

The National Geographic Magazine

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INTRODUCTORY

With the present number the NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE commences a new series and makes its first appearance as a monthly publication. What shall be its precise scope and function has been the most difficult question its editors have been called upon to determine. From no other point of view is the interdependence of the sciences so manifest as from the geographic. Geography in its broader sense has to do not merely with the physical features of the earth's surface, but with the distribution of animal and vegetable life, with political divisions and subdivisions, with the growth and movement of population, with the progress of human society, with the development of the earth's natural resources, and with commercial intercourse between nations. To cover successfully so vast and so diversified a field is entirely beyond the capacity of any single periodical publication. Either it must restrict itself to physical geography and become largely technical, or it must content itself with briefly chronicling the more notable additions to geographic knowledge in those parts of the world in which its readers are less directly interested, and with becoming more especially the exponent of the geography—physical, political, and commercial—of the continent with which its publication more particularly identifies it. And surely in the case of an American publication this is a sufficiently broad field. There are vast regions of the New World that must continue to tempt the venturesome explorer for many years to come. Here, too, on this continent "the rudiments of empire are," in the words of one of our own poets, "plastic yet and warm;" political problems are being wrought out on an unexampled scale, a fusion of races hitherto without parallel is going on, and the bounty of nature is being poured out with a more lavish hand than in any other equally extensive portion of the globe. It will accordingly



U. S. REVENUE-MARINE STEAMER "BEAR" MOORED TO A FIELD OF ICE IN BERING SEA.

THE ARCTIC CRUISE OF THE UNITED STATES
REVENUE CUTTER "BEAR"

By DR SHELDON JACKSON, *United States General Agent of Education in Alaska*

Expeditions to the Arctic have always had a fascination for mankind. From the early voyages of the Norsemen down through the successive expeditions of Davis, Baffin, and Ross to that of Peary the world has honored the men who have braved the dangers of the Arctic in voyages of discovery lasting from one to three years, but little account has been made of the whalers who have encountered these same dangers for many years in succession, and particularly of the United States revenue cutter service that has annually ventured into these icy regions for sixteen years past. The service began in 1880 with the sending of the little cutter *Corwin* into the Arctic in search of the *Jeannette*, and an Arctic cruise has been made each season since that time. In 1883 the steamer *Bear*, after the rescue of General Greely and party of the Lady Franklin bay expedition, was turned over to the United States Treasury Department and detailed for the Arctic service. She is a barquentine-rigged steamer, 198 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 18.5 feet deep, with a capacity of 714 tons. She was built at Greenock, Scotland, for the Dundee sealing and whaling fleet, and is an excellent sea boat—in fact the best in the Arctic ocean for work in the ice. The commanding officer from 1884 to the present time has been Captain Michael A. Healy, an officer justly rendered famous by his long, successful, and in many ways remarkable service in the dangerous waters of Arctic Alaska.

The annual cruise of the *Bear* to the Arctic ocean is unique in its multifarious duties and its practical usefulness. In addition to the ordinary duties of a revenue cutter in protecting the interests of the customs, more particularly by the prevention of smuggling by the whaling fleet, this steamer has performed the duty of a traveling life-saving station. During these twelve years it has rescued from the bleak and sterile coast of western and Arctic Alaska a thousand shipwrecked whalers and destitute mariners. Not a season passes without one or more whalers

