

## Commentary

### **“Where ladies are so scarce we have to muster in full”: Sophie Porter’s Account of Over–Wintering at Herschel Island, 1894-1895**

**Edited and Introduced by P. Whitney Lackenbauer**

*Sophie E. Porter’s account offers colourful insights into the life of the whaling community over–wintering at Herschel Island (Qikiqtaruk) in the mid–1890s. Porter lived on board the whaling ship Jesse H. Freeman in the winterized quarters prepared for her husband, but her full social schedule meant that the ship did not keep her captive. The excerpts transcribed, reproduced, and introduced in this commentary span the period from 19 August 1894 (when Jesse H. Freeman dropped anchor off the sand spit at Herschel) to Victoria Day (24 May) 1895. Porter’s account offers rare insights into how women and other members of the diverse Herschel Island community negotiated gender, race, and class positions and coped with life in this remote Arctic outpost.*

*Le récit de Sophie E. Porter offre un aperçu imagé de la vie de la communauté baleinière qui a passé l’hiver à l’île Herschel (Qikiqtaruk) au milieu des années 1890. Porter vivait à bord du baleinier Jesse H. Freeman dans les locaux aménagés pour l’hiver préparés pour son mari, mais son calendrier d’activités sociales était chargé même si elle était à bord d’un navire. Les extraits transcrits, reproduits et présentés dans cet exposé couvrent la période du 19 août 1894 (lorsque le Jessie*

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H. Freeman a jeté l'ancre près de la flèche de sable à l'île Herschel) à la fête de la Reine du 24 mai 1895. Le récit de Porter offre un regard unique sur la façon dont les femmes et les autres membres de la communauté hétérogène de l'île Herschel déterminaient leurs positions de genre, de race et de classe et faisaient face aux difficultés de la vie dans cet avant-poste isolé de l'Arctique.

Most readers of *The Northern Mariner* are likely familiar with the importance of Herschel Island (Qikiqtaruk), lying 5 km off the Yukon coast, as a hub for the whaling fleet that operated in what is now the western Canadian Arctic in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>1</sup> Inuit (more closely related to the Inupiat in Alaska than the Central Inuit peoples to the east) had continuously occupied the Mackenzie Delta region since the Thule migration



Herschel Island, western Canadian Arctic. (Wikimedia Commons)

around 1200 CE,<sup>2</sup> but contact with Euro-Americans had been limited until whaling captains, having decimated the population of bowhead whales in the North Pacific, turned their attention to the waters off Alaska in the 1870s. Few dared to venture east of Point Barrow for fear of being trapped in the ice until Joe Tuckfield reported in 1889 (after a winter with Inuvialuit near the Mackenzie Delta) that the bowhead whales were “as thick as bees” in the region. Based on his report of a first-rate natural harbour on Herschel Island,

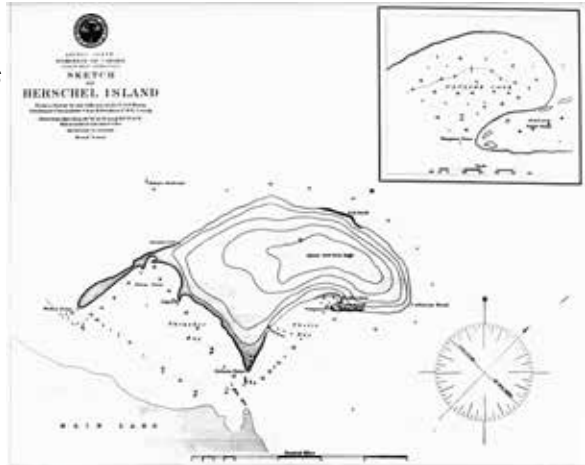
<sup>1</sup> The essential introduction remains John R. Bockstoce, *Steam Whaling in the Western Arctic* (New Bedford: Old Dartmouth Historical Society, 1977).

<sup>2</sup> T. Max Friesen, “Event or Conjunction? Search for the Material Record of Inuvialuit–Euro–American Whaler Interaction on Herschel Island, Northern Yukon,” *Alaska Journal of Anthropology* 7, no. 2 (2009): 45; and David Morrison, “The Copper Inuit Soapstone Trade,” *Arctic* 44 (1991): 239–246.

the Pacific Steam Whaling Company established Pauline Cove as an advanced whaling base the following year. By 1894, fifteen ships from the American Beaufort Sea whaling fleet based in San Francisco and Seattle were wintering there, safely frozen in and protected from the ice. Like the Klondike Gold Rush, this “whaling rush” ultimately proved short-lived – but, while it lasted, created a vibrant maritime community in the western North American Arctic.

According to whaler John Atkins Cook, captain of the steam bark *Navarch*, six white women and more than 700 white men stayed at Herschel Island during the winter of 1894-95.<sup>3</sup> (Other commentators have placed the number at more than 1000.) He also estimated about two hundred Indigenous men, women, and children on the island, as well as five hundred dogs.<sup>4</sup> This austere, flat, treeless island had become a point of convergence, with its permanent station boasting storehouses, quarters for a representative of the Pacific Steam Whaling Company, and a billiard room for winter recreation.<sup>5</sup> Wintering over

Sketch of the Herschel Island area by the officers of USS *Thetis* from field measurements on 15 – 16 August 1889, published in March 1890 by the Hydrographic Office of the United States Navy. (New Bedford Whaling Museum)



afforded ready access to valuable whaling grounds during the short ice-free summer season that ran from July to late August or early September, but much of the story unfolded in ten months of winter quarters when the ships’ crews converged at Herschel.

“The masculine symbolism of the sea is so strong that the presence of women is often occluded or entirely forgotten,” concluded Melanie Ried in her study of captains’ wives who participated in merchant and whaling voyages

<sup>3</sup> John A. Cook and Samson Pederson, *Thar She Blows: Chasing Whales in the Arctic* (Boston: Chapman & Grimes, 1937), 74.

<sup>4</sup> John A. Cook, *Pursuing the Whale: A Quarter-Century of Whaling in the Arctic* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1926), 56.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Stone, “Whalers and Missionaries at Herschel Island,” *Ethnohistory* 28, no. 2 (1981): 103.



Historic buildings at Pauline Cove, Herschel Island. (Wikimedia Commons)

during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>6</sup> While narratives of Arctic exploration and seafaring often adopt highly gendered frames that essentialize the roles of men, scholars have sought to recover stories of women in these activities. In the case of Herschel Island, previous scholars have noted how wives of whaling captains brought the “accoutrements of civilization” in the western Canadian Arctic outpost.<sup>7</sup> Analyzing the log books, diaries, and memoirs that survived from the period, historians have interrogated how gender, race, and class shaped expectations about respectability and became manifested in social relations. The few non-Indigenous women “preside[d] as hostesses” over a “strangely domestic scene,” Joan Druett described:

In the 1894–95 season there were no fewer than seven European females at Herschel Island—Sophie Porter of the *Jesse H. Freeman* and her daughter, Dorothy, Viola Cook of the *Navarch*, Fanny Weeks of the *Thrasher*, Caroline Sherman of the *Beluga*, Mrs. Green of the *Alexander*, and her niece, Lucy McGuire. It was a strangely formal existence, with dances, whist parties, costume balls, concerts (one concert party being called ‘The Herschel Island Snowflakes’), and amateur theatricals. Dinner parties were staged, complete with amazing menus. One included ‘Lobster salad & olives, Oyster Paté with French peas,’ and ‘Bartlett Pears, with citron and sponge cake’ for dessert. Outside on the ice, there were games and sledding, with boat races once the ice began to melt. The men made up hunting parties and also went in for a great deal of illicit commerce with the natives, trading fur for rum.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Melanie Ried, “The Captain’s Best Mate: Gender, Genre, and Representation in Women’s Whaling Journals, Letters, and Memoirs, 1823 to 1915” (PhD diss., University of Hawai’i at Mānoa, 2013), 6.

<sup>7</sup> Stone, “Whalers and Missionaries,” 103.

<sup>8</sup> Joan Druett, *She Captains: Heroines and Hellions of the Sea* (New York: Simon & Schuster,

The whaling ship *Jesse H. Freeman*. (Wellfleet Historical Society and Museum)



In the mid-1890s, Sophie E. Porter filled out the log book for her husband's ship, *Jesse H. Freeman*, as it engaged in the “whaling rush” in the western Canadian Arctic. Porter (who turned thirty on 20 January 1895) used the log book as her own personal journal, sharing her observations about people and place alongside more typical technical information. In particular, Porter's account, now held by the Old Dartmouth Historical Society/New Bedford Whaling Museum, offers colourful insights into the life of the whaling community over-wintering at Herschel Island.

