Waves Upon the Shore

an Historical Profile of

Herschel Island

by
Rob Ingram & Helene Dobrowolsky

Yukon
Tourism
Heritage Branch

September 1989

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prepared for
Heritage Branch
Department of Tourism
Government of Yukon

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Cover photo:
Inuit family in front of their dwelling at Herschel Island circa late 1920's.

Finnie Collection
Yukon Archives

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the staff of Heritage Branch, Government of Yukon for their assistance, particularly Brent Riley who kept us on the straight and narrow and, without whom, the buildings never would have been sorted out; Dr. John Bockstoce for filtering through the material and providing the foundation for this work; the staff at Yukon Archives for finding things we thought were lost; Brian Ross and Chris Grant for wading through the endless government records and all their other support and assistance;and Wayne and Valerie Fromme for help when we needed it.

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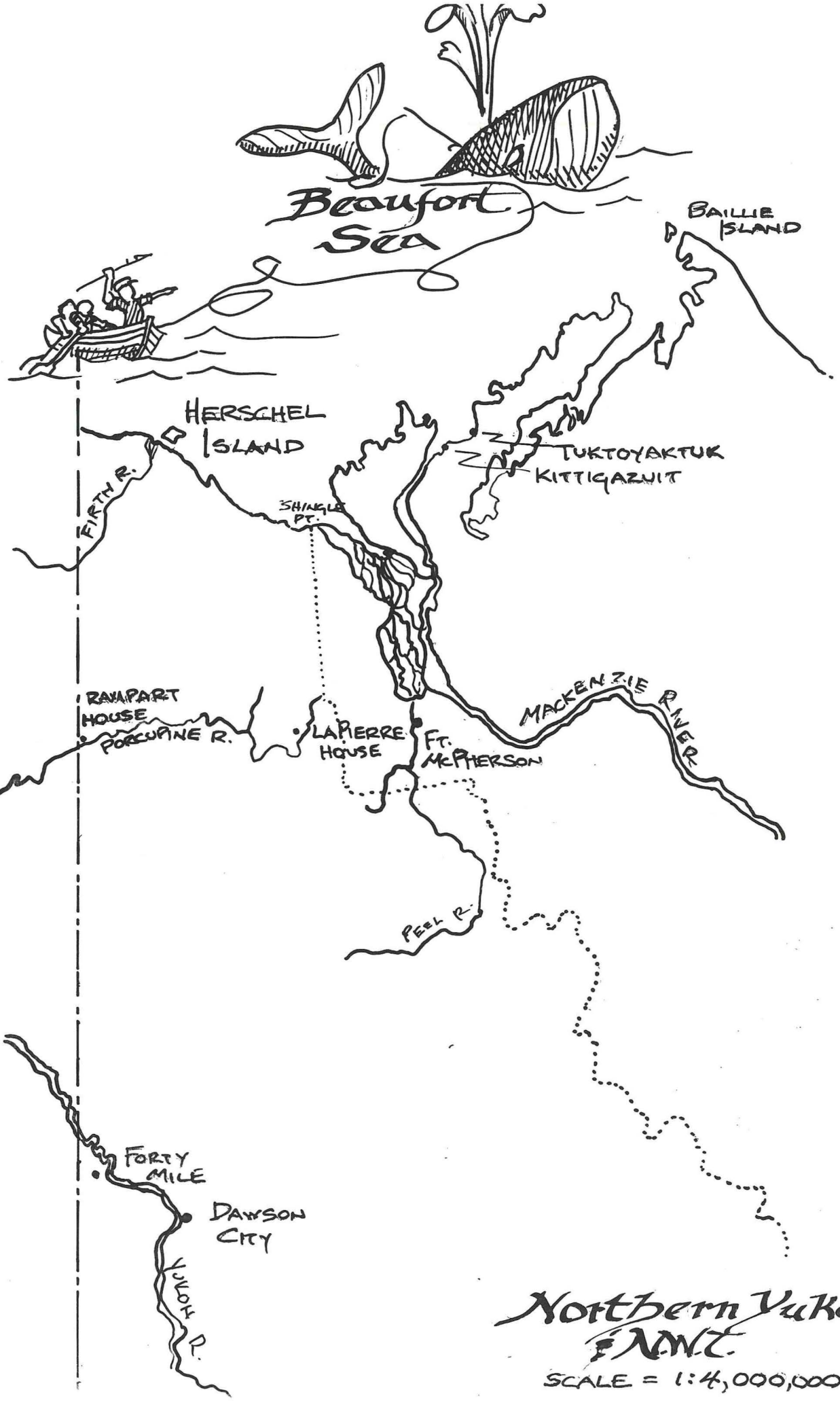

Beaufort Sea
BAILLIE ISLAND
HERSCHEL ISLAND
FIRTH R.
SHINGLE PT.
TUKTOYAKTUK
KITTIGAZNIT
RAMPART HOUSE
PORCUPINE R.
LA PIERRE HOUSE
FT. McPHERSON
MACKENZIE RIVER
PEEL R.
FORTY MILE
DAWSON CITY
YUKON R.
Northern Yukon
& N.W.T.
SCALE = 1:4,000,000

General Notes:

1. Other than the buildings mentioned in notes 2 and 3 all of the sites identified on this plan are extant either in the form of identifiable archaeological remains or a standing structure. Extant structures are shaded. They are designated either by their common name, prime occupant/function or original builder along with date of construction (if known).

2. Sites 30, 31 and 32 were not identifiable on the ground but were located using a 1934 Hudsons Bay Company site plan. The HBC site plan has proven not to be totally accurate as to exact building location, therefore outlines are approximated.

3. Sites 33 through 36 were not identifiable on the ground but were roughly located using historic photographs. Little is known about these buildings, including their size.

4. There are many other historic features within the settlement area that have not been identified on this plan. Some of these sites are visible in historic photographs but their size or location have not been determined to date.

5. Historic Photographs show that numerous tents were erected throughout the settlement area at various times. No attempt has been made to map their locations due to their transient nature.

6. Thule sites have been located within this area. Archaeological excavation has been undertaken on several sites within this area by: R.S. MacNeish, 1954; B. Yorga, 1978 & 79, J. Hunston, 1985 & 86.

Extant Buildings:

1. Northern Whaling and Trading Company store/Warehouse (1926)
2. N.W. & T. Co. Shed (1926)
3. N.W. & T. Co. Warehouse/Canada Customs Bonded Warehouse (1926)
4. Pacific Steam Whaling Company Community House (1893)/Police Detachment Headquarters and Barracks.
5. P.S.W.Co. Bonehouse (Warehouse c.1894)
6. Mrs. MacKenzie's House (c.1968)

6a. Smokehouse.

7. Police Dog Kennels (c.1950)
8. Royal Canadian Corps of Signalers transmitter station (1930)
9. P.S.W.Co. Building (Blubber House, c.1890's)
10. Captain McKenna's Cabin (c.1893)
11. Dwelling (1890's)
12. Dwelling (1890's)
13. Anglican Mission House (1916)
14. Staff Accommodation (1988) - Former site of the Newport House (1892-1973)
15. Icehouse (intact)
16. Icehouse (collapsed)
17. Icehouse (collapsed)
18. Icehouse (intact)
19. Icehouse (collapsed)

Park Structures:

20a. Traditional Log Windshelter (1988)
20b. Traditional Log Windshelter (1988)
21a. Outhouse (1988)
21b. Outhouse (1989)
22. Sauna

Archaeological Sites:

23. Washout Site NjVi -2 (Excavated by J. Hunston 1985-1986)
24. Royal Canadian Mounted Police Officers Quarters (1920's)
25. Extension of Building #9 (Blubber House)
26. Hudson's Bay Company Store (1915 - 1943), frame construction)
27. H.B.Co. House (1915 - 1943, frame construction)
28. H.B.Co. Shed (c.1915, frame construction)
29. H.B.Co. Shed (c.1915, frame construction)
30. H.B.Co. Warehouse (1915 - 1943, frame construction)
31. H.B.Co. Oil Shed (c.1920, frame construction)
32. H.B.Co. Warehouse (1923 - 1943), frame construction
33. Pioneer House (1891 - 1912, frame construction)
34. McKenna House (c.1891, frame construction)
35. Karluk House (c.1891, frame construction)
36. Dwelling (c.1925, frame construction)
37. Garbage Pit
38. Outhouse
39. Dwelling
40. Dwelling
41. Dwelling
42. Dwelling (sod construction)
43. Dwelling (sod construction)
44. Dwelling (frame construction)
45. Dwelling
46. Dwelling (sod construction)
47. Dwelling (1/2 sod and 1/2 frame construction)
48. Dwelling (sod construction)
49. Dwelling (log construction)
50. Dwelling (frame construction)
51. Dwelling
52. Dwelling (excavated 1986 - 1987, sod construction)
53. Cache
54. Dwelling
55. Dwelling (frame construction)
56. Dwelling (disturbed 1986)
57. Dwelling (sod construction)
58. Dwelling (sod construction)
59. Dwelling (sod construction)
60. Dwelling (sod construction)
61. Cache
62. Fence Posts
63. Dwelling (frame construction)
64. Dwelling (sod construction - excavated by J. Bockstoce 1973)
65. Dwelling (sod construction - excavated by J. Bockstoce 1973)
66. Dwelling (sod construction)
67. Dwelling (sod construction)
68. Dwelling (sod construction)
69. Dwelling (sod construction)
70. Dwelling (sod construction)
71. Dwelling (sod construction)
72. Unknown (probably a sod dwelling)
73. Dwelling (sod construction)

Other:

74. Boat. Abandoned
75. Dock

Monuments:

A. Point of Interest Sign
B. National Historic Sites and Monuments Plaque
C. Park Monument

Bark Triton
Sank 1895

10 Inuit Graves
Approx. 100 m
north

R.C.M.P. Graveyard
2 Graves

Intermittent Stream

Whalers
Graveyard
24 Graves

Inuit Graveyard
100 Graves

2 Graves

Pauline Cove

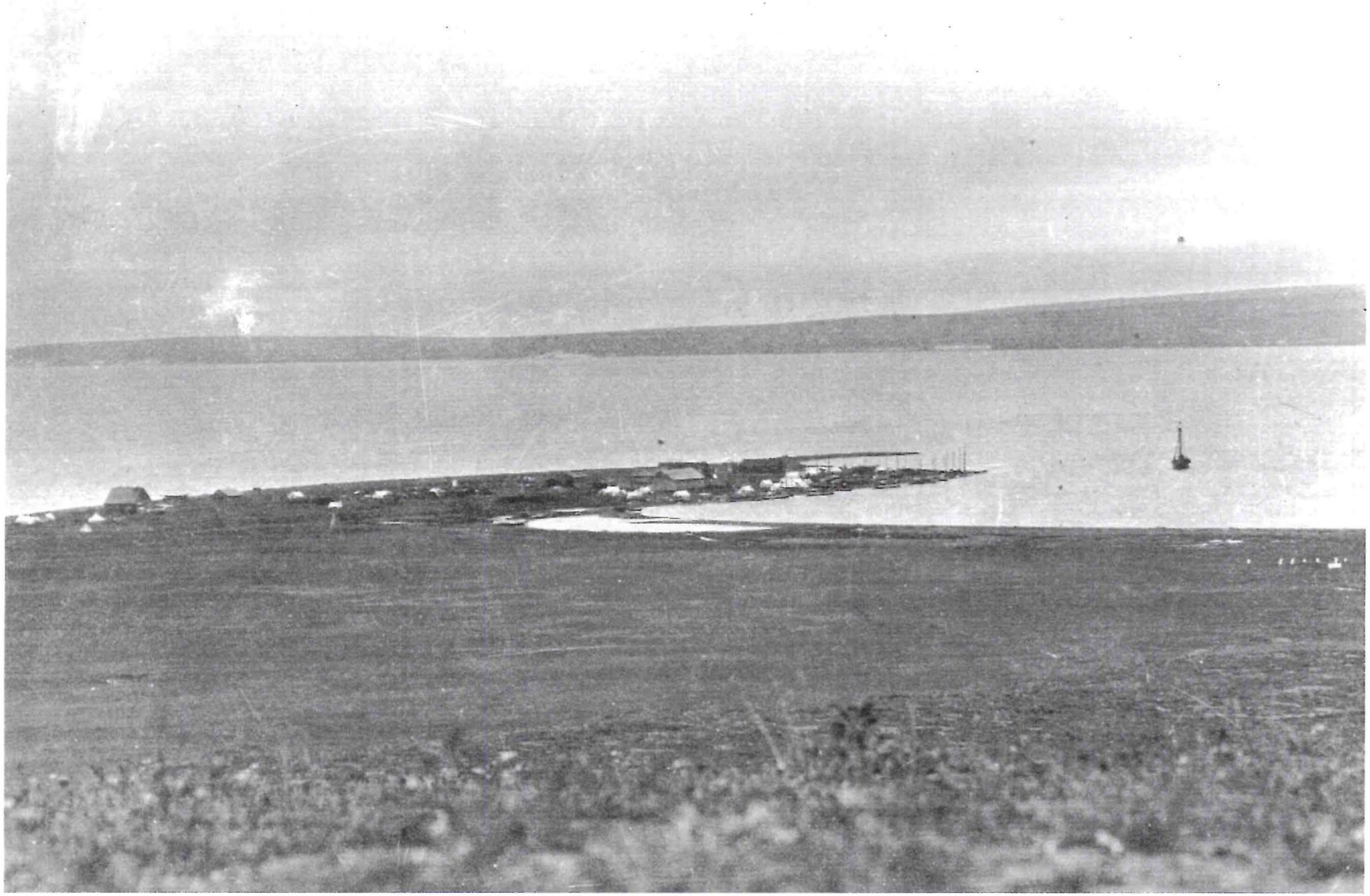
Beaufort Sea

HERSCHEL ISLAND HISTORIC RESOURCES - SETTLEMENT AREA

SCALE : APPROXIMATELY 1:1000

0 100 meters

DRAWN BY B.RILEY, HERITAGE BRANCH, 1989



Herschel Island Harbour
Canadian Arctic Expedition, 1913-1916
National Museums of Canada
Canadian Museum of Civilization
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WAVES UPON THE SHORE

An Historical Profile of Herschel Island

PREFACE

Like waves from the Beaufort Sea, the people of Herschel Island have washed onto its beaches, left their mark and returned to the sea. Since its discovery by Europeans in 1826, the Island has been a landmark, stopping place and sanctuary for those travelling and working in Canada's Western Arctic. It was a centre for commercial whaling, police headquarters, Anglican mission to the Inuit of the area, trading centre and scene of various government and institutional activities. But none of them stayed. This type of transience is not unusual in the North and to the Inuit of the area it must have seemed quite normal. By all indications they have being using the Island on and off for several hundred years. Both the federal and Yukon governments have formally recognized the historical significance of Herschel Island. It is not, therefore, the purpose of this history to prove the importance of the place. Rather this profile concentrates on bringing out the salient features of Herschel's story as well as the ordinary and extraordinary occurrences in the daily lives of its inhabitants.

In trying to paint a true picture of a place, it is beneficial to have as many views as possible. In the case of

Herschel Island we are fortunate in that a number of perspectives appear in the considerable number of written sources pertaining to the Island. There is one perspective significant by its absence however. Since there were very few written records among the Inuit of the area, we cannot truly say what they thought of events as they occurred. Fortunately, this history is intended to be complemented by a cultural study of the Island. Rather than speculate beyond the bounds of the written record, therefore, it is hoped that the cultural study may go further in illuminating that dimension of Herschel's history.

One of the purposes of this history is to provide background information for the interpretation of Herschel Island Territorial Park. For this reason, the information here tends to be presented in a manner easily extractable for interpretive text. Hence the "Personalities" section at the end of each chapter and the "Chronology" at the end of the text. Another function of the history is to provide details on the Island's buildings, both those still standing and the ones which have gone. Since the character and chronicle of these structures reflects the nature and occupation of the settlement's inhabitants, they are an important record and integral part of the story.

Complete references for all of the endnotes can be found in the companion piece to this history, entitled "Herschel Island: An Annotated Bibliography" produced in May 1989. Further sources which have been consulted since then are listed as an appendix to

this document.

INTRODUCTION

Physical

Herschel Island was born from sediment at the bottom of what is now Herschel Basin in the Beaufort Sea. The slow but tremendously powerful action of the glaciers pushed the sediment at the bottom of the ocean up into a pile now known as Herschel Island. What stands today is a mass nine miles by five miles by 600 feet high (14.5 km. by 8 km. and 183 meters high), standing just off the Yukon's north coast. The Island is composed of silt, sand and clay but no bedrock. The foundation material tends to wash away in great chunks with the action of ice and tide, and its surface heaves and rolls down its own hillsides from the effects of frost creep and solifluction.[1]

The Island is covered with lowlying plants and shrubs. Its only source of fresh water is a pond in the interior of the Island and melt water. There are no trees on Herschel although the prevailing currents from the Mackenzie Delta provide a considerable amount of driftwood. The Island is the seasonal home to a wide variety of birds and waterfowl and, periodically, larger mammals. Nearby waters abound with seal, fish and whale.

While this may not sound like the perfect place to establish a home or business, it is Herschel Island's geography that makes it strategically significant to commerce and travel in the Western Arctic. From the Mackenzie Delta in the Northwest Territories to Point Barrow, Alaska, Herschel Island offers the

only safe port for ships on the Arctic Coast. Thetis Bay is deep enough to allow even larger modern ships to rest at anchor without fear of running aground. It is also protected from the prevailing northeasterly winds by the bulk of the Island. This same feature makes it relatively immune to the crush of moving pack ice. Since the navigation season is so short in the Western Arctic (sometimes the pack ice never does move out from shore) a safe winter port is crucial to the viability of any long-term venture as it allows overwintering and an early start on the short navigation season. The warmer waters flushing out of the Mackenzie River give Herschel an additional advantage as they tend to break up the ice along the shore between the Delta and the Island a month earlier than anywhere else along the coast.[2]

Despite the strategic attractiveness of Herschel Island, the bareness of the landscape and extreme weather contrive to make it inhospitable to those used to southern climes. This is borne out in several journals and descriptions of life on Herschel, for example, this entry from the Hudson's Bay manager's post journal on March 10, 1933;

> The wind was strong enough to blow Messrs Chartrand and Sinclair before it on a large sled at much more than a walking pace, over level ground (snow, not glare ice).[3]

The whalers used to say of Herschel's winds that " a nor'eastern never dies in debt to a sou'wester."[4]

The weather, however, was much more than a daily event to be remarked upon. Combined with isolation and boredom it drove men to drink, to suicidal attempts to escape to the south and to

death. The weather was a constant factor to be dealt with and, in winter at its most severe, it played a major role in shaping the daily lives of Herschel Island's inhabitants.

The floral and fauna of the Island, or rather the lack thereof, also figured significantly in life on Herschel Island. Unlike the seminomadic Inuit of the area who followed their food sources, such as the marine mammals and caribou, the non-Inuit residents on Herschel had to bring their food with them or arrange to have it supplied. When there were only a few mouths to feed, an occasional fishing and hunting foray supplied enough to last through the hard winter months. When there were several hundred hungry whalers to feed through a couple of fishing seasons, the supply of food to the Island caused an upheaval in the local economy as well as a significant financial and logistical burden on the whaling companies. Similarly, although there is lush vegetation on Herschel, there are no trees. The driftwood fuel on the Island was quickly used up, requiring residents to go further and further afield to keep their domiciles at a temperature acceptable to southern metabolisms. The collection of driftwood became a regular and essential chore. The supply was quickly exhausted, however, and coal had to be imported from the south to augment the dwindling quantities. To run out of fuel in winter was to risk freezing to death.

The Island's geographical proximity to the Canada/United

States border on the 141st meridian, some fifty miles to the west, also made it of strategic importance. The significance in this case was not the commercial or navigational advantages it offered but the matter of sovereignty it represented. Since the border was not physically marked until 1912, the division of the countries was not at all clear.[5] The use of Herschel Island by American whalers and, perhaps more importantly, the trading done by American whalers in Canadian waters, eventually caused enough concern that the Canadian government felt it necessary to show the flag on the Island's beaches. While the official presence arrived too late to do much about the whalers, Herschel Island did become a prominent outpost of Canadian officialdom in the Western Arctic and served as a customs collection point much like any other border crossing.

By dint of geography and geology Herschel Island became a prominent base, crossroads and jumping-off spot in the history of the Western Arctic. Because it had a good harbour in the right location, it became a base for the whalers. Since the whalers carried trade goods and required food and clothing, the Island became a spot to trade and resupply. This attracted large numbers of Inuit, who attracted the attention of other traders and the Church. All of this activity, combined with nearness to the international border, brought Herschel Island to the attention of the Canadian Government and made it a crucial place to establish an official presence. When transportation and communication technology made geography less meaningful, Herschel

faded into obscurity until its harbour was needed once again to support a commercial enterprise, this time oil exploration.

Prehistory

Nomadic peoples have been moving back and forth across Canada's Arctic for many centuries. It is supposed that prehistoric peoples crossed the Bering Land Bridge from what is now the Soviet Union to follow migrating caribou herds. Eventually, this movement took them east into the Arctic where they migrated to Greenland, then back again. This is a gross simplification of a complicated wave action of cultures in transit, but there were potentially many crossings and recrossings of the Arctic Coast by nomadic peoples, differentiated from each other by the intervening generations and technological developments.

Geology is again a factor in the story of Herschel Island since it limits what we know about the pre-contact peoples who occupied the Island. The unstable shoreline has caused entire prehistoric house sites to wash away over just a few seasons. It is speculated that entire villages may have been lost over the century and a half since contact was made with the indigenous peoples of the area.[6] It is known, however, that Herschel Island was occupied seasonally by the Western Thule people about one thousand years ago. These people had an essentially maritime culture oriented around fishing, sealing and whaling. There are

indications that their diet was augmented by mainland items obtained in trade from at least as far away as the Mackenzie Delta.[7] The Thule were house builders. They lived in these timber constructions during the winter and left them to pursue game during the months of open water. Remains of their houses can still be found on Herschel Island.

The Thule were the ancestors to the Western Mackenzie people who were occupying the Island at the time of Franklin's contact in 1826. Estimates of the number of Inuit living along the coast and on Herschel Island at the time range from 200 to 2,000.[8] These people had various names ascribed to them but the Inuit of Herschel Island at the time of white contact are referred to as the Kigirktaugmiut.[9]

When Franklin reached Herschel Island, there were three villages of Kigirktaugmiut people. The namesake settlement itself was the largest and was located at Pauline Cove. Archaeological evidence indicates that even by this time, the Kigirktaugmiut had European trade goods from Russia. It was an annual event for the Inuit of Herschel Island to go to Barter Island in Alaska with furs, sealskins and oil to trade for iron, knives and beads.[10] The trade system the Kigirktaugmiut were involved in was very extensive and well established. It involved so many links that the people of Herschel Island were quite familiar with European goods without knowing anything of the people who made them.

The Western Mackenzie Inuit were known to be a very

aggressive people and this may have been one reason that European traders were reluctant to make direct contact with them.[11] While the Kigirktaugmiut proved to be friendly, they were to suffer the same fate as their more aggressive Western Mackenzie neighbours. Their unfamiliarity with the white men and their ways was likely their downfall despite their fierce nature. Because they were not used to the new economy and culture the whalers brought to their land, and had no resistance to the diseases which came along with "civilized" people, the Kigirktaugmiut were essentially extinct within thirty years of contact with the whalers.[12] This did not mean there were no Inuit on Herschel or along the Yukon coast for as the Kigirktaugmiut died off, Inuit from the Interior of Alaska moved into their villages.[13] But these ancient people were gone. As Peter Usher puts it, by World War I, the Inuit on the coast "would have been unrecognizable by their aboriginal forefathers, at least in their social characteristics".[14]

Today, Herschel island is still used as it has been for over one thousand years by the Inuit along the coast. It is still a good harbour and campsite and the waters still abound in fish, seal and beluga whale. The tradition has remained even if the people have changed.

Introduction Endnotes

1. For an in depth examination of Herschel's soil and vegetation see:
C.A.S. Smith et al, Soil and Vegetation Survey of Herschel Island, (unpublished manuscript prepared for Government of Yukon, Department of Renewable Resources, December, 1987.)

2. Canada, Department of the Environment, Parks Canada, Stuart, Richard, "Herschel Island Resource Assessment." October, 1982, p.2.

3. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B419/A/1, Post Journal 1933, March 10, 1933.

4. Canada, Sessional Paper Number 28, Report of the North-West Mounted Police, 1908, p. 140.

5. Lewis Green, The Boundary Hunters: Surveying the 141st Meridian and the Alaska Panhandle, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1982, p. 165.

6. For a discussion on this matter see Brian Yorga's "Washout: A Western Thule Site on Herschel Island," published in the Mercury Series, Canada, National Museum of Man, Archaeological Survey of Canada, Paper No. 98, Ottawa: 1980.

7. Yorga, p. 129.

8. Ibid, p.35.

9. Most writings refer to the indigenous population as "Mackenzie Eskimos". The name was later changed to the "Tareormiut" division of the "Tchiglit", and still later the people of Herschel Island were named "small island people" or the "Kigirktaugmiut" after the largest village on Herschel. (Yorga, p. 30.) The name Kigirktaugmiut will be used in this writing to refer to the population resident at the beginning of the historic period.

10. Franklin, Captain John, Narrative of the Second Expedition to the Polar Sea in the Years 1825, 1826, and 1827 (London: John Murray, 1828.) p. 129.

11. Yorga, p.31.

12. Ibid, p.30.

13. Usher, Peter, "The Canadian Western Arctic: A Century of Change," Anthropologica, N.S., Vol. 13, Nos. 1-2, 1971, p. 173.

14. Usher, "Canadian Western Arctic", p. 176.

Chapter 1 - EARLY EXPLORATION

The possibility of a direct trade route to the riches of the Orient through a Northwest Passage sparked the imaginations and curiosity of European explorers for generations. While the impracticality of such a route erased the commercial interest in finding the passage by the nineteenth century, the unexplored vastness of the Arctic still drew adventurers and scientists looking for new lands and a route through the Arctic ice. The seas around Alaska had been explored by the Russians since 1648 and Europeans had been searching for a Northwest Passage from the east since Elizabethan times.[1] The middle portion of the Canadian Arctic, however, had still not been explored or mapped by white men at the opening of the nineteenth century.

Following the Napoleonic Wars, England had a surfeit of adventurous men who had little or nothing to do with all of their naval experience following the defeat of Napoleon.[2] Some of the nationalist energy which had been focused on the war with France was now diverted to scientific discovery for the greater glory of England. So it was that John Franklin was sent to North America in 1825 to map the coastline.

Franklin was forty three years old at the time and a veteran of the British Navy. This voyage to the colonies was his third expedition. He had been second-in-command on a voyage to Spitzbergen, Norway in 1818 and led an expedition to the mouth of the Coppermine River in 1819-21.[3] The expedition to explore the Arctic Coast began on the shores of Great Bear Lake where the

Crew of the U.S.S. Thetis, 1890.
Naval Historical Collection
Naval War College
Newport, RI

expedition had wintered at the end of 1825. From this point the group was split into two parties. Franklin and his crew of fourteen were to boat down the Mackenzie River and head west along the coast in an attempt to meet with Lieutenant Beechey, who was heading eastward from the Bering Sea. The other party, under John Richardson were to explore the coastline between the Mackenzie and Coppermine Rivers.[4]

Franklin is known to have been a keen and impartial observer and much of what is known of the people along the coast can be credited to him. He began mapping the shoreline west of the Mackenzie Delta and named a number of geographical features along the way after friends and prominent figures of the day; Kay Point, Babbage River, Philips Bay and the Buckland Mountains among others.[5] On July 17, 1826, the party sited an island off the coast which Franklin named Herschel in honour of his friend Sir John Herschel, a well-known British chemist and astronomer.[6] As they approached the Island, Franklin's party saw a herd of caribou on the shore. They were moving within shooting range to procure fresh meat when they noticed they were not the only ones pursuing the herd. Inuit hunters were giving chase. Franklin was determined to make contact with the Inuit on his trip. His first encounter with the Inuit just west of the Delta, had been near disastrous. Emboldened by the store of gifts Franklin had in his boats, they had tried to rob his party. While understandably suspicious at first, the people of Herschel Island proved to be very friendly and delighted in the small gifts he

gave them.[7]

Franklin spent very little time on Herschel Island as he was anxious to carry on to his rendezvous with Beechey before freeze up. Unfortunately, his progress west was halted by pack ice and poor weather. At Return Reef he was forced to halt, about one hundred and sixty miles short of his rendezvous with Beechey at Point Barrow.[8] He retreated back along the coast and up the Mackenzie. Franklin was to make another expedition into the Arctic, years later, his final and most celebrated venture from which he never returned.