being wrecked and relief being furnished by the *Bear*. In addition to affording relief to the whaling fleet in times of disaster and peril, its record is equally brilliant in the protection of thousands of half-civilized natives from the rapacity of the white man and the demoralization that comes from the white man's ruin. Along vast stretches of coast (from 10,000 to 12,000 miles) unknown to civilization, the flag of the revenue steamer is the only evidence of the authority of the Government that is ever seen and the only protection ever afforded. The cruiser *Bear* also furnishes the only medical attendance which the natives living along thousands of miles of coast ever receive. In 1890 the importance of its annual cruise was still further increased by its affording transportation to the United States general agent of education in Alaska in his establishment and supervision of Government schools in western and Arctic Alaska, and in 1891 still another addition was made to its usefulness by its being employed in the transportation of domestic reindeer from Siberia to Alaska. Its visits to the native villages upon the American coast and the search for reindeer along the coast of Siberia bring it into many bays and regions little known to the geographic world. During the establishment of schools and the introduction of domestic reindeer into Alaska the writer was enabled, by the permission of the Secretary of the Treasury and the courtesy of Captain Healy, to make five consecutive annual cruises along the Arctic coasts of Siberia and Alaska. The work being now well under way, his place was this season taken by the assistant agent, Mr William Hamilton. The cruise of the *Bear* in 1895 was over much the same course as in previous years.

After patrolling the North Pacific during May and June the *Bear* left the wharf at Dutch harbor, Unalaska, on June 24 for her Arctic trip. The next day she sighted through the fog first St. George island and then St. Paul. The sea being too rough to land, the ship pushed on to the northwest, passing St. Matthew island on June 26, and reaching anchorage at St. Lawrence island on June 28. Very soon the natives swarmed on board, bringing tidings that Mr and Mrs Gamble, in charge of the Government school on the island, were in excellent health and had had a very successful year. A sewing machine and a cabinet organ for Mrs Gamble, with supplies for the family and a twelve months' mail, were landed safely through the surf. Hoisting anchor on June 30 the *Bear* crossed over to Indian



HERD OF REINDEER LYING DOWN.

Photographed by A. L. Broadbent, U. S. R. M.

point, Siberia, about 40 miles distant. There two Cossack officers of the Russian army were found taking a census of the village. This was the first visit of Russian officials to that section of the Siberian coast in many years, and the natives brought the Russian coins they had received from them over to the ship to sell as curios. Here, as elsewhere on the trip, the ship's surgeon went ashore to treat the sick and ailing. The principal native of the village is Koharri, who is a noted trader all along the coast. He has a little frame whale-house filled from floor to ceiling with tobacco, flour, and looking-glasses, which he has obtained from the whalers and from which he supplies the country for hundreds of miles around. This man has been known to have as much as \$75,000 worth of whalebone in his storehouse at one time. He does a business of probably \$100,000 a year, and yet not a single coin of gold or silver nor a single bank note or bank check is used, nor are any books kept. All transactions are by barter, furs and whalebones being exchanged for tobacco, flour, and whisky. This wholesale merchant of the North Siberian coast can neither read nor write, nor can any one associated with him. Although so wealthy, he lives in an ordinary tent and sleeps on the ground, on a pile of reindeer skins.

On several occasions the *Bear*, in search of reindeer, has turned southward from Indian point and sailed up Holy Cross sound, at the head of Anadir gulf, some 300 miles into Siberia. In 1893, while in search of reindeer, we discovered a large river emptying into Holy Cross sound. After visiting a herd of reindeer, an officer and crew entered the mouth of this stream, the *Bear* being the first ocean steamer that had ever plowed those waters. This season the *Bear*, turning northward, anchored, on July 1, off South head, St. Lawrence bay. Peter and Kaimok, the leading men of that section, came on board and sold 40 head of reindeer. The herd, however, was on the opposite side of the bay and could not be reached until the ice should go out, a month later. Being unwilling to wait, the captain set sail for King island, which was reached the next morning. At this point during two previous seasons the *Bear* was caught and imprisoned in large ice floes.

Leaving the island at 8 a. m., the *Bear* soon encountered large cakes of ice at the entrance to Port Clarence. Forcing her way through the ice, she found seven whalers at anchor inside, and news was received of the successful winter of the reindeer herds.