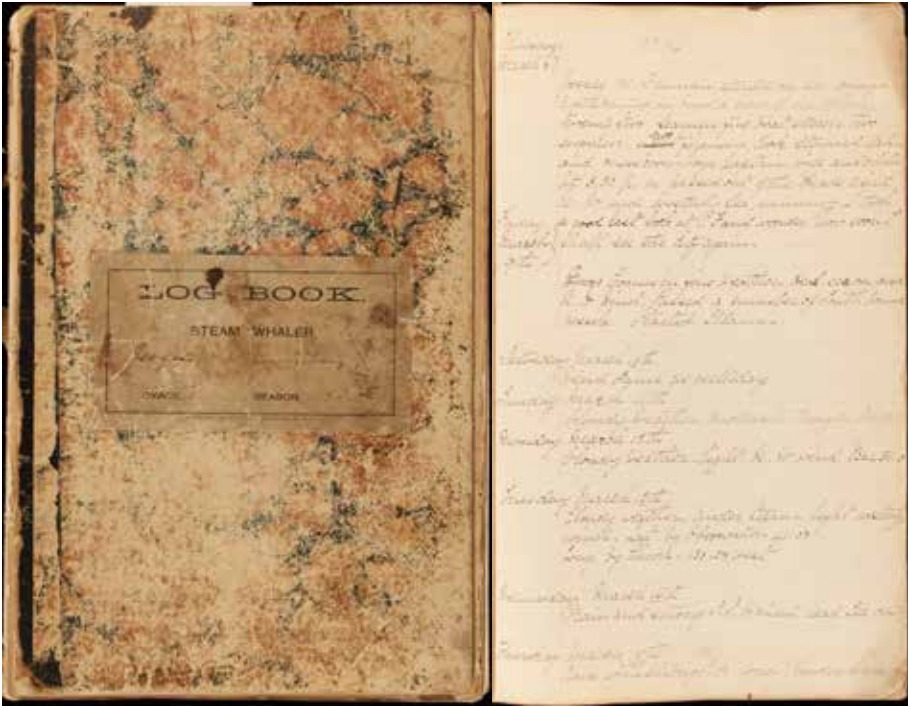
Porter lived on board *Jesse H. Freeman* in the winterized quarters prepared for her husband, William, but her full social schedule meant that the ship did not keep her captive.<sup>9</sup> The excerpts transcribed and reproduced in this research note span the period from 19 August 1894 (when *Jessie H. Freeman* dropped anchor off the sand spit at Herschel) to Victoria Day (24 May) 1895, thus covering the first season when wives overwintered with their whaling captain husbands.<sup>10</sup> Typical of whaler's wives personal accounts, there is no indication that Sophie recorded her daily reflections with any thought to publishing. Thus, rather than offering an overarching narrative, Porter describes her physical surroundings and interpersonal interactions in a mode reflective of this “unique sub-genre of nineteenth-century literature.” While on the surface, her account may give the impression of “casual writing, uncomplicated by social, political,

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2000), 251.

<sup>9</sup> Stone notes that “the wives lived on board ship in the winterized quarters which the captains prepared for themselves, then often moved to shore where they lived during the summer season while their husbands were off whaling.” Stone, “Whalers and Missionaries,” 103.

<sup>10</sup> Please note that I have removed various references to weather, temperature, wind direction, and velocity in the log book entries. As Ried notes, incorporating large amounts of official log data in personal journals represented a contribution to the “business of the voyage.” Ried, “Captain's Best Mate,” 23.



Cover and first page of the log book of the steam bark *Jesse H. Freeman*, kept by Sophie Porter. (Old Dartmouth Historical Society/New Bedford Whaling Museum)

and gender constraints on genre and composition practices,” it offers poignant insights into how women and other members of the diverse Herschel Island community negotiated gender, race, and class positions and coped with life in this remote Arctic outpost.<sup>11</sup>

For this commentary, I have selected entries that highlight the social dynamics of the cosmopolitan population on Herschel Island. Popular depictions emphasize the hardness of the crews – “a rough bunch, shanghaied from ports around the globe,” who did little but “drink and fight” in their “veritable Arctic prison,” a recent article suggests. “Life was bleak,” with

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<sup>11</sup> Ried, “Captain’s Best Mate,” 7. For other examples of whalers’ wives journals (and analysis thereof), see Emma Mayhew Whiting and Henry Beetle Hough, *Whaling Wives* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1953); Joan Druett, *Petticoat Whalers: Whaling Wives at Sea 1820–1920* (New York: Collins, 1991); Mary Brewster, *She Was a Sister Sailor: The Whaling Journals of Mary Brewster, 1845–1851*, ed. Joan Druette (Mystic: Mystic Seaport Museum, 1992); Lisa Norling, *Captain Ahab Had a Wife: New England Women and the Whalefishery, 1720–1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); and Julia Bonham, “Feminist and Victorian: The Paradox of the American Seafaring Woman of the Nineteenth Century,” *American Neptune* 37, no. 3 (1977): 203–218.





Sketches by Sophie Porter in *Jesse H. Freeman's* log book. (Old Dartmouth Historical Society/ New Bedford Whaling Museum)

sailors regularly freezing to death, succumbing to illness, or losing limbs to frostbite.<sup>12</sup> While divisions of space and labour meant that Sophie Porter and the other whaling captains' wives were isolated from the crews in their practical work, she carefully observed their activities and did not record any overt opposition to her presence onboard the ship. She provides insights into hardships, sickness (both mental and physical), death, and loneliness, but much of her writing paints a less bleak and violent picture of the Herschel Island experience than popular images (or missionaries' letters) might suggest. Instead, she documents chores essential to overwintering in the Arctic, such as smoking out rats, gathering wood for fuel and freshwater ice for drinking water, and banking the ships with snow. She chronicles the to-ing and fro-ing of hunting parties, the number of animals caught (or procured from Indigenous hunters), and the dispatch and arrival of mail. “Those who each morning impatiently listen for the postman’s ring can scarcely picture the eagerness and anxiety with which we receive our one solitary yearly delivery,” Porter

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Campbell, “Hardball on Herschel Island,” *Up Here* (March 2016).

wrote from her Arctic abode, “where the conditions of life and environment are utterly opposed to all that makes existence comfortable to us within the bounds of civilization, culture and modern improvement.”<sup>13</sup>

Porter’s account also provides many examples of how community members entertained themselves in forms that “partially reconstruct[ed] the kind of lifestyle which could be identified with their home society.”<sup>14</sup> She notes a regular procession of parties featuring music, dancing, card playing, and elaborate meals. Describing the first gathering of the season aboard *Beluga* on 4 October, Porter notes “an excellent band of three pieces – violin, banjo & accordion – and we were treated to all the latest (up to March 1894) airs, and not withstanding [the] unpolished floor and heavy boots, we had some jolly dances.”<sup>15</sup> For another party twelve days later, the same ship was “elaborately decorated with bunting and lights and one half the whole length partitioned off with flags and occupied by the dinner table which was tastefully laid for 25 persons.” After a sumptuous five-course dinner, she expressed “the unanimous regret ... that our dear friends at home could not see how the poor ‘Arctic Exiles’ were suffering as we laughed and chatted over our good things.” In other entries, she described the baseball league formed by the ships’ crews, who prided themselves on playing their games regardless of weather – and often had an enthusiastic audience of Inuit spectators cheering them on.<sup>16</sup>

The log book also references less savoury aspects of life at Herschel. “I have undressed once in the last two weeks,” Porter noted on 30 December 1894 while tending to her sick husband laid up in bed in the wheelhouse. There were accidents: an Inuk shooting himself, Captain Charles Weeks dying from injuries sustained in a fall, and disoriented men getting lost during routine activities. For some this meant frostbite and amputations of fingers and toes. For others, like a sailor who became lost one evening in early February while retrieving meat for the dogs, it meant death. She also recounts how some sailors, fed up with their fate at Herschel, decided to brave the elements and desert. On Christmas eve, for example, three men ran away and “were bound for the mines, wherever that may be.” Most did not get far.

Porter also describes the welcome arrival of Anglican missionary Isaac

<sup>13</sup> Sophie Porter, “An Arctic Winter: A Woman’s Life in Polar Seas,” *Overland*, vol. 29 (n.d.): 353–58, quoted in Barbara Kelcey, “Jingo Belles, Jingo Belles, Dashing Through the Snow: White Women and Empire on Canada’s Arctic Frontier” (PhD diss., University of Manitoba, 1994), 42.

<sup>14</sup> Stone, “Whalers and Missionaries,” 104.

<sup>15</sup> For more on music at Herschel, see Paul Krejci, “Skin Drums, Squeeze Boxes, Fiddles and Phonographs: Musical Interaction in the Western Arctic, Late 18<sup>th</sup> through Early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries” (PhD diss., University of Alaska Fairbanks, 2010), 100–102.

<sup>16</sup> Campbell, “Hardball on Herschel Island.”