One of the members of Franklin's Expedition was a Hudson's Bay Company employee by the name of Peter Warren Dease. The Hudson's Bay Company had lent minimal support to Franklin's first expedition and provided a little more backing for the second in the form of Dease and a party of hunters. In 1836, the Company decided to send an expedition of its own to finish the mapping started by Franklin with Dease as the trek leader.[9] The second-in-command on this trip was a cousin to the Company Governor, Sir George Simpson. Thomas Simpson had an academic background in mathematics and natural sciences which augmented Dease' practical experience. Together they made a remarkably efficient team and, with fourteen men and two boats, completed the mapping of the coast to Point Barrow in the summer of 1837.[10]

The Hudson's Bay Company moved into the Arctic and established Fort McPherson in 1840. They did not move as far as the coast, however, and did not establish a post on Herschel

Island until 75 years after their contact with the Mackenzie people at Fort McPherson. Most trading activity was centred further south and exploration activities were concentrated on the Eastern Arctic, including the massive search for Franklin who had disappeared in 1845. Herschel Island and its inhabitants were left alone until the coming of the whalers.

Early Exploration Personalities

Sir John Franklin

(see text)

Peter Warren Dease

Dease was a long-time Hudson's Bay Company Employee who spent many years working in the Athabasca and Mackenzie districts. He was selected by the Company to head the expedition to complete the mapping of section of Arctic Coast west of the Mackenzie Delta left unfinished by Franklin. Dease was a conservative and well-respected employee who had an excellent rapport with the Company's labourers.[11]

Thomas Simpson

Thomas Simpson was a cousin of Sir George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company. He received a master's degree from King's College in Aberdeen in 1828. Simpson had a sudden temper and a strong dislike for natives, half-breeds and the lower, uneducated classes. He was second-in-command to Peter Dease on

Chapter 1 Endnotes

1. John Bockstoce, ed., The Journal of Rochfort Maguire, 1852-1854 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1988), pp. 1-3.

2. Coates, Ken S. and Morrison, William R., Land of the Midnight Sun: A History of the Yukon (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1988), p. 118.

3. Ibid, p. 118.

4. Canada, Department of the Environment, Parks Canada, Coates, Ken S., "The Northern Yukon: A History", p. 9.

5. Coates, "Northern Yukon", p. 10.

6. There is controversy over whether Franklin named the Island after Sir William Frederick Herschel or his son. All Franklin says about it is that the Island was to bear the name of Herschel, not which one. Hudson Stuck, who made something of a study of Franklin, points out that Franklin was in the habit of saying the "late" so-and-so if the person he were naming a feature after were dead. Since the elder Herschel was dead by this time, Stuck contends the naming was for the son.

7. Captain John Franklin, Narrative of the Second Expedition to the Polar Sea in the Years 1825, 1826, and 1827 (London: John Murray, 1828.) p. 129.

8. Coates, "Northern Yukon", p. 11.

9. Ibid.

10. Coates and Morrison, Land of the Midnight Sun, p. 119.

11. Coates, "Northern Yukon", p. 12.

12. Ibid, p. 13.

13. Coates and Morrison, p. 120.

the Hudson's Bay Company expedition to complete the mapping of the Arctic Coast to Point Barrow.[12] He was shot to death under unexplained circumstances near the Red River colony.[13]

Chapter 2 - The Whalers

It is strange to think that the settlement on Herschel Island was in large part attributable to the Victorian woman's desire for a twelve inch waist. But just as the fashion demand for beaver hats fuelled the fur trade through the eighteenth century, the demand for whalebone corsets gave a new impetus to whaling and led to the establishment of the Herschel settlement. Whalebone, or baleen, is the cartilaginous substance in the mouth of some whales which is used like a sieve. The whale takes huge amounts of water into its mouth and these plates trap its main food, the shrimp-like krill.[1] Whales had been hunted by Americans since the Revolution for their oil, which was used for fuel and lubrication, and baleen, which was used in buggy whips, fishing rods and other such items. However, it was the requirements of fashion which created high prices for baleen and made the hunting of whales a very profitable venture.

In 1900, an average American worker would make $400 per year. At the same time, whale oil sold for $15 a barrel and baleen at $6 a pound. From a single bowhead, whalers could take a hundred barrels of oil and two thousand pounds of baleen. This made a whale worth up to $15,000 and a good season could net $400,000 for a ship.[2] Mind you, the average seaman only collected a minute portion of the season's profits. After paying for his hiring agent's fee, stores and clothing, he often ended up in debt after a three-year voyage and was paid off with a

Painting of a winter scene during the height of the whaling period.
Mariners Museum

dollar.[3] The profits accruing to the whaling companies of New England and San Francisco, on the other hand, spurred them to push ever further north and eastward in their search for new whaling grounds.

The whaling grounds north of the Bering Strait were first discovered and exploited for commercial purposes by Captain Thomas Roys aboard the **Superior** in 1848. He was also the one who found that the whales there were bowheads which yielded surprisingly more oil and baleen than most whales.[4] This discovery set off a boom in the American whaling industry which had been stagnating due to depleted whale stocks in their traditional grounds. The whaler's lethal exuberance soon led to the exhaustion of the stocks in American Arctic waters, however, and by the 1870's catches were falling off. To make matters worse, the price of baleen and whale oil also began to drop.[5]

A couple of things occurred during this time to improve the efficiency of whaling operations and marginally increase their profitability. Firstly, winter whaling quarters began to shift from Honolulu to San Francisco which made the trip to the Arctic shorter and allowed transhipment of the whale products to the eastern markets on the transcontinental railroad rather than taking them around the Horn or on the Panamanian railway.[6] The second innovation was the use of steam auxiliary power aboard whalers. This allowed them to spend longer periods of time in the Arctic since they did not have to rely on wind to escape from

the ice. It was this fear of being crushed in the ice which led most whalers to flee the Arctic before the end of whaling season. When the price of whalebone did rise again, the investment in steam power was to more than repay the owners for their initial investment. With steam power the ships also had increased maneuverability in ice-choked waters and were able to pursue the bowhead where their sail powered competitors could not.[7]

As the pressure on the bowhead stocks increased, they began to disappear from the seas off Alaska, forcing American whalers to push further and further eastward in search of their prey. Since it had been determined by the 1870s that the Arctic bowhead was identical to the Greenland whale, it was assumed that there was an open-water passage between the Eastern and Western Arctic.[8] The shallow waters and constantly shifting ice of eastern part of the Western Arctic had until that time dissuaded the whalers from moving into these waters. With the advent of steam power, they were able to negotiate the ice and explore further and further east for whales. The whalers had ventured only one hundred and fifty miles east of Point Barrow, with one excursion just across the international border, when rumours reached the whaling captains from the Inuit of the region that the whales were plentiful in the area of the Mackenzie Delta.[9] In 1888, they decided to see if the rumours were true.

The Coming of the Whalers

On July 25, 1888, Charlie Brower, the shore-based whaler and

trader, outfitted one of his boatsteerers, "Little Joe" Tuckfield, with a whaleboat, gear and a year's supplies to sail east following the rumours of bowhead near the Mackenzie Delta. He returned to Point Barrow on August 5, 1889 after wintering in the Delta and reported whales "as thick as bees". He saved the baleen from one he had killed to prove his story. The other important thing he reported was a good harbour at Herschel Island and abundant driftwood in the area.[10]

This was all the proof the whalers required to set them into action. Only three days after returning to Point Barrow, Tuckfield was whisked aboard the **U.S.S. Thetis** to act as pilot for the voyage east. The **Thetis** was a naval vessel under the command of Captain Charles Stockton, sent to assist the U.S. Marine Revenue Service in "looking out for the commercial and whaling interests" of Americans working off the coast of Alaska.[11] Upon receiving Tuckfield's news, most of the ships in the area had steamed east, and Stockton followed to lend assistance. What form that assistance was supposed to take is unknown though some have speculated that Stockton wanted to see if Herschel Island might be in American waters.[12]

Seven whaleships steamed east into the Beaufort. Early on August 12, 1889, the **Lucretia, Jesse H. Freeman, Orca, Narwhal, Thrasher, William Lewis,** and **Grampus** dropped anchor on the east side of Herschel Island. From there the fleet sailed east to Shingle Point without sighting whales but one ship did sight reefs. This was enough to turn the rest of the ships around and

send them scurrying back to Point Barrow. As Hartson Bodfish aboard the **Grampus** put it:

> They wouldn't take any chances of getting ashore in that lonesome place, where perhaps no help could be obtained and where the trip back to civilization was so long.[13]

Only the **Orca** and **Thrasher** stayed behind to hunt whales.

The **Thetis** arrived at Herschel Island on August 15 to find the **Orca** and **Thrasher** safely at anchor. It is significant that an American representative was right on the spot when this commercial opportunity was discovered while there was not a Canadian government official within one thousand miles. It is also notable, and perhaps typical, that once the Canadian government and Canadian companies found out about the whaling and trading opportunities in the Beaufort, they did nothing about it until well after the peak had passed. The honour of producing the first chart of Herschel Island and naming most of its prominent features belongs, therefore, to an American naval vessel.

The **Thetis** anchored alongside the other two ships and Stockton named the place Thetis Bay. Just to the east, Stockton's men found a protected harbour with enough depth for the whaleships. Stockton named it Pauline Cove after his wife. The sandspit protecting the cove was named after the **Thetis'** ice observer, John Simpson.[14] The **Thetis** crew then charted the island, which they duly noted as a Canadian possession when the map was published in 1890.[15] On the 17th, after completing their survey, the **Thetis** returned to Point Barrow.

Even though the **Orca** and **Thrasher** had not caught any whales by the time **Thetis** left them, and therefore no catches could be reported to those waiting at Point Barrow, there were some who were willing to take Tuckfield at his word and to act upon it. The Pacific Steam Whaling Company representative at Point Barrow was George Leavitt. He was convinced that Tuckfield was right about the potential of the Delta area and returned to San Francisco to persuade the company's managing agent, Josiah Knowles, to outfit him with a ship and supplies to winter at Herschel. Leavitt was not given a ship until 1893, but his arguments, along with the subsequent catches of the **Orca** and **Thrasher**, convinced Knowles that overwintering could indeed be profitable. Another thing which helped convince him was the plans of the competition, one Captain Louis Herendeen and his brother Ned, to take their little schooner **Nicoline** to the Delta area provisioned for twenty-seven months in 1889.[16]

By hunting in the Eastern Beaufort, the whalers had gone so far from their home ports that they simply could not sail from San Francisco, return home in the same year and still hope to put in a good, economical whaling season. The season was just too short. For example, in 1894 there was only open water long enough to permit sixteen days and eighteen hours of cruising in the Beaufort Sea.[17] That was the extent of a whole year's whaling. They had to have a forward base where they could get a jump on the short season by overwintering and that base had to have a harbour safe from ice. The whalers were only too well

aware of the dangers of being caught in unprotected waters at freeze-up. In 1871, thirty-two ships were crushed in the ice off the Alaska coast and, in 1876, twelve more met the same fate off Point Barrow alone.[18] Herschel Island seemed the perfect place to establish such a base since it was very near the new whaling grounds and it offered the only safe harbour along hundreds of miles of coastline.

The shallow waters around the delta prompted Knowles to select small ships for this project, ones with shallow draft which ran less risk of running aground than the larger vessels in the company's fleet. He selected the **Grampus**, the smallest ship in the fleet, with Albert Norwood in command, and purchased a ninety foot tug, the **Mary D. Hume**, for James Tilton to captain. The **Mary D. Hume** was so small that she could not even carry a try works to render whale blubber into oil. At that time, baleen was approaching four dollars per pound while whale oil only fetched sixty-five cents per gallon. To Knowles it made sense not to waste limited time and space on trying-out the blubber and storing the oil.[19] Hence the regrettable and wasteful practice of taking only the headbone of the whale was initiated.

The **Mary D. Hume** and the **Grampus** reached the southwest sandspit of Herschel Island on August 10, 1890. One assumes this was the most southwestern spit, Advedlek. After deciding to winter at this spot, the crew unloaded their extra supply of food and provisions for the following year and 5,000 feet of lumber to build a storehouse forty feet square. They had this constructed

by the 18th and set out to catch up with the rest of the whaling fleet which had passed them heading east to the Delta.[20] The whaling turned out to be very poor that season and, when the rest of the fleet headed for San Francisco on August 30th, the **Grampus** and **Hume** had made no catches. They spent the early part of September cruising for whales and collecting firewood until they were unexpectedly frozen in at Pauline Cove on September 18th, nearly twenty miles by water from their storehouse and supplies at the other end of the Island.[21] They were not alone as the Herendeen's ship, **Nicoline**, had finally made Herschel after having left San Francisco too late in 1889 to make the Island. The crews spent most of September moving their supplies to Pauline Cove and reconstructing their storehouse on the sandspit. The little whaling community on Herschel Island was born.

Winters

Winters for a whaler had been a time to enjoy some well-earned respite from the daily routine and hardship of a whaling voyage. They were spent in places like Hawaii, about as far from the cold and bleakness of the northern oceans as one could get, or in one's home port with the comforts of home and family. The first winters on Herschel Island had few comforts and the boredom and drudgery of daily routine were worse than normal if anything. The sailing and maintenance of a ship at work at least filled the day up. There was very little to do once the ships were frozen in for the winter. However, the preparations and

chores for winter had to be done, no matter how tedious, since survival depended upon them.

After the experience of the **Hume** and **Grampus**, the whalers learned to anchor in Pauline Cove before freeze-up. They would stick close to the Island through September and, by early October, everyone was anchored in the bay. When the first young ice formed in the bay, they would nose the ships to the southwest since the prevailing winds of winter are from the northeast. They would then let the ships freeze in that position to prevent snow from building up on the vessel.[22] If not positioned properly, snow would build up on one side of the ship. The weight of the snow, combined with the force of the wind, would tilt the vessel making life aboard quite awkward for the winter. The crews often had to use tackle to hold the ship in place while it froze in and constructed walls of snow some distance windward to reduce the drifting against the ship.[23] Once they felt the ice was thick enough and not likely to be broken up by strong winds, the engineers shut down the boilers for the winter to economize on coal.

As the weather grew colder, boats and gear were removed to the storehouses ashore and the decks were closed in to allow the men to work in a heated area. The ships sails were stretched across the yards to form a tent over the deck called the "bull room". Sod and planking were also used to construct these enclosures as some believed that method provided extra warmth and insulation. They would be heated with driftwood fired woodstoves

made from 100-gallon oil drums which provided a comfortable working temperature.[24]

When the snow was thick enough, it was cut into blocks and stacked against the hull of the ships to a thickness of a metre or more and as high as the main deck to provide insulation. Below decks were then heated by wood stoves and, sometimes, the ship's donkey engine was dismantled and heating pipes were rigged from its boiler to warm the ship.[25] Captain John Cook related that snow was banked from ten to twelve feet thick from the ice to the top of the "houses" (afterhouse of the ship). To allow some light through this massive wall, three or four inches of ice was frozen into the snow about one inch from the windows on the ship.[26] This allowed light in while still providing insulation.

The collection of driftwood was an ongoing chore. The ships' fuel bunkers simply could not carry enough coal to fuel the ships and heat them through the long winter as well. The more driftwood they burned, and the more ships that spent the winter, the scarcer became the supply and the further afield the crews had to range for it. When the whaling tapered off near mid-September, the ships would go to the mainland for firewood and gather anywhere from 100 to 300 cords per ship.[27] This was stacked well up on the beach to prevent ice from piling up on top of it. Cutting up the supply kept the crews engaged throughout the winter.

Fresh water was scarce on Herschel Island and was supplied

to the ships in the form of ice blocks cut from the freshwater pond in the Island's interior. They usually cut the ice in October while it was still fairly thin, but ice cutting went on all winter. This was stacked on racks, to keep it above the dogs and drifting snow, to be melted when needed. A single ship would use up to four tons per week. A 110 gallon oil drum was kept on deck connected to the stove for melting the ice and providing a constant supply of hot water. Drinking water was scooped out of these tanks and cooled. By 1894, there was even a bathtub set up by the hot water tanks which was "piped and drained in the approved manner".[28]

Ice was also chopped out from around the propeller to prevent it being damaged by shifting ice, and "fire holes" were cut to supply water in the event of fire. These had little houses built over them to retard ice formation.[29] The houses also prevented people from falling in while blinded by the dark, foul weather or alcohol.

Fresh meat was another necessity. The whaling ships sometimes carried livestock for meat with them on their long voyages but this was soon gone. Then it was mostly salt beef ("salt horse"), salt pork ("salt junk"), beans, potatoes and other nonperishables.[30] Although the system of getting resupplied by tenders with fresh foods helped matters, on an extended voyage, scurvy became a problem due to the lack of fresh meat and vegetables. As scurvy could be prevented by the ingestion of fresh meat, hunting became a regular pastime of the

ships' officers. They consumed moose, mountain sheep, polar and grizzly bear, seals, fish, hare, ducks, geese, swans and ptarmigan. By far the most important meat, however, was caribou. In the 1890's, there were as many as fifteen ships and over fifteen hundred people wintering at Herschel.[31] With this demand for game, the whalers set up satellite camps to hunt and trade for meat. They ranged as far as one hundred and fifty miles from the settlement in search of meat - from Camden Bay in the west to Richards Island in the east and throughout the mountains to the south.[32] The demands were so great, however, that Inuit hunters had to be hired or traded with to procure meat. John Bockstoce estimates that over two thousand caribou were killed annually for the winters of 1894-95 and 1895-96. While this sounds like a serious depletion of the local caribou population, he estimates the herd was over one hundred thousand animals at the time and was actually larger at the end of the whaling period than at the beginning.[33]

Word got around that the whalers were wintering at Herschel Island and that they were paying and trading for meat. Surprisingly, a group of Indians from south of the mountains had also heard of the trade to be had with the whalers and arrived the first winter with caribou meat and skins to trade. Since the Inuit in the area of Herschel Island were primarily fishermen and not caribou hunters, the whalers traded more with the inland Nunatarmiuts of Alaska and the "Rat" Indians (Gwich'in) than with the local people.[34] The game on Herschel Island was actually

quite sparse come autumn, so the Gwich'in did a fair trade bringing caribou from their forests where it was more plentiful that time of year. They would arrive two or three times per winter with as many as twenty-two toboggans of caribou, moose and fish. The captains actually competed to get these food stuffs which they bought with goods like tea, flour, tobacco, rifles, gunpowder, primers, lead, sugar, soap, calico, knives, combs, files, whaleboats, small stoves, clothing and alcohol for the equivalent of six to seven cents (US) per pound.[35]

By February, the supply of meat was great enough that a storage space was required. The whalers built their own walk-in freezers by blasting into the permanently frozen silt of the island and framing in a twelve foot square room. They covered this over with driftwood and sod, put in a small door, and had a cache which kept meat frozen right through the summer.[36]

The low temperatures and high winds of winter on Herschel posed a problem for whalers used to warmer climes and lighter dress. The traditional woollen clothing and leather boots were not proof against temperatures of thirty below and accompanying winds of thirty miles per hour. The whalers found that traditional Inuit dress of parka and pants, made from caribou skin, and sealskin boots were light and comfortable even in this extreme climate. The outfit consisted of a skin shirt, pants and stockings with the hair turned in. This was all that was worn in warmer weather. When it was colder, a second suit was put on consisting of a parka, pants and boots all with the skin turned

out.[37] On the voyage north, the whalers would trade for these articles of clothing along the Siberian shore. They also hired Inuit from along the Alaskan coast to sail with them and make clothing.[38]

With the increasing community of Inuit attached to the ships, another preparation made for winter was the construction of sod houses for those people. The crews were detailed ashore to cut sod for these houses which were constructed in the traditional Inuit style of a driftwood frame and sod roof and walls.[39] They were very warm if a little airless. This was also the time of year when some of the Inuit moved out of the skin tents and "mud houses" into igloos.[40]

Along with the Inuit came their dogs which were used for hauling caribou meat back from the hunt. A supply of meat had to be laid in for them as well. They were fed mostly on whale meat which was scrounged from carcasses washed up along the shore. These were towed up on the sand spit, allowed to freeze, then chunks were cut off as needed during the winter.[41]

The whalers were now physically prepared for winter. They had laid in food and water and covered and insulated themselves and their vessels against the coming cold. But the winter brought more than the cold weather and hunger for the whalemen to contend with.

The Perils and Problems

Whaling was a dangerous occupation. There were not only the

normal risks of sailing but the added danger of cruising amongst the ice flows of the Arctic waters where ships were holed or crushed with distressing regularity. Since whaling ships often worked alone, being stranded in the Arctic was often fatal. The work itself was dangerous as whales often capsized the small whaling boats. One does not survive for long in salt water hovering around the freezing point. Trying to cut the whale up in rough water before bringing it aboard was so perilous that sailors sometimes paid another man to perform the task in their stead. Even for the experienced whaler, there was always the danger that the explosives used with whaling guns would explode prematurely. The storybook vision of the hook-handed sailor owes much to the temperamental harpoon bomb.

The end of whaling season brought a respite from the dangers of sailing and hunting whales. But for those wintering on Herschel Island, the off season brought other, more insidious threats. Long, dark days with little work to fill up the time, after winter preparations were made, caused a kind of desperation among many of the whalemen. The average seaman was not particularly well paid and had little incentive to put up with the harsh winters of the Canadian Arctic. Also, because of his low status and pay, he could not afford the luxuries which helped an officer through the drudgery of the winter. An imperfect understanding of diet and its effect on health brought the added burden of diseases like scurvy. With the weight of these factors bearing down on the whalemen, it is perhaps not surprising that

desertion, drinking and suicide became serious problems for the ships.

Boredom was perhaps the root of many of the evils in the winter community of Herschel Island. After the winter preparations were made, there were only routine chores to fill the day, and they did not fill much of it, as Hartson Bodfish points out:

> Routine of the day month after month. Get up in the morning for breakfast, lay around till lunch, lay around till supper, lay around till bedtime, varied by playing cards and setting the men to hauling and sawing wood and once in a while going after a load of ice or meat.[42]

During the winter, no watches were stood aboard ship. The only real chores were tending the fires, collecting ice and wood, keeping the fire holes and hole around the rudder open, and the occasional hunting foray for the officers. The work day was eight hours, with an hour break at noon. Saturdays were spent washing and bathing and there was no work Sundays.[43]

The boredom and isolation was so severe that it drove some to suicide. On January 8th, 1891, one of the boatsteerers disappeared from his ship after "acting rather queer for several days". He was found where he had attempted to freeze himself to death, both feet black with frostbite. Since Hartson Bodfish had amputated his own toes on the trip up when collapsing rigging crushed them, he seemed a natural to perform like surgery on this unfortunate. He and Captain Tilton administered chloroform and neatly took the man's toes off with a butcher knife and hacksaw. It was the first of many like operations performed by the two who

were remarkably successful in saving patients despite the primitive conditions under which they worked. Their first patient recovered from the operation, regained his mental equilibrium and was able to resume his duties and finish the voyage.[44]

Others preferred making a run for the south to ending their lives. The whalers knew that if they could just cross the mountains, they could reach Rampart House, Fort Yukon or one of the other trading centres and obtain transportation to the outside. Once the rumours of the Klondike gold strike reached the Arctic coast in 1895-96, the goldfields of the Klondike became the favoured target of deserters. The prospect of riches must have been very enticing for a common seaman who could not hope to save more than a few dollars after two or three years before the mast. Most of these deserters were so desperate to escape that they left the ship ill prepared for the hardship of the trail in winter. This was a type of suicide in itself for they sometimes froze to death if they were not caught and brought back to the ship.

The first such incident was on March 15, 1891, the first winter on Herschel. Robert Coleman, the fireman aboard the **Hume**, deserted followed by three men from the **Grampus** the next day. These men had done some planning, as the story came out later. They had been pilfering clothing, food and other gear and hiding it ashore and in other places. The mistake they made was that they took too much rather than too little and overloaded their

sled. Captains Tilton and Norwood, when they discovered the desertions, could not simply let the men go as this would put it into the heads of others that they might make the attempt with impunity. A pursuit party was organized and set out after the deserters. Coleman and his fellows, finding themselves too tired to push the overloaded sled, had started throwing things off as they went. This left a clear trail for the pursuers who found the would-be escapers exhausted and badly frostbitten in an Inuit camp. Two were too badly frozen to travel. Coleman confessed to raiding the stores and implicated the steward, cook and cabin boy in his plot. The steward and cabin boy were reduced in rank and sent forward. The cook was punished and put in irons.[45] Robert Coleman lost all of his toes to frostbite for his trouble.

Despite the example made of these first deserters, some tried to make a break every year. In the winter of 1895-96, the rumours of gold strikes in the Klondike proved too tempting for many. On January 23, 1896, Dan Sweeney, a boatsteerer and well-known "hard character" on the **John and Winthrop**, jumped ship and lead six others away with him. The captains immediately sent a party after the deserters but they returned empty-handed, it is thought because they were afraid of Sweeney. They were sent out again better armed and eventually captured Sweeny and three others. The temperature during the chase was between forty and fifty degrees (F) below zero .[46] One of the escapees returned on his own, badly frostbitten, but Joe Carroll and Dick Martin made good their escape. Sweeney was put in a "Spanish Buckle" as

punishment. He was handcuffed, his knees drawn up through the circle of his arms, and an iron bar slid between his elbows and the backs of his knees.[47]

The captains set a guard on the stores after that and set a curfew of 10 P.M. for the men. Still, others were not dissuaded from jumping ship. On March 16, 1896, twelve men deserted after supplying themselves amply with stolen food, guns, dogs and sleds. They held up two hunting parties and stole all of their supplies. When the search party did manage to catch up with them, the deserters were able to drive them off with gunfire. Continuing on, the deserters encountered a hunting camp. As the occupants were away hunting at the time, the deserters took what they needed and destroyed the rest. This was supposed to deter pursuers but it also virtually guaranteed the death of the hunters as they were left far from the ships without clothing, shelter, food or dogs and sleds.

Harry Huffman, fifth mate of the **Wanderer** and Peter Peterson, a boatsteerer on the **Alexander**, returned to find their camp in ruins and realized they could not make it back to the ships without equipment and provisions. They were over one hundred miles away. They met John Bertonccini returning from Fort McPherson with the mail and, together with thirty Inuit, set off after the deserters. Since the hunters were travelling light, and the one thing the deserters had not thought to bring was snow shoes, they caught up with their quarry after a few hours. Huffman and Bertonccini, hailed the camp and demanded the

return of their supplies. One of the leaders of the deserters, a sailor from the **Northern Light** by the name of Kennedy, who had also tried to escape in January, called back that he would start shooting if the hunting party were not out of sight in ten minutes. Huffman returned to his party and organized an attack. The Inuit with him were excellent marksmen and all the damage done was on the deserters. Kennedy was killed and another of the runaways, Thomas Fitzgerald of the **Jeanette**, was wounded before the deserters gave up. The hunters returned with six runaways, three had been out of camp and two escaped with dog sleds during the confusion of the battle. Kennedy was left in the snow. The fate of the five who were not returned to the ships is uncertain but they may have made it to Dawson.[48]

It is certain that Joseph Carroll made it to Dawson as he met Captain Cook some years later in Nome and related the tale of the hardships of the trail he had endured during his escape. Just when they were at the point of starvation, the two escapees had run into a party of Itkiliks who, for the price of a couple of rifles and ammunition, fed them and guided them to Fort Yukon. They recuperated there then followed the river up to Dawson. Carroll sold his dog team there for a very high price. Encouraged by the sale, he went to the coast to purchase more dogs which he also sold for a handsome profit in the Klondike. Hence, when Cook met him in Nome, Carroll was looking quite prosperous.[49]

Boundaries were established after this incident. The men

were not allowed to go beyond them at any time and they had to be on ship by 8 P.M. This stopped the desertions for that winter. But Dan Sweeney tried again in the following September. Just before his ship left for San Francisco, he stole a boat and hid out on the mainland. Oddly enough, he returned to the Island after the **John and Winthrop** had left and lived on shore. He and an equally bad character, Big George Madison, spent the winter stirring up trouble ashore. Madison was cut across the stomach for his trouble later in the season.[50]

Frostbite was a regular occurrence on Herschel Island as may be expected with the low temperatures and severe winds which haunt the place, and the whaler's unfamiliarity with the extremes of the Arctic climate. Unfortunately, freezing to death was not that uncommon either. Men out on hunting expeditions, who ranged far from the ship, and deserters seemed to be at greatest risk of freezing. The great danger frostbite posed was that, if left untreated, it turned to gangrene and eventually killed the victim. If one was stricken with frostbite far from shelter, one stood a good chance of freezing to death before gangrene ever set in. The fear of this frosty death was responsible for bringing back almost as many deserters as the search parties.