The 4th of July was spent with the whaling fleet, at anchor. A baseball game on shore and a salute of twenty-one guns at noon, with a dinner on the *Bear* to the whaling captains, comprised the public celebration of the day. On July 5 the *Bear* left for St. Michael, where she arrived the following day. On July 8 anchor was hoisted and a trip was made to the native village on Sledge island. On July 9 the steamer made Bering straits, calling at East cape, where four or five influential natives were taken on board to aid in procuring reindeer. Learning that there was a large herd about 50 miles to the northward, the vessel entered the Arctic ocean. Early in the morning of July 11 the *Bear*, picking and pushing her way through the ice, reached Utan. At this place 16 deer were purchased and brought on board. Continuing the trip up the coast, the *Bear* tied up to a huge ice floe near cape Serdze, Siberia. While there target practice was had at distant pieces of ice. On the 14th, learning that there were some deer at Chacorán, the vessel steamed over to that village, where 22 deer were secured. The ice closing in, the cutter was compelled to move a few miles farther south. At this point 73 head of deer were purchased, and at midnight the *Bear* got under way for the reindeer station at Port Clarence, passing through a gale on the 16th and reaching point Spencer on the 17th, where she anchored. About noon on the 20th, the gale having subsided, the *Bear* steamed over to the station and landed the deer. The brig *W. H. Meyer*, with the annual supplies for the several stations and schools, was found wrecked on the beach in front of the station, having gone ashore during the gale on the night of the 17th. The supplies for the reindeer station had fortunately all been landed, but those for the schools at cape Prince of Wales and point Barrow were lost.

On July 22 the *Bear* weighed anchor and headed for Siberia for another load of reindeer, and on July 23 she reached St. Lawrence bay. On the 24th she steamed to the head of the bay, where 43 head were secured. The next day she returned to the reindeer station, where the deer were landed on the 26th. On the 28th, the *Bear* having taken on board Mr and Mrs Hauná, who had been wrecked on the *W. H. Meyer*, with their supplies received from reindeer station, sailed for cape Prince of Wales, where they were landed that afternoon. Again hoisting anchor the steamer left for Kotzebue sound. On the way the schooner *Jessie* was boarded and examined. On July 30 the *Bear* anchored



SCENE AT POINT BARROW IN APRIL.

in the lee of Chamisso island. On the 31st, while the vessel was lying windbound, Dr Sharp and Mr Justice, of the Philadelphia Academy of Sciences, and Mr William Hamilton, of the Bureau of Education, together with a party of officers, made an excursion to Choris peninsula. On August 5 the steamer left for point Hope, where it arrived next day. Here the school and whaling stations were visited, and Dr Driggs, one of the teachers, who had been in that country for five years, was taken on board to return to the states for a vacation.

On August 7 the *Bear* started up the coast for point Barrow, wending its way through large packs of floating ice, and on the following day caught up with the whaling fleet at anchor near Icy cape, at the southern edge of the great Arctic ice pack. The whaling fleet had been at anchor for 19 days, waiting for the ice to open. The *Bear* lay there for 14 days longer, waiting for an opportunity to get farther north. Parties from point Barrow, who came down the coast for their mail, reported that the past winter had not been very cold, the lowest temperature being 30° below zero. Giving up all expectation of getting farther north, young ice forming on the sea and on the rigging of the vessel, the captain concluded to turn southward, which he did on August 22. The following day a shoal of walrus was sighted several miles away, and hunting parties were sent out and secured 10 of them. Picking up the walrus, the vessel continued southward, calling at point Hope the next day and reaching the reindeer station August 27. Two days were spent in securing requisitions and finishing up the business of the year. On September 1 the steamer, while near St. Michael, took on board 16 destitute miners from the Yukon region. On the evening of September 4 the vessel anchored off the St. Lawrence island village. The evening was spent in closing up the season's business at the station. Requisitions were made out for another year's supplies, last letters were received, farewells were spoken, and Mr and Mrs Gamble were again cut off from all communication with the outside world for another year. At 4 a. m. on September 5 the *Bear* was again under way. September 6 St. Matthew and Hall islands were passed, and on the 7th anchor was dropped at St. Paul island, where on the 8th a landing was made for a few hours. On September 9 a similar landing was made at St. George island, and at noon on September 11 anchor was dropped in Dutch harbor, Unalaska, closing the Arctic cruise of 1895.