Stringer, based at Fort McPherson, on his third annual visit to Herschel. He held church services, baptized the “first white child born in the Arctic Ocean,” and ministered the sacraments to followers. Worried about the trade in alcohol and the reputation of the island as a “hive of debauchery,” Stringer also convened a meeting at the Company’s House to find a way to quash the liquor trade with Indigenous Peoples. Porter recounts how the missionary “spoke of the difficulty of getting any result from his mission work, while the influence of liquor had such a bad effect on the natives, who would with a few exceptions rather trade their meal and furs for liquor than anything else, knowing that they could get it.” The captains signed a petition promising “not to give liquor in any way to the Ilgillies or Kogmolics, and to give as little as possible to the Nunatagmiut hunters, belonging to the vessels,” but pledging to control the supply side did not end demand. “So far this winter,” Porter observed, “the Captains have found it impossible to get work or hunting deer done by the natives unless they gave them a small quantity of liquor to carry out on their sleds, also giving them a drink when they came in with a load of meat.” If any ships broke with the deal to secure caribou meat, others would follow suit to ensure their own supply. The trade thus continued, but the captains, their wives, and other officers harboured no resentment towards Stringer and began to raise funds to establish permanent mission quarters at Herschel (which Stringer and his wife Sadie occupied in July 1897).<sup>17</sup>

Porter’s log book entries also touch upon inter-cultural relations between the American whalers and Indigenous Peoples who formed part of the Herschel Island community. As whaling vessels sailed north along the Alaskan or Siberian coasts, the captains signed on Inuit crewmen to participate in the whale hunt (often as boatsteerer or harpooners) and then to hunt for the ship’s crew while they rested in winter quarters at Herschel. While the ships lay in their static winter state, the island also attracted Inuit from the adjacent coastlines and First Nations from the interior (such as Gwich’in) to trade animals that they caught for goods brought by the vessel captains for this purpose. Porter’s account shows the reliance of the residents on fresh meat provided by visiting hunters, as well as caribou, birds, fish, and clothing provided by Inuit living at Herschel. Although her short daily entries do not provide elaborate descriptions of these inter-cultural encounters, she captures the whalers’ curiosity in Indigenous performances, such as a dance outside of tent on 30 September, as well as the reciprocal curiosity of Indigenous Peoples

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<sup>17</sup> Virtual Museum of Canada, “The Bishop Who Ate His Boots” (Whitehorse: Old Log Church Museum, 2002); and Ken Coates and William Morrison, *Land of the Midnight Sun: A History of the Yukon*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill–Queen’s University Press, 2002), 132–35.

in the activities of the ships' crews.<sup>18</sup>

This time period marked the apex of the commercial whaling industry in the western Canadian Arctic. Historian John Bockstoce observed how catches fell from 1892-95 and remained low over the next two years. In 1896-97, only three ships overwintered on the island.<sup>19</sup> As historian Thomas Stone summarized:

The period of wintering voyages inaugurated in 1890 was nevertheless short-lived; the last one took place only seventeen years later, in 1907-08, when the decline in the productivity of bowhead fishery and the plummeting price of baleen spelled, for all intents and purposes, the end of American whaling activity in the Arctic. But the initial success of the *Grampus* and *Hume* precipitated an influx of whalers to the region which led to the creation for a time of a virtual American colony on the Canadian arctic coast.<sup>20</sup>

Sophie Porter's account from the winter of 1894-95 offers a unique lens into the nature of Herschel Island society at this time. Refreshingly free of the "stereotypically hyperbolic and sentimental" depictions that Haskell Springer observed in his survey of women's shipboard journals,<sup>21</sup> Porter's narrating also offers an important corrective to exaggerated tales of Herschel as "the Sodom of the Arctic" and overly romantic images of it as an "outpost of civilization."<sup>22</sup> Her perspective on the heyday of whaling in the western Canadian Arctic reminds us how women coped with hardships, socialized, and "performed civility"<sup>23</sup> during voyages to the farthest reaches of the world.

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<sup>18</sup> For Inuvialuit perspectives, see Murielle Nagy, "Yukon North Slope Inuvialuit Oral History," *Occasional Papers in Yukon History No.1* (Whitehorse: Government of the Yukon, Heritage Branch, 1994). For an Inuit perspective on the whaling community at Herschel Island in the early twentieth century, see Nuligak, *I, Nuligak*, trans./ed. Maurice Metayer (New York: Peter Martin, 1966).

<sup>19</sup> Bockstoce, *Steam Whaling*, 46-49.

<sup>20</sup> Stone, "Whalers and Missionaries," 103.

<sup>21</sup> Haskell Springer, "The Captain's Wife at Sea," in *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-1920*, ed. Margaret Creighton and Lisa Norling (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 92-116.

<sup>22</sup> Coates and Morrison, *Land of the Midnight Sun*, 135.

<sup>23</sup> Ried, "Captain's Best Mate," 241.



Whaleships in Winter Quarters at Herschel Island, 1893-94. Painting by John Bertonccini. (New Bedford Whaling Museum)

**Excerpts from the Logbook of the Steam Bark *Jesse H. Freeman* (1894-1896), kept by Sophie E. Porter (transcriptions by Walter Vanast).<sup>24</sup>**

1894, 08, 19. Sun.

At noon we dropped anchor about a ship's length off the end of the sand spit at Herschel Island where we landed some stuff in barrels. I went ashore to have a look at the surroundings of our future home. They did not look very inviting, but we had a cordial welcome from Captain Murray the station master, the entire population of natives, principally women and children, and about seventy-five dogs. There are several wooden buildings. The P.S.W. [Pacific Steam Whaling] Company's twine house and store house are quite a good size and painted dark red gives a very civilized appearance to the place. The natives live in tents which are neat looking. We found that everything was well with the station and the ships that had been there all winter, but the whaling so far had been very thin compared to last year. 16

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<sup>24</sup> Original held at the New Bedford Whaling Museum Research Library in Massachusetts. <https://researchworks.oclc.org/archivegrid/collection/data/76817807>. The full names of the captains are derived from the database at <https://whalinghistory.org/?s=AV10942>.

whales have been taken among the 7 vessels. We hove up anchor and steamed out to where the ships were whaling and met them all coming in as the fog was thick and ice very heavy at the eastward. The captains were all very glad to see us as they began to fear that we could not get in. Captains [H.H.] Norwood, [James A.] Tilton, Vincent, [George B.] Levitt and [Horace P.] Smith came on board.

1894, 08, 20. Mon.

Fine weather. Left the Island at 5.00 a.m. and cruised around all day seeing nothing. The steamers *Karluk* and *Grampus* each took a whale.

1894, 08, 21. Tues.

Fine weather with good north-east breeze. We raised a whale at 10.00 a.m. and lowered then raised 3 more, going very fast. Lowered again twice, but did not strike any. Have seen 10 whales today. Steamer *Narwhal* took one to leeward of us. Five ships in eight with boats out.

1894, 08, 23. Thurs.

Rain and sleet during a.m. Nine vessels round us. *Orca* came up and reported having arrived at Herschel Island on the 20<sup>th</sup>, also *Beluga*, *Thrasher*, *William Baylies* and *Belvedere*. Steamer *Newport* took a whale.

1894, 08, 24. Fri.

Steamed about 30 miles to the eastward along with the *Orca*, but saw nothing. Came back to where the other ships are. *Alexander* lowered at 5.00 p.m., no whales seen. Mr. Williams and Mr. Ashley shot 5 large bears and a cub which were feeding from a carcass of a whale. Saw two carcasses today.

1894, 09, 12. Wed.

Have been cruising for three weeks between Herschel Island and Cape Bathurst. Have seen most whales north-east of the Island and north-east of Pullen Island. Have not seen more than two whales at one time with the exception of once when there were four together. Most of those we have seen have been going. The mate struck and got a calf N.E. of Herschel Island on 30<sup>th</sup> August—no bone in it. On the 7<sup>th</sup> the 6<sup>th</sup> mate got a 1800 lb whale and on the 9<sup>th</sup> the 4<sup>th</sup> mate got another calf. On the 10<sup>th</sup> the 3<sup>rd</sup> mate struck and lost a large whale close to the ship. So far we have lowered boats sixteen times. One time the 5<sup>th</sup> mate's boat was capsized and two sailors nearly drowned. It was blowing hard and snowing at the time. Yesterday 11<sup>th</sup>, the *Navarch* spoke to us and reported one whale. We were sailing west

but the *Navarch* had seen no whales between here and the Island. We turned round with him to hunt up the rest of the fleet. At 8.00 a.m. sighted 6 vessels, at 12 came up to the fleet. *Beluga* 4 whales, *Thrasher* 3, *Alexander* 0, *William Baylies* 4, *Newport* 6, *Hume* 5, *Belvedere* 2. We sent mail and some packages on board the *Belvedere* as she is just starting west and then going to San Francisco. It has come in thick fog as usual.

1894, 09, 14. Fri.

Clear weather with fresh north wind and snowstorms at times. At 10.00 a.m. raised a whale and lowered all 5 boats, then raised another. At 2.30 p.m. 4<sup>th</sup> mate struck a whale and had it alongside at 4 o'clock—about 1800 lbs of bone. Hope to double it tomorrow.

1894, 09, 17. Mon.