Bodfish relates how a "Kanaka" (Hawaiian Islander) received frostbite to his face while out on a hunting trip. The mate in charge of the party sent him back to the ship. When he had not shown up by the time the party returned, they set out to search

for him. They found him rolling down a hill. As he was frozen from toes to knees and fingertips to elbows, this was the only way he could move. They realized they must have walked right past him the day before and not seen him. After five days of trying to "get the frost out" and relieving the man's pain with opiates, the patient died.[51]

Perhaps Bodfish's succinct report on three deserters of January 9, 1895, makes the clearest statement on this matter;

"...the two men from the **Thrasher** returned, one badly frozen, and reported the man from the **Winthrop** dead."[52]
His lack of elaboration on the matter indicates how common an event this had become.

Perhaps the most bizarre incident of this sort occurred on March 7, 1897. The weather had been unseasonably mild at 20°(F) and the men from three ships were enjoying a game of baseball in the fine weather. In the early afternoon, bottom of the second inning, a dark cloud blew in over the Island and within minutes the ball players were caught in a howling blizzard with the temperature plunging to -20°(F). Visibility was reduced to near zero almost immediately and the men were forced to take refuge in the nearest ship or building they could find. The gale suddenly stopped at eight o'clock the next morning. On venturing outside again, the crews found five men dead, three whalers and two Inuit. One was a mere hundred yards from shelter.[53]

The sudden gales which blew up on Herschel Island claimed more than one life. They sometimes claimed minds as well. On

February 21, 1894, two men from the **Narwhal** went missing in a gale. When the search party finally found them, one was dead and, despite the fact that the sled dogs were curled up, nose to tail, completely snowed in, the other man was sitting on the sled driving the team as if they were at full run.[54]

Some fell victim to sickness and accidents. In this isolated community there was little medical help for those with serious wounds or diseases. Those who fell prey to these perils often remained on the Island forever. If a whaler died at sea during a cruise, he was usually buried at sea. Of those who died on the Island, only a few were shipped home at the end of the cruise. The icehouses were used as makeshift mausoleums to store these bodies through the summer. The rest received simple burials.

On November 4, 1890, J.A. Drayton, first mate of the **Grampus** died of "dropsy". He was placed in a shallow grave carved out of the frozen ground on the marshy flat northeast of the settlement. Drayton has the dubious honour of being the first whaleman to occupy the burial ground on Herschel.[55]

The following winter, on March 17, 1892, John Meyers, a sixty-year-old black seaman from Baltimore, died of "inflammatory rheumatism". They did not try to hack a hole in the steel hard frozen ground this time, the crews simply covered him with logs and snow until the ground thawed sufficiently to allow them to dig a grave.[56]

Captain Weeks of the **Thrasher** died on March 29, 1895. He

fell through an open hatch, broke his collarbone and splinters from this fracture punctured his lungs. His crew wanted to bury him ashore but his wife, who was along on the voyage, begged them to preserve the body so it could be shipped home. Bodfish supervised the embalming which consisted of cutting open the body, stuffing it with salt and packing it in a "water-tight coffin made of planks and filled with pickle".[57]

There were, of course, the perils which had nothing to do with accident or disease. Whalers were, all in all, a pretty tough lot. Many of the common seamen were the dregs of humanity escaping problems with the law, alcohol or other difficulties. When thrown together under the trying circumstances of a winter on Herschel, the worst was often brought out their characters. For example, on April 11, 1895 there was a stabbing in an argument over laying out a baseball diamond. The Herschel Islanders took their baseball seriously.

Among this type of seaman, drinking was a problem but accepted as normal by the captains. The Pacific Steam Whaling Company forbade its men to trade alcohol but they were still allowed to possess it for their own consumption. This lead to the episodes often associated with boredom, isolation and alcohol, the worst of which involved stabbings and an occasional shooting. It carried its own perils as well. On November 26th, 1894, Hartson Bodfish reported that three men had gotten drunk. The steward, Herman Vogel, was demoted for stealing the rum. The blacksmith who had gotten drunk received his own punishment by

falling and hitting his head on the stove.[58]

Surprisingly, there seemed to be little tolerance among most of the captains for drunkenness. When Captain Leavitt's engineer and fireman were caught drunk, he threw all of their supplies of alcohol overboard. This amounted to thirteen gallons. A similar misdemeanour by a mate cost the man a part barrel of beer, ten gallons of whisky and five gallons of alcohol.[59]

It is significant that the social clubs formed by the whalers specifically barred intoxicants from their gatherings. This is hardly the behaviour one would expect from the drunken, brawling seamen some writers have portrayed as the occupants of Herschel Island. It is also unlikely that the whaling captains would have brought their wives and families into a community where "rum flowed like water" and the men were inebriated all the time.

With the amount of time they were spending away from the services of civilization, the PSWCo. finally decided that a doctor for the fleet would be a good idea. To their dismay, they found this simply added to their problems.

Bodfish, who had performed numerous successful amputations, turned over the job to the doctor they had hired in 1894. On his first operation, the doctor almost killed his patient by administering an overdose of chloroform. Had it not been for Bodfish's intervention, the patient may have lost more than his toes. Not long afterward, Bodfish caught the doctor breaking into the store of drugs in the captain's cabin and gulping down

quinine tablets. The good doctor was a drug addict as it turned out. He had managed to clean out most of the drugs stored on all the ships in the fleet that he had visited.[60]

In his reminiscences on the deaths at Herschel, Bodfish points out that although the death count seemed unusually high, from 1890 to 1905 there had been only thirty seven graves made on the island, and two bodies shipped home, with over 600 whalers staying there some winters. Considering this the death toll was proportionately quite low. Though one may not be inclined to concur with Bodfish's observation that "the place was pretty fairly healthy and conducive to long life".[61]

The Dry Throats and Other Diversions

The winters on Herschel were not all filled with dark, depression and desertions. The whalers developed some interesting ways to pass the time outside of the regular duties about the ship.

The Pacific Steam Whaling company recognized the deleterious effects boredom and isolation were having on its employees and sent up precut materials to build a community house in 1893. The house was to be forty by sixty feet with a large living room containing card tables, a pool table, a billiard table and an office for Captain Murray, the company's manager and storekeeper.[62]

Sledding and skiing became popular pastimes. The whalers used almost any wood they could lay their hands on to construct

skis and sleighs. They sawed up oak planking and steamed it to turn up the ends for skis. They also took apart the 42 gallon wooden barrels called tierces to make sled runners. They even utilized the cottonwood washed up on the shore to construct their equipment. Coasting took place in a small ravine on the north side of the cove. It quickly became so popular that separate tracks had to be cordoned off with ropes for those sliding down and those climbing back up for another run. Despite their best efforts on separating the coasters from the climbers, accidents still occurred on a regular basis resulting in bashed shins and loosened teeth.

In 1893, a soccer field was laid out on the ice of the cove as soon as the ice was thick enough. The crews played throughout the winter even when it was -25^{o} F.

On February 19, 1894, what was likely the first game of baseball in the Arctic was played. The ships officers formed one team and the boat steerers the other. The officers lost by one run. There was such great enthusiasm over the game that a league of four teams was formed on the spot. They were the Herschels, Arctics, Northern Lights and Pick-ups. A fifth team, the Eurekas, were added the following year. The Captains met on March 4th to draw up league rules and regulations. The diamond was laid out on the ice using ashes to mark the baselines and a sail formed the backstop. There was also a social side to the league where one team would invite the others to a dinner. One such was given by the Herschels on April 9, 1894 where they

served ham sandwiches, popcorn, ice cream and beer in true ballpark tradition.

Once the families of some of the whaling captains came to the Island, in 1894-95, the social calendar expanded to include card parties, elaborate dinners, birthday parties, dances and just about any occasion which could be used as an excuse for a party or celebration. On October 4, 1894, for example, a party was held to celebrate the covering over of the decks of the **Beluga** for the winter. It was called a "deck house warming" and the tent was lit up with three dozen lanterns, some with coloured side lights. There was a dance to an "orchestra" of violin, banjo and accordion, and ice cream, cake and beer were served.[63]

The following week a tea party was given by Mrs. Green who served:

> Lobster salad and olives
> Oyster Pate and French Peas
> Veal Loaf with Jelly
> Chops a la Francais with Saratoga Chips
> Sea Bisquits
> Bartlett Pears, with citron and sponge cake
> and most delicious tea.[64]

A far cry from "salt junk" and hardtack.

Likely inspired by their wives' entertaining, the captains began to give parties. These were often fancy dress affairs with the men digging out finery they had not worn in months or even years. The group of captains who were accompanied by their wives became known as "The Four Hundred" while those masters who were spouseless organized themselves into two groups, the "Hoodlums" and "Dry Throats".

While the whole objective of these groups was to entertain one another, there was a certain friendly rivalry amongst them. The Hoodlums gave a party aboard the **Karluk** and invited Captain and Mrs. Whiteside. The Whitesides had developed a reputation for stinginess as they were the only ones who had fresh pork in the entire fleet wintering at Herschel and they refused to share it. Living up to their names, the Hoodlums broke into the **Belvedere's** meat locker one night and stole half a pig. They served this at the dinner the Whitesides attended and, after all had finished, told the guests in a poem where the meat had come from.[65]

Some of the men formed themselves into acting and musical groups. The "Herschel Island Snow Flakes" and "Fry's Theatrical Company" performed regularly in the bull room of the **Beluga**. The fleet's artist, John Bertonccini, painted backdrops for many of the productions. Bodfish also reported on October 30, 1893 that they had their first minstrel show put on by the "Original Christy Minstrels of Herschel Island" in the covered poop deck of the **Balaena**. There was another performance on New Year's Day.

One of the greatest occasions was the Fourth of July, which carried a double significance for the American whalers as this date marked American Independence and the official end of winter at Herschel. The ships were dressed in flags and a gun was fired at 8 A.M. to start the festivities. There was tug-of-war contests, jumping competitions, foot races, wheelbarrow races, sack races, three-legged races, obstacle races, a whaleboat race,

shooting contests and, of course, baseball.[66]

In the winter of 1892-93, Captain Tilton attempted to initiate the sport of ice sailing. He and a carpenter spent some time building iron runners for a boat, rigged it with one of the whaleboat sails and started off across the ice. They did fairly well sailing to leeward but could not beat back against the wind over the rough ice. They tried cottonwood runners shod with iron next but that met with the same lack of success.[67] Ice sailing never really caught on in the sporting circles of Herschel Island.

Some of the men took up scrimshaw and carving whalebone and ivory to pass the time and to makes souvenirs or saleable trinkets. The chief engineer aboard the **Newport** went into partnership with another man to do commission work for sailors who did not feel like carving things themselves. The chief set up a lathe, run by the ship's circulating steam pump, to turn the material and together the pair turned out large numbers of keepsakes.[68]

Trapping was a profitable pastime for some of the whalers. They could get three or four dollars for a white fox at the time. Some had regular lines where they set traps for white fox.

There were still tensions among the crews despite the fun and festivities but these activities provided a badly needed vent and distraction during the long winter months.

The Inuit and the Whalers

The true relationship that existed between the whalers and the various groups of Inuit attracted to their settlement is not an easy one to determine. Nor is it likely that there was just one type of relationship. There were different groups of Inuit with different attitudes, needs and tolerances to the white culture. There were also different types of whalemen who traded independently from the others who, by their individual natures and temperaments, would have treated with the Inuit differently. Given the variations in both groups, there is not one stock statement to be made about their relationships, certainly not the Hollywood tabloid style of statement made by some earlier writers who would have us believe the worst kind of debauchery was the way of life on Herschel Island.

When travelling northward through the Bering Sea, the whalers regularly traded with the Inuit en route. They had encountered these people as early as the late 1840s and had developed a trading and working relationship with them. The Siberian natives were called "Masinkers" and were excellent boot makers, good mushers and, as it turned out, made good sailors. They were hired aboard as crew on the way north to make boots for the crew, act as hands and help bring in the meat supplies aboard their sleds.

As they sailed further north, the whaleships would stop at the coastal villages of the Alaskan Inuit. Much the same bargains were struck with these people who were hired for their

skills as caribou hunters. This, as we have seen, was a skill much in demand as the whaling community grew. Each ship would carry from four to eight Inuit hunters, plus their families, as many as fifty dogs, and sleds.[69]

Once the Inuit all along the coast of Alaska, Yukon and the Northwest Territories found out about the trade goods to be had from the whalers, many simply packed up their families and moved to Herschel. This established a resident native population of between one hundred and one hundred fifty in any given year.[70] There were then at least three Inuit groups represented: the "Masinkers", Nunatarmiuts from the Brooks Range in interior Alaska, and the Kogmullicks (Kigirktaugmiut) indigenous to the area.

The Inuit, especially the Masinkers, supplied boots and clothing to the whalers. They also came with furs to trade. In some cases they even traded their wives and daughters. But the primary item of trade was fresh meat in various forms, primarily caribou. The Nunatarmiuts had an edge on the other peoples in this regard as their primary food source was caribou which they hunted in their native mountains. Since the Kigirktaugmiut were a maritime culture, their skills lay more in fishing, sealing and whaling. This type of foodstuff did not seem to be in as great a demand as caribou, moose or even sheep and game birds. As a result, the Nunatarmiuts did a better trade than the local Inuit.

The Inuit came with their meat, furs and other items from

the land and were paid in barter for the most part. They were also introduced to the cash and credit system by the whalers. Bodfish notes that trade goods were in short supply at times and the captains would pay for meat and furs with cash and a system of credit notes. If a white man wanted goods from an Inuit he could simply give him a note promising goods and it would be redeemed by any ship. The note would eventually work its way back to the issuer or his company and be made good to the holder. As reneging on such a promissory note could mean the end of the credit system and a shortage of food for the winter, the notes were always honoured.[71]

The trade became so regular with the Inuit that they could put in orders for the following year, like we might do from a catalogue. This type of trust and stability was developed over several years but, once established, the list of trade goods went well beyond beads and knives. One such from 1902 read as follows:

> 49 rifles, 5 shotguns, 39,000 cartridges, reloading tools, powder, lead, shot, thousands of yards of ticking, drill, denim, calico, flannelette, foot sewing machines, hand sewing machines, needles for same, thread, thimbles, matches, flour, bread, molasses, sugar, tea, baking powder, dried apples, prunes, rice, 3 phonographs, 110 records, phonograph needles, clocks, oak boards, boat anchor, brass kettles, primus stoves, dish pans, milk pans, enamelled pails, table spoons, serge cloth, coffee pots, canned milk, shovels, tacks, mirrors, scissors, darting irons, cutting spades, knives, harmonicas, files, drills, bits, breast drills, planes, hammers, hatchets, saws, axes, awls, coal oil, spy glasses, opera glasses, darting-bombs, shoulder-bombs, boat compasses, boat boards, screw drivers, cigars, beads, caps, suspenders, boys' clothes, leather belts, lady's coat, one 16-foot oar, old sails (these from the ship), whaleboat and gear, paint, paint brushes, playing cards, pepper, brooms, and one house, 30 x 20 feet, cut and

fitted.[72]

These types of goods represented a technology which made Inuit life far easier if not out and out luxurious. It was also a technology which they could not hope to copy and develop themselves. It is not surprising that they rapidly became dependent on the trade goods supplied by traders to maintain a lifestyle quite different, and in some ways alien, to their traditional ways but one which they quickly came to adopt nonetheless. As we shall see later, the Inuit of the area became so dependent on white man's food that, in time of poor hunting, they came to Herschel Island for relief rations from the police and traders. A far cry from the independent nomads who met the first whalers.

Two items of trade did not sit well with the morals of many observers: women and alcohol. Opinion on the trade in the former is mixed. The ethics of the whalers certainly may be called into question since many of them had the morals of alley cats by anyone's standards. As mentioned previously, parts of the crew on any given ship were likely to be escaping the law, alcoholism or other trouble and the Arctic was looked upon by them as a refuge where no laws or codes of conduct restricted them other than those of the captains. Since there were a few captains whose morals were not what one would call exemplary, it is doubtful if their men felt much restraint whatsoever. One captain, E.W. Newth of the brig **Jeanette**, was known as "Kindergarten Captain" for his practice of bringing along a harem

of Inuit girls between the ages on eleven and fifteen.[73] Captain John Cook was accused of mentally torturing his wife to the point of nervous breakdown and having intercourse with his daughter. The officers, however, tended to be exceptions to the rules of conduct laid down for everyone else on the ship. Besides which, they could afford to buy female companionship, which most of the sailors could not, and the Inuit women reportedly considered it prestigious to be an officer's woman.

It is difficult to say how the Inuit felt about their relationship with the whalers. While it was culturally acceptable among the Inuit to trade wives and daughters on a temporary basis amongst themselves, we do not know how these and other interactions with the whalers affected their integrity. In the one written Inuit account of the period we have, (Metayer, I Nuligak.), the portrayal of the whalers is likely coloured by time to a rosy hue since it was an old man's reflections on his boyhood. The issue of how much and in what ways the whalers corrupted the Inuit requires a cultural examination to determine what were and were not acceptable practices among the Inuit. Historically, suffice it to say that the whalers changed the lives of the Inuit forever and not all for the good.

The whalers and their Inuit companions lived ashore in the winter, usually in the driftwood and sod constructs many of the Inuit peoples used, but some in frame houses they had built for the purpose. Some of these relationships were quite long-term and others seemed to be a pay-as-you-go arrangement. There were

whalers who took Inuit women as their wives and stayed in the Arctic after whaling had died out, and there were whalers who attracted company for the night with liquor and trinkets. There were Inuit, both men and women, who profited from their relationships with the whalers, and there were those who died of the diseases which often came with the association. The trade in alcohol was a different matter though many also thought that too was just "good business". Many Inuit had a weakness for alcohol which would lead them to pay a great deal for it in trade. There were, of course, whalers who took advantage of that weakness.

As mentioned previously, the Pacific Steam Whaling Company forbade its employees from trading or giving liquor to the Inuit. This did not mean it never happened even within that company, but there seems to have been a fairly strong belief or superstition among the whalers that trading liquor to the Inuit brought very bad luck.

> As for trading it (liquor) to the natives, it was done, certainly, but of all the men whom I have known to do it all save two met violent deaths, one went insane, and all of them went broke before they died.[74]

There is no denying that liquor was given to the Inuit whether in trade for goods or services. If it was strictly proscribed as a trade item then there was always the officers' private stocks which, in some cases, were quite enormous. Liquor from these supplies often made its way to the Inuit. The ships from other companies were not constrained by the policies of Pacific Steam Whaling and their officers traded alcohol freely. Even if

intoxicants had not been brought up on the whaleships, Inuit and whaler alike made the stuff in stills on shore.[75]

The Hudson's Bay Company, which had stiff regulations against trading liquor to any native, caught wind of the alcohol trade on Herschel Island. On the same wind, they also heard about the huge numbers of white fox pelts the whalers received in trade...American whalers in an area where they had been given a monopoly. These whalers were also managing to significantly undercut the Bay's prices and were stealing trade from Fort McPherson.[76] The Hudson's Bay Company suspected whalers could afford to pay the Inuit higher prices because they were not paying duty on the trade goods they brought into Canadian waters. Of course, it could have nothing to do with the fact that the Bay had a monopoly and felt safe charging whatever they pleased. Whether in moral, nationalist or commercial outrage the Company complained loudly to the Canadian Government to do something about the whalers on Herschel.[77] Despite the plea, the Canadian Government took no action until 1903 when the whaling boom was well past and very few whalers were at Herschel Island.

The Anglican Church received the same reports the Hudson's Bay Company had. They took more direct action and sent Reverend Isaac O. Stringer to Herschel Island in the spring of 1893. Much to his surprise, Stringer was well received by the whaling captains who insisted he stay aboard one of the ships in comfort. The moral influence Stringer brought to the Island was both recognized and welcomed by the captains as being a calming

influence on the men during the tense times of winter. They were so supportive that they all pitched in to help him establish the mission on Herschel. Reverend Stringer probably did as much as the government did to curb the liquor trade, both by his presence and by the agreement he persuaded all the whaling captains to sign where they promised not to sell liquor to Canadian born Inuit.[78] This unfortunately left out the Masinkers and the Nunatarmiuts but it was a start.

For better or worse, the whalers certainly changed the lives of the Inuit in some fundamental ways. While they introduced the evils of alcohol, disease and, according to many, theft and lying, they also brought technology to make their lives easier and introduced them to market and credit economies. These latter were to prove important survival tools in future dealings with white society. The Inuit, for their part, taught the whalers how to dress, hunt, and trap among other survival skills for the Arctic. They also supplied food, clothing and "companionship" to lend a better quality to the whalers' life.

The Community Grows

The founding of the whaling community on Herschel Island may be dated from September 1890 when the whalers first overwintered and built their warehouse. There is scant mention in the records of most of the buildings on Herschel Island since these tended to be storage facilities or temporary quarters and nothing grand or memorable. Since most of the men lived aboard ship during the peak whaling years, the community was composed more of ships than

buildings. When the ships left, so did a goodly portion of the settlement's character.

The first ships to winter were the **Grampus** and the **Mary D. Hume** of the Pacific Steam Whaling Company and the **Nicoline** owned by the Herendeen Brothers of San Francisco. By July 10, 1891, the **Nicoline** was totally discouraged and left for home, not having learned that spring and the whales arrived late. She had been in the Arctic for two years with not a single whale to show for it. The whales showed up around Herschel in August and the **Grampus** and **Hume** took forty-eight between them before the **Grampus** left for home in August with their combined collection of whalebone.

The **Mary D. Hume** spent the winter of 1891-92 alone. This was a hard winter for the crew of the **Hume**. They were so lonely and starved for news that third mate, William Mogg, hiked the three hundred miles to Rampart House just to get the latest from the outside world. The Americans must have been overjoyed to hear that Queen Victoria was still alive and Salisbury still prime minister.[79]

The winter of 1890-91 was a trial run to test the feasibility of overwintering and it proved a great success. With proper preparations, the whalers could be quite comfortable, if a little cabin-feverish. They also found out in that first season that spring did not really arrive until July. That was when the ice moved out and the whalers could head east in search of the bowhead. The best whaling was to be had in August and early

September, when the plankton bloom was at its peak and the whales were feeding heavily. The season ended by mid-September when the ships had to be prepared to be frozen in.

The season of 1892 was a record breaker. In that year the **Mary D. Hume** took thirty-seven whales and arrived in San Francisco September 30 with a cargo of baleen worth $400,000 (about $4.5 million in 1989). Josiah Knowles had already begun work on a new fleet as soon as the **Grampus** had returned the previous year. The **Balaena, Grampus, Narwhal,** and **Newport** were all fitted out for wintering at Herschel. He had also seen his experiment as a success and now treated Herschel Island as his forward base of operations in the Western Arctic. His plan now was to exploit the Cape Bathurst whaling grounds and to use Herschel for wintering, repairs and as a resupply base where his supply ships (tenders) would take fresh provisions and crews. The tenders would then return to San Francisco with the men on leave and the whalebone. The whaleships would not have to do the annual shuttle to home port or leave the Arctic at all for that matter.[80] Knowles also had his men search for another base closer to the whaling grounds during the season of 1892. Baillie Island was selected but, since its harbour was not as well protected as Herschel's, it never became a community like that at Pauline Cove.

A new warehouse was built in 1892 on the sandspit and the original one was used strictly for storing whalebone. The **Jeanie** acted as the first tender for the Pacific Steam Whaling Company's

operation on Herschel and dropped her supplies in the new building in 1893. The **Balaena, Grampus, Narwhal,** and **Newport** spent the winter of 1892-93 at Herschel.[81]

The season of 1893 was to break all whaling records. There were 286 whales taken east of Herschel Island, the PSWCo. ships **Narwhal** and **Balaena** taking over fifty. That winter there were the four ships Knowles had sent the previous season plus the **Mary D. Hume.** These were joined by the Roth, Blum Company's two ships **Jeanette** and **Karluk.** This was to be the last great season for the whalers. The area around the Delta was the last refuge of the bowhead. After they had cleaned this out, there were no more "El Dorados".

The Pacific Steam Whaling Company's "house" or "community house" was built in 1893. It was designed with a recreation room, and office for Captain Murray and the rest was devoted to storage. This seems to have been a commitment beyond a temporary storage place and more toward a true base of operations. It also was a recognition that this was a community and winter home for whalers, one that had requirements beyond those of whaling and business. A blacksmith's shop was also built on the sandspit that year complete with blacksmith and lathe.[82] This was to provide the ships with repair services so they were not always forced to return south in the event of damage.

The Church also came to Herschel Island that year, at least for an initial assessment of the place, in the form of Isaac O. Stringer. He arrived for his first visit in May and came back in

November to conduct his first service. He used the PSWCo. community house for a church and its billiard table as an altar.

If 1893 had been the crowning glory of the whaling seasons, 1894 was the beginning of the end. Due to heavy ice, there were very few catches. There were still the late-comers hoping to cash in on the new find made by the PSWCo. and that winter there were fifteen ships in Pauline Cove. The **Jeanie** brought in supplies for Knowles' ships and the **Lakme** supplied the rest.[83] By this time, many officers were wintering ashore with their Inuit companions and over twenty sod houses belonging to the officers and resident Inuit dotted the spit.

The winter of 1895-96 saw thirteen ships staying in Pauline Cove. This was the first year that the captains were allowed to bring their families. They had to pay the owners $1,000 for the privilege. Captain W.P.S. Porter brought his wife Sophie and daughter Dorothy aboard the **Jesse H. Freeman.** Captain John Cook had his wife aboard the **Navarch.** Mrs. Charles Weeks was aboard the **Thrasher.** Captain Sherman of the **Beluga** brought his wife and son Bertie and Mrs. F. M. Green and her niece Lucy McGuire were aboard the **Alexander.**[84] The presence of womenfolk not only had a gentling effect on the conduct of the whalers but greatly expanded the social calendar. The sense of community grew with the addition of family. On May 8, 1895, Captain and Mrs. Albert Sherman became the parents of a seven and one-half pound baby girl, Helen Herschel Sherman. She was delivered by Sophie Porter and was likely the first white child to be born above the Arctic

Circle in "that quarter of the world".

The Community on the Downswing

By 1895, most of the whales were gone from the area around Herschel Island and the Pacific Steam Whaling Company vessels began looking further east. It was a very poor season due to cold weather and heavy ice conditions. The following year proved to be just as disastrous for the same reasons. The ice did not leave the area around the Delta until late July and then returned not long after. The ships were forced to run for Herschel with very scanty catches. Only three ships made it to Herschel. The **Fearless** and **Mary D. Hume** were trapped near Shingle Point and the **Jesse H. Freeman** was caught in the ice near King Point. In 1897 the fleet was dealt a terrific blow. The **Navarch, Jesse H. Freeman, Rosario** and **Orca** were all crushed in the ice.[85]

In 1897, Knowles decided that Herschel was simply too far from the last refuge of the bowhead. He sent four ships from the fleet east for the winter, leaving only the **Mary D. Hume** at Herschel Island. This proved to be a mistake as the ice does not leave the eastern part of the Beaufort until well after Herschel Island is open to navigation. The advance fleet Knowles sent arrived on the whaling grounds to find that the **Wanderer**, which had no steam auxiliary, had beat them there by sailing from Herschel.[86] Nevertheless, the base of operations was moved eastward to Baillie Island and by the winter of 1897-98, only two ships wintered at Herschel, the **Mary D. Hume** as a caretaker, and

the **Wanderer** only because ice conditions had forced her to return to safe anchorage. By 1898-99, the **Mary D. Hume** was alone again. From 1900 to 1902, no ships wintered at Herschel.

