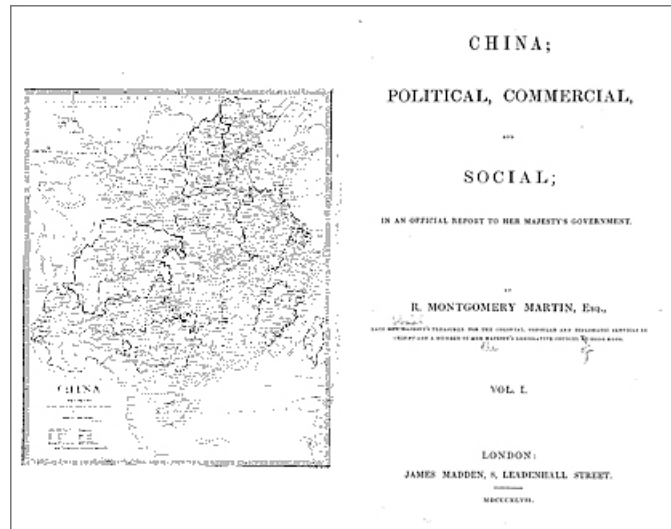
Edward Belcher

Narrative of a Voyage Round the World, Performed in Her Majesty's Ship Sulphur, During the Years 1836-1842, Including Details of the Naval Operations in China, from Dec. 1840, to Nov. 1841, vol. II (Henry Colburn, London, 1843)



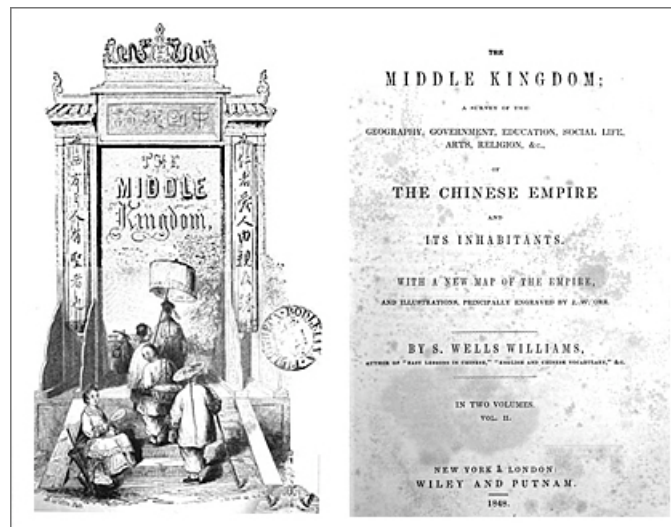
Robert Montgomery Martin

China; Political, Commercial, and Social; in an official Report to Her Majesty's Government, 2 vol. (James Madden, London, 1847)



Samuel Wells Williams

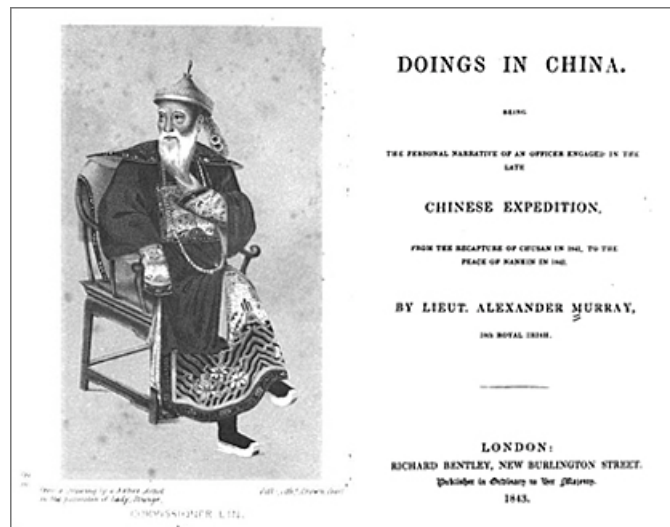
The Middle Kingdom: A Survey of the Geography, Government, Education, Social Life, Arts, Religion, &c. of the Chinese Empire and Its Inhabitants, 2 vol. (Wiley & Putnam, 1848). See chapters 22 and 23 in volume 2 (pp. 468-604) on the first Opium War.



Williams, a missionary who went to China in 1833 and became adept in the language, was not in China when the war took place but was nonetheless very knowledgeable about it. This first edition of his voluminous text was published just six years after the Treaty of Nanking.