Anchored off the spit at the Island at noon, found five steamers and six sailing vessels at anchor. Were glad to receive five letters and a box of books from Mrs. Penniman which had come up on the steamer *Fearless*.

1894, 09, 19-21. Wed. — Fri.

Spent the time getting wood and discharging it on the spit at the Island. The shores are covered with fine large logs of spruce and cottonwood, which have drifted down the McKenzie [*sic*] and other sizeable rivers for hundreds of miles, and this wood forms the principal fuel for winter consumption and enables the Captains to reserve their coal which is none too plentiful for the heavy work in the Spring—that is when the ships get out of winter quarters and have to whale among the ice.

1894, 09, 24. Mon.

... Tried to get near the beach round Kay Point to get more wood but found too many shoals. Kept off for south-west of the Island and anchored in 10 fathoms of water at 5.00 p.m. Steamers *Thrasher*, *Alexander*, *Hume* and *Newport* all at anchor along the beach. Our boatsman had a narrow escape while taking in sail. A loose block struck him and knocked him insensate and cut his head badly.

1894, 09, 26. Wed.

Fine beautiful day with light breeze and almost calm sea. It could not be more pleasant today in San Francisco Bay. The boats brought off about thirty cords of wood, and then we steamed round to the winter quarters and found all the ships in—15

all told.

The last whaling for this year has been done and the last whale caught by the steamer *Hume* on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Steamers *Thrasher* [caught] 4, *Beluga* 4, *Navarch* [blank]

1894, 09, 27. Thurs.

The little Bay looks quite lively. All the ships are lying close together and all the crews are very busy getting ready for winter. On board the vessels they are unrigging the whale boats and davits, sending down spars and sails, and the carpenters have commenced the work of housing over the decks. Dozens of boats are going to and from the ships loaded with wood to pile on the spit and provisions to store in the warehouses. Young ice was made last night.

1894, 09, 30. Sun.

Fine, beautiful, warm weather.

There is a little snow on the ground.

This is the first Sunday that all work aboard ship has been suspended. In the afternoon, all the ladies with their escorts went on shore, where about three hundred men were playing or watching a game of baseball. A good many others were in attendance at a native dance outside one of the tents.

Captain [Charles] and Mrs. [Fanny] Weeks came on board for supper, after which we sang gospel hymns, assisted by Captain [John McInnis].

1894, 10, 01, Mon., 10, 02. Tues.

Spent in towing a carcass off the south-west side of the Island in company with *Newport*, *Beluga*, *Navarch* and *Hume*. Finally got it off the beach and towed it round to the station and left it on the beach for dog food. There are about a hundred and fifty dogs at the station and this carcass (whale commonly called "stinker") will last them all winter.

1894, 10, 04. Thurs.

Fine clear weather, threatening a cold snap.

Nearly all the ships are housed in, some with sails but most of them have wood houses.

All received an invitation to a deck housewarming on the *Beluga* and as this is the first party which has been given at the Island, and proved to be a very jolly one, it is quite worthy of mention. The programme consisted of a very good supper at 5.30 p.m. in the dining cabin, after which we all went on deck where we found a fine

comfortable room entirely covering the poop deck, and lit by two or three dozen lights, lanterns and colored side lights.

There was an excellent band, of three pieces, violin, banjo and accordion, and we were treated to all the latest (up to March 1894) airs, and notwithstanding unpolished floor and extra heavy boots, we had some jolly dances, while the “old fogies” played whist (as usual) and a crowd of spectators crowded round the musicians at the end of the room and seemed to have lots of fun watching us trip the light fantastic.

Ice cream and cake, also beer and cigars, were served during the evening and everyone enjoyed their first informal Arctic Party.

1894, 10, 05. Fri.

Cold, raw weather and strong signs of approaching winter.

Finished housing in the main deck with scantlings and sails. We have very little lumber, not sufficient for a small deck house. We found when we got to the Island that all the lumber had been seized by the other steamers, leaving the *Freeman* minus.

...

1894, 10, 09. Tues.

Fine weather, light snow.

The ice is beginning to make.

Called on board steamer *Thrasher* and received an invitation to a party on board steamer *Alexander*.

1894, 10, 10. Wed.

Fine weather but getting colder with light snowfall.

Had the bulkhead in stateroom moved and everything put in a terrible mess.

At 4.00 p.m. set out to the house-warming on the *Alexander* where we found out great preparations had been made for a good time. At 6 o'clock, ten of us sat down to high tea and as soon as we cast our eyes over the tastefully arranged table, we ladies, mentally decided that Mrs. Green was blessed with the “Boss” steward of the fleet.

The menu consisted of, as far as I can remember: Lobster Salad and Olives, Oyster Patés with French Peas, Veal Loaf with Jelly, Chops à la Français with Saratoga chips, Tea Biscuits, Bartlett Pears with citron, sponge cake and most delicious tea.

At 7. 30 p.m. the evening guests began to arrive. Several of the Captains brought musicians to swell the Band.

A part of the deck house was partitioned off for dancing and decorated with bunting and lanterns. The wheel house was occupied the entire evening by the “old fogies” who formed two tables for whist and cribbage. The men who could dance did their duty like



majors, and the music was fine, to say nothing of the Hawaiian songs which were sung by three native boys.

During the evening there was a liberal distribution of ice cream, [illegible] fruits, the spectators who were crowded in the background not being forgotten. Mrs. Green wished everyone to enjoy her house-warming.

When we got into our boats to go home at 12.30 we found winter had begun, in earnest, for every vessel was white with snow and the water had its first crust of ice.

1894, 10, 12. Fri.

Freezing hard.

All day the steamers heaving up their anchors and getting placed for winter.

At noon, the ice is strong enough for men to walk ashore.

The *Freeman* has a very good berth and we hope to be able to remain in it for good.

The vessels are crowded into close quarters.

1894, 10, 13. Sat. +18.

Blowing strong . . . and snowing.

Ships steady with lines run ashore in case the ice should break up.

G. Tolner a sailor on the sick list.

1894, 10, 14. Sun. +12.

Heavy gale.

At 12 midnight the ships began to move and we got up steam and backed out of the ice and anchored.

*William Baylies* dragged into bark *Northern Light*.

*Thrasher* and *Alexander* went out to anchor.

1894, 10, 15. Mon. +11.

Freezing hard.

Got up steam and steamed into our position for winter.

Got a fine berth. Ship heading north-east by north, the sandspit one side, *Thrasher* on the other and *Fearless* under our bow.

Driving 17 ft. forward and 3 ¼ fathoms of water under the stern.

Blew down the Port boiler this p.m.

1894, 10, 16. Tues. +12.

Fine and pleasant weather.

This being Bertie Sherman's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday, Captain [Albert C.] and

Mrs. [Caroline] Sherman celebrated it with a party on board the

*Beluga*. The deck house was elaborately decorated with bunting and

lights and one half the whole length partitioned off with flags and occupied by the dinner table which was tastefully laid for 25 persons. At 7 o'clock the party consisting of 16 men, 5 ladies and the three little ones sat down and were served in the best style to an excellent five course dinner : 1<sup>st</sup> course Chicken, Salad, Boston crackers. 2<sup>nd</sup> course Oyster Stew, hot biscuit. 3<sup>rd</sup> course Roast Pork, Cranberry sauce, Mashed Potatoes, French Peas, 4<sup>th</sup> course Sliced Pinenapple, Chocolate cake, 5<sup>th</sup>course Dry fruits, Nuts and Coffee, Olives, Cigars.

The unanimous regret being that our dear friends at home could not see how the poor “Arctic Exiles” were suffering as we laughed and chatted over our good things. Of course, Mrs. Sherman would have to confess that a raid had been made on her private stores, as we certainly would not have any one run off with the idea that the P. S. W. Co. provides the bill of fare for dinner parties etc.

The evening was spent in dancing and cards. Ice cream, cake and coffee were served during the evening. Music by the Herschel Island Orchestra.

At 2.00 a.m. we put our weary feet into our messinkers and trudged home taking care to have the heavier of the men folks lead the way, this being the first day any of the ladies have ventured on the ice and we hear there are numerous dangerous places where some unfortunate has tested the temperature of the water.

Captain [Bernard] Cogan was not able to attend “this being his night for taking a bath”.

1894, 10, 18. Thurs.

The ice is quite strong and pleasant weather.

Dorothy took a ride on the new sled which Captain [McInnis] sent her this a.m.

Mrs. Weeks remembered this was Will's birthday by sending him some fine doughnuts and Captain Weeks, Captain [James] McKenna and Mr. Whithorn spent the evening with us.

1894, 10, 21. Sun.<sup>25</sup>

Fine bright weather, no wind.

Took some snapshots with Mr. Hart's kodak.

In the evening the ladies with their husbands came on board the *Freeman* and we had a very pleasant evening.

1894, 10, 22. Mon.

Beautiful weather.

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<sup>25</sup> Please note that we have corrected dates for the next few entries.