Things could have ended in 1898 on Herschel Island as the bottom had fallen out of the whalebone market. There was a brief resurgence in the price again in 1903 which saw whalers overwintering once again but, as a whaling community, Herschel was definitely on the decline. The Pacific Steam Whaling company did not replace the ships it lost in 1897 and added no big ships to the fleet at all. When the catches and prices dropped, the only economical vessels were the small ones with the new gasoline auxiliary engines which took a third as many men to run and hunted only heads.[87] The season of 1905 was another bad ice year and a short season.

The winter of 1905-06 was a bad one for the community on Herschel. It had been a poor season and most of the ships had not planned to spend the winter. As a result, everyone was on short rations. To make matters worse, the shipping articles for the crews of the **Bowhead** and **Karluk** expired leaving the crews under no obligation to work the ships. They grudgingly agreed to work the ships back to their home port. To add oil to the fires, there were serious allegations of abusive treatment from Captain John A. Cook.[88]

The fate of Herschel Island as a whaling settlement was sealed in 1907 by the same vagaries which had founded it. In almost all other areas, baleen had been replaced by other

materials. The price of baleen was still strong but it was supported almost entirely by the volatile Paris fashion industry. When Paul Poiret, a leading couturier, introduced his slim line fashions, the hourglass figure and the market for whalebone corsets were consigned to the past.[89] Whaling in the Western Arctic was finished and Herschel was no longer a whaler's settlement. The whales had gone, the market for their products was gone, and the whalers went along with them.

Whaler's Legacy

Some of the whalers stayed in the Arctic, simply changing over to fulltime trading but essentially they were gone from Herschel by 1907. The buildings at Herschel Island remained to be used by the Police, the Church and others. These included the Pacific Steam Whaling Company's Community House, the "Bone House" just to the east of it, Newport House, the ice houses and several of the small houses built by the officers who lived ashore. Of course, many of the whalers themselves remain on the Island, resting beneath the marshy flat north of the settlement.[90] There are also depressions and debris remaining from the sod structures built for the Inuit and whalers and the remains of the bark **Triton** gracing the beach.[91]

Perhaps more lasting were the social and economic influences of the whalers. For the Inuit of the Herschel area, the whalers were their first long-term exposure to white men, their social structure, economics, material culture and disease. They were

never to be the same after that encounter. Dietary habits changed, currency and notes of credit were introduced into their trade and barter economy, southern technology vaulted them centuries ahead and white disease and alcohol nearly killed them off.

The whalers also attracted the attention of church and governmental officialdom. Had the whalers not been there to exploit the natural and economic resources of the Western Arctic, it is doubtful that Canadians would have bothered with the land or its people for a generation or more. As it was, there was no official government presence on Herschel Island until thirteen years after the whalers set up housekeeping in Canadian territory. The Hudson's Bay did not establish a post in the Herschel area until eight years after the whalers had left.

Whaling Personalities

The "Mary D. Hume"

The **Mary D. Hume** was a ninety foot coastal freighter and tow boat built in 1881 and purchased by the Pacific Steam Whaling Company of San Francisco to sail the shallow waters around the Mackenzie Delta. She was so small that the towering seas of the North Pacific must have been quite an unwelcome adventure for her crews. She was too small to carry a tryworks and could only take the headbone from the whale. She was hastily and sloppily rigged as a brigantine in April 1890. Only a week out of San Francisco she ran into a gale which toppled her masts. While replacing the

foretopmast, it fell and crushed the toes of first mate, Hartson Bodfish. She sailed on with improvised masts only to run aground on the Seahorse Islands off Point Clarence. She finally reached Herschel Island in August 1890. She spent the winter of 1891-92 alone at the Island.

In 1892, the **Mary D. Hume** later made the greatest catch in whaling history; thirty-seven whales worth $400,000. She also made one of the longest recorded whaling voyages in American whaling history, staying away from home port for six and one half years. Perhaps her greatest claim to fame, however, was that she survived the Arctic ice and the normal deterioration of time to keep working right into the 1970s, the only survivor of the historic American whaling industry.

Captain Hartson Hartlett Bodfish

Hartson Bodfish served aboard a number of whaling ships working in the Arctic, first as a mate and then working his way up to master of the **Beluga** while at Herschel. He was known as an expert on Arctic Whaling and the Arctic. Being a progressive man, he made a concerted effort to improve whaling technique and the lot of whalemen in a notoriously harsh and tradition-bound industry. Bodfish was first mate of the **Grampus** when it reached Herschel Island in 1889 and he spent the first winter there the following year aboard the **Mary D. Hume**. He showed great calm on the steam north when a piece of rigging fell on his toes, crushing them. He knew they had to be cut off but no one had the

stomach for it. While they were still numb, he whetted up his knife and removed them himself. This was the beginning of his informal career as fleet surgeon in which he removed many frozen pieces from whalers' extremities. Rather than mope aboard ship during his many winterings on Herschel, he studied the Inuit of the area and learned a great deal about their survival and hunting techniques. He put these to use hunting food for the crews and trapping fox.

In all, Hartson Bodfish whaled for thirty-one years in the Arctic.

"Little Joe" Tuckfield

Joe Tuckfield was a boatsteerer of an adventurous bent. He was outfitted in 1888 by a group of captains at Point Barrow Alaska to sail east to the Mackenzie Delta area in search of bowhead whales. He wintered with the Inuit in the area and returned with reports of whales, baleen to prove his findings and the recommendation of Herschel Island as a harbour.

Captain Charles Stockton

Charles Stockton was the captain of the **U.S.S. Thetis** when she sailed to Herschel Island in 1889. His orders were to support the whaling fleet in this venture. Whether in his orders or not, Stockton surveyed and produced the first charts of Herschel Island as well as naming Pauline Cove, after his wife, and Simpson Point, after his ice observer. The Stockton papers

also contain the first known photographs of Herschel Island.

Josiah N. Knowles

Knowles was one of the partners in the Pacific Steam Whaling Company. He had been a merchant skipper, then a shipping agent and whaling agent. He became manager of the Pacific Steam Whaling Company and is credited with much of the modernization and innovation in the whaling industry. It was his progressive thinking which kept the company profitable in a time of declining whale stocks and falling demand for whale products. He had the idea of using Herschel Island as a forward supply base to exploit the Beaufort whaling grounds. It was also Knowles who realized the potentially destructive effects of a winter without diversions and ordered the community house built on Herschel. Fortunately or unfortunately, Knowles did not live to see the end of the industry he had worked so hard to build as he died in 1896.

Captain George Leavitt

When Joe Tuckfield arrived at Point Barrow from his historic wintering on the Delta, George Leavitt was acting as the Pacific Steam Whaling Company representative there. It was largely on the basis of his arguments that the company agreed to overwinter at Herschel as an experiment. While Leavitt had asked for his own ship for the experiment, he was sent as second mate on the **Mary D. Hume**. Leavitt also became an informal surgeon with the

fleet, and performed numerous amputations over the years. He became captain of the **Mary D. Hume** in 1893.

W.P.S. Porter

Called "Alphabetical" Porter because of the initials preceding his name, Captain Porter represented an experiment on the part of the Pacific Steam Whaling Company. The company did not like paying its whaling captains so great a percentage of the catch because they did not actually catch the whales. As a money saving idea, they thought to hire merchant captains at a straight salary. Porter was one of the first. According to Bodfish, and others, he had no whaling sense and made mistakes which cost his ship whales. As Bockstoce puts it;

> His lasting contribution to the Arctic fishery was in bringing up his handsome and talented wife, Sophie Porter, to Herschel Island. Her parties helped leaven the gloom of winter.

Sophie Porter

Wife of Captain W.P.S. Porter, Sophie was the toast of Herschel society for the parties and outings she organized. She was a fair writer as well as a charming hostess, however, and had many of her Herschel Island adventures printed in the **San Francisco Chronicle.** There is a disparity between the "jolly" times she depicted in the newspaper articles and her journals however. Her personal writings show a more serious side to Mrs. Porter, who saw the harsher side of Northern winters as a midwife, mother and whaler's companion.

Endnotes Chapter 2

1. John Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), p. 46.

2. Ken S. Coates and William R. Morrison, Land of the Midnight Sun: A History of the Yukon (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1988) pp. 120-121.
When the price of baleen was at its peak, it became so valuable that more than half of the whalers took only the heads of the bowhead whales and left the rest of the body to rot. (Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 260.)

3. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 37.

4. Ibid, p. 24.
The bowhead was known by whalers as the "Roys" or "Royce" Whale in honour of its discoverer.

5. Ibid, p. 205.

6. Ibid, p. 205.

7. Ibid, p. 210.

8. Ibid, p. 255.

9. Coates and Morrison, p. 121.

10. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 256.

11. Ibid, p. 256.

12. Coates and Morrison, p. 121.

13. Hartson Hartlett Bodfish, as told by Joseph C. Allen, Chasing the Bowhead (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), p.45.

14. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 258.

15. Coates and Morrison, Land of the Midnight Sun, p. 122.

16. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 260.

17. Bodfish, Chasing the Bowhead, p. 113.

18. Fred Bruemmer, "Herschel! The Big Town,"The Beaver, December 1938, p. 28.

19. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 260.

20. Ibid, p. 262.

21. Captain Hartson H. Bodfish, Chasing the Bowhead, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), p. 53.

22. Some disagreement exists here. Bockstoce's information indicates this orientation from southeast to northwest with the bow to the southeast. John Cook, Pursuing the Whale, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1926) p. 57. indicates they drove the ships northeast as the prevailing winds brought storms from the northeast and southwest. The police reports agree with the latter.

23. Bodfish, pp. 73-74.

24. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 272.

25. Ibid, p. 272.

26. Cook, Pursuing the Whale, p. 59.

27. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 271.

28. Bodfish, Chasing the Bowhead, p. 114.

29. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 272.

30. Ibid, p. 43.

31. Population estimates for the whaling period vary radically. A whaling ship could carry as many as fifty crew, meaning, when there were fifteen ships wintering over, there could have been as many as 750 whalers. The Inuit population would have been counted in the estimates to produce a figure of 1500, such as Bockstoce quotes. This was not always done, however. In some cases, only white people were counted. This is not surprising since even the official Canadian Government census did not include native people for many years. Another confusing factor in making a population count was the fact that the Inuit were always coming and going while hunting and whaling. They often stayed away for months at a time. It is hard to say, therefore, what the population of the Island may have been

33. Ibid, p. 275.
For further discussion on this topic see John Roberts Bockstoce, "The Consumption of Caribou by Whalemen at Herschel Island, Yukon Territory, 1890 to 1908," Arctic and Alpine Research, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1980.

34. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 272 and p. 275.

The Gwich'in people were known in the past by names given them by explorers and traders. They are called "Rat" Indians in many journals from their practice of trapping muskrat. They were also known as Loucheux. (personal communication from Louise Profeit-Leblanc, Native Heritage Advisor, Heritage Branch, Government of Yukon)

35. Ibid, pp. 272-275.

36. Ibid, p. 264.

37. Bodfish, Chasing the Bowhead, p. 57.

38. see "The Inuit and the Whalers" below.

39. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 271.

40. Cook, Chasing the Whale, p. 58.

41. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 271.

42. Hartson Hartlett Bodfish, "A Letter Home from Herschel Island, 1891," The Dukes County Intelligencer, Vol. 8, No. 3, February, 1967, pp. 57-70.

43. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 279.

44. Bodfish, Chasing the Bowhead, p.56.

45. Ibid, p.65.
Being "sent forward" was being reduced in rank to a common seaman.

46. Cook, Chasing the Whale, p. 86.

47. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 280.

48. Ibid, p. 281.

49. Cook, Chasing the Whale, p.95.

50. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, pp. 281-282.

51. Bodfish, Chasing the Bowhead,p. 120.

52. Ibid, p. 119.

53. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 282.

54. Bodfish, Chasing the Bowhead, p. 108.

55. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 265.
There seems to be some discrepancy over this as Bockstoce states in Steam Whaling in the Western Arctic, p. 40, that John Meyers was the "first of many winter deaths".

56. John R. Bockstoce, Steam Whaling in the Western Arctic (New Bedford: Old Dartmouth Historical Society, 1977) p. 40.

57. Bodfish, Chasing the Bowhead, p. 121.

58. Ibid, p. 116.

59. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 326.

60. Bodfish, Chasing the Bowhead, pp. 118-119.

61. Ibid, p. 121.

62. Murray acted as a summer relief master in case one of the ships' captains was incapacitated. (Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 268.)

63. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, pp. 283-284.

64. Ibid, p. 285.

65. Ibid, p. 286.

66. Ibid, p. 289.

67. Bodfish, Chasing the Bowhead, p. 77.

68. Ibid, p. 115.

69. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, pp. 270-271.

70. Ibid, p. 275.

71. Bodfish, Chasing the Bowhead, p. 197-198.

72. Ibid, p. 195.

73. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 277.

74. Bodfish, Chasing the Bowhead, p. 197.

75. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 277.

76. Ibid, p. 276.

77. Ibid, p. 279.

78. Ibid, p. 278.

79. Ibid, p. 266.

80. Ibid, pp. 267-268.

81. For a complete list of overwinterings at Herschel Island see John Bockstoce and Charles F. Batchelder, "A Chronological List of Whaling Voyages to the Bering Region and the Western Arctic of North America, 1850-1910," Musk Ox, Vol.20, 1977, pp. 3-8.

82. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 268.

83. Ibid, p. 269.

84. Ibid, p.282.

85. Ibid, p. 325.

86. Ibid, p. 325.

87. Ibid, pp. 330-331.

88. Ibid, p. 335.

89. Ibid, p. 335.

90. There were at least 37 whalers buried on the Island up to 1905 (Bodfish, Chasing the Bowhead, p. 121). Surficial archaeological investigations have noted varying numbers visible. Ross noted 24. (Brian Ross, "Herschel Island: Heritage in the Face of Adversity", Parks Canada Research Bulletin No. 192, March 1983.)

91. The **Triton** was wrecked in the ice in 1895.

Confirmation Class with Rev. Whittaker, Bishop Stringer and Rev. H. Fry, Herschel Island.
Vale Photos
General Synod Archives/Anglican Church of Canada

Chapter 3 - The Missionaries

The Coming of the Missionaries

Long before before the Anglican Church Mission Society sent a minister to Herschel Island, missionaries from both the Anglican and Catholic faiths had been pushing northward in a steadily-increasing competition for native souls until eventually both groups were established in missions in the nearby Mackenzie River delta.

The first missionaries to reach this area were the Roman Catholic Oblates of Mary Immaculate. This order had been founded in Aix, southern France in 1816 by Charles J.E. de Mazenod, Bishop of Marseilles.[1] One of their number, Peter Henry Grollier became the first Roman Catholic missionary to the Inuit. During his ministry in the 1850s, he travelled extensively just within the Arctic Circle establishing many missions and visiting Fort McPherson where he reputedly effected a reconciliation between the Loucheux Indians and the Eskimos.[2]

About the same time, the Anglican missions also began to move further north. These missionaries often operated under the auspices of the staunchly-Protestant officers of the Hudson's Bay Company who assisted them with travel arrangements and encouraged them to set up missions near Bay posts.[3] One of the more notable of these was Archdeacon Robert McDonald, a missionary of mixed-blood ancestry from Red River, who travelled to Fort Youcon in 1862, then moved to Fort McPherson in 1873 after Fort Youcon was

found to be in American territory. McDonald's experience with native missions and ability with languages served him well with his new congregation in the northern Yukon. When McDonald fell ill with influenza in 1864, a search was made for a missionary to replace him.

An English curate, William Carpenter Bompas, answered the call. By the time Bompas reached Fort Simpson on Christmas Day 1865, however, McDonald had recovered and it was decided later that year to give Bompas a roving commission travelling throughout the north.[4] In 1870, he spent the spring with a band of Inuit (then commonly dubbed Huskies or Eskimos) along the Mackenzie River. Although Bompas had problems with snowblindness, a language barrier, and what he perceived as the unhygienic personal habits and poor morals of his companions; he appreciated their ingenuity, patience and hospitality declaring that "there was nothing warmer that the grasp of a Husky's hand."[5]

When the vast diocese of Rupert's Land was to be divided into four parts in 1874, Bompas was appointed the Bishop of Athabasca, a vast area that comprised "the whole of the enormous territories watered by the Athabasca and the Mackenzie Rivers, and such part of the Yukon basin as was within British territory".[6] In 1884, this diocese was further divided into the Peace River District which retained the name Athabaska and the new Mackenzie River Diocese for which Bompas took responsibility. The Mackenzie district was further divided in 1890 into an

eastern section retaining the name Mackenzie River and a new section to the west in what is now the Yukon Territory. Bompas took charge of the more remote Yukon district and christened it "Selkirk" after the Scots "Selig Kirke" or "Holy Church".[7] In 1907, Selkirk was officially renamed the Diocese of Yukon.

Thus by the early 1890's, Herschel Island was included within the Diocese of Selkirk; although for several years it was administered by the Mackenzie River Diocese. By the mid teens, Herschel Island was being jointly administered by both Diocesan Bishops. Even though the mission was within the Yukon Territory, its missionary often visited Aklavik, Fort McPherson and other communities within the Northwest Territories. Also,logistically, the community was easier to reach from the NWT via the Mackenzie River than by the arduous overland route from Dawson City.

The impetus to send a missionary to the Inuit at Herschel Island, as with so many other events of that period, followed on the arrival of the whalers. Reports, in 1891, of whalers selling guns and liquor to the Inuit, as well as debauching the native women, prompted Bishop Bompas to make several representations to the Canadian government requesting policing of the situation. Bompas never did visit the island himself and his source was Archdeacon McDonald who also obtained his information at secondhand.

> I have information from our missionary Archdeacon MacDonald that American Whaling Vessels have reached the Neighbourhood of the mouth of the Mackenzie and have there sought to trade spirits with the Esquimaux.[8]

Although much has since been written about the situation at

Herschel, actual eyewitness reports vary according to the perspective of the observer and there are those who feel the circumstances were greatly exaggerated.[9] The most vivid and oftquoted passage concerning the onslaught of the whalers was written many years after the event and is renowned more for its purple prose than its accuracy:

> Down the gangplanks surged a motley horde of mixed humanity til the sandspit was overrun with a drunken mob of dark-visaged Kanakas, bearded Russians, ebony-faced Negroes, and the off-scouring of the Barbary Coast. Rum flowed like water. Fighting, drinking, and debauchery became the order of the day.[10]

Despite his personal distaste for the impact of the whalers upon the morals of the Inuit, Bompas was politic enough to point out the sovereignty implications of illegal trade by the whalers and ventured to propose the sending of a gunboat to Herschel Island and the establishment of a "permanent British Naval Station for exploration and observation and as a centre for a Canadian whaling trade".[11]

It would be another eleven years before the Canadian government would finally send a representative to Herschel Island but the Church Missionary Society determined that the situation at Herschel immediately warranted the presence of a missionary to minister solely to the Inuit of the Mackenzie Delta and western Arctic coast. As well there was always the consideration of:

> the ever-present threat of competition from the black-robed Oblates who, it was felt, would lose no opportunity to steal a march on the hated Protestants and claim the Eskimos for their own.[12]

Consequently, early in 1892, the Bishop of Mackenzie River,

William Day Reeve, travelled to Wycliffe College in Toronto in search of a likely candidate for this ministry.[13] He found a volunteer in twenty-six year old Isaac Stringer from Bruce County, Ontario. Stringer wrestled with some personal misgivings and the initial opposition of his family, then obtained the consent of his fiancee, Sarah Ann Alexander and enthusiastically began getting ready for his new post. These preparations included a quick course in dentistry and medicine in order to provide his new charges with physical as well as spiritual care. Stringer was ordained deacon on May 15th at the Church of the Redeemer in Toronto. Only a few days later, he set out on his long journey north.

Establishing the Mission on Herschel Island

Isaac Stringer's apprenticeship in the north took place in Fort McPherson where he stayed in a log cabin with Archdeacon McDonald and his family. The post had a resident Indian population and was visited regularly by a number of Inuit who came to trade at the Hudson's Bay Post. There he learned something of native customs, studied the local Inuit language and translated a number of hymns and scriptures. After becoming familiar with the distances and rigors of northern travel during visits to Rampart House and Kittigazuit, an Inuit community on the Arctic coast just east of the Mackenzie Delta, Stringer set out by dogsled for his first visit to Herschel Island on April 2nd, 1893.[14] A month later, on May 1st, Stringer arrived to

find four whaleships (the **Balaena**, the **Grampus**, the **Narwhal** and the **Newport**) wintering at Pauline Cove with a combined crew numbering about 160 men, "all nationalities and some odd specimens of humanity".[15] As well there was the local native population drawn by the trade goods of the whalers.

Perhaps to his surprise, Stringer's reception was a warm one.

> I was well received by the four Captains who were wintering there. ... I intended to return with the Indians in a day or two but the Captains gave me a hearty invitation to remain and go up later by boat when the ice would break. It was too good a chance to lose so I accepted the invitation and sent my man and dogs back.[16]

Consequently, Stringer was able to prolong his visit to three weeks before travelling back to Fort McPherson with the Inuit trader Ooblonk and his family.

During his visit, Stringer stayed aboard one of the whaleships where he enjoyed such civilized amenities as a comfortable bed and hot baths. No doubt, as Bockstoce suggests, the captains were glad of Stringer's mollifying influence upon their often unruly crews and appreciated the company of an educated and personable man.[17]

Stringer seems to have trod lightly on this first visit. He spent much time amongst the whalers but did not hold any services, although he diffidently suggested the possibility near the end of his visit and met no opposition. His first service eventually took place the following November in the whaler's recreation hall using the billiard table as an altar.[18] Among the Inuit, he had little success. He discovered that these were

"Noonatagmiuts" or dwellers on the mainland, speaking a different language from that he had studied so painstakingly at Fort McPherson. Although he was able to find an interpreter, there seemed to be little interest in his message. In his diary he gave way to his discouragement:

> I sometimes despair of doing any good among these Eskimos. I don't seem to have the ability to acquire the language quickly. I can't sing or I could reach them in that way. It will be a long time before I can do anything to influence them judging from present appearances.[19]

Although Stringer remained based in Fort McPherson where he bought a cabin of his own in anticipation of the arrival of his future bride, he continued to spend a great deal of time with the Inuit on the coast and made further visits to Herschel Island. By eschewing an interpreter and then later camping with the people rather than staying in his own tent, Stringer appears to have made progress in learning the language, making a positive impression on the people and presenting himself and his doctrine as a preferable alternative to the Oblate missionaries also staying at Fort McPherson.

In July 1894, Stringer intensified his efforts to stop the trade in alcohol between the whalers and the natives. A petition was addressed to the whaling Captains pointing out the illegality of this trade and requesting their cooperation in preventing such activity. This was signed by Archdeacon McDonald, Stringer and Hudson's Bay traders, John Firth and Julian Camsell.[20] The petition was not presented to the whaling captains until the following spring. The document was backed with a threat to notify

Canadian authorities if the whalers would not pledge to police the situation themselves. Although some seemed to have doubted the efficacy of such an undertaking, ultimately twenty-four whaling captains signed an agreement to prohibit the liquor traffic with Canadian natives.[21]

In June, the annual visit of the steamer **Wrigley** down the Mackenzie River brought Bishop Reeve and a new recruit, Charles Edward Whittaker, a fresh graduate from Wycliffe College. The trio travelled together to Herschel Island where Bishop Reeve met with about thirty-five of the ship's officers to discuss the possibility of establishing a mission on the Island and once again emphasize the desirability of completely eliminating the liquor traffic. A subscription list was opened for contributions to the new mission and garnered over $650 from most of the whalers. At the same time, a sod house was purchased for $30 and "a small store" (possibly storehouse) for $150, to serve as temporary quarters for the new missionary.[22] This being accomplished, Whittaker and Reeve returned to Fort McPherson and Stringer left the north on furlough, boarding the **whaler Jeanie** for the long trip home by sea to San Francisco then overland to Ontario.

Married Life - the Stringers on Herschel Island

During his leave, Isaac Stringer conscientiously spread the word on his work in the north, did some fundraising, arranged for supplies and, most importantly, on the 10th of March 1896,

married Sarah Ann Alexander. Sarah, better known as "Sadie", had not wasted the two years she was separated from her fiance. In preparation for her life as a missionary's wife, she had taken a two year nursing course at Grace Hospital in Toronto followed by a few months at the Deaconess Missionary Training House.

Accompanied by Sadie's uncle Will Young, who had sold his Ontario farm in order to accompany the young couple as a lay worker, the Stringers left for the north in May. Isaac, at the time, was twenty-six and his wife was twenty-four. As Sadie put it, they were both "burning with a missionary zeal laced by a sense of adventure on the far side of the cold horizon".[23]

That summer, the couple spent three weeks at Herschel Island where they set up housekeeping in a sod hut with such improvised arrangements as curtains made from strips of muslin torn from Sadie's wedding dress.[24] That fall, Archdeacon and Mrs McDonald were going to England to see his translations through the press. Consequently, it had been decided that Isaac would act as McDonald's replacement and the Stringers would spend the winter at Fort McPherson, returning to Herschel the following spring. That December, their daughter Rowena Victoria was born with only Isaac in attendance.

In 1896, Stringer had arranged to have lumber for a mission house shipped to Herschel Island with Captain Knowles on the **Jeanie.** Stringer delayed building "because of the uncertainty of the place remaining a permanent whaling station". Few whales had been caught in the area in the last few years, which Stringer

felt would lead to a cessation of whale ships wintering at Pauline Cove and a corresponding decline in the Inuit staying on the island.[25] The lumber ended up being distributed to four ships wintering east of the mouth of the Mackenzie. Subsequently, the Stringers were offered the use of "Captain Murray's House" in recompense.[26] This was probably another name for the Pacific Steam Whaling's community house, acquired ca. 1894 when Captain Murray stayed there during a stint as the Pacific Steam Whaling Company's manager and storekeeper.[27]

This structure would be the Stringers' home for the next four years. Here they lived in two rooms in the rear of the building: the larger serving as church, school and first-aid centre; the smaller being used as kitchen, communal bedroom and parlour. The latter contained such cherished possessions as an eight day clock, a rag carpet, a large writing desk, a sewing machine and "a dear little portable organ" all transported by boat, oxcart and steamer the two thousand miles from the end of rail. The structure was christened "Igloopuk" or "Big House" by the community Inuit who were frequent visitors. The sick, both whalers and Inuit, often moved in temporarily, staying in the new bunks constructed by Will Young.[28]

Despite the long desolate winters, the life led by the Stringers was anything but dull or idle. Both Sadie and Isaac led full and varied lives trying to keep up with the many duties they had taken on. In 1897-98, the first full year of their residence, Herschel settlement had a population of over a hundred

Inuit from half a dozen different tribes and about fifty white men. The latter group was an unexpected addition to the community, having been stranded when the **Mary D. Hume** and the **Wanderer** were blocked by ice on their way east and had to return to Herschel. Sadie Stringer paints a poignant picture of these men unexpectedly stranded so far from home for an extra year.

> I remember how stunned the sixty-odd sailors were when this first happened. They sang sad songs around my organ (Where is My Wandering Boy Tonight?) and waited wistfully for spring.[29]

Separate Sunday services were held for the Inuit and whites. Mrs. Stringer taught about thirty Inuit adults and children at a dayschool and held evening classes for the whalers. One of her more popular classes was a shorthand course that her husband initiated. Four of her pupils became sufficiently proficient that they were able to leave whaling for clerical jobs in San Francisco.

Eventually Isaac was able to forego the services of an interpreter in dealing with his Inuit congregation. He phonetically translated the Lord's Prayer, Grace Before Meat, several scriptures and twenty hymns. Some imagination was used in transcribing otherwise obscure biblical texts. Thus, "Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves" became "Be ye therefore as wise as a weasel and harmless as a seal pup."[30] Using these writings, many Inuit were taught to read and some of the children learned to do simple arithmitic.

Sadie readily adapted to housekeeping in the Arctic. Her oven was made from biscuit tins, her rolling pin was a whisky

bottle and her cookie cutter the lid from a cocoa tin. Her bread was baked in large batches then frozen in the ice house. Meat was also stored in frozen blocks that had to be chopped up with an axe. Water came in frozen blocks from a pool two miles away in the central part of the island and was stacked on a rack outside the door. In the spring of 1900, Sadie delivered her second child, a son aptly christened Frederick Herschel. Once again, her husband was her only midwife.

