On trial here with this course for OLLI is the vividness of history. Vividness or persuasiveness depends not on history as something that happened only in the past, but on the telling of the “-story” that comprises two-thirds of the syllables in “history.” T.S. Eliot put it another way:

…the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; {T.S. Eliot 1921}
Confession: I am partial to books written by Bill Bryson. He is a gifted writer and interpreter of history for amateur analysts of history like me. Bryson’s (2010) *At Home*, for example, alerted me to the hectic pace of social, technological, and scientific change that England experienced in the mid 1800s, when that nation was in the grips of its industrial revolution.

Bryson’s skill as an interpreter of special material for non-specialists has been recognized by publishers. And by historians. And by some scientists. One such recognition was the invitation for Bryson to edit a volume of contributed chapters to celebrate the occasion of the 350th anniversary of one of the world’s most outstanding and respected “clubs.” In 2010, the Royal Society of London celebrated the achievements and highlights since its founding in 1660, as well as forward to what the RS might experience by the time of its 400th anniversary in 2060.
By the end of the 18th century both the British and the French had experimented with telegraphy, or “far-writing.” But before electromagnetic devices were developed in industrializing countries toward the middle of the 19th century, far-writing, or telegraphy, was based on optical signals. And if you think about it, optical telegraphy persisted until the “wireless” technology of radio could be adopted by ships in the first years of the 20th century. The *Titanic* was equipped with “wireless” so that she was able to communicate distress signals to ships near her. Incidentally can you think of where you might find fossil relicts of optical telegraphy even today?
War puts a heavy imprint on historical developments, including science. We cannot ignore war as an agent of change. The Napoleonic wars dragged on and on until the definitive land engagement, the Battle of Waterloo in what is now Belgium in 1815. The defeat of the combined French and Spanish Naval Fleets in 1805 by Horatio Nelson guaranteed that Britain would escape invasion for the final decade of the wars. Britannia’s naval supremacy had been carefully built up during the 18th century. When John Barrow became the permanent (i.e., not an appointed or titular) Secretary of the Admiralty in 1810, England had a serious oversupply of naval officers, ships and marine expertise.
In the nature of history’s presence, or its artifacts, we lived in the northernmost U.S. community for a decade. Barrow’s name, of course, is taken from Point Barrow, named in honor of Sir John Barrow, the civil servant Secretary of the Admiralty for nearly four decades. The region also bears a number of other commemorative names from late 18th through 19th century British Admiralty exploits. Sir Francis Beaufort (the Beaufort Sea stretches from Point Barrow eastward to the westernmost islands of the Canadian Archipelago) was a polymath, in that he worked on optical telegraphy in England and Ireland, but also strove to bring standardizations and quantification into Admiralty operations for observing and reporting environmental conditions. Notably, he developed the Beaufort Wind Scale, which he then was able to institutionalize when he became a leader of the Royal (Naval) Observatory in the early 19th century.
Let’s consider a few topics that fill our various appetites for so-called news these days. We might not all agree on how I have sorted them into short-, medium- and long-term staying power.

On the other hand, I doubt that we can disagree over whether the history we are discussing offers examples that enlighten us about each of these dozen topics. Anyone want to disagree?
Since last time we discussed 19th century history of ocean exploration in this class, I have gone back over some events, and discovered new angles on matters and situations that I thought I understood pretty well. Wow!

First, the story (history) of one individual’s life at a time (a biography or autobiography) can seduce a listener or reader into believing that such an account provides a balanced view of history. But the better, if more challenging approach, is to consider several life stories of people whose trajectories overlap, intertwine, and influence one another to various extents.

Just as you learn more about the 20th century by studying Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt together, you get a fuller picture of the 19th century by considering several of its key performers together. Moreover, these several 19th century performers tended to know one another, interact, and shape one another’s ideas to a surprising degree!
Second, I’ve been reminded that history can be understood by picking a key moment or a key stretch of time, then moving forward or backward in time, to illustrate threads of ideas and circumstances.

To illustrate, a not-quite random choice of half a decade, 1850-1855, is shown here for discussion and to give ourselves a “mooring or anchor” from which to move in either direction.
Let’s summarize several key “game-changing” developments in place by about 1825:

In a span of the last 10 years of the 18th and the first 25 years of the 19th century, primitive attempts at telegraphy for long-distance communications were undertaken on both sides of the English Channel. At the Battle of Trafalgar, the French and Spanish fleets were soundly rebuffed, defeated, and dissuaded from invading Britain. Cap’n Francis Beaufort later assumed high office, from which he could promote standardization of meteorological and hydrographic observations. Viscount Melville and Sir John Barrow extended the British “Hydrographic Mandate” to promote internationalism, even altruistic motives, in the exploration of oceans, islands, trade routes, ports, and coastal zones worldwide.

Let’s recall that this British altruism to some extent solved the social problem of a vastly over-built, over-officered, and suddenly under-employed Naval forces: make-work, or welfare solutions to exercise British marine capabilities and sovereignty in a time of peace,

After 1825, developments and innovations accelerate at a dizzying pace.
Before mid-19th century, the British Admiralty was busy, following the mandate to explore the planet for the “good of mankind.” By then, the Admiralty was trying (still!) to bull its way through the maze of the Canadian Archipelago to provide a shortcut for far-Eastern commerce. Barrow put his trust in Franklin, the day’s equivalent to a leader of NASA’s astronaut corps.

Here are Franklin’s first two Expeditions de-confused. Sir John Barrow persisted with Franklin, in no small part because he came back alive.

1. Expedition to Coppermine River, 1819-1822.
2. McKenzie Expeditions 1823, when Franklin ventured west to Return Reef (Oliktok Pt)

By 1830, the British Admiralty had learned and salted away much geographical information, including patterns of 1. Climate, and 2. Weather (the more problematic of the two concepts).

How do we distinguish weather from climate?