Mrs. Green, Will, the two children and myself took a walk to ice houses this p.m. Everything looked beautiful in the bright 4 o'clock sunset light. The air was so sharp that when we got home our faces were rosy red and the fur fringes round our faces were covered with frost.

We with most of the other ships have changed our meal hours, breakfast at 8.30 a.m., coffee at 12 noon and dinner at 4.30 p.m. The men are for the most part idle now and this arrangement gives the cook, steward and boys more leisure.

Will changed the cabin boy and has taken Alick a foremast boy to wait on our cabin.

My brother Will's birthday today (35 years).

1894, 10, 23. Tues.

Received an invitation to a birthday party on shore, to be given by Captain Tilton of the steamer *Newport*. This is surely the month of birthdays. Captain [McInnis] celebrated his on the 13<sup>th</sup> by running into the *Northern Light* but he did not send out invitations.

1894, 10, 24. Wed.

Snowing.

We spent a very pleasant evening at "Hotel Murray" where we all were invited to celebrate Captain Tilton's birthday. The Party was in the usual order. Dancing and cards for the old fogies who I am glad to say are getting "beautifully less". For tonight Captains [John A.] Cook, Green and Porter distinguished themselves in the square dances. We had music and songs by the Minstrel troupe and at 1.30 the party ended with the "good night" waltz.

Came home in a drifting snowstorm.

1894, 10, 27. Sat. +8.

Mr. Ashley smoked out the rats on the *Freeman* and made a good job of it as they found over a dozen dead all over the ship. Nearly killed the cabin boy, kittens and canaries who were in the wheel house, when the gas rushed out to the air outside.

News came in that one of our native hunters had shot himself with a shotgun and is about dying at his "Iglo" where the other natives took him on a sled.

1894, 11, 05. Mon. -12.

Fine and clear weather, and bright sunshine for a few hours.

Men hauling ice with the dog sled.

I went out to take a snapshot of the team, and found the whole colony of captains in wild excitement over the arrival of the "Itgiliks" or

interior indians. Away out on the ice, towards the mainland, we could see a long line of natives running quickly after their dog teams in the direction of the ships. Each sled was well loaded with deer meat etc. and drawn by from ten to twenty five large dogs, harnessed with yokes and bells.

Every ship wanted to secure a sled of fresh meat, and in five minutes a string of runners were making for the approaching teams and grabbing owner of the first sled they could reach. The indians might feel flattered at their warm welcome. The *Freeman* being the outside ship, had a good chance and soon had a fine load on the deck - natives dogs, sled and all.

Some disputing was heard about some of the meat as two ships claimed the same load and people in this part of the world are very loath to yield up good food or anything else for that matter.

The weather was colder today than it has been.

Ther. 12 below zero and several unprotected ears got nipped.

1894, 11, 06. Tues. -4.

Fine weather.

Some more Indians arrived with deer meat.

The *Freeman* got one of the three they brought in.

1894, 11, 07. Wed. -2.

Pleasant weather.

The whole population turned out this a.m. to see the departure of the “Itgiliks” with their sleds loaded with trade and there were several kodaks in the field. It is quite a pleasure to trade with these people compared to the bother of bargaining with the natives on the coast.

The Itgiliks speak good English and are very polite and what articles they want are useful ones, either for food or clothing. Not one would touch liquor of any kind.

1894, 11, 08. Thurs. 0.

Pleasant weather.

All the ships are banking up with snow and we expect to have things snug enough when the snow is piled in a wall all round us. So far, the cabins are very comfortable without a stove.

We live during the day and evening in the wheel house which is very comfortable. We still use our washroom as usual and no pipes have as yet frozen.

There is a good stove in the forward cabin, a large one with a waterback for melting ice on the main deck and one in my canvas house on the poop.

1894, 11, 11. Sun. 0°

Weather dull, slight snowfall.

Some "Itgiliks" came in with deer meat.

The *Freeman* did not get any today.

Will had a letter come by them from Mr. [Isaac O.] Stringer the missionary at Peel River.

These natives will take back mail from us to be sent out through the Hudson Bay Company in the north-west of Canada.

1894, 11, 12. Mon. -4°

Blowing, fresh wind from south-west.

Busy getting letters ready to be sent out with the natives.

1894, 11, 13. Tues. -10°

Pleasant weather. . . .

clear and cold.

Captain (Little) Porter and Captain [Abraham T.] Simmons gave a party at Hotel de Murray. All had a pleasant time.

1894, 11, 14. Wed. -13°

Blowing a gale from south-west and snow drifting.

The "Itgiliks" did not start with the mail. It was too strong.

1894, 11, 15. Thurs. -17°

The blizzard continues this a.m. and snow is drifted up round the ships.

At 4.00 p.m. a man belonging to steamer *Thrasher* was found frozen, having lost his way between the shore house and the vessels during last night's storm and wandered off on the ice. His feet, face and hands are badly nipped and he will probably lose some fingers.

There was a big crack made in the ice caused by the tide. Several of the vessels were raised up a few inches and some of the snow embankments gave way.

1894, 11, 16. Fri. -10°

Fine, clear weather, no wind.

The ships look very pretty with snow piled all round and the spars and rigging covered with frost.

The "Itgiliks" started today .

We sent letters to mother, the girls, Mrs. Weeks, Mr. Burnham and a small box for Xmas to Mr. Stringer at Fort Peel.

Our mail will reach San Francisco D.V. in June 1895.

1894, 11, 17. Sat. -10°

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Clear, beautiful weather and bright sun from 11.00 a.m. to 2.30 p.m.  
The moon is up day and night as it is never quite dark now.  
We take a walk every day.

1894, 11, 18. Sun. -26°

Weather the same, clear and bright but colder.  
We all took a walk over to the shore and watched the men [*illegible*]  
and tobogganing. I rode home on a dog sled and did not believe till  
I looked at the thermometer that it was then 20° below zero with the  
sun still above the horizon. The only time we feel the cold much  
outside is when the wind blows.  
One of our men, Fred Layer was taken very sick this p.m.

1894, 11, 19. Mon. -15°

Blowing from south-west . . .  
I had a bad fall from the wheel house into the passage way. Saved all  
my bones and got well shaken up.  
Captain and Mrs. Sherman and Bertie came for dinner and spent the  
evening playing whist.

1894, 11, 24. Sat. -20°

Fine and clear. Light airs north-east.  
All the Captains are busily engaged in putting a new covering on the  
billiard table. The cloth was donated by Captain Green.  
At 4.30 we heard sled-bells out on the ice. The officers ran out and  
got three “Itgiliks” sleds having altogether about 750 lbs. of deer  
meat and a few skins. There were six sleds that came in this lot.  
These natives had travelled from the “Rampart House” a Hudson  
Bay [*sic*] station on the Porcupine River a small branch of the Yukon  
and about 160 miles from Herschel Island. They all speak a little  
English.  
Snowed during night 4 inches.

1894, 11, 27. Tues. +12°

Cloudy with fresh wind.  
“Itgiliks” left for the “Rampart House”.  
The meat they brought weighed 735 lbs.

1894, 11, 29. Thurs. -4°

“Thanksgiving.”  
Fine, cloudy weather. . . .  
There were no outdoor sports as the wind was too cutting.  
All the captains who have their wives dined on their own vessels and  
entertained the Bachelors and “grass widowers” and everybody took

in the Minstrel Performance in the evening.

Twenty young men from the crews of different ships have organized a company and dubbed themselves the "Herschel Island Snowflakes" and this was the first entertainment given out of compliment to the ladies. The invitation cards included everyone. It was given on board the *Beluga* and was very good in every respect, music, specialities and costumes. I have paid \$100 for a much poorer performance in San Francisco. The ladies provided a fine supper for the performers, which was served on board the *Thrasher*. So ends Thanksgiving Day 1894.

1894, 12, 01. Sat. -2°

Cloudy weather and light wind.

Jules the boatsteerer on the *Thrasher* who was frozen about two weeks ago had six fingers and two toes amputated by Captain Tilton.

1894, 12, 03. Mon. -8°

Received invitations to a ladies' lunch on *Fearless* and a dance on the bark *Northern Light*. Both for Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup>.

1894, 12, 06. Thurs. -30°

Blizzard still on and increasing.

Lunch party postponed indefinitely.

Enjoyed the party given by Captain Cogan on the *Northern Light* very much though it took all my moral courage and a good escort to get me there in the teeth of the wind and blinding snow. Coming home was not so bad as the wind was at our back.

People at home would think us crazy to go to a party in such weather, but where ladies are so scarce we have to muster in full on all such occasions.

1894, 12, 07. Fri. -21° (noon), -29° (4.30 p.m.)

Wind still blizzing . . . and getting colder.

I find my cabin more comfortable with a stove, but the ship is warm all over.

1894, 12, 10. Mon. -31°

Wind still fresh.

Captain and Mrs. Weeks gave a party on board the *Thrasher* to celebrate the Captain's birthday. We had dinner at five o'clock and cards and dancing till supper, and everyone had such a good time that some did not want to go home when the party broke up with the *Virginia Keel* at 2.30 o'clock. The music was furnished by the "Herschel Island Snowflakes".