Stringer made some contributions to scientific knowledge of the island. He collected, pressed and mounted sixty formerly unidentified wildflowers which were then sent to the Department of Agriculture in Ottawa. Birds' eggs were obtained and mailed to an ornithologist in Toronto. The local Inuit agreed to make two full sets of clothing, one for a man and one for a woman, to be donated to the Royal Ontario Museum. He continued his practice of visiting the Inuit in their camps along the coast and travelling with them. Once a year, Stringer made the long trek to Fort McPherson either singly or with his family. Here he obtained a year's worth of supplies and tried to be on hand for the Bishop's annual visit.

Stringer persisted in his war against the bottle. Although the whisky trade with the whaleships had at least moderated at his instigation, spirits were available locally from one Avumnuk who produced a spiritous brew from his homemade still. This was described as:

> a filthy and hellish mixture fermented and distilled from flour, molasses, raisins, yeast and, of all things, tobacco.

He called it Tonga and it drove men to murder.[31]

Isaac bought Avumnuk's still during "one of the periodic food shortages" by bartering a couple of bags of groceries. With the inducement of extra tea and tobacco, the still was turned over to Stringer who then destroyed it quite thoroughly with an axe.

The other front on which Stringer battled was against the existing spiritual beliefs of the local Inuit and the influence of the native shamen. Stringer made no attempt to determine if any of the native remedies might be efficacious and dismissed all their beliefs as mere superstition. Small wonder that Sadie was able to report that the shamen "became openly hostile as soon as we began to undermine the ancient shibboleths on which their power rested".[32] Maurice Metayer briefly describes the role of the angatok or Inuit shaman in I, Nuligak:

> For the Inuit, spirits inhabited everything - storm, sickness, the ocean, the mountain. It was the angatok's function to act as intermediary between them and the people, to expel the evil spirit making this one ill, to bring back fair weather, etc. In exchange for these services they received remuneration. Their meetings were frequently held in the igloo of reunions. There they sang invocations and entered a sort of trance. The entire village was present, including children who thus came into contact with the mysterious region which the angatok claimed to penetrate.[33]

The Stringers opposed the practices of leaving the elderly or very sick to die. On one occasion they brought one Okpik, sick with pneumonia, into their home after the shamen had given up on his recovery. They did so knowing they ran a great risk for if Okpik died, none would break the taboo on entering a structure in which there had been a death. Okpik survived and so

did the credibility of the missionaries. They intervened in the often murderous rages of the Inuit. On one occasion they gave shelter to a woman from her murderously angry husband. When all parties had settled down, it was discovered the argument had been caused by the woman's refusal to sew her husband's boots![34] All was done with genuine Christian concern with a strong overlay of paternalism, a feeling that these were children to be guided into the light.

By 1901, Isaac Stringer was beginning to experience problems with his eyesight due to snowblindness. The condition became so severe he was unable to read for days at a time. That year he and his family left the Arctic on the **Narwhal** and his sojourn in the far north was ended. He did retain a special interest in Herschel Island and a genuine affection for the Inuit. As Bishop of Yukon, he worked hard to raise funds for this remotest of his missions and made several efforts to have a church built on Herschel Island. He regularly wrote the Inuit layworkers in the area and made special efforts to obtain any items they requested from a wolverine skin to a portable organ. The confirmation of forty-seven Inuit at Herschel Island in 1917,[35] followed by the ordination of the first Inuit deacon in 1927 must have been among the most gratifying moments of Stringer's long career.

The Middle Years

In addition to Stringer, there were a few other missionaries who worked at Herschel Island in the early years then stayed on

to do further work in the Arctic. The first of these was Charles Edward Whittaker. He manned the mission at Herschel in 1895, while Stringer was on furlough, then took responsibility for the mission after Stringer's departure in 1901. For most of his tenure in the Arctic, however, he was based at Fort McPherson where he worked with the local Indian population.

Whittaker enjoyed the advantage of having a steam launch giving him easy access to the mainland and other communities along the Arctic coast and in the Mackenzie Delta. In August 1903, the mission launch was rented to Sergeant Fitzgerald when he wished to transfer supplies from Fort McPherson to the new detachment at Herschel Island. The launch was wrecked in Mackenzie Bay and part of the police cargo was lost. This incident contributed to both Fitzgerald's indigence in that difficult first year of the police on the Island and strained relations between the police and the mission.[36]

There were, however, at least two other vessels being operated by the Church in the next decade. In 1915, when Vilhjalmur Stefansson dropped anchor in Pauline Cove, he recorded the presence of "the Church of England's **Atkon** (or The **Torch**)".[37] The following year, Whittaker arrived in the **Tiliyak** to help Fry construct the mission house.

There are very few sympathic accounts of Whittaker's character. He comes across as a rigid, intolerant man unwilling to make allowances for the foibles of those around him. He lacked Stringer's popularity with the whaling fleet and lodged

numerous complaints about their behaviour. In 1895, an Inuit named Pysha beat his wife then killed his daughter during a drunken frenzy. An impromptu jury of whalers sentenced him to one hundred lashes and exile from the island. Whittaker, in his zealous desire to see justice done, laid on the first dozen lashes. Justice perhaps, but hardly the merciful behaviour one might expect from a man of the cloth. Pysha, now completely deranged, later murdered eight people at Flaxman Island and was executed by the Inuit of Point Barrow.[38]

Whittaker seems to have been more than normally patronizing of his Inuit charges. In a letter to Stringer in 1905, Whittaker mentions the pleasures of having the company of a doctor, Mrs. Cook and two policemen, "a pleasant contrast to our first year when we had none but natives and evel(sic) tempered natives at that".[39] He left Herschel in 1906 after the death of his youngest daughter. From then until he left the Arctic in 1918, he was based at Fort McPherson where he worked with the area's Indian population.

William Dobbs Young, Sadie Stringer's uncle, accompanied the Stringers to Herschel Island. He worked as a lay catechist and appeared to have been a handy carpenter who turned his hand to a variety of projects from additional bunks in the room the Stringers called home at Herschel Island, to construction of a mission house and church at Shingle Point.

Young was alternately company for Sadie when Isaac left the island and also accompanied him on his long journeys

prosetylizing Inuit along the Arctic Coast. There are few records of his movements after the Stringers left Herschel Island in 1901 but he visited Herschel Island ca. 1911, was at Fort McPherson in 1915 and from 1920 assisted William Geddes with the Shingle Point mission.[40]

After 1906, visits from the whaling fleet were increasingly rare. From this time until 1915, the Herschel mission was maintained by regular visits from itinerant missionaries. In 1909, Stringer visited the island and baptised six Inuit, among them Thomas Umaok and his wife Susie Atogaok and James Atumiksana and his wife. On this occasion, Thomas and Susie were also formally married by the Anglican Church, although they had been married "native fashion" since 1905. With the imminent opening of the Hudson's Bay post on Herschel Island in 1915, plans were made to re-establish the Anglican mission. The two events were not coincidental. Missionary H. Girling wrote Stringer in 1915 lauding the "proximity of wood, water and abundance of fish" that would make Shingle Point an ideal site for a mission but conceded that "the Company's extensive settlement at the island will almost settle the point".[41] Therefore, in 1916, William Henry Fry and Christina, his wife of a few months, went to Herschel to take over the mission and attempt to carry out Stringer's dream of building a church on the island.

Stringer had wanted to construct a church on the island since 1896 when he had ordered lumber from San Francisco for that

purpose. In 1914, he wrote H.J. Knowles of the Pacific Steam Whaling Company relating the story of the lumber that had been diverted to cover in four whale ships wintering at Cape Parry and suggesting that the company might wish to sell the church the Bone House. The request came too late. In 1911, all the buildings belonging to the company had been sold to the Royal North-West Mounted Police for $1500. Undaunted, Stringer then wrote Prime Minister Robert Borden with his request, backing it with an alternative suggestion that, if the police could not spare the Bone House, perhaps they might be willing to sell the other buildings used as storehouses for the lumber. A. Bowen Perry, Comptroller of the RNWMP, replied that the Bone House could not be spared as it was being "fully used" and the police did not own either the Karluk or McKenna houses and thus could not dispose of them.[42] This correspondence ceased temporarily in 1916 when it appeared that Stringer might finally get his church built. He had ordered lumber from San Francisco and had it sent together with detailed instructions and a set of plans to Harding the Hudson's post manager, who had apparently agreed to take charge of construction of the church. After making detailed arrangements for the erection of the church, Stringer was rather vague as to where the Frys would spend the winter, suggesting they might live in a sod hut or perhaps the unfinished church.[43]

Reverend Fry was a northern veteran who had spent five years on the Arctic Coast, his last mission station being "Kittygagjuit" (Kittigazuit). He was all too aware of the

isolation of his new posting and before he left Ontario sent Stringer a sketch showing his "idea of the boat that would be of great use to ply between Herschel Island and Cape Nome" which could be built for $5000 fully equipped.[44] Alas, despite numerous further suggestions over the next few years for boats that could be built or bought, funds were never made available for this expensive item and Fry had to rely on such vessels as could be borrowed or chartered to travel between the island and the mainland.

The Frys arrived late in the summer on July 26th and were met by 150 to 200 Inuit staying at the island. To their dismay they discovered that work had not yet begun on any sort of building. Harding made it plain that work could not be done on the church until the following spring but that he would be able to help with a house. Work commenced on a two-storey, twenty by thirty foot structure. While Fry borrowed Whittaker's boat the **Tiliyak** to collect firewood on the mainland and salvage windows from his former mission at "Kittigagjuit", Archdeacon Whittaker and a crew of Indians from Fort McPherson laid a floor and erected walls. In the midst of this activity, the Frys winter outfit arrived on the **Herman** and much time had to be spent salvaging damaged goods. The building program was slowed further when Harding sold the remainder of his lumber to another island resident. With some anxiety, Fry decided to use the church lumber to complete the mission house suggesting that perhaps Stringer could order more for the following year. The

missionaries were not let off easily for their decision to provide themselves with a dwelling rather than constructing a church. Whittaker suggested that the upstairs of their house might be used as a church, a suggestion to which the Frys did not take kindly.[45] Stringer professed himself bitterly disappointed to see his pet project delayed yet again.[46]

By January 1917, Stringer was renewing his attempts to obtain one of the police buildings, but Perry, acting on the report of Inspector Phillips at Herschel Island, was just as adamant that the police structures were all in use. In return, Perry offered to give a missionary (single male implied) quarters and board with the police with an important proviso.

> The person you select should be a man willing to do his share of work and likely to adapt himself to conditions and get on with others.[47]

This terminated Stringer's attempts to obtain a building from the police. As late as 1924, however, the Anglicans were applying for a plot of land adjoining the mission house for the purpose of building a church.[48]

In the meantime, the Frys were busy settling into life on the Island. This involved teaching school, holding services and vainly trying to cope with widespread sickness with inadequate medical supplies. A Dr. Doyle from Fort McPherson was the first doctor to visit the Island in four years. During his visit, he diagnosed cases of pneumonia, diptheria, meningitis, bronchitis, tuberculosis and hereditary syphillis.[49] Few years went by without mention of several deaths due to introduced diseases.

This legacy of the white newcomers caused physical, often fatal damages that seemed to far outweigh the spiritual needs of the Inuit. In his 1916 Christmas circular letter, Fry writes affectingly of a pregnant tuberculer woman who managed to hold on to life until her child was born then passed away after a loving look at her newborn.[50]

The Frys were genuinely fond of the Inuit people, on one occasion expressing dismay at the possibility of moving to Fort McPherson and having to leave "their Eskimos" for an Indian mission.[51] Fry was very interested in the existing culture and spiritual beliefs of the Inuit although he was impelled by mixed motives:

> A knowledge of the old faith ingrained upon the soul of this people gives the missionary floods of light. He learns how they think and how they reason so that he can present the truths of (Christianity) in a far more acceptable way. A new faith has always to begin by adjusting itself to that which it finds in possession, and if the propagators are wise they will adopt what they can of the old system.[52]

Fry related an incident that took place among a former Shaman, the explorer Stefansson, Inspector Phillips and himself. The Inuit was talking about his ability to fly. Phillips offered the man $500 if he was allowed to witness a flight. The man demurred declaring that he did not fly now that he was a Christian. When Stefansson continued to scoff, however, Kuplualuk offered to fly to the mountains with Stefansson tied naked to his back and leave him there to perish in punishment for his incredulity if the missionary would give his permission. Fry was quite surprised at how many Inuit, including "one of our most

advanced Eskimos", believed in the man's abilities and claimed to have witnessed flights in the past.[53]

As well as working with their native flock, services were held twice a week for the small white community. The Frys seem to have gotten on well with their non-native neighbours who included the three-man police detachment and the Hudson's Bay trader, his wife and their two male helpers. They also carried on with a normal family life. In May 1917, Christina Fry gave birth to a son Walter and had her second child, Herschel Noel, on Christmas morning 1918. In stoic missionary fashion, only her husband was present to attend the births and, in the latter case, they "still held the usual Christmas services and feast".[54]

Fry continued to lobby for a boat for the island and struggled to keep the mission house warm. During his second winter, the mission's stoves consumed thirty-six cords of wood, a large amount to replenish when wood supplies were becoming scarcer on the coast and without easy access to a vessel. Fry was forced to switch to an oil burner and buy fuel from the Bay. The mission continually exceeded its fuel allowance, a troublesome item on an already pinched budget.

There were various comings and goings to enliven the daily round. Stringer made another visit in 1917. The service he held at Herschel was a grand affair. Forty-seven Inuit were confirmed, eight-eight took part in Holy Communion and over thirty-seven pounds were taken in the collection. When Stringer returned south, he brought along two Inuit boys, Frederick

Amegrak and Alex Inyunak, to attend the Carcross Indian Boarding School.[55] Fry later expressed some doubts about sending children out to the residential school thereby losing them from the Herschel day school.[56]

Another visitor was Archdeacon Hudson Stuck who came by in April 1918 during his trip along the Arctic coast. Fry must have enjoyed the opportunity of visiting with this congenial, like-minded traveller.

A less welcome visitor, who stopped regularly at the island during this period, was the explorer and writer Vilhjalmur Stefansson who was at that time involved with the Canadian Arctic Expedition of 1913 to 1918. Stefansson was openly critical of the missionaries and their effect on the lifestyle of the Inuit. The normally genial Fry seems to have repaid this dislike with interest, a dislike that was shared by many in the community. Amongst the black marks that Fry registered against the explorer were his subversion of the mission work, his estrangement from the scientific men of the Canadian Arctic Expedition, implications that the explorer was seducing attractive native women and, most scathingly, dismissal of his book, My Life With the Eskimo, as "the product of a distorted brain".[57] Others, particularly local traders, were incensed at Stefansson's disruption of the local economy by paying high wages to local Inuit and his purchase of various items from dogs to boats at premium prices. Since this was being done with government funds during wartime, many found the explorer's attitude

"unpatriotic".[58]

When Stefansson succumbed to pneumonia, however, Fry demonstrated his Christian charity by housing him in a hospital improvised from the mission storehouse and nursing him until arrangements could be made to transport the explorer to the hospital at Fort Yukon. A tragic side effect of this illness was that it proved contagious and ravaged the Inuit on the Island and in the Delta. Among those who died from the disease was Constable Lamont of the police.

In addition to his Island duties, Fry attempted to maintain contact with the coastal people. In January 1918, accompanied by lay worker Thomas Umaok, Fry travelled to visit the mountain Inuit. As well, there was the customary annual visit to Fort McPherson, usually timed to coincide with the Bishop's annual visit. By this time, however, Fry was beginning to suffer from the stresses of his taxing life and feeling the early effects of the illness that would cause him to leave the following year.

This seemed to have been a time of falling fortunes for all the Island's residents. The police went through a prolonged streak of bad luck. After losing two dogteams and sleighs through the ice in the spring, they then rammed their whaleboat on the ice losing mail, government documents, money, provisions and the boat. The trader Pedersen set up a station at Shingle Point; consequently fewer Inuit came to the island to trade that summer thus contributing to the demise of the Hudson's Bay Company post.[59]

The loss of much of the island's congregation to rival traders coming on top of difficulties with fuel, food (fish had been scarce for a few years) and transport, made continuing operation of the mission expensive and illogical. Consequently, it comes as little surprise that in 1919, Stringer accepted Fry's recommendation to move the mission to Shingle Point keeping Herschel Island as a summer mission only.

The Later Period

William Archibald Geddes was the next Anglican missionary to travel to this area in 1920. He was accompanied by that experienced lay worker, William Young and their mandate was to build a mission house and school at Shingle Point. After his experiences on Herschel, Young was most appreciative of the relative ease of life at Shingle Point with its plenitude of wood, fish and "deer" or caribou.[60] The house was constructed in 1920 and the church was built in 1922. Finally, the Anglicans could boast of their first church on the Arctic coast.

Herschel Island was visited in the summers and, in the interim, the dedicated lay worker Thomas Umaok continued to hold regular services on the island whenever he was in residence. He also made efforts to keep a school going and discourage his people from such deleterious practices as gambling and prostitution. The winter of 1924-25 seems to have been an unusually rowdy one. Captain Klengenberg's crew had wintered over after their vessel had been iced in; a crew from the

Canadian Army Signal Corps, who had lost their outfit on the **Lady Kindersley** were also wintering over, and there was trouble over at the Hudson's Bay with the new lady housekeeper.[61]

That same year Bishop and Mrs. Stringer made one of their Arctic visits. Stringer dedicated the new church at Shingle Point (St. John's) and attempted to visit Herschel Island but was prevented by poor ice conditions, greatly disappointing Thomas Umaok who was waiting expectantly at the island.

> I saw the boat and felt quite sure that it was you, and I cannot tell you how sorry I was, when I saw that you had to turn back.[62]

Three years later, in 1927, Umaok was able to successfully rendezvous with the Stringers at Herschel Island. On that historic occasion, Umaok was ordained deacon on July 30th, thereby becoming the first Inuit Anglican minister.

The church continued to develop facilities for the Inuit, often in response to similar activities by the Oblates. Thus, two hospitals were built in Aklavik in the mid twenties, one by the Anglicans and the other by the Roman Catholics. When a Catholic residential school was opened at Aklavik, the Anglicans set up a facility at Shingle Point that opened in 1929. The site proved to be impractical due to problems with sea-ice and food. A new and larger school was built in Aklavik with funding from the Department of Indian Affairs. When it opened in 1936, the Shingle Point mission was closed, marking an end to a formal Anglican presence on the Western Arctic coast.[63]

As late as 1931, Mrs. Stringer spoke at the Synod of the

Diocese of Yukon on the necessity of maintaining the Herschel mission as the Island was still a port of call.[64] By this time, however, most of the Island's itinerant congregation had largely moved on, either to be in closer proximity to other traders or to the growing administrative centre of Aklavik. When the Stringers left the Yukon Diocese in the early thirties, their departure marked the end of a strong sentimental tie with this most northerly parish. Although, by the mid thirties, Thomas Umaok was still recorded as the clergy from Herschel Island, St. Patrick's Mission was considered abandoned and no longer listed as a parish.[65]

Missionary Personalities

Sarah Ann "Sadie" Stringer

1869-1955

Sarah Ann Alexander, better known as "Sadie", grew up on a farm not too far from the Stringer family near Kincardine. She and Isaac attended the same high school and during that time "came to an understanding".

Sadie continued her education by studying typing and shorthand. While Isaac Stringer was attending Wycliffe College, she accepted a post as a stenographer in New York City. Here she learned that her husband-to-be wished to assume a ministry to the Inuit of the Arctic coast. She supported him in this decision

and during the two years of his initial posting, she prepared herself for her role as a missionary's wife by taking a nursing course at Grace Hospital in Toronto then spending a few months at the Deaconess Missionary Training House. Thus prepared for life in the north, Sadie married Isaac on the 10th of March 1897. They left for the north in May.

As with many gently-nurtured women of the period, Sadie proved remarkably adaptable to her new life. Her skills in nursing, teaching, music and stenography, as well as her strong sense of social responsibility, made her an able partner in her husband's ministry. She accompanied Isaac on many of his wilderness trips and, on one occasion, travelled from Dawson to Fort McPherson accompanied only by a native guide. She endured childbirth in primitive conditions, delivering two of her five children with only her husband in attendance. Her home was always open to her Inuit and Indian friends and it was of no moment to her if she disregarded the rigorous social code of Dawson City to give precedence to the wife of a native deacon.

Isaac O. Stringer

1866 - 1934

Isaac Stringer was born on April 19th in Bruce County, Ontario ten miles from Kincardine. His early education took place in a one-room schoolhouse on land donated by his father. He attended high school in Kincardine and, in 1888, attended Wycliffe College where he was active in student organizations.

During this period, he acquired his middle initial - the story being that it arose from a debt recorded by a fellow student as "I.O. Stringer the sum of ...". Another explanation given by Mrs. Stringer was that there was a varsity song that went "I.O, I.O., I.O," and the students began referring to Isaac as I.O.[66] In 1892, during a visit from Bishop Reeve of the Mackenzie River Diocese, Stringer responded to an appeal to leave within a few months to minister to the Inuit of the Arctic coast. He was ordained Deacon on May 15th just before his departure. In July, the following year he was ordained priest at Fort McPherson during Bishop Reeve's annual visit to the northwest corner of his diocese.

During the first two year stint of his mission, Isaac was based in Fort McPherson but travelled extensively, visiting Rampart House, Kittigazuit, other Inuit communities and camps in the Mackenzie Delta and on the coast, and Herschel Island. At the latter spot he saw the last hurrah of the whalers. Here he accomplished the difficult task of getting on well with the whaling masters while attempting to stop the illegal traffic in liquor between the whalers and the Inuit. He also made modest headway in getting to know the Inuit and their ways and teaching them something of his brand of religion.

After a furlough in 1895-96, Isaac returned to the north with his new bride Sarah Ann or Sadie. After a winter in Fort McPherson during which their first child was born, the couple moved to Herschel Island where they made their home until 1901.

When Isaac determined he was unable to return to Herschel due to health problems, he accepted an invitation from Bishop Bompas to take on the congregation of Christ Church in Whitehorse. When Bompas resigned in 1905, Isaac was elected his successor.

Stringer remained the Bishop of Yukon until 1931. He travelled extensively both within the Yukon, visiting the widely-scattered missions, and outside the territory, carrying out fundraising, episcopal business and on a trip to England, doing his part in the Great War. In 1907, he changed the name of the Diocese from Selkirk (which Bompas had chosen after the Scots "Selig Kirke" or Holy Church) to Yukon - a good deal more descriptive if less poetic. In a time of few funds, he was a careful manager, constantly exhorting his missionaries to carefully tally up their school registers so that the church could be reimbursed for teaching services from Indian Affairs.

In 1909, he nearly lost his life while travelling with a missionary companion, Charles F. Johnson, from Peel River en route to Fort Yukon. They were beset by such difficulties as a shortage of supplies, early freeze-up of the Porcupine River making canoeing almost impossible and much snow. They were only able to make progress at the rate of five miles a day. Rather than take the chance of travelling another 150 miles in this fashion or undertaking an almost equally arduous return trip, the two decided to chance crossing the mountains to Fort McPherson, a distance of less than 100 miles. They followed an unknown route without snowshoes, crossing & recrossing partially

frozen rivers and enveloped by a thick fog. After several weeks of near starvation they were reduced to eating Stringer's boiled and toasted rawhide sealskin boots. They were delivered when they reached an Indian camp on the Peel River and were sledded from there to McPherson. In fifty-one days Stringer and his companion had each lost fifty pounds. Thus Stringer became notorious as "the Bishop Who Ate his Boots".[67]

In 1931, Stringer was appointed the Archbishop of Rupert's Land, a post based in Winnipeg. One of his accomplishments during his tenure was the rearrangement of the Diocese of Mackenzie River in 1933. That part south of the Arctic Circle was made part of the Diocese of Athabasca while the northern section become the new Diocese of the Arctic.

In 1932, John Machray, a Winnipeg lawyer and chancellor of the diocese, and R.H. Shanks, a bookkeeper, were discovered to have been responsible for the disappearance of $860,000 belonging to church endowments, as well as the funds of a number of private investors. Stringer undertook to replace the missing funds by setting up a Restoration Fund and embarking on a intensive speaking tour in eastern Canada.[68] The worries and efforts expended toward this endeavour are believed to be partially responsible for his death in 1934.

Isaac Stringer was buried in Winnipeg, just outside the south doors of St. John's Cathedral. His tombstone, donated by his fellow alumni of Wycliffe College, reads:

Archbishop of Rupert's Land
Sometime Bishop of Yukon
First Missionary to the Eskimos of
Herschel Island [69]

Charles Edward Whittaker

Whittaker graduated from Wycliffe College in 1895. In 1897, he was ordained Deacon by Bishop Reeve of Mackenzie River. The following year he was ordained priest and that same afternoon married his fiancee Emma Hatley who had travelled north to join him. From 1914 to 1918, he was Archdeacon of Mackenzie River. He left the Arctic in 1918 to become Rector of Whitehorse, a post he held until 1921. From 1921 until his retirement in 1934, he held a number of parishes in Ontario. He died in 1947.[70]

Whittaker was not one of the more popular missionaries to serve at Herschel Island. He did not get along well with the whalers, appeared to be more than normally patronizing toward the Inuit, who in turn "heaped insult after insult upon him and his wife",[71] and even succeeded in alienating the police when he interceded in the personal affairs of Sergeant Francis Fitzgerald.[72] Perhaps a mitigating circumstance in his favour was that he underwent great personal hardships during his time on the island. In 1906, Roald Amundsen described the heartbreaking sight of the Whittakers leaving the island dragging the dead body of their youngest daughter with them on a sledge.[73]

Whittaker returned to Herschel on a number of occasions, the most notable being in 1916 when he brought a crew of Indian workers from Fort McPherson to construct the mission house.

William Day Young

William Young was the uncle of Sadie Stringer. He sold his Ontario farm in order to travel to the Arctic as a lay worker with the Stringers after their marriage. Young appears to have been a handy man with carpentry tools as well as an adequate lay catechist for communities lacking a proper minister. He seems to have enjoyed life in the north and stayed on after the Stringers left Herschel Island.

After his initial stint on Herschel Island, he served in a number of communities around the Yukon. He was at Fort McPherson in 1915. By 1920, he was in Shingle Point for a two year term. Here he built a mission house that year then a church two years later. Later in the twenties, Young spent time at Champagne, Moosehide and Fort Selkirk.

Thomas Umaok

Thomas Umaok was the one consistent presence at Herschel Island over an extended period that saw a number of other Anglican missionaries come and go. According to his church file, he was born ca. 1886 and was arbitrarily given the birth date of April 8th. As a boy, Umaok was one of the early pupils at the Herschel Island day school. In 1905, he married Susie

Atogaok "native fashion". They were remarried under church auspices at Herschel Island, August 15th after both he and his wife had been baptised that same morning. Three years later, Thomas and Susie were confirmed at Fort McPherson by Bishop Stringer on July 13th. The couple both attended the Hay River residential school for a few years ca. 1915. During this period, his letters to Bishop Stringer show greatly increased fluency in the expression and writing of his second language. Although Thomas and Susie fished, trapped and hunted around the countryside; he made an effort when at Herschel Island to hold church services and later, teach school. As well, he provided practical assistance to those around him and tried to dissuade his people from such deleterious practices as prostitution and gambling.

Umaok and Stringer seemed to have enjoyed a close relationship. In his letters, Umaok confided the concerns and details of his daily life. Stringer took a keen interest in the lives of Umaok, his family and people and in return, told him something of the doings of the outside world and attempted to procure any items he needed.

It must have been a moment of great gratification to both these men when Stringer ordained Umaok as the first Inuit deacon during a ceremony at Herschel Island on July 30th, 1927.

William Henry Fry

Fry was perhaps one of the more enthusiastic yet practical missionaries to serve on Herschel Island. He had already worked five years in the Arctic before being posted to St. Patrick's mission in 1916. His three years on the Island were busy ones. A mission house was constructed, a large confirmation class was prepared for Bishop Stringer's visit in 1917 and there was the usual struggle to deal with the regular occurrences of sickness, food shortages and keeping a large, draughty mission house warm with an ever-dwindling and hard to obtain fuel supply.

Even after Fry left the island in 1919 due to failing health, he continued to correspond with Stringer, passing on several practical suggestions on how to best manage the mission and gear that should be included in his replacement's outfit. At one point, he even considered returning to his beloved Inuit despite the frail state of his health. He died suddenly in May of 1921, five months before the birth of his third son.