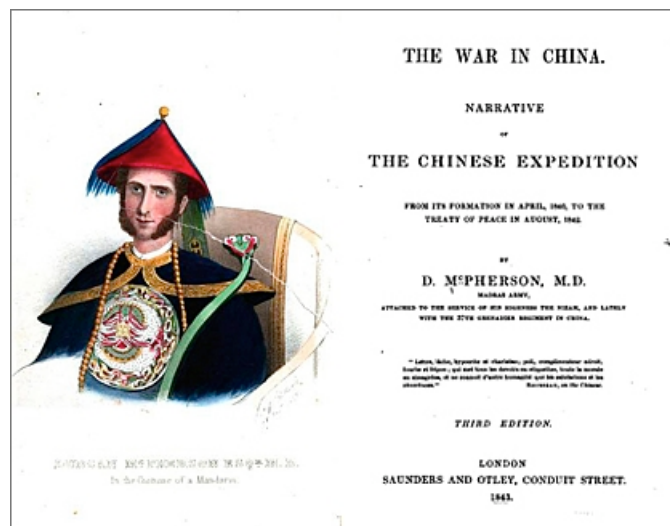
Alexander Murray

Doings in China, being the Personal Narrative of an Officer Engaged in the Late Chinese Expedition, from the Recapture of Chusan in 1841, to the Peace of Nankin in 1842
(Richard Bentley, London, 1843)



Duncan McPherson, M.D.

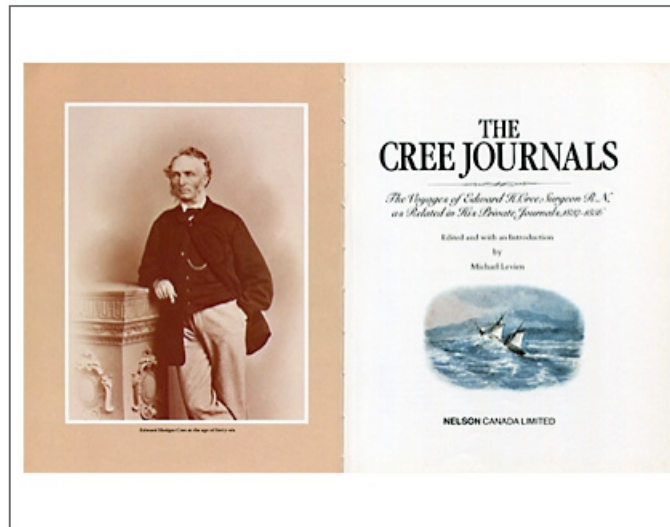
The War in China. Narrative of the Chinese Expedition from its Formation in April, 1840, to the Treaty of Peace in August, 1842, 3rd edition (Saunders and Otley, London, 1843)
M.D., Madras Army



The first edition of this book, also accessible online, was published in 1842 under the title Two Years in China.

Edward Hodges Cree

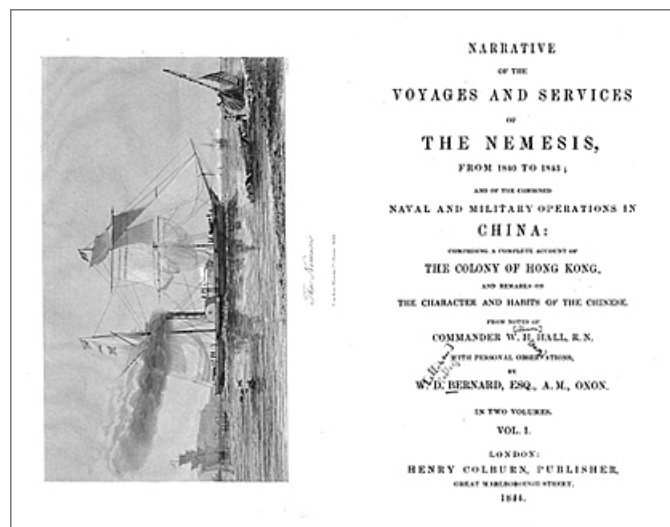
The Cree Journals: The Voyages of Edward H. Cree, Surgeon R.N., as Related in His Private Journals, 1837-1856, edited and with an Introduction by Michael Levien (Nelson Canada Limited, 1981).



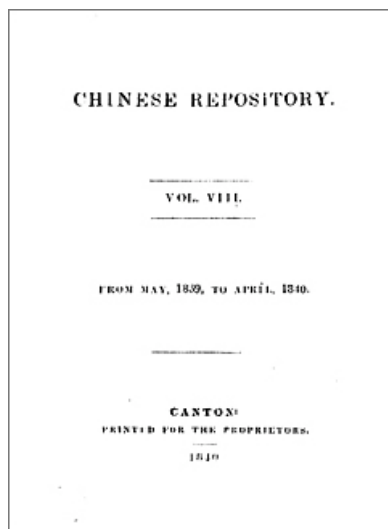
This publication was reissued in 1982 under the main title Naval Surgeon, and is not accessible in full online. The hard copy includes extensive color reproductions of Cree's watercolor sketches.

William Dallas Bernard, Sir William Hutcheson Hall

Narrative of the Voyages and Services of The Nemesis, from 1840 to 1843...from the notes of Commander W.H. Hall, R.N. with Personal Observations by W.D. Bernard, in Two Volumes (Henry Colburn, London, 1844).




The Chinese Repository, Volume VIII, from May, 1839 to April 1840
(Canton, Printed for the Proprietors, 1840) (one volume of many)



This publication, published from 1832 through 1851, provides an intimate view of Protestant missionary perceptions of developments in China.

On viewing images of a potentially disturbing nature: [click here](#).

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