1894, 12, 13. Thurs. -32°

Cold and cloudy weather.

Captain McKenna's lunch for the ladies came off today and we were all pleased that the weather was better than it has been for a week. We enjoyed our hen-party very much and were served with an excellent seven course lunch and entertained most pleasantly by Captain McKenna and Mr. Whitham.

Broke a piece off a front tooth and Mrs. Weeks' bird Harry died.

1894, 12, 16. Sun. -32°

Light wind and cloudy weather but quite light for three hours.

Mr. Ashley took us for a good ride in the sled. The dogs pull splendidly, we had ten on the team.

1894, 12, 17. Mon. -32°

Wind strong with drifting snow.

At midnight last night, the Chief Engineer Mr. Parke died very suddenly of heart disease. He has been subject to slight attacks of heart trouble and on Friday night last had a more severe attack.

Yesterday he felt well and went about the ship as usual and spent the evening chatting with friends in his room.

He had retired and was lying reading in his berth when he felt the attack coming on. He got out of bed, saying to Mr. Denny the 1<sup>st</sup> assistant who was also lying reading, Jim I think I am going to be sick. He got to a chair, but never spoke again.

Mr. Denny tried to raise him and called for help. The mate, 2<sup>nd</sup> mate, Captain and myself ran in. The Captain applied resuscitation and sent for the doctor, but no one could call back the life that we all knew was gone. We all feel this sad event very much, not only on account of the suddenness, but because Mr. Parke was well liked by all. We feel we have lost a good shipmate and a pleasant companion. The Captain has a bad cold and cough.

1894, 12, 18. -12°

Calm, cloudy weather and much warmer.

At 2.00 p.m. Mr. Parke was buried in the spot which has been allotted for a burial ground. The funeral was conducted with Masonic Rites, as far as was possible to do so, and was attended by about 50 people, including the Captain and their ladies. Captain Porter was laid up with severe cold and could not leave the ship. Captain Tilton lead [*sic*] the service.

6.00 p.m. wind blowing strong from south-west and much colder.

1894, 12, 24. Mon.

Weather still warm.

Captain still laid up with cold, which seems to be an attack of acute bronchitis. Am too busy waiting on him to make any or much preparation for Xmas.

1894, 12, 25. Tues. Xmas.

Weather same, and getting warmer.

Will seems a little better today, still in bed.

Dorothy woke bright and early (9.00 a.m.) to see what Santa Claus had brought her. About a week ago she sent him a letter, which she told one of the officers to leave in a hole out on the hill. Well she got all she asked for, a great deal more in the way of toys, books, aprons and a lovely stocking stuffed with everything good and pretty. A delightful letter from Santa Claus came tucked between the bedclothes of a dear little cradle. I don't think the children at home ever had a nicer one from their Xmas friend. Poor Mr. Parke spent his last efforts on a little brass basket for Dorothy, and though not quite completed when he died, his friends finished it and sent it to her. This made me more sad, and added to my longing for home and the dear ones, especially as I feel worried about Will's cold.

Nearly everyone called to wish us a Happy Xmas and it was late in the day before I got time to look over the pretty gifts I received from each of the ladies and some of the gentlemen of the fleet.

We were delighted with the contents of dear Mrs. Week's box. Two loaves of fruit cake, two quarts of mincemeat, one quart of preserve, a sweet doll and some fancy work.

I also received some fruit cake from Mrs. Tuck in Unalaska, from dear La Fletcher a lovely book with her photo inside. I wish she knew how pleased I was to find it.

Dinner consisted of chicken soup, roast pork and English plum pudding.

Captain Weeks took Dorothy to the theatrical performance on board the *Beluga* in the evening, and I ran over to bring her home at 11 o'clock.

The weather is so warm outside, we can scarcely bear our fur clothing.

1894, 12, 30. Sun. +18°

The weather during the week has been so mild, no one has ever seen it so warm at this time of the winter before. The Ther. ran up to 28° above, calm almost all the time.

Yesterday there was a fall of snow during a.m. and little wind from south-west.

Today, more snow and blowing.

At 7.00 p.m. a strong gale with snow drifting.

Everyone has been tobogganing and skiing this week. One day Dorothy and I rode on the dog sled to the slide, and I had two delightful descents on the slopes with Captain Tilton and Captain Levitt holding me, one on each side. There were several accidents through carelessness.

On Tuesday night three men ran away—two from the *Thrasher* and one from the *John & Winthrop*. A good many dogs were also missing. Three of the dogs returned two days later, and news came from a white man living on the shore about 6 miles from here, that the men had passed there and told him they were bound for the mines, wherever that may be. They will probably never get back alive to the ship, now that they have had good weather to travel in. The blizzard that is coming on will be more than they can stand. They were provided with rifles, ammunition, spades and picks which they had stolen from the ships.

Captain Porter still laid up and feels very weak. I have undressed once in the last two weeks.

1894, 12, 31. Mon. Above 0°

Light fall of snow, fresh wind.

Mrs. Green gave Mrs. Sherman a surprise party on board the *Beluga*. The New Year was ushered in with firing of guns, hooting of whistles, etc. and I kept watch making flaxseed poultices for Will.

1895, 01, 01. Tues. Above 0°

Fine and pleasant weather. Calm.

Nearly all the Captains called to wish me a Happy New Year. Will was too sick to see anyone.

Minstrel performance on board the *Beluga* which was pronounced very good.

1895, 01, 07. Mon. -30°

Fine, clear weather. Very red in the south at noon and six hours of good daylight.

Will walked over to the house and received a warm welcome. It is three weeks since he went out and is very weak yet. It has been the longest three weeks I have spent on the J.H.F.

Beautiful moonlight nights.

1895, 01, 18. Fri. -26.

Fine, cold weather. Sun out.

Everyone down at the slide coasting, skiing and trying to get

smashed up generally. Nearly every day someone comes home limping.

1895, 01, 20. Sun. -27.

Fine, pleasant weather and calm. Sun out 3 hours in honor of my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday.

1895, 01, 23. Wed. -8.

Fine and pleasant. Our party was given on board the *Beluga* instead of at Captain Murray's, as his steward was suddenly taken ill. We had only a few hours notice to prepare the deck house of the *Beluga*, but everyone set to work with a will and cleared the ice from the sides and roof, decorated and draped the whole place with flags, hung lamps and chinese lanterns, waxed the floor for dancing and arranged the five tables for "Progressive Whist" which was to be the first feature of the entertainment. At 7 o'clock the deck room looked as bright and cosy as any one could wish. This being the first card party we have had, everyone enjoyed the novelty.

The prizes which had been rather a source of worry to Mrs. Cook and myself were: 1<sup>st</sup> ladies' painted wall pocket; 1<sup>st</sup> Gentlemen's a very handsome cribbage board made by the mate of the *Navarch*; ladies' booby, wooden bean pot and beans; gentlemen's booby, miniature bowhead decorated with ribbon, which had the words "They're after me" painted on it. Captain Weeks won this prize, Mrs. Green the ladies' booby, Captain Tilton the 1<sup>st</sup> gentlemen's and (Little) Captain Porter who played lady for the occasion won the 1<sup>st</sup> ladies' prize.

After supper we danced till 3 o'clock. Everyone complimented us on the success of our party and all agreed it was the prettiest we have had yet at Herschel Island.

...  
1895, 01, 31. Thurs. -21.

Weather rather worse than better. Big snow drifts everywhere. Still we managed to get to the *Horatio* to attend Captains Penniman, Haggarty and Coffin's Whist Party. Captain Tilton carried Dorothy while I was dragged along over the drifts by Will and Captain MacInnis. We did not regret going for inside the ship's house everything was as pretty and cosy as though such a thing as wind and ice were unheard of except in lemonade or sherbets, which we found very acceptable after a few lively dances. We found the gale still holding sway when we started home at 2.30 a.m.

...  
1895, 02, 07. Thurs. -27.

Cloudy weather, fresh wind. Slight snowfall in the p.m.

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Mr. Whitham gave a very pleasant party on board the *Thrasher*. Progressive Whist and dancing. Will took a ladies part in the “soloist” and won the 1<sup>st</sup> prize which I appreciated very much as it was a handsome tortoise-shell hairpin.

A sailor reported lost from the *Alexander*. He was with other men getting dog meat on the other side of the point, and complaining of being frost bitten started for the ships. He has not reached them, or been found by searching parties.

1895, 02, 08. Fri. -18.

Fine, clear weather. Light airs.

Mr. Donaldson while going to get dog meat this morning found the sailor who was lost last night. The poor fellow was not able to walk or speak. Both feet and hands badly frozen. There is no hope he can live.

I was weighed today, also Mrs. Weeks and Mrs. Cook. Mrs. Cook 131, Mrs. Weeks 105 and myself 113. Dorothy had a present from Captain Tilton of a lovely sleigh.