Christina Fry

Not too much personal information is available about this lady in the Anglican Church records. She married William Henry Fry in Ontario the winter before the couple moved to Herschel Island in 1916. During her time on Herschel Island, she took charge of the day school for the Inuit, nursed the sick and gave birth to two sons, one on Christmas morning 1918, an occurrence

that did not interrupt the normal Christmas services and feast.

Her services made her invaluable to Fry and he gives the best description of her ability and sensitivity.

> My wife is a great help to me in the work, a good wife and a true missionary. There are some things that only a woman can do. When our people need help she realizes their need long before I do and has been of great service where I should have failed utterly. The Dr. discovered this before he left us and now the Police Inspector brings many of the cases which come before him to her.[74]

James Atumiksana

There are several spellings to be found for the last name of this Inuit lay worker including "Atoomachina", "Atoomikchina" and "Atumaksinna". The spelling above appears in a letter written by James himself and therefore was the one chosen.

James Atumiksana was another of the Inuit to embrace Christianity during the early days of the mission. He and his wife Hannah were baptised in 1909 by Bishop Stringer, during his summer visit to Herschel Island. He appears to be another one of the Inuit who enjoyed a special relationship with Stringer through regular letters and various gifts sent by the bishop.

Atumiksana had personal experience of the hardship and disease that plagued his people. His wife Hanna died in 1918. When he remarried, he and his wife took on the responsibility for the children of one, Isuman, when both their parents died.[75] Atumiksana died at Herschel Island in 1923 during one of the

periodic epidemics that devastated the area Inuit.[76]

Chapter 3 Endnotes

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3. Ken S. Coates & William R. Morrison, The Land of the Midnight Sun, (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1988), p. 31.

4. H.A. Cody, An Apostle of the North, (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1908), p. 58.

5. Ibid, pp. 108-125.

6. Ibid, p. 144.

7. Ibid, p.257.

8. Public Archives of Manitoba, John Christian Schultz: Correspondence & Papers of the Lieutenant-Governor of Keewatin, MG 12-E, Box 12, fol. 5041, Bompas to Schultz, 27 April 1891.

9. See discussion of the relationship between the Whalers and the Inuit in Chapter 2, The Whalers.

10. Philip H. Godsell, "Pirate Days in Arctic Waters," **Forest and Outdoors**, vol. 37 (1941), p. 146.

11. Public Arhives of Manitoba, Schultz Coll., MG 12-E, vol. 12, fol. 5871, letter from Bompas to Schultz, 3 June 1892.

12. Peake, The Bishop Who Ate His Boots, p. 18.

13. Ibid, p. 6.

14. Ibid, p. 22.

15. General Synod Archives, Stringer Papers, 10. Correspondence, Isaac Stringer to Sadie Alexander, 7 July 1893.

16. Ibid.

17. John R. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men (Seattle: University of Washington Press in assoc. with New Bedford Whaling Museum, 1986), p. 277.

18. Ibid, p. 277.

19. Stringer diary quoted in Peake, The Bishop Who Ate His Boots, p. 24.

20. Ibid, p. 30.

21. Ibid, p. 33.

22. Ibid, p. 34.

23. Mrs. I.O. Stringer, "My Husband Ate His Boots", Maclean's Magazine, 9 July 1955.

24. Ibid, p. 10.

25. National Archives of Canada, Church Missionary Society Papers, microreel A-120, letter no. 129, letter from Rev. I.O. Stringer re "Work among the Eskimos of Herschel Island", 1 Feb. 1897.

26. Yukon Archives, Anglican Church Records, Diocese of Yukon, (hereafter referred to as YA, Diocese of Yukon), I.1.b., Box 9, folder 6, Stringer to H.J. Knowles, 5 Dec. 1914.

27. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 268.

28. Mrs. I.O. Stringer, "My Husband Ate His Boots".

29. Ibid.

30. Matthew 10:16 quoted in Mrs. I.O. Stringer, "My Husband Ate His Boots".
According to Frank Peake, however, it was actually Archdeacon McDonald who made this particular translation. (Peake, The Bishop Who Ate His Boots, p. 70.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Maurice Metayer trans., I, Nuligak, (New York: Pocket Books, 1971), pp. 59-60.

34. Peake, The Bishop Who Ate His Boots, pp. 67-68.

35. Diocesan Committee, "An Account of the Bishop of Yukon's Recent Visit to the Arctic Coast and Herschel Island" (The Diocesan Committee & the British Columbia and Yukon Church Aid Society, June 1918), 4 p.

36. William R. Morrison, Showing the Flag: The Mounted Police and Canadian Sovereignty in the North, 1894-1925 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1985), p. 82.

37. Vilhjalmur Stefansson, The Friendly Arctic (New York: Macmillan, 1921), p. 388.

38. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 279.

39. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.1.b., Box 9, file 6, Whittaker to Stringer, 16 May 1905.

40. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.1.a., Box 7, file 19.

41. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.1.b., box 9, f.6, Girling to Stringer, August 1915.

42. The whole of this correspondence is contained in YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.1.b., box 9, file 6.

43. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.1.a., Box 1, file 18, Stringer to Mrs. Bompas, 14 Aug. 1916.

44. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.1.a., Box 3, file 16, Fry to Stringer, 28 Sept. 1915.

45. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.1.a, Box 3, file 16, Fry to Stringer, 28 August 1916. This letter also contains detailed specifications regarding the layout and measurements of the mission house.

46. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.1.a, Box 1, file 18, Stringer to Mrs. Bompas, 3 Feb. 1917.

47. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.1.b., Box 9, file 6, Perry to Stringer, 3 March 1917.

48. Yukon, Central Registry Files, Yukon Record Group I, Series 1, vol. 56, file 33821, Merrett to Finnie, 28 Aug. 1924.

49. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.1.a., Box 3, file 16, Fry circular letter, 10 December 1916.

50. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.1.a., Box 3, f. 16, 10 Dec. 1916.

51. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.1.a, Box 3, f.16, Fry to Stringer, March 1917.

52. Anglican Church of Canada, General Synod Archives, James A. Lucas Papers, M75-1, Box 3, Fry to Stringer & Lucas, 7 Jan. 1918.

53. Ibid. In I,Nuligak, the author narrates a very dramatic account of a flight he witnessed by a husband and wife team of shamen or angatkot at Herschel Island. Their help had been invoked to open the ice for seal hunting and, the very next day after the flight, great cracks appeared in the ice and many seals were killed. (Metayer trans., I,Nuligak, p. 60.)

54. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.1.a., Box 3, f. 16, Fry to Stringer, 12 January 1919.

55. Diocesan Committee, "An Account of the Bishop's Recent..."

56. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.1.a., Box 3, file 16, Fry to Stringer, 25 June 1918.

57. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.1.a., Box 3, file 16, Fry to Stringer, 14 Jan. 1918.

58. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.1.a., Box 3, file 16, "Latest News Concerning Stefansson, Brought by: Mr. Clark, H.B.C. Book-keeper.

59. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.1.a., box 3, file 16, Fry to Stringer, 31 August 1918.

60. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.1.a., Box 7, file 19, William Young to John Young, 25 Jan. 1921.

61. YA, Diocese of Yukon, Box 3, f. 21, Geddes to Stringer, 12 Jan. 1926.

62. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.1.b., Box 9, f. 6, Umaok to Stringer, 1 Oct. 1924.

63. Coates & Morrison, Land of the Midnight Sun, pp. 141-142.

64. Public Archives of Manitoba #5000 , Archives of the Ecclesiatical Province of Rupert's Land, Report of Synod of Diocese of Yukon, 1907-1931.

65. Church of England, Year Book and Clergy List of the Church of England in the Dominion of Canada (Toronto: Joseph P. Clougher, 1934 to 1936 editions).

66. Peake, The Bishop Who Ate His Boots, p. 4.

67. Ibid, pp. 120-126.

68. Ibid, pp. 158-162.

69. Peake, The Bishop Who Ate His Boots, p. 166.

70. Ibid, p. 37.

71. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.l.a., Box 3, file 16, Circular letter from Fry, Dec. 1916.

72. Coates and Morrison, The Land of the Midnight Sun, pp. 135-137.

73. Fred Bruemmer, "Herschel! The Big Town" (The Beaver, December 1938), p. 33.

74. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.l.a., Box 3, file 16, Circular letter from Fry, 10 Dec. 1916.

75. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.l.b., Box 9, f. 6, Stringer to Atoomachina, 31 May 1921.

76. YA, Diocese of Yukon, I.l.a., Box 3, f. 21, Geddes to Stringer, 13 Aug. 1923.

Sergeant Fitzgerald and Constable Sutherland in front of their sod house.
From the archives of the Dukes County Historical Society, Edgartown, Massachusetts

Chapter 4 - The Police

The force representing the Crown on Herschel Island was successively known by different names at different times during the period it was on Herschel; North-West Mounted Police, Royal North-West Mounted Police and Royal Canadian Mounted Police. To save confusion (and paper) we will simply refer to them as the "police". The reasons for their establishing a post on Herschel are as numerous as their names.

This corner of Canada had been virtually ignored by the Canadian government. There was really very little reason to pay attention to it. As far as officialdom knew, there were very few people there, no resources worth exploiting and no one challenging Canada's claim to this frozen backwater of the country. Besides, the government had a number of newly-formed provinces which had people, both indigenous and imported, who required a great deal of attention and policing.

The lower portion of Yukon caught the attention of Ottawa when gold was discovered in the Forty Mile area in 1887 and prospectors and miners, mostly American, began flowing into the gold bearing country bordering Alaska. **There** was a definite resource to be protected and a matter of sovereignty to be established. On the other hand, the only people in the Western Arctic, save for an occasional explorer, were the Inuit who had been roaming back and forth through the area for millennia with no notice or help from Ottawa. So the police established a fort at Forty Mile in 1895 and ignored the Western Arctic. When the

Klondike gold strike was made and thousands began to pour into the Territory, they built posts throughout the southern Yukon. They were stretched fairly thinly by then and were even less inclined to head north of the Arctic Circle when there were hordes of unruly, "foreign" miners to be policed in the south.

Reports began to filter down from the Beaufort Sea to Forty Mile that there were whalers debauching the Inuit, selling them alcohol and repeating rifles and, worst of all, freely whaling and trading in Canadian waters without paying any duty on their trade goods or their catches. The Anglican Church appears to have known about all of this as soon as the **USS Thetis** passed the mouth of the Mackenzie. This fact was dutifully reported to the government by Bishop Bompas of the Diocese of Selkirk (later Yukon).[1] Beginning in 1893, reports on the actions of the whalers were provided regularly and in detail by the missionaries sent to Herschel Island. Just as regularly, Bompas wrote to the government in Ottawa appraising them of the illegal and immoral activities of the whalers, pleading that some action be taken to curb their excesses.

Inspector Charles Constantine was the officer commanding at Forty Mile. Upon his arrival, he received the reports from Bishop Bompas and from a man who had been an engineer on one of the whalers. The latter related tales of Inuit who were constantly drunk to the point where they were incapable of hunting and starved to death. This was likely exaggerated but there was also the matter of the officers purchasing the company

and favours of Inuit girls and women, aged nine and up.[2] It appears Constantine was willing to believe these rumours as it would give the police a reason to establish a post in the Arctic. William R. Morrison suggests that the political situation of 1895, where the pro-police Conservatives were rapidly losing power to the not-so-supportive Liberals, made the police anxious to be useful and seen to be protecting Canada's interests on the frontiers.[3]

Although Constantine was supportive of action in the Arctic, his superiors plainly were not. In reference to the Anglican Church's allegations and pleas for intervention, police Comptroller Fred White observed;

> It is so difficult to convince the goody-goody people that in the development and settlement of a new country allowances must be made for the excesses of human nature.[4]

There were other, more concrete reasons for not taking immediate action, however.

Faced with a situation which threatened Canadian sovereignty and the possible corruption and destruction of Canadian peoples, the Minister of the Interior turned to the Comptroller Fred White to ask if he thought it would be feasible to police the area around the Mackenzie Delta. White was characteristically unenthusiastic about the prospect saying that the region was hard to supply, expensive to operate in and that present conditions really did not justify the expense.[5] He felt, as did many afterward, that a ship was the best way to patrol the Western Arctic. Even that was to prove too expensive, however, for a

country just coming out of depression. Besides, the police were heavily committed in Yukon from 1895 to 1903, as well as supplying over two hundred and fifty men to the Boer War effort. There simply were not the manpower resources to extend police activity northward.[6]

To add pressure for government intervention in the Western Arctic, John Firth, Hudson's Bay Company factor, and semi-official government representative at Fort McPherson on the Mackenzie River, complained that the whaler's were trading in contraband goods and not paying duty. Besides which, the whalers were undercutting his prices so severely the Inuit of the Mackenzie were taking their furs all the way to Herschel then bringing back their trade goods to barter with other Inuit. His company was being cut out entirely.

Although there were demands for police action as early as 1891, the government did not move until 1903. Even though they had some reason not to act, Ottawa knew of the existence of the whalers as early as 1890.[7] The Canadain Government also knew that they were taking whales in Canadian waters, not paying custom's duties, and trading repeating rifles and alcohol which were illegal trade items. Still, they did nothing about it until 1903. But they did act in 1903.

That was the year that a six member international tribunal (three Americans, one British and two Canadian) voted by simple majority to give what is now the Alaska Panhandle to the United States.[8] It is likely that the British sided with the Americans

to ensure their military support for Britain in any threats from the Continent. At any rate, the United States "carried a big stick" politically at that time and wanted control of the ports and fisheries along the Panhandle. Quite understandably, Canada was incensed with the decision which bargained away what it felt to be its territory for political favours from which it was likely to receive little benefit. Canada was still a colony, however, despite Confederation, and was still ruled in international affairs by England. It had no choice in the matter but it did not have to like it. So, with the settlement of the Alaska Boundary Dispute fresh and sore in the minds of Canadians, any potential incursions on their sovereignty were simply not to be tolerated. In a rare flash of nationalistic temper, Ottawa directed that the possibility of establishing a post on Herschel Island at least be looked into.

Feasibility Study

With the winding down of the Klondike Gold Rush in 1900, the police could breathe a little easier and once again turn their attention to new frontiers. By 1900, White had begun inquiries into extending police activities up the Mackenzie to Fort McPherson and from there to Herschel Island. It was not so much the welfare of the Inuit which motivated this investigation, nor was it whaling, since most of that was thought to occur outside Canada's three mile limit. It was the fur trade which the whalers engaged in, and the custom's duties to be paid on that

trade, which really piqued the interest of the government and police.[9] After an exploratory patrol had been sent from Dawson to Fort McPherson in 1900, White was still not optimistic about the prospects of establishing a post and patrolling the Western Arctic. The Hudson's Bay Company had demonstrated that Fort McPherson was accessible via the Mackenzie River and supplying it, if difficult, was not impossible. Herschel Island was another matter. The police would either have to follow the route the whalers took, from the Pacific, through the Bering Sea to the Beaufort, or they would have to boat down the Mackenzie River to its mouth and face eighty miles of notoriously unfriendly ocean in a small craft to reach Herschel Island.

Despite the difficulties, planning for policing the Western Arctic continued. In 1902, Inspector Constantine was sent to San Francisco on a secret mission to investigate the whaling industry, which he reported was in decline. The following year, Commissioner Perry went to the same city to look into purchasing a ship for police and fisheries patrols.[10] The government refused to appropriate funds for the vessel. Despite these events, officialdom decided to go ahead with an expedition down the Mackenzie in 1903. Since the number of whalers was declining, the justification for setting up posts to collect customs and control trade must also have been waning. Every year there were fewer ships in the Western Arctic. The government had refused to appropriate funds for a patrol vessel which it surely would have had the whalers posed a serious threat to Canadian

trade and customs laws. It is more likely that the Western Arctic posts, especially Herschel Island, were set up simply to show the flag, establishing a Canadian presence in the Western Arctic. Whether because of the recent depression or because all the government wanted was a presence and no more, the eventual funding for the Herschel Island detachment was so paltry that the police were forced to rely on the Church and whalers just to get through the winter.

Establishing the Post

In 1903, Superintendent Constantine was stationed at Fort Saskatchewan near present day Edmonton. Because of his Yukon experience, and because he had been one of the first to lobby for establishing a presence in the Arctic, he was selected to lead an expedition down the Mackenzie River to Fort McPherson where he was to establish a detachment. Then he was to proceed to Herschel Island and set up a detachment there as well, if he thought it advisable. There were five men in his party, including Sergeant Francis J. Fitzgerald, one of the heroes of this story.

Constantine left the party at Fort McPherson to return home, rather hastily, to his wife. He left Fitzgerald to continue on to Herschel Island to establish a post, if he saw fit. As to the running of the detachment, Constantine gave fairly specific orders. Fitzgerald was to represent the force in this part of the country and the success of his mission depended on his

discretion, tact and management. He was to be advised on matters dealing with the natives by John Firth, the Hudson's Bay Company factor at Fort McPherson. He was not to interfere with the natives but respect their customs so long as they did not fall outside of the law. Routine and discipline were to be maintained, with proper dress, weekly inspection of arms and monthly inspection of kits. All reports were to be in triplicate on the typewriter supplied.[11]

Despite the fact that no one really expected him to make it that year, Fitzgerald, along with Constable Sutherland and Interpreter Thompson, took a small boat and left for Herschel Island on July 29. Upon his arrival, they found a bustling community of whalers and Inuit and one very distraught missionary pleading for their assistance. Fitzgerald decided to establish a post on the Island and borrowed the mission's steam launch to transfer supplies from Fort McPherson. The launch was wrecked in Mackenzie Bay with a good portion of Fitzgerald's supplies aboard. Since they were not well-provisioned to begin with, this left them with very little to get through the winter. It also did not put the police in good standing with the Church. The argument over how much compensation should be paid for the vessel continued for a number of years. The Herschel Island detachment had not even been set up and already there was a wrangle with one of the Island's interest groups.

There was very little in the way of buildings to be had for a detachment on Herschel. Fitzgerald arranged to rent two sod

huts and a storehouse from the Church for the detachment.[12] It is fortunate that these quarters were small and easy to heat since, by 1903, there was no more driftwood to be had on the Island. The Sergeant bought five tons of coal from the whalers to get them through the winter. His report on the establishment of the Herschel Island detachment was necessarily brief since, as he notes, "I have only these four sheets of paper and no more on the island."[13] So much for obeying Constantine's orders to submit all reports in triplicate.

There were not adequate supplies to sustain the two policemen on the Island through the winter so they returned to Fort McPherson and made patrols from there.[14] On July 12, 1904, they returned to Herschel Island and set up the detachment with plans to spend the winter.

Immediately, the police were looking for better and bigger quarters. The sod hut they lived in was warm to be sure but it was also lightless and airless. More importantly, there was no place to lock up lawbreakers. Since, by this time, the whalers were in the process of moving their headquarters to Baillie Island, they had turned the community house over to Reverend Whittaker. The police thought this would make a fine detachment building. But it was not until 1906, when Reverend Whittaker left Herschel Island, that these quarters became available. This was to be the third usage of the Pacific Steam Whaling Company community house.

Fitzgerald and Sutherland were truly on their own on

Herschel Island. There was no established means of supplying them with fuel or housing, nor were they even given proper authority or direction to carry out the duties they were sent to perform. Fitzgerald notes in his 1903 report:

> In re the Customs I could not collect anything, as I have not yet received the tariff, which I suppose will come with the next load of supplies this fall.[15]

Until they were given formal authority, Fitzgerald and Sutherland had to rely on the uniform and the force of their own personalities to enforce customs and liquor laws. There were only two of them to deal with over two hundred and fifty whalers.

The post was now established but the police still had to establish control over their district. During the summer, most of the police work was on Herschel Island itself. The men stationed at Herschel, however, were responsible for a much larger area than the Island. This required them to get about their district on regular patrols. Patrols made in the winter were difficult, due to extreme weather conditions, but by no means impossible. Dog sleds were able to get around very well even through heaving pack ice. More difficult by far were the summer patrols from Herschel. Since the whalers and traders were able to roam at will, there was very little the police could do to keep track of them. It was said, however, that whether second or third hand, the police eventually found out about everything that happened in the Western Arctic. This information was not obtained by simply sitting on the Island waiting for it. Nor could the police uphold their reputation for diligence by relying

on second-hand information. Since the base of the whaler's activities had moved to Baillie Island by the time the police arrived, it was necessary for them to make a patrol there to establish Canadian "sovereignty". But how to do this when they had to borrow a boat simply to move their supplies? As incongruous as it may seem, they persuaded the whalers to take them. In 1907, Inspector Jarvis made a patrol of some 2,000 miles aboard the **Beluga**. Later, the detachment acquired a whaleboat in which they sailed the coast to the Mackenzie River and thence upstream to Fort McPherson on a regular patrol. But it was not until the coming of the **St. Roch** in 1928 that they had independent transport with long-range capabilities.

Once they had established their authority, the police on Herschel were expected to live up to the Canadian standard of quick and sure justice. They were not only expected to arrest lawbreakers, they were required to try and sentence them as well. While they did so on the strength of the Force's reputation, they did not receive the authority of magistrates until 1906. Even after that, serious cases had to be tried in the south which meant an officer had to take the offenders all the way to Edmonton. This was not only enormously expensive but it left the detachment short-handed. Most civil cases had to be ignored completely.

The early policemen on Herschel really can be looked upon as heroic figures as a huge burden of responsibility lay on their shoulders. The roles they were expected to fulfil were quite

above that of ordinary policemen and they had to exercise this authority with very little support or advice from the department in the south. This was because the lines of communication and authority were very long in the first years of the detachment. Reports were sent and orders received only so often as there were ships or boats leaving for the outside. Mostly, communications went up and down the Mackenzie River using approximately the same cumbersome network the Hudson's Bay Company insisted on using.

Not only were the lines of communication long, but to add to the administrative confusion, Herschel detachment was moved about from one division to another over the years. Initially, the detachment reported to Fort Saskatchewan, which was "G" Division Headquarters. In 1905-06, The Mackenzie River Sub-District was set up with headquarters at Fort McPherson, under "Depot" Division. The inspector in charge of the sub-district would have his headquarters at Fort McPherson and patrol out to the detachments. In 1909, the sub-district was transferred to "N" Division with Headquarters at Athabaska Landing. In 1910, Herschel Island became the official sub-district headquarters which it remained until 1931. In 1916, Herschel was still in "N" Division but the headquarters were transferred to Peace River. In 1919, "N" Division was closed and the sub-district, along with Herschel Island, fell under the administration of "G" Division headquartered in Edmonton. Herschel Island now became part of the "Arctic" sub-district. By 1926, Herschel was part of the Western Arctic Sub-District and was established formally as a

Customs-Excise outport. This was as high as Herschel Island was to rise in its importance as an outpost of the Crown. Shortly thereafter, radio communications, airplanes and, finally, a patrol vessel were introduced to Arctic police work. The very communications and transportation systems which made the Arctic easier to patrol made Herschel's function obsolete.

The Police Perspective

When the detachment was established on Herschel, the police were in the somewhat compromising position of having to rely on the whalers for heat and partly for food while making them toe the line in regard to customs payments, liquor trade and having Inuit women on board their ships. This situation did not really improve with time as, when the police wished to investigate conditions at Baillie Island, they had to go on a whale ship. They were also dependent on the Church to provide them with shelter. The Anglican missionaries represented the other force on the Island, one that lobbied against the actions of the whalers and expected the police to do something about it. As things turned out, this situation did not cause a great deal of friction at all. The whaling captains were glad to have the police present to keep their sometimes disorderly crews in line and enforce the laws against desertion. Problems with getting the tariff list for customs duties, and the difficulties in collecting them without a ship, meant that the customs laws were not rigorously enforced. When asked, most whaling captains

volunteered lists of goods brought into the country for trade and paid without complaint. The police took them at their word and did not search their vessels. This was probably wise considering the somewhat tenuous position of the police. Those whalers who wished to avoid paying customs or having the police look into their business simply did not go near Herschel Island. In some cases, Fitzgerald knew that the whalers had illicit trade goods aboard but feigned ignorance of the fact to hide the weakness of his position and inability to take direct action.

Fitzgerald used similar methods to control the liquor trade, which was one of the main things the Church wanted done. He simply made the whaling captains aware of the laws against it and, for the most part, that was that. The first year, despite his best efforts, some liquor slipped ashore and two Inuit got drunk. Fitzgerald took immediate action by breaking the bottles and incarcerating the drunks for a token period of time. Almost every year, however, the police included complaints made against one whaling ship or another giving liquor to the Inuit. There was also the fact that the whalers had passed on to the Inuit that bit of technology which ensured a continuous supply of liquor, the still. The Inuit could make their own intoxicants when and where they wished, away from the scrutiny of the police.

As to why the whalers were so cooperative, William Morrison and Thomas Stone speculate that the structure of whaling society itself required a third element for stability. The whalers' society was ruled by its captains or masters. They also kept

themselves distinct by privilege and social activity, rarely associating with their men socially. When significant conflicts arose between the crews and the officer class, they were exacerbated by having no third party to mediate.[16] The police stepped into this role even though they tended to support the captains by enforcing the laws against desertion and violence.

During the difficult winter of 1905-06 trouble arose when the whalers, not intending to spend the winter, were caught at Herschel by early freeze-up. Ill-paid to begin with and now short-rationed for an unexpected winter in the Arctic, matters were ripe for a mutiny when the contracts expired for the crew of the **Bowhead** and they refused to work. The police stepped in to explain to the crew the logic of working the ship back to home port and taking their complaints to the courts there. But they would not interfere in the matter for one side or the other. A tenuous truce was reached, with the crews working under signed protest.

There were also disputes amongst the captains which the police mediated. One such incident occurred during the same winter. The captains had pooled their supplies and resources to get through the winter. Two captains were appointed to hire the Inuit to obtain meat. After having received his supply of meat, one Captain McGregor left the cooperative but refused them the use of his dogs. Inspector Howard mediated and got McGregor to pay for his meat at an agreeable rate rather than be part of or obstruct the captains cooperative. This put McGregor and the

other captains at odds. It happened that McGregor also had the only trained doctor in the fleet working for him. The doctor had been attending the other crews as well but, after this incident, McGregor became as possessive of his doctor as he was of his dogs and refused to let him visit the other ships unless they paid thirty pounds of meat per visit. No ship could pay such a price in a lean year and the lack of a doctor posed a serious danger in event of injury or disease. The doctor jumped ship and joined the **Alexander.** When McGregor demanded that Howard arrest the man for desertion, he was refused.[17] Strictly by the letter of the law, Howard probably should have arrested the doctor but, as he explained to his superiors, he convinced McGregor of the foolishness of his action and saved everyone a great deal of trouble. It may have been good fortune, or simply good planning, that Howard did not try to enforce the letter of the law. He also added in his report that he still had not received his papers empowering him as a magistrate and, as in previous years, he expected it would arrive with the next load of supplies.

The relationship of mutual dependence between the police and the whaling captains becomes clear when one reads Fitzgerald's first report. He made an annual report on which whaling ships had stopped at Herschel, along with a list of their officers. He also made brief comments on each. His comments on the **Narwhal's** captain, George Leavitt reads;

> ...has the reputation of being the best captain of the fleet, and I should judge would be a great help in carrying out the law.[18]

The police seemed to have had a genuine concern for the welfare of the whalers and did not treat them as a "problem". In the winter of 1905-06 when the whalers were unexpectedly frozen in and short of rations, Howard made regular patrols to check on their condition and urged his superiors to contact the United States government to ensure that the whaler's supply ship got through the next summer.[19] The police also ensured that the ships had adequate medical supplies, providing them from their own stores. After a couple of hard winters and wrecked ships, both of which resulted in whalers stranded in the Arctic short of food, the police suggested to Ottawa that the whalers be required to leave a cache of goods with the police on Herschel to ensure their survival in the event of their being stranded.[20] This was very similar to the policy of ensuring gold stampeders had adequate provisions to see them through a year before allowing them into the country.

Perhaps because the police went to Herschel Island expecting trouble from the whalers, their early reports carry a tone of pleasant surprise at finding reasonable, civilized officers. The crews, although somewhat "rough", were generally well-treated and controlled by their captains. The police found themselves in the roles of mediators more often than enforcers. Although it must have been somewhat uncomfortable for both groups, a cooperative arrangement was reached where neither side impinged upon the authority or interests of the other and where they

actually assisted each other to a certain degree. There is no indication that the whalers found the police to be a great impediment to their making a profit and, except for a few minor incidents, the whalers were more a help than a hindrance in upholding the law.