1895, 02, 09. Sat. +32.

Fine, beautiful weather, with warm southerly breeze at times. The snow is melting on the south side of the ships, and the air has a delightful feeling of Spring.

The Captains played their first game of “Ball” and the ladies were among the spectators.

Dorothy enjoyed her sleigh today with “Boxy” to pull her and her good friend Antoine to guide them, for over two hours.

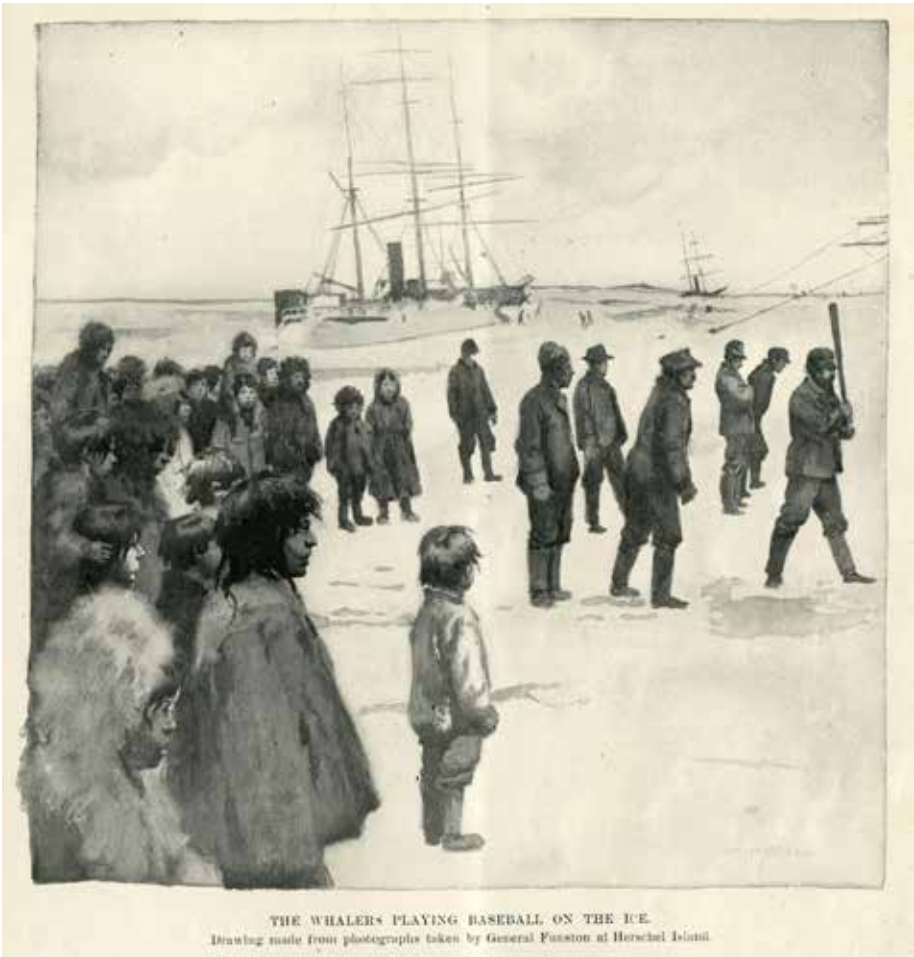
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1895, 02, 12. Tues. +5.

Thick weather and light wind.

The man belonging to the *Alexander* who was frozen last Thursday night died this morning. He has been kept under the influence of opiates so has not suffered much. The cause of death was internal injury.

Dorothy’s grey kitten has been sick for some time and it died this morning. I felt sorry about it but was completely brokenhearted when on going to clean the bird cage I found poor “Vicky” lying dead on the bottom of the cage. He seemed quite well yesterday and I cannot think what was the matter with him. I have taken such good care of him all through the cold weather. I hoped he would live to go home with us.



Drawing of a photo of whalers playing baseball on ice, featured in the July 1899 issue of *Harper's Round Table*. (National Baseball Hall of Fame)

...  
1895, 02, 14. Thurs. -6.

Fine, cloudy weather and light wind.

Dorothy received three pretty Valentines and sent three. Mine was a very appropriate and acceptable one (a barrel of granulated sugar from Captain Tilton).

...  
1895, 02, 17. Sun. -20.

Continues to blow a blizzard, making it unfit for light-weights like myself to be out.

With the exception of yesterday and today, Dorothy and I have taken a walk every day this week though the wind has been too much to

allow us to stay out more than half an hour at a time.

I have made six quarts of sweet pickles this week and finished some bed linen.

My days are not long enough to accomplish much work. We don't often have breakfast before eleven, and in the evenings generally some of the Captains come in and stay till midnight bathing and playing cards, “whist” usually, so I don't get much chance to sew or do fancy work.

There have been three deaths this week among the natives, a woman, a girl and a newborn baby. The latter was allowed to die as the mother did not want it.

...

1895, 02, 22. Fri. -32.

Fine, cold, weather.

Flags were all waving in honor of Washington's birthday.

In the afternoon a game of baseball was played between the foremost hands, and officers of different ships. The foremost hands won 7 to 6.

In the evening Captain Murray and Captain Levitt gave a party in Captain Murray's house, and we all had a pleasant time.

...

1895, 03, 04. Mon. -7.

The same weather as yesterday.

There is a game of baseball played everyday on the ice beyond the ships.

This is mother's birthday and yesterday was Mrs. Weeks' birthday, so tonight we gave her a surprise party and New England supper on board the *Thrasher*.

1895, 03, 08. Fri. 0.

Cloudy weather with light wind and snowing hard.

Our natives Cunak [Cunuk] and Muraug [Meraug] got in at noon with four deer, a dozen fish and two grouse. They have been over a hundred miles. Cunak brought me a Badger skin coat.

One year today since we left home.

1895, 03, 15. Fri. -20.

Clear and cold with fresh wind.

The ladies and their husbands were invited to dinner on board the *William Baylies*. Only Captain and Mrs. Weeks, Captain and Mrs. Cook, Will and Dorothy Porter accepted. Mrs. Sherman had a toothache, Mrs. Green has retired from society and I had one of my vile headaches. In the evening a performance was given by the Minstrels in honor of “St. Patrick”.

...



1895, 03, 17. Sun. -20.

Fine, clear, cold weather.

This being St. Patrick's day, there was a strong desire among some of the Irish boys to show their loyalty to their patron Saint but not receiving much encouragement (otherwise "tougua") their patriotic feelings calmed down by night time and all remained peaceful in the Quarters.

1895, 03, 18. Mon. -22.

Clear and cold with light wind.

We had a very pleasant card party and dance on board the *Beluga* this evening. It was got up by the ladies in honor of Captain McKenna who some time ago told us "in fun" that his birthday came on St. Patrick's day. So we gave him a good Irish celebration, gorgeously mounted in green. It was all a surprise to him and he was quite overwhelmed when he was presented with a banner, crown and necktie, all in the national hue. The ladies wore applegreen bowknots and the gentlemen clover leaves cut from green cloth. The "Whist" prizes were decorated with green, and after supper of brown bread, beans and pumpkin pie, which was Irish (americanized). The musicians played a number of Irish airs for dancing till the "wee hours".

...  
1895, 03, 25. Mon. -10.

Cloudy and calm weather.

Jackson the sailor ran away with four other sailors from different ships. They left in the night taking their clothes, some provisions, rifles, ammunition and two small sleds.

At 8.00 p.m. Jackson came back with one toe frozen, having lost grit, if he ever possessed any, which is doubtful.

...  
1895, 03, 29. Fri. -28.

Fine, clear weather, fresh wind.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> mate of the *Wanderer* reports seeing the runaways east of the south-west sand spit.

At 5 :15 p.m. Captain Charles Weeks fell from between decks, striking we suppose the keelson and then the skin of the ship. He was insensible when picked up and died at 7 o'clock. He was quite conscious when he died. His collar bones were crushed in and there was apparently some injury to the back.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> The first half of the details re Capt. Weeks' death are somehow inserted in a note at the bottom of the entry for April 5<sup>th</sup>. The error possibly reflects Mrs. Porter's shock grief at the news.

1895, 03, 30. Sat. -12.

Cloudy weather, fresh wind.

All the P. S. W. Co. Captains take turns sitting up with Mrs. Weeks. The blow has made her very low.

1895, 03, 31. Sun. -15.

Fine, clear weather and fresh wind.

Captain Weeks' remains were laid up in the ice house to await the arrival of the *Jeanie* when they will be taken to San Francisco.

Captain Tilton read a short but impressive service and a hymn “Near My God to Thee” was sung by all who could conveniently come on the *Thrasher's* deck. Then the casket was placed on a sled and draped with the “Ensign”. A large body of men and all the Captains and ladies followed to the vault.

Our attention was given then to poor Mrs. Weeks, who needs the most tender care. I stayed up with her last night and will take turns with Mrs. Cook in doing so till she is a little stronger.