Initially, the police view of the Inuit also tended to reflect the closeness of the relationship between the police and the whalers. Fitzgerald remarked that he could not reconcile the reports of Inuit debauchery with the friendly way they greeted the whalers. Inspector Howard, on the Island in 1906, also noted that Inuit custom allowed for wife swapping so it was natural that it extend to the whalers. He saw no apparent harm in it.[21] On the other hand, the first police report to come out of the Western Arctic indicates that the numbers of Inuit were falling very fast to the ravages of disease introduced by the whites. Just how devastating this was becomes clear in Constantine's 1903 report.

> Last spring at McPherson out of a band of 80, whose settlement was at Herschell Island, some 70 died of measles, thus practically cleaning out the entire band. They did much the same as our Indians when afflicted with the same disease, they laid down in the snow and on the ice to get cool, while the fever was raging; many, in fact most of them, died on the sand bar in front of the post, some on their way home, and others on arriving at the settlement.

The Inuit of the region were alien to the police and most of the people from southern Canada. The police reported on them like anthropologists or explorers would report on a new found primitive culture in another country. The relative innocence and simplicity of the Inuit culture allowed the police to treat them

more as charges than as citizens or ordinary people. Where the police had a relatively easy time developing a rapport with the whalers, having a common language and similar culture, the police had to educate the Inuit to the concepts of nationality and law. This was not as difficult as trying to bring the Inuit around to the prevailing moral standards of Canadian society of that time. In this the real cultural disparity between the police, representing white society, and the Inuit emerges. It improved over time as both sides became accustomed to the ways of the other.

One of the many things the police were to do on Herschel was prevent Inuit women from going on board the whaling ships. Presumably this was to prevent their being debauched. When the police arrived however they found some debauching, assuredly, but they also found a relationship between the Inuit and whalers which was much more stable, formal and long-term than they had expected. While most whalers were not formally married to their Inuit consorts, a large percentage had a regular, formalized arrangement for annual cohabitation, mutual support and provision for any offspring of the relationship. This was arranged with the husband or male relations of the women because that is the way the Inuit culture worked such arrangements. When the police were faced with a situation not of casual one-night-stands but what amounted to common-law marriage, they were forced to pull in their horns. The police themselves were confused and divided on the issue. Fitzgerald himself had a common-law Inuit wife whom

he lived with in a house separate from the police detachment on Herschel.[22] Inspector Jennings, on the other hand, was mystified by the whole situation. He stopped women from going on board the ships at all hours but he had to allow the "wives" to go on board for their meals. He was perplexed enough that he took the matter up with the Bishop of Yukon. Bompas was wise enough to point out that the situation must be handled delicately and with tact and that the solution was a matter of time and education rather than enforcement. This apparently did not completely salve Jenning's sensibilities. He felt the Indian Act should be changed to make it an "indictable offence" for anyone to live with a native or half-breed woman out of marriage.[23]

Whatever their moral misgivings about cohabitation between whites and Inuit, the police had to try to undo a number of the wrongs perpetrated through earlier white contact. As noted earlier, this contact brought disease. Throughout their time on Herschel Island, the police helped the Inuit as much as they could with medicines and care through bouts of influenza, measles and other fatal diseases carried by the whites.

One of the worst such cases occurred in 1928. The steamer **Distributor** had travelled down the Mackenzie River with mail and supplies for Aklavik. They carried both Inuit and whites. Some of the latter were down with serious colds which tended to last only a day or so. Some of these passengers were carrying on to Herschel Island and one of the Inuit on board caught the cold. As soon as they arrived at the Island, the Inuit went off to

visit friends and within a couple of days the entire Inuit population of Herschel were down with the flu. The police assumed responsibility for treating these people and were fortunate enough to have the assistance of Mr. Murray of the Hudson's Bay post who had some medical training. They used the empty Anglican mission building as a hospital and borrowed blankets from the Hudson's Bay stores. Then Inspector Kemp wisely quarantined the Island to prevent the spread of the disease beyond Herschel.

Despite their best efforts to treat the fever by keeping their patients warm and bathed, they insisted on taking their clothes off in an attempt to cool off. The influenza hit every community from Great Slave Lake to Aklavik along the Mackenzie River and along the coast to Herschel Island. There were over one hundred deaths, six of them on Herschel Island. Thanks to Kemp's action, the influenza did not spread past Herschel but it did eventually claim over three hundred lives.[24]

The police worked on behalf of the Department of Indian Affairs and part of their job while on patrol was to ensure the Inuit were in good health, had ample to eat during lean times, and were not imbibing intoxicants. Happily, in 1910, Inspector Jennings could report that "the natives have been protected on the score of morality and in regard to intoxicants."[25] What they could not protect them against was the incursions made on the Inuit's traditional lifestyle by white contact. The most obvious result of this was their dependence on white foodstuffs. When

the whalers and traders could not get through with supplies, the Inuit nearly starved to death. Sadly, Jennings reported in 1910 that "the people have now become accustomed to tea and a little flour and the children cannot go a straight diet of fish, whalemeat, seal and oil."[26] Whether this was the truth or merely his perception, the fact is that the Inuit became dependent upon the police for emergency food during hard times and were firmly tied to the white economy.

Government had come to the Arctic and with it, many more changes to the traditional lifestyle of the Inuit. The police assumed the role of introducing these changes to the Inuit of Herschel Island, acting as teachers and councillors for the indigenous population. It was a much more sensitive and, one hopes, more positive education than they had received from the whalers.

Fish, Game and the Weather

The status of the whalers and Inuit were not the only matters the police reported, though they usually led the list until the whalers left the Western Arctic. Minerals, fish and game, health, births, deaths, marriages and exploration were some of the regular topics the police reported. In addition there were the regular detachment matters of patrols, discipline and conduct, provisions and stores and the buildings, and, of course, crime. The police represented the government in the Arctic and this meant more than enforcing the law. They were statisticians, mail carriers, emergency relief workers and, when

times were hard, welfare workers as well.

The most regular matter to be reported on was patrols. The vast bulk of patrol reports, which were made faithfully whether there was anything to report or not, consisted of the weather each day, how far they went, and who they saw. This was all contained in a few lines per day. As one can imagine when travelling across the Arctic in winter, there is little to be reported in terms of activities but the weather is of paramount importance. The patrols were run regularly from Herschel Island along the coast and up the Mackenzie River to Fort McPherson. Quite regularly over the years, patrols were also run to and from Rampart House and Fort Yukon as well. While the official reports on these excursions are dull enough to bore one to tears, one must bear in mind that travel in the Arctic by dog sled was fraught with danger. Patrols were often forced to lay up during blizzards. Cold and frost bite were a constant worry. Dog teams were often difficult to control and required a great deal of care. For the most part, the areas the patrols travelled through were uncharted and it was an easy matter to become lost in the featureless landscape of winter tundra. Even staying out overnight was a hardship and often, when the weather was bad, quite dangerous. It was not until Fitzgerald and his fateful Lost Patrol that provisioned cabins were established at regular intervals along the patrol routes. In the typical stiff upper lip police reports, however, these dangers were glossed over.

These patrols served several functions however. The police

were also the mailmen of the North and the mail had to be delivered. By 1910, they had established what they called the "rural delivery system." It was the only communication most residents had with the outside world and family. They not only delivered information on these patrols, they collected it as well. There was little that went on in their district that they did not find out about eventually. Most important of all, the patrols established the presence of the Crown in the Western Arctic. Historically, this is why the Canadian national police force had been so effective in the face of overwhelming numbers. Each man was known to be backed by an army in red serge. Establishing this fact in some parts of the Arctic proved to be difficult, however, as many of the more remote Inuit obviously did not understand what the Mounties represented. It cost several lives to educate the local populace that they were not out of reach of the law.

Beginning with the first year in the Arctic, regular reports were made on the game conditions of the area and, more particularly, the status of the fur trade. These days there are separate government departments to collect such information, but then there was only the police. Since the fur trade was one of the main stimuli which had brought the authorities to the Western Arctic, it seems fitting that they faithfully reported its ups and downs like an annual stock market report from the time they arrived right through the 1940s. The fur trade had become so critical to the economy of the local Inuit that the police were

forced to enter the fur trade business themselves in the 1950s. This was one of the regular periods of near famine conditions on the Arctic Coast. The police took furs in payment for destitute rations in order to encourage the faltering local economy.[27]

In addition to reporting on fur-bearers the police also recorded in incredible detail the precise number of fish, seal, sheep, caribou, ptarmigan and other game species taken each year and from which parts of their district. Eventually, one of their responsibilities became the issuance of game licenses and enforcement of the game laws. This proved very confusing for the Inuit who had hunted there for generations with no impediment. Understandably, the matter was not quickly cleared up as even in 1948 the police report confusion amongst the Herschel Island Inuit who were denied registered trap lines in the Mackenzie Delta where they had been trapping for years.[28]

A note of hunter's delight creeps into the normally bland reports as the police relate just how good the hunting was in some years. One report relates how Captain Ellis of the **Karluk** was a renowned shot. He was detailed by the United States revenue cutter **Bear** to procure geese and ducks for the whalers wrecked off Point Barrow in 1898. His bag for three days was 1,132.[29] This was before conservation awareness.

The other side of the coin were the reports of famine. The Inuit had very quickly become dependent on whalers' food and, when there were no ships, as in 1908-09, and game was scarce, near famine conditions existed. The police in that year took

responsibility for the forty-seven Inuit on the Island and fed them out of their own stores at least once a week for the winter.[30] This may be why Inspector Jennings' 1910 report questions "why the crews of foreign ships should be allowed to decimate our deer herds at will, and, the more so, without recompense of any kind."[31] The police continued to support the Inuit of the area through lean years and the issuance of destitute rations became a regular practice well into the 1950's.

The police kept a fairly close eye on mineral exploration as well. There was enough prospecting activity by 1907 that Jarvis felt they should soon have to become mining recorders for the district. He also felt the police should at least be armed with copies of the Canadian mineral regulations.[32] This eventually happened in 1922, when they were given the power of government agents to enforce ordinances, collect taxes and issue licenses.[33] For the most part, the police simply kept track of who was mining or prospecting and where they went about it. If there were any significant mineral finds, which there usually were not, they reported the extent. The gold finds were usually reported in terms of how much "colour" was found.

They kept track of scientific and exploratory expeditions in much the same way. When Vilhjalmur Stefansson came into their district in 1909, they reported who was in the party, under whose auspices they were working, and what they were looking for. The police took a keen interest in such ventures since they knew, were the adventurous to get themselves into trouble, it would be

the police who had to get them out. They took a very dim view of people like Stefansson who promoted the Arctic as a "Friendly" place where one could live easily and comfortably off the land. Despite the fact that Stefansson managed to get by with very little in the way of supplies, the police were worried that this type of promotion would bring an influx of such amateurs whom they would have to look after.[34]

Deaths, Births and Marriages was another heading in most reports. While they were acting as a sort of Bureau of Statistics, the police reports tend to have the tone of a local newspaper. These events were treated with characteristic lack of emotion in the reports but one cannot help but be appalled that influenza, or "La Grippe" as it was called, claimed so many lives or, that in one incident, eleven people died after eating a rotten whale.[35] One also cannot help but smile at the descriptions of happy events such as the "quite noteworthy" marriage which took place in 1907. It reads much like a society column.

> The bride was a young girl of not more than 17 years of age, and had been taken by her fourth husband. She is very comely, and was given away by her brother-in-law, `Su-pi-di-do,' commonly known as `Sour Potatoes.' Three winters ago she had both feet amputated at Baillie Island on account of exposure to cold. The wedding breakfast consisted of seal meat, muktuk (whale meat), and frozen rotten fish. The ceremony took place at the `Igaloo,'(sic) or house of `Supididdo,' there being about fifty present. The size of the `Igloo' is 10 x 12 feet. I was invited and got as far as the door. The odour arising from the preparation of the `dejeuner' was more than I could stand, and I had to retire.[36]

Even the condition and deaths of their sled dogs were

matters of significant import to warrant inclusion in the reports. The dogs were, after all, crucial to the winter patrols and were expensive assets.

The condition and behaviour of the men under the reporting officer's command were also included in the annual reports. There is really very little known about the character and conduct of the individual policemen, save what appears in these reports. As one might expect, the officers in charge tended to praise their men to the highest degree for their courage and good conduct in the face of such adverse conditions. Incidents such as that of a member of the force being charged with drunkenness and wife stealing in 1933, were kept hushed up and nothing about it appears in the public record.[37] Similarly, the first special constable shows up in the 1909 report, but other than noting there was one on a patrol or two, nothing else is mentioned. Also, the use of interpreters and guides is noted fairly regularly but, other than the occasional name, nothing else about them is mentioned.

By the 1920's, the police were taking on even more functions as government spread its way northwestward. As mentioned, they became responsible for the issuance of hunting licenses. They also enforced trapping regulations and paid the bounties on wolves. Of course one of their original functions in the Arctic was to collect the customs due on trade goods. They became a Customs-Excise outport in 1926, which included having a bonded warehouse to look after. They also collected income tax from the

white residents along the Arctic coast. In many cases, they had to assist the taxpayers in filling out their returns.[38] Oddly enough, in 1923, they were also appointed timber agents for Herschel Island. In 1925, a post office was opened on Herschel Island with Inspector Thomas Benjamin Caulkin as postmaster. When Inspector V.A.M. Kemp was posted to the Island in 1927, he found that his police duties included being:

> ...Postmaster, Agent of the Mining Recorder, Magistrate, Coroner, Registrar of Vital Statistics, Radio License Inspector, Immigration Officer, Deputy Sheriff, Deputy of the Public Administrator, Commissioner for the hearing of naturalization applications and...Collector of Customs.[39]

He also found it was usual for police in the North to assume the role of undertaker, priest, physician, dentist and general welfare officer. The main problem with all of these responsibilities, he found, was having to carry the regulations and laws around in his head. If a trapper were to ask him for regulations or a decision on a trapping matter, he had to give it on the spot without the aid of the books which were too cumbersome to carry on patrol.[40]

In 1925 the police on Herschel were appointed to receive immigration applications. When social assistance was introduced, they were also charged with registering the families on Herschel eligible to receive welfare payments. These two responsibilities were to cause them some difficulty when Alaskan Inuit, finding out about the free money, came to Herschel Island to get paid.[41]

In addition to their police and governmental responsibilities, however, the police were also part of the

community. Though they regularly bemoaned the isolation and long postings with no white men to talk to, they were an integral part of Herschel's social life. After the Hudson's Bay Company arrived in 1915, the police and the Bay manager alternated giving the community a Christmas and New Year's party. This was a wonderful event for all, but particularly the Inuit as there would be dancing, music, dog races and plenty to eat. It was one of the few occasions where the police ever mention socializing with the local populace. It was a common practice for the police to remain aloof from the rest of the community so that they could retain their objectivity in enforcing the law. Since some of the police stayed in the North when they retired, however, and some took Inuit wives and lifestyles, one suspects there was a good deal more socializing than the annual Christmas party.

The Big Cases

Despite the bad reputation the whalers brought to Herschel Island, there were no major crimes committed on the Island after the police arrived. There were a few major cases in which the Herschel detachment was involved, however, since it was an administrative centre.

The first of this involved a trader by the name of Christian Klengenberg. He had come to the Arctic as a cook and gained the trust of Captain McKenna, who was in charge of the **Charles Hanson** and the **Olga**. In 1905, McKenna had just dismissed the skipper of the **Olga**, who he did not trust, and put Klengenberg in charge.

While he liked the little Dane, he did not entirely trust him either and put only two weeks of provisions on board the **Olga** so that Klengenberg could not get too far away from him. Shortly thereafter, Klengenberg disappeared in a fog three days east of Herschel Island, with the **Olga** and its crew.

Nothing was heard from the ship for almost a year. When it did return, Klengenberg went straight to the police and made a statement. The original crew of nine was now five. The skipper claimed one dead of scurvy and two fallen through the ice while hunting. The last, the Engineer Jackson, he had to shoot in self defense. He had caught Jackson drunk on alcohol he had brewed from stolen supplies. As they were short rationed, Klengenberg had become enraged and smashed the still. Jackson had attacked him and he been forced to shoot. While his remaining crew backed him on this story, the whalers did not believe it and demanded he be arrested. In the middle of the night, Klengenberg escaped in a small boat with his wife and large family, and crossed the Alaska border out of Canadian jurisdiction.

The crew then came out with a different story where Klengenberg had cold-bloodedly murdered Jackson, threw his friend in irons until he starved, and marooned the only two witnesses to the murder.[42] He was eventually caught by a U.S. Revenue cutter and tried for murder in San Francisco. He was acquitted and later returned to the Arctic to establish a trading dynasty.

The other two prominent cases pertained to murders. They

both dealt with a group of Inuit who had not much exposure to whites, the law or the police.

Two Catholic priests, Fathers Rouvier and LeRoux from Fort Norman, had set out on a mission to a group of recently discovered "Cogmollocks" in the area of Coronation Gulf in 1913. They had not been heard from for two years when word reached the police that Inuit had been seen wearing a priest's cassock and crucifix. Three patrols set off to investigate, including a Corporal Bruce from Herschel. Bruce and Inspector La Nauze discovered that the priests had been murdered and mutilated by two Inuit, Sinnisiak and Uluksuk. They arrested these two and escorted them back to Herschel Island. From there they were sent out to Calgary where they were tried for murder and sentenced to death. While at the trial, the two Inuit were treated more as pets and celebrities than prisoners. Public sympathy was certainly with them, so much so that the arresting officer, Inspector La Nauze, became quite incensed and wrote to his superiors;

> There seems to have been a campaign of public sympathy for the `poor Eskimos' and the public seem to be on the side of the defence...we are hoping for a conviction of the two murderers on the second charge...If both murderers are found `not guilty' we have nothing to do but send them back FREE MEN to their own land to let their tribe know that NO PUNISHMENT will be meted out to those who murder white men.[43]

The government decided to be lenient in this case involving the new found Canadians and reduced the sentence to life imprisonment at Fort Resolution. They were escorted back in the summer of 1919 by Sergeant Clay.[44] These two served two years of the life

sentence at Fort Resolution and were sent home with a wealth of clothing and goods.

According to some, this leniency set a dangerous precedent. Some of the police, such as La Nauze, felt that now the Inuit would think all they had to do to get a free trip outside was to kill someone.

In 1922, Constable Woolams and Corporal Doak of Tree River detachment were sent to arrest two more Inuit, Tatamagama and his eighteen-year-old nephew, Alikomiak, for the murder of five "Cogmollucks". The prisoners were taken to Tree River. There Alikomiak slipped out of his bed one night, stole a rifle, and shot Corporal Doak as he slept in his cabin. The murderer sat by the window until the local Hudson's Bay factor, Otto Binder, arrived for his morning social call and shot him as well.[45] While making their escape, the two ran into police officers Brockie and Barnes coming back from patrol with a group of Inuit. The police, not suspecting anything amiss, were held at gun point while Alikomiak tried to persuade the Inuit to kill the police and help loot Tree River. Brockie kept the escapees talking while two young Inuit in his party snuck up behind the murderers and lassoed them.[46]

The trial of these two was the first Arctic court session ever held. The court was brought up from Edmonton. On the way, they collected jurymen from Fort Norman, Fort Good Hope and Aklavik. Four of the jury were selected from Herschel Island residents. Judge Lucien Dubuc of Edmonton presided on the trial

which eventually found the two guilty and sentenced them to hang. The men were executed in the bone house on February 1, 1924.[47] The government apparently saw an error in showing leniency and made an example of these two.

There were actually five on trial for murder in 1923-24 and three in 1928 on Herschel Island, though for much less spectacular crimes such as a young mother killing her unwanted baby. But these attracted little attention and almost nothing is said of them in annual reports. A few of the sentences for these crimes were also served out on Herschel which made a strange sort of prison. One convict, Okchina, who was convicted of manslaughter in a love triangle slaying, became a chore boy for the police during his term and apparently made an excellent baby sitter.[48]

Closing the Post

Beginning in 1922, moves were afoot to change the Arctic Sub-District headquarters to Aklavik, which by then was a bustling little community. Herschel had been kept alive to this point because much of the provisions for the police and the traders came via the Bering Sea past Point Barrow. The detachment at Herschel was required for customs inspection and to act as a distribution point for supplies coming into the Western Arctic. Already, however, the focus of government and commercial activity was shifting eastward to centres like Aklavik and Tuktoyuktuk. The rationale for maintaining Herschel

declined further between 1928 and 1931 when the **St. Roch**, the police's floating detachment, and aircraft were introduced to the Arctic. This greatly reduced the need for strategically placed, fixed detachments. The final blows came with the loss of the supply ships **Lady Kindersley** in 1924 and **Baychimo** in 1931 . After the loss of the **Baychimo**, supplies were flown or floated via the Mackenzie River, bypassing the treacherous ice of the North Coast. The Inuit of Herschel began to leave for the Delta area in the 1930s when their source of supplies moved. Since one of the other reasons the police remained at Herschel was to police and assist the Inuit, even this reason for keeping the post open was gone. In 1931, the headquarters for the Western Arctic Sub-District were moved from Herschel to Aklavik by General Order 555. Herschel Island was closed on September 7, 1933.

The old detachment was still used during the summer months by members from Aklavik for six weeks to two months during the summer from 1934 to 1937. There were still Inuit in the area and ships moving along the North Coast which needed to be attended to. Herschel even saw a brief revival during the **St. Roch's** sailings of the Northwest Passage in the 1940's, when it was used as a supply depot and the overwintering site.[49] Beginning in 1936, however, the police began to salvage the buildings at Herschel. A "C" type building, formerly used as quarters for the commanding officer at Herschel, was moved to Aklavik for use as offices, sleeping quarters and a lighting plant.

In 1948, the Herschel detachment was reopened under the command of "G" Division and its commanding officer, Henry A. Larsen. This was in response to an influx of Alaskan Inuit coming across the border to qualify for family allowance cheques and a minor gold rush on the Firth River.[50] At that time, the police also began a dog breeding program on the Island. Herschel was ideal for this purpose because of all the vacant buildings and the plentiful supply of seals for dog feed. The post was kept open sporadically through the 1950's, though there was discussions in 1952 about closing the post for three or four months during the winter.[51] The police kept a caretaker at the post to issue destitute rations to the Inuit of the area and made occasional patrols there from Aklavik. For a short time in the early 1960's, they supervised the running of a store there for the Inuit as part of a self-sufficiency program. By 1964, however, there were not enough local Inuit left to support even that small venture. While the dog breeding program had been an interesting novelty, the increased use of machines for winter transportation undermined even that reason for keeping the post open. In 1964 the post was permanently closed.[52] In 1968, the police transferred all the buildings and property on Herschel Island to Crown Assets Disposal.[53]

Police Personalities

Francis J. Fitzgerald

Fitzgerald first came to Herschel Island as a sergeant in 1903. He established the detachment on the Island along with Constable Sutherland in the following year. He was essentially in command on Herschel and on his own during the years when the whalers outnumbered police by about 140 to one. Poorly supplied and without clear orders or adequate authority, Fitzgerald maintained the peace in the Western Arctic, reduced the liquor trade to a trickle and managed to keep all parties appeased. For his tireless efforts, he was promoted to Inspector and returned to Herschel, by his own choice, in 1910. In that same year he made his ill-fated journey on the Lost Patrol which claimed his life.

Since Fitzgerald was the first policeman on Herschel, and faced the greatest challenge, he stands out from his successors. This does not detract from the efforts of those who followed but there can be only one who was first and blazed the trail for the rest.

D.M. Howard

Inspector Howard ran the Herschel detachment during some of its most difficult years. He acted as the mediator in a number of volatile disputes among the whalers which could easily have erupted into violence. Through his cool handling of the situations, trouble was avoided. Howard lobbied his superiors for greater regulation and support of travellers in the Arctic to

prevent reoccurrences of the winter of 1905-06 when the whalers were trapped in the ice and short of rations.

A.M. Jarvis

Inspector Jarvis' main claim to fame was the 2,000 mile patrol he made aboard the whaler **Beluga** to bring the police presence to Baillie Island in 1907.

G.L. Jennings

Inspector Jennings was a man of rather conservative morals who was faced with the problem of keeping whalers separate for Inuit women. He thought it should be an indictable offence for them to live together in anything but holy matrimony. The Inuit he was charged with protecting were something of an enigma to him and he studied them in great detail. He states in his 1910 reports that, though the Inuit had been "protected" from alcohol and whalers morality, they had become dependent on the white man's food and simply could not live without it. His perceptions and understanding may have been faulty, but his desire to preserve their culture and way of life were honest.

Chronology of Detachment Personnel

This list of personnel stationed at Herschel Island detachment is incomplete. The names are taken from police reports, government reports, Hudson's Bay Company and Anglican Church Journals, and secondary sources.

1903	Sgt. F.J. Fitzgerald and Constable F.D. Sutherland
	-do not winter over but patrol to Island.
1904	Fitzgerald and Sutherland
	-winter over
1905-1906	Fitzgerald (Sutherland?)
	Inspector D.M. Howard makes regular visits but HQ in McPherson
1907	Fitzgerald, 1 constable and 1 special constable
	Inspector A.M. Jarvis replaces Howard
1908	Fitzgerald, Csts. Carter and Pearson
	Fitzgerald replaces Jarvis but patrols from Herschel
	Inspector G.L. Jennings replaces Fitzgerald
1910	Sgt. Selig, Cst. Kinney
	Inspector Fitzgerald replaces Jennings, dies on Lost Patrol
1911-1912	Selig (dies and is buried on Herschel), Cst. Wissenden, Cst. Kinney commanding during interim. Corporal Trickey.
	Inspector W.J. Beyts replaces Fitzgerald, HQ at Herschel
1913	Inspector J.W. Phillips replaces Beyts.
1914-1915	Phillips, 1 cpl. (Bruce), 2 cst.
1916	Inspector C.D. La Nauze replaces Phillips
1917	La Nauze goes out, temporarily replaced by
	Inspector J.M. Tupper, replaced by Phillips.

	Cst. Lamont (dies and is buried on Herschel)
1918	Phillips, Cst. Doak, Cst. Cornelius
1919-1921	Inspector S.T. Wood replaces Phillips
1924-1926	Inspector T.B. Caulkin replaces Wood, Constable Pennefather
1927-1928	Inspector V.A.M. Kemp replaces Caulkin
1929	Inspector A.N. Eames replaces Kemp
1931	H.Q. for Western Arctic Sub-District transferred to Aklavik
1933	Constable Woods, followed by Constables Chartrand and Parkes, Special Constables Kewick and Ethier. Herschel detachment closed. Opened during summer. Run by Inspector Charles Rivett-Carnac.
1935	George M. Curleigh
1948	Cst. E.J. Phelan
1950	Cst. R.E. Hopley
1952	C.R. Mains

Chapter 4 Endnotes

1. John Christian Schultz: Correspondence and Papers of the Lieutenant-Governor of Keewatin, Public Archives of Manitoba, Manuscript Group 12-E, Box 10, p. 4492.

2. William R. Morrison, Showing the Flag: The Mounted Police and Canadian Sovereignty in the North 1894-1925 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1985) p. 74.

3. Ibid.

4. quoted in Morrison, Showing the Flag, p. 75.

5. Morrison, Showing the Flag, p. 76.

6. Ibid, p. 76.

7. Schultz, Papers, p. 4492.

8. For a detailed discussion on this matter see: Lewis Green, The Boundary Hunters: Surveying the 141st Meridian and the Alaska Panhandle (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1982).

9. Morrison, Showing the Flag, p. 76.

10. Ibid, p. 78.

11. National Archives of Canada, Manuscript Group 30 E55, Volume 4, **Constantine Papers**, Miscellaneous documents, 1870-1908, 18 June 1903 "memo of instructions for Reg: No 2218, Sergt. Fitzgerald F.J."

12. It is not entirely clear that Fitzgerald and Sutherland stayed in these quarters the first winter. Since the boat he borrowed had been wrecked and he was short of supplies, he states that he was not able to overwinter, only to make patrols to Herschel Island that first winter. (National Archives of Canada, Manuscript Group 30 E55, Volume 4, Constantine Papers, Miscellaneous Documents, 1870-1908, Letter from Fitzgerald to Officer Commanding "G" Division, Fort Saskatchewan, 10 February 1904.) Further, Coates indicates they stayed in a frame structure owned by the Pacific Steam Whaling Company. (from the same source, letter dated 29 December 1903.)