1895, 04, 01. Mon.

The same as yesterday.

It is arranged for Captain Murray to take charge of the *Thrasher* and he will go on board at once. This is a great comfort to Mrs. Weeks, as she will be able to stay in her own home and have one who was a dear friend of her husband to take his place.

...

1895, 04, 05. Fri. -2.

Clear at times, and some light snow.

Our hunter “Onijak” came in with 271 lbs of deer meat, some fish and wolf skin. Reports bad travelling.

My log with many other things in the “Quarters” has been put aside for a week. Only the absolutely necessary work has been gone on, and it will be many weeks before people will recover from the sudden and dreadful blow which came to us in the death of Captain Weeks, which occurred at 7 :00 p.m. on last Friday the 29<sup>th</sup> of March. We have always thought with dread of the possibility of sickness and death in this far away corner of the earth, but no one dreamed of such an accident as this, which would have been dreadful if it had happened to any one of the men on the ships, and we who have been so closely associated in every way for the past year, feel that almost a family tie has been broken, for Captain Weeks was a favourite with everyone and a “friend” in the truest sense.

1895, 04, 10. Wed. -8.

Comes in clear, bright sun.

Will and Mr. Whitham took several pictures, some with the large camera.

A sailor on the "*Rosario*" died this morning, he had been ill for some time.

Fred our sailor and the two native boys came in at midnight, brought about 400 lbs of meat and 6 grouse.

1895, 04, 11. Thurs. -10.

Fine and pleasant weather.

Piza the native hunter came in from Copek. Brought 65 lbs meat, 10 grouse and some skins.

...

1895, 04, 16. Tues. -8.

Fine, cold, clear weather.

Mr. Stringer arrived with nine Ilgillie sleds at 2.00 p.m. He brought a few Canadian papers of last August. No mail or news of much importance from the outside world. A mail will arrive at Fort McPherson in about two weeks and the Captains are making arrangements to send in for it by the Ilgillies. So it will reach here in four or five weeks at the most.

Mr. Stringer is a very welcome visitor, and will remain at the Quarters several weeks. He received the box I sent him for Xmas, and brought me in return several pairs of moccasins, gloves, and a specimen of the choice table delicacies of the country, some deer tongues, a moose nose and heart, and a beaver's tail, which last is considered a great delicacy.

...

1895, 04, 19. Fri. -10.

Fine, clear weather, cold with a little wind at times.

A number of natives came in from MacKenzie River, had very little meat and some furs.

Mr. Stringer has put up a tent to use for services for the natives while he is here.

Will bought me a nice muskrat robe which Mr. Stringer brought from the Fort.

1895, 04, 20. Sat. +49 (noon).

Fine, warm day, the snow all thawing round the ships, and decks starting to leak.

Some of the Captains have begun to remove the banking from their vessels.

...

1895, 04, 21. Sun. +20 (noon).

Continues fine and pleasant, with light airs.

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Stringer held Divine Service in the Company’s House in the afternoon. A great many attended and enjoyed the service and music very much. Text from Deut. 4:29 “Seek ye the Lord, etc.

...

1895, 04, 25. Thurs. (Dorothy’s Birthday) +28.

Strong wind, clear at times.

Dorothy had a little dinner party and a magic lantern show in the evening. Captains MacInnis, Tilton and Levitt, Lucy, and Bertie were the guests. She had a very happy day and several nice presents.

1895, 04, 26. Fri. +20.

Strong gale, cloudy weather.

Commenced taking the banking away from the *Freeman*.

...

1895, 04, 28. Sun. +30.

Comes in fine clear weather, the snow is disappearing quite fast.

Captain Cogan is quite ill, with cold on his lungs. Also the boy on the *John* and *Winthrop* is ill with fever.

A native child died last night.

Mr. Stringer held a service on the *Beluga*’s deck for all.

...

1895, 05, 01. Wed. -8.

Clear and cold with fresh wind.

No flowers in bloom, but flocks of little birds are seen round the ships.

A theatrical performance was given on board the *Beluga*, in honor of Mr. Stringer, who enjoyed it immensely.

Mr. Ashley, Joe, Fred and ships’ team came in with nothing.

1895, 05, 04. Sat. -5.

Clear, cold weather.

The water is overflowing round the ships and several of them have come up.

1895, 05, 05. Sun. -5.

Cloudy weather, light wind and blowing snow.

A number of Ilgillies left for the “Rampart House”, and carried mail to be sent via the “Yukon” River. I wrote to mother, the children, and Mrs. Weeks in Alamaden also to Mrs. Weeks’ sister in New Bedford. Will wrote to the children.

Mr. Stringer held service today on the *Beluga*. A large number of men were present besides the Captains.

...

1895, 05, 08. Wed. +45.

Fine, beautiful weather, snow melting fast.

At 6.30 a.m. Mrs. Sherman gave birth to a little girl.

The first white child born in the Arctic Ocean. She will be named Helen Herschel.

Will bought me two beaver skins from Killie, an old Kopuk indian.

Also got 16 fox skins from Inuahlurak the new hunter.

...

1895, 05, 10. Fri.

Fine weather, light wind.

At 8.00 p.m. a meeting was called at the Company's house for the purpose of discussing a possible way to stop the Liquor Trade among the natives living here and on the coast of Herschel Island, also to the natives known as Ilgillies living inland. Rev. I. O. Stringer acted as chairman, and spoke of the difficulty of getting any result from his mission work, while the influence of liquor had such a bad effect on the natives, who would with a few exceptions rather trade their meal and furs for liquor than anything else, knowing that they could get it. The Hudson Bay officials have been taking an interest in the matter, and of course wish that the liquor traffic was stopped.

The matter was discussed from all sides, and it was finally decided to draw up a petition asking the Captains to promise not to give liquor in any way to the Ilgillies or Kogmolics, and to give as little as possible to the Nunatagmiut hunters, belonging to the vessels. So far this winter the Captains have found it impossible to get work or hunting deer done by the natives unless they gave them a small quantity of liquor to carry out on their sleds, also giving them a drink when they came in with a load of meat.

All acknowledge that this is not a good plan, but the fact that there are so many vessels here, and all need the meat, makes it necessary for those that would not willingly give liquor to do as the rest do or go without deer. A great deal more liquor than has been needful, has reached the natives especially those living to the Eastward and among whom Mr. Stringer has been working, and who he particularly desires should be kept free from the bad influence. The Ilgillies, with a few exceptions, do not want liquor and so far they have not received any from the ships here.

The Paper was presented to all the Captains and signed by all and it is hoped that this movement will have a good result.

...

1895, 05, 12. Sun. -2 (at 8 p.m.)

Fine and pleasant weather, a little colder than yesterday.

Divine Services were held this p.m. on the Steamer *Beluga*, during which Mr. Stringer baptized Captain Sherman's little four day old

daughter, giving her the name Helen Herschel. Mrs. Green, Captain and Mrs. Porter acting as sponsors. The baby appeared in its best bib and tucker and behaved beautifully during the ceremony. Mrs. Sherman was not able to go on deck, but listened to the service through the open skylight and Captain Sherman performed his part in a most praiseworthy manner.

At 7.00 p.m. Mr. Stringer administered the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to Mrs. Cook, Mrs. Porter, Dr. Flint and Dick Brook, the cabin-boy on the *John and Windthrop* who is still laid up and in a very weak condition.

1895, 05, 13. Mon. 0

... A subscription has been started for the benefit of starting a Mission at Herschel Island. It has been the intention of the Church Mission Society to establish a mission here, as soon as the necessary funds could be raised. Nearly \$500 was promised by the Captains and Officers of the ships here, and a letter was sent to Bishop [William] Reeve of the McKenzie [*sic*] River Diocese requesting him to appoint Mr. Stringer if it is decided to have a permanent Missionary at this place.

1895, 05, 17. Fri. +22.

... The *Freeman* came up at 7.00 p.m., 3 feet forward and went down 14 inches aft. All our coal is out, about 80 tons.

1895, 05, 21. Tues. +35 (coldest).

This has been our first real Spring day. The snow on top of the Island is disappearing fast and around the ships there are pools of water.

Open water seen north-east of the Island.

Today the *Freeman's* windlass, which was broken last fall was taken apart and repaired.

1895, 05, 22. Wed. +40.

... All ships are busy taking off houses from the decks and bringing gear from the beach where they have been lying all winter.

Plenty of water running off the Island, and so much round the ships that it is very difficult to walk around.

... So warm in the middle of the day we cannot wear a wrap, and the men are casting off their fur clothes.

1895, 05, 23. Thurs. +40.

Still beautiful weather, getting fresh water in casks from the streams running down the hills.

1895, 05, 24. Fri. +35.

Fine and pleasant weather.

Finished painting and tearing down a loft.

2 sailors on the sick list with scurvy.

We all forgot that that this was the Queen's birthday till sundown, so there was no bunting out.

It has been an exceptionally fine day for the 24<sup>th</sup> of May. As I used to remember it at home, it was always stormy.