13. Canada, Sessional Paper Number 28, Report of the North-West Mounted Police, 1903, p. 53.

14. There is some confusion on this point. Some sources (eg. Coates) state that Fitzgerald and Sutherland spent the winter of 1903-04 in a frame house borrowed from the PSWCo. The police reports themselves seem to indicate that they did not have adequate provisions to overwinter and therefore made winter patrols from McPherson to Herschel and did not establish there until the summer of 1904. (National Archives of Canada, Manuscript Group 30 E55, Volume 4, **Constantine Papers**, Miscellaneous documents, 1870-1908, letter Fitzgerald 10 February 1904.)

15. Ibid.

16. Morrison, Showing the Flag. p. 84. see also Thomas Stone, "Atomistic Order and Frontier Violence: Miners and Whalemen in the Nineteenth Century Yukon", Ethnology, Vol. 22, Oct. 1983, pp. 327-339.

17. Canada, Sessional Paper Number 28, Report of the North-West Mounted Police, 1906, p. 130.

18. Canada, Sessional Paper Number 28, Report of the North-West Mounted Police, 1903, p. 54.

19. Canada, Sessional Paper Number 28, Report of the North-West Mounted Police, 1905, p. 22.

20. Canada, Sessional Paper Number 28, Report of the North-West Mounted Police, 1908, p. 146.

21. Canada, Sessional Paper Number 28, Report of the North-West Mounted Police, 1906, p. 131.

22. Ken S. Coates and William R. Morrison, Land of the Midnight Sun: A History of the Yukon (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1988, p. 135.

23. Canada, Sessional Paper Number 28, Report of the North-West Mounted Police, 1910, p. 152.

24. Vernon A.M. Kemp, Without Fear, Favour or Affection; Thirty Five Years with the RCMP (Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1958), pp. 120-126.

25. Canada, Sessional Paper Number 28, Report of the North-West Mounted Police, 1910, p.155.

26. Ibid, p. 151.

27. National Archives of Canada, Record Group 85, Vol. 107, File 253-2/214, Pt. 1.

28. Ibid.

29. Canada, Sessional Paper Number 28, Report of the North-West Mounted Police, 1908, p. 144.

30. Canada, Sessional Paper Number 28, Report of the North-West Mounted Police, 1909, p. 130.

31. Canada, Sessional Paper Number 28, Report of the North-West Mounted Police, 1911, p. 172.

32. Canada, Sessional Paper Number 28, Report of the North-West Mounted Police, 1908, p. 143.

33. National Archives of Canada, Record Group 85, Vol. 612, File 2761.

34. Morrison, Showing the Flag, pp. 105-107.

35. Canada, Sessional Paper Number 28, Report of the North-West Mounted Police, 1908, p. 149.

36. Ibid, p. 145.

37. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B419/A/2, Post Journals 1933-34.

38. Canada, Annual Departmental Reports, No. 21, Vol. LX, No. 4, 1925, Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, p. 24-25.

39. Kemp, Without Fear, pp.89-90.

40. Ibid, p.96.

41. National Archives of Canada, Record Group 85, Vol. 107, File 253-2/214, pt. 1, letter Bailey to Wright, 3 January 1949.

42. John R. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), pp. 331-34.

43. Quoted in Morrison, Showing the Flag, p. 159

44. Philip H. Godsell, "The Passing of Herschel Island," RCMP Quarterly, Vol. 9, No. 4, April 1942, p. 389.

45. Ibid, p. 390.

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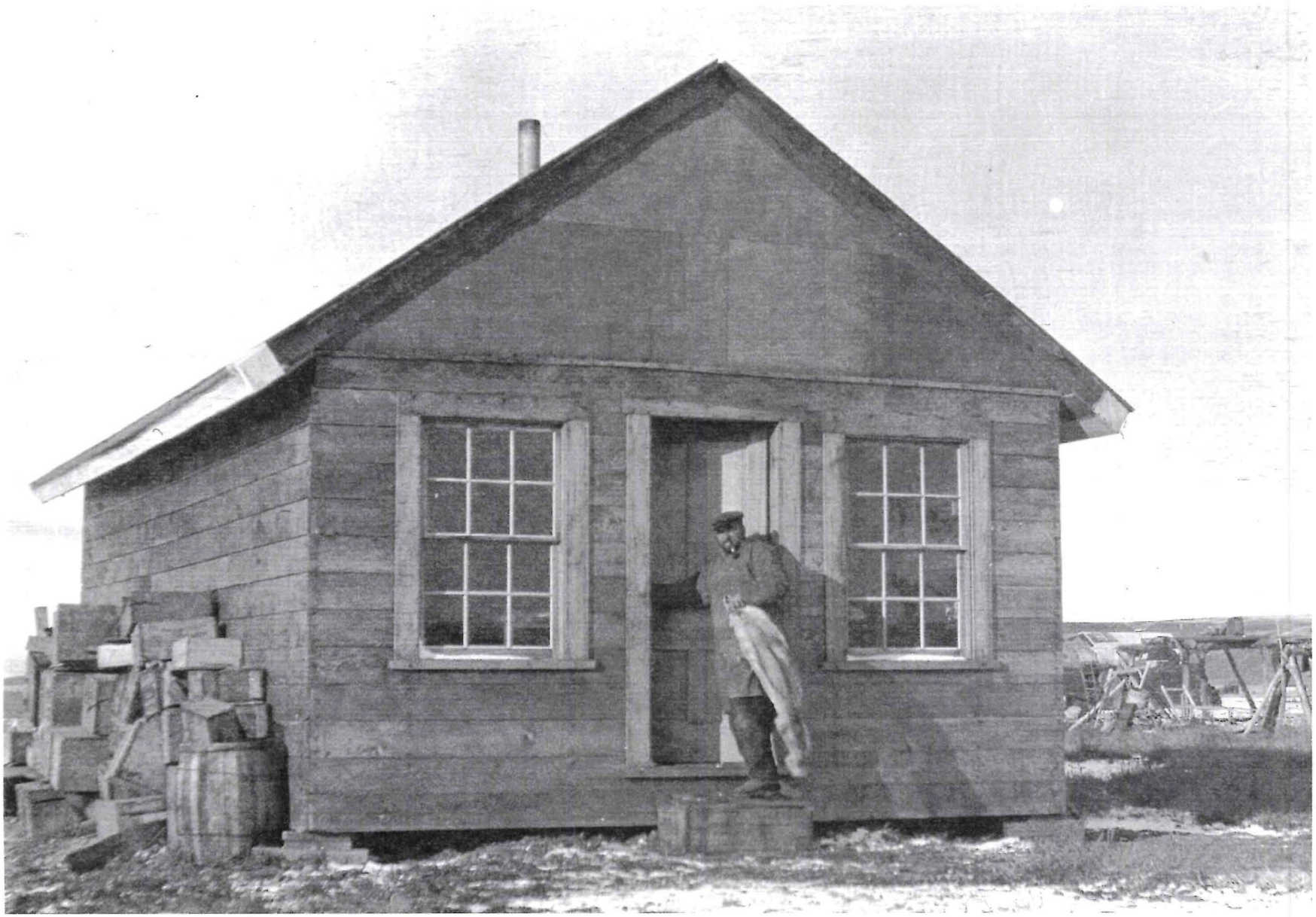

Mr. C. Hardy, Manager H.B.Co., Western Arctic District, outside H.B.Co. building, Herschel Island - Fall 1916.
R.C.M.P. Photo Archives

Chapter 5 - The Traders

Unlike most of Western Canada, the history of the fur trade on Herschel Island did not start with the entrance of the Hudson's Bay Company. The Inuit of the Herschel Island area were already part of an extensive trade network oriented on Russian enterprises off the west coast of Alaska before the Hudson's Bay ever ventured into Yukon. Therefore, despite the fact that there were no fur trading posts in the Arctic prior to 1870, the Inuit of Herschel Island had already seen white trade goods.[1] When the whalers arrived at Herschel, they found people eager to trade both labour and furs for their wares.

The furs proved to be a very profitable sideline for the whalers. Between 1891 and 1907, they had taken whales out of Canadian waters valued at about $13.5 million, but they also took out furs traded with the Inuit and Indians valued at $1.5 million.[2] Since the whalers had cheap transportation via a strictly water route, no fixed posts to keep up and, at least during the boom years of whaling in the Arctic, were not paying customs duties on the goods they brought in, they were able to offer much cheaper prices than any of the Interior traders. Even after they started paying duty, they were able to sell one hundred pounds of flour to the Inuit for $2 while the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort McPherson charged $30.[3] Not only were their goods cheaper but the whalers did not feel bound by the laws and conventions of the regular fur trade which prohibited the traffic

in such items as alcohol, repeating rifles and fixed ammunition. These were all in great demand by the Inuit and Indians.

The news of rare goods and cheaper prices spread all along the Arctic coast and rapidly filtered into the interior via the rivers and mountain passes. The whalers on Herschel attracted Inuit from the Mackenzie Delta to the Interior of Alaska. They also attracted the Gwich'in of the Porcupine and Peel Rivers. These latter had been trading with the Hudson's Bay Company Posts at Fort McPherson, La Pierre House and Rampart House. When they heard that they could get better prices for their furs at Herschel Island, however, and that the whalers were paying well for fresh meat, they took their business and headed North.

This loss of business basically finished the Bay at Rampart House and La Pierre House. The trade at those two posts had never been lucrative. Rampart House stood as a bastion against the further incursion of American traders into the Yukon, and more particularly, the Mackenzie River basin. La Pierre House was mostly a distribution point for goods headed to other posts. With the Indians taking their furs elsewhere, company factor John Firth gave up trying to keep these posts afloat and abandoned them in 1893, with the comment that he did:

> not so much mind the opposition from down River, (meaning the American Interior traders) but it is difficult to oppose the trade from the coast, as they are giving higher prices than ever.[3]

As noted in Chapter 2, the trade between the whalers and the Inuit became so well instituted that credit was established between them. The natives would bring in their goods to be

traded and, if the whalers could not pay them on the spot, they were given a note of credit, redeemable on any whale ship for goods or cash. Later on, once the relationship had become consolidated by the passage of a few years' honest trading, the hunters and trappers were able to order goods to be brought up on the whale ships the following season. The prices they could receive for their furs, especially white fox, were high enough that many were able to order such heavy and expensive items as sewing machines, whale boats and even entire buildings that the Hudson's Bay could not hope to transport by their longer and more cumbersome supply network. Even though the market for whalebone collapsed in 1907, the market for white fox did not. The whalers found the fur trade lucrative enough that many abandoned whaling and turned their ships over entirely to trading along the coast.[4]

As one can imagine, the Hudson's Bay Company took exception to this incursion on their monopoly. Matters were made worse when the whalers not only began attracting Indians away from the Bay posts but, by trading cheap goods to the Mackenzie Inuit who in turn traded these to the other Inuit and Indians along the Mackenzie River, put the Bay's customers in direct competition with them. The Bay had a weapon with which to retaliate, however. The mail for the whalers travelled north to the coast via the Company's string of posts. News from the outside was necessary to the whalers' sanity and this was the only regular source of that commodity. In the winter of 1894-95, John Firth

of Fort McPherson, sent word to the whalers threatening to cut off their mail delivery if they continued in the fur trade. Firth visited Herschel in the autumn of 1896 and was apparently satisfied that the whalers had stopped encouraging the Inuit to bring them furs.[5]

Since John Firth acted as the representative of the Canadian government in Fort McPherson, he had a regular line of communication with Ottawa. His complaints about the whalers illegal trade practices were sent to the government and likely were at least part of the reason that the police were sent to the Arctic. According to William Morrison, the fact that the police eventually set up their post in Fort McPherson in buildings rented from the Hudson's Bay Company reflects the relationship of mutual support between the Company and the force. The Bay provided for the police and the police in turn made the country safe for trapping and trading.[6] It was also in the mutual interest of the Bay and the police to see American trade in Canadian territory properly regulated.

Even after the whalers were brought to account for their trade goods the Hudson's Bay Company still could not compete with the prices and merchandise offered by the American traders and their floating stores. This is probably why the Bay did not establish a post on Herschel until 1915, well after the bulk of the whaling fleet had abandoned the area.

Building the Bay Post at Herschel Island

By 1915, the fur trade in the Western Arctic had replaced whaling as the mainstay of the local economy. The price for muskrat, white and silver fox was high enough to attract the Hudson's Bay Company and several independent traders to the coast. By the time the Bay arrived, independent traders such as Klengenberg, H. Leibes, and Hibbert and Stewart had been in operation for years and had established posts or had trappers working for them on a regular basis. While the whalers had departed, the independent traders were still making a handsome living along the coast. As with Rampart House on the Porcupine River, the Bay needed a bastion against the further incursions of American traders into what they considered their territory.

Judging by the Company correspondence, it was not until 1913 that the Bay became alarmed at the amount of fur being taken out of the Western Arctic by ships like the **Belvedere**, belonging to Hibbert and Stewart Fur Dealers of Seattle.[7] The decision was made to situate on the coast to be closer to the fur trading Inuit. The Company began an urgent search to find a ship they could hire or buy to transport their goods.

The Hudson's Bay Company made their first attempt to establish its post on Herschel Island in 1914. They had hired the **S.S. Ruby** out of Vancouver to haul their supplies. Like so many ventures in the Arctic, this one was foiled by ice. The **Ruby** was forced to turn around before it reached Herschel and the

Bay's supplies were dropped at Teller, Alaska.[8] The second attempt was made in 1915 with the **Ruby** and Bay's supply ship **Fort McPherson.**

The ships landed on Herschel Island on August 15 but they were certainly not alone. The explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson arrived on the 16th and noted:

> The **Ruby** was there beginning to unload; there were also four small schooners, the Hudson's Bay Company's **Macpherson** (sic), Captain Fritz Wolki's **Gladiator**, Captain Matt Andreasen's **Olga**, and the Church of England's **Atkon** (or **The Torch**).[9]

The first post manager was Christy Harding who, along with his wife, Rudolph Johnson and hired Inuit labour, were to set up the post.[10] The main function of the post on Herschel Island was to serve as a distribution centre for goods and supplies going further east. It would appear that the Company had taken a lesson from the whalers and American traders and were experimenting with bringing in their supplies by the faster, cheaper coastal route. It was also a far riskier route as the Bay was to find out much to their dismay.

Before the buildings were even constructed on the Island, goods meant for the posts further east were repacked and shipped off on the little supply ship **Fort McPherson.** By August 18, Mr. Harding and his assistant, Rudolph Johnson, were laying the foundations for the company house and store.[11] The two men and whatever help they could scare up, quickly erected a store, house, warehouse, shop, dog house, store house, coal house, outhouse and wharf. They were open for business by October but

there were almost no furs traded that first year. It was a sign of things to come.

The supply problems were not over for the Bay. By 1917, they were negotiating with H. Leibes and Company of San Francisco to transport their supplies to Herschel aboard the **Herman**, another converted whaler. The Leibes Company must have driven a hard bargain as the Hudson's Bay Company had to agree to let them trade and whale while they were travelling through Canadian waters. The Bay was actually subsidizing the competition. This type of arrangement with the small American firms was quite unsatisfactory. Not only were they giving away trade to the independent traders but they were notoriously untrustworthy, often failing to deliver goods as promised.[12] They decided that they must either buy or build their own ship, thus assuring regular, trustworthy supply.

Eventually the post at Herschel Island had a series of little freighting vessels, like the **El Sueno** and **Akurvik**, to transport goods and fuel along the coast.[13] It also purchased its own supply ship, **Lady Kindersley**, and later **Baychimo**, to ensure a reliable supply of goods from the south. The coastal vessels met the Company sternwheeler **Distributor** at the mouth of the Mackenzie River where goods were transferred to be carried upstream. This supply system was much cheaper and faster than the old method of bringing everything down the Mackenzie River system and it gave the Bay at least some of the advantages of the water-based American traders. Although cumbersome, however, it

was the river route that was to prove the more economical in the long run.

Running the Post

The Bay people found the same difficulties living on the Island as the whalers, church and police had found before them. Their buildings, designed for southern climes, were very cold and hard to heat in the frigid Arctic winters. Driftwood for fuel was scarce (by 1915 they had to travel ten miles to the mainland to get it) and coal was expensive to import. As time went by, the procurement of water, fuel, fresh fish and meat and the weather became items of greater importance than the business they were sent to run. For most of the time the Bay was on Herschel Island, there simply was not that much business to take care of anyway. Most of the post managers, however, were loyal to the Company and spent an incredible amount of time doing accounts and arranging and rearranging the stock on the shelves of the unheated store.

The store on Herschel was run in much the same manner as all Bay posts in the North. Prices paid for furs were kept as low as possible, the prices charged for goods as high as possible, and the comforts and amenities for customer and staff alike were kept to a minimum. The store was left unheated, ostensibly to reduce the fire hazard but it seems more likely this was a money saving measure. On a tour of the Arctic made by Archdeacon Hudson Stuck in 1918, he remarked that "no trader who had a competitor could

afford to treat his customers in such a way."[14] He also noted the ludicrous practice of putting merchandise in paper bags as if it were any "outside" store, where the Alaskan traders used cotton sacks. He exclaimed that "... paper bags are simply impossible receptacles for sugar and rice and such things in a sled."[15]

By tradition and Company policy, the post managers were not to socialize with their employees or their customers. Although many in the Arctic broke with this practice during the 1920's, the managers on Herschel never seem to have followed the trend. This meant that social life for the post managers was very limited since everyone on the Island, except perhaps the police, were either traders, customers or employees. The post managers did talk with people, however, and the store acted as a clearing house for information, receiving the news from up and down the coast and into the interior from the Inuit, miners and travellers who came in for supplies. Still, it was a lonely existence.

Despite the many and diverse distractions, the isolation and loneliness on Herschel became telling. The stout Scots who were often chosen to run the posts were not ones to complain but in April 1933, after the whole population of the Island left on their various duties, Mr. Sinclair the post manager wrote that he and Constable Chartrand were the sole inhabitants of Herschel Island. One must wonder about the effects of this when in June Mr. Sinclair recorded that:

> A flock of wild turkeys passed over the camp this morning.[16]

Either Mr. Sinclair was a terrible identifier of bird life, saw one of the rarest sightings of the century, or perhaps he just needed a holiday.

With improved communications and transportation, more people were coming into the Western Arctic in the 1920's and '30's. Attracted by the good trapping and fur prices during that period, American trappers from Alaska crossed over the border. The mineral potential of areas like the Firth River also attracted an increasing number of miners. This meant there were more and more visitors to the post, coming in for news, supplies and special events such as holidays or the arrival of ships. The Inuit also came in very regularly. Many had been able to purchase their own schooners from the profits of the fur trade and they were now more mobile in the summer months. There were still a varying number resident on the Island as well. The greatest influx of all kinds of people came at Christmas time. The Bay, the church and the police traded off providing community dinners and parties. The church usually gave a Christmas party, the Bay hosted New Years' and the police threw a party in between. The Christmas season was especially important to those isolated from friends and family in the North. Particularly so for the tradition-bound post managers who were not to socialize with their staff or customers. The sentimental Scot who ran the post in 1934-35 celebrated Hogmanay with his family by sitting around that evening listening to the wireless for season's

greetings from relatives on CKY, Winnipeg.[17]

The advent of the radio also provided a focal point for the Company staff on Herschel. To judge by the post journals, the radio became one of the most important features of post life in much the same way as mail had been during the time of the whalers and early police days. The post personnel on Herschel were regular listeners to radio station CKY in Winnipeg. They also listened to Salt Lake City, Anchorage and, on occasion, tuned in what they thought to be Japan.[18]

By the 1930's, the market for fur was depressed as was the rest of the country. There were events of significance to the little community on Herschel, but very few of them had to do with the fur trade. The Lomand reindeer herd was passing by to the south. This incredible venture, led by the Porsild brothers, took months to pass by and supplies were needed. It was probably the best business the Bay did in years. The first airplanes landed at Herschel and through the 1930's this became fairly common. So much so that they began to carry the mail regularly. There were also near famine conditions amongst the Inuit which the Bay was expected to help alleviate. Most important to the running of the post during this time were the regular visits of the District Manager, his inspectors and accountants. Up until the late 1920's, the operation of Bay posts in the Arctic had been left pretty well up to the managers. So much money was being lost, however, that the Company had finally decided to tighten up its Western Arctic operations. This was to have a

significant impact on the running of all the Arctic posts, including Herschel.

The Post Closes Down and The Post Opens Up Again

In an effort to copy the successful methods employed by the independent traders, such as Klengenberg, the Hudson's Bay Company had hired former whalers and their Inuit wives to run many of their Arctic posts. This was to prove a disastrous experiment as these people, with strong leanings toward the Inuit way of life, extended credit which could not possibly be paid back. They were usually semiliterate and abhorred bookkeeping. The result of this, by 1924, was that native debt in the Western Arctic surpassed the profit from furs. By 1927 the Western Arctic District was $40,000 in debt. In 1928, it had lost $183,000.[19]

The situation was serious enough that the Bay launched an investigation. This was a combination internal audit and purge which resembled a witch hunt. Many post managers were dismissed for incompetence. Richard Bonnycastle was the Company's accountant who took part in the inspection of the Arctic posts from 1929 to '31. He was appalled at the laxity and poor business practices he found.

> The majority of present post managers appear to be totally unqualified to handle such large outfits as are now being shipped in. There has been a general tendency towards carelessness, extravagance in debt, and reduced gross merchandise profits. The district is conspicuous for the incompetence and undependability of its staff. There is a total lack of discipline, every man being permitted to do almost exactly as he desires. Orders are very rarely given

> and then frequently disregarded. The district manager is on terms of familiarity with all his men, is indulgent to a degree, and lacks the moral courage to face a situation or reprimand an employee.[20]

This inquisition also affected Herschel. In 1931, post manager Fred Ware was let go after Bonnycastle and Fur Commissioner Ralph Parsons visited the Island. Bonnycastle, District Manager by that time, was almost fired himself due to the poor state of affairs of the Western Arctic posts.[21]

In 1924, the Hudson's Bay suffered a great blow to its Western Arctic operations when its supply ship **Lady Kindersley** was caught in the ice off Point Barrow and wrecked. Without the vital supplies she carried, there was not enough stock to keep Herschel Island open. At any rate, trading had been worse than slow at Herschel for the past few years. Both the post, and the police detachment which depended on the supply ship, were closed down temporarily and moved to Aklavik where the police were focusing their operations.[22]

Fur prices rallied and stayed strong through the 1920's. The Bay obtained another supply ship, the **Baychimo**, and carried on at Herschel. The outdated trade practices which were weakening the Bay's position, however, continued to pull the company down. Where the Company had held a monopoly, they felt a profit on furs of 180% to be good and 50% to be poor. It was quite normal to mark their goods up 100%.[23] In the Western Arctic, however, there were traders who were willing to accept a much smaller profit margin. In 1929, Richard Bonnycastle was appointed as Manager of the Bay's Western Arctic District and

was expected to introduce modern business practices on his own. He may have saved the Bay's operations by writing off useless merchandise, closing posts, enticing the best trappers away from the competition and coopting the Klengenbergs.[24]

This aggressive policy designed to regain control of the fur supply in the Arctic was not without its costs, however. Bonnycastle had expected the investment in a new management system to pay for itself in a few years. Unfortunately, the **Baychimo** was lost in December 1931, with thousands of dollars worth of furs on board. Although they later paid $10,000 to have the ship's cargo salvaged, 1931 was a disastrous year. Their supply ship and a year's profits gone, the Bay was dealt another blow by the Depression and the rapid fall of fur prices. There was no way to recoup the loss. In 1930, the Western Arctic lost nearly $81,000. In 1931 a whopping $207,672.60 was written off. Although the loss was reduced to a mere $48,847 in 1932, the business was clearly becoming unprofitable.[25]

The trade done at Herschel Island by the Hudson's Bay Company was always marginal at best. It was a distribution and shipping point for goods going and coming from the Western Arctic. By 1937, there were no furs being traded at the Herschel post. The post manager that year was E.H. Riddell who reported his sales were mostly cash, no furs traded. The post journals end abruptly on August 29, 1937. The post was permanently closed in 1938.

Pedersen and the Independent Traders

Even while whaling was still in its heyday, there were excellent trading opportunities for enterprising individuals. One of the most enterprising, and probably one of the least scrupulous, was Christian Klengenberg who was also called Charlie Klinkenberg. This little Dane had begun trading on the **Olga**, a ship he had stolen, in 1905. He took the hijacked ship east in search of the legendary "Blond Eskimos" of the Coronation Gulf area. There he claimed to have found these people, a stone age culture with whom he had traded bits of metal for copper knives, carved ivory and other valuable artifacts. While this trip opened a whole new area of trade and exploration, it also resulted in Klengenberg's being charged with murder and his open admission of theft. He was later tried and acquitted of the murder of his engineer on that first trip. His nefarious reputation grew, however, as he was later suspected of doing in a police officer sent to keep an eye on his trade practices. Despite the appellation of "sea wolf", he managed a booming trade all along the Arctic coast. He accomplished this through his large, half-Inuit family who he set up in business all over the Arctic. Richard Bonnycastle described them as:

> Handsome, literate, and thoroughly bicultural, the Klengenbergs could sail like Vikings, hunt like Eskimos, and trade like Eatons.[26]

Klengenberg himself was based out of the United States but every spring he sailed north to Herschel Island where he met his children in their own schooners. From there he worked his way

eastward to the Coronation Gulf. He did not limit himself to furs as he also found a market for whale oil, handicrafts and ivory carvings. His freewheeling little dynasty of traders was very stiff competition for the Bay, so much so that, when Klengenberg died in 1931, they co-opted his children by making them contractors to the Hudson's Bay Company.[27]

With the collapse of the market for whalebone in 1907, most whalers gave up any pretence of making a living from whales. It was costing more to run the ships than they could make on their catch. Captain Steven Cottle of the **Belvedere** was one of the whalers who realized the futility of continuing whaling. He also realized that fur prices were on the rise and that a good living could be made in that trade. The fur trade also proved to be more economical for the whalers as a trading ship only required half the crew of a whaler.[28] Another company to pursue this course was H. Leibes and Company of San Francisco, who outfitted their ship **Herman** for trading voyages. For about ten years after the collapse of the whalebone market, they were the only big ships sailing north.

In 1917, H. Leibes and Company attempted to expand their operation and opened a post at Shingle Point. In an effort to maintain their dominion over the fur trade in the North, the Bay also set up a post there in 1920.[29] The competition from the Bay and other independents proved too stiff for the Californian company and they were out of the fur trade business within a few years.

There were many small traders during this period like Fritz Wolki and his ship **Gladiator**, but none were land-based. The success of their business lay in limited inventory that could be taken to the trappers aboard ships. While many of these visited Herschel Island regularly and were certainly part of the Island's life, they were not attached to Herschel by dwellings or places of business. Besides, the Hudson's Bay Company and the Customs Office were on Herschel Island. That was likely enough to deter most traders from using it as a base of operations. There was one trader, however, who was not intimidated by the Bay and proved to be as big a thorn in the side of the Company as Klengenberg.

After the First World War, the price for fur skyrocketed. In 1907, fox pelts had been worth $2.50 each and muskrat had gone for a few cents. In 1918, fox went for $63.00 and "rats" for $2.50.[30] This created a favourable environment for Captain Christian Theodore Pedersen to begin operations.

In 1914, Pedersen was working for H. Leibes and Company in command of the **Herman**. After a brief stint with the Alaska Packers Association, he was back aboard the **Herman** where he stayed from 1916 to 1922. After a salary dispute, he left H. Leibes and bought the motor schooner **Ottillie Fiord**, which he renamed the **Nanuk**. He formed the Northern Whaling and Trading Company and, in 1923, he had his revenge on his former employers. Although he left San Francisco six weeks after the **Herman** that year, his skilful ice piloting put him on the Arctic coast well

ahead of the H. Leibes Company vessel. By the time the **Herman** arrived, he had bought up most of the furs on the coast.[31]

Pedersen had a reputation among whites and Inuit alike in the Beaufort for honesty, reliability, good prices and quality trade goods. His sharp trade practices and the pressure from the Hudson's Bay Company, combined to drive H. Leibes and Company out of business within a few years. The Hudson's Bay also attempted to drive him, and other American traders, out of business by ensuring they were drowned in the red tape of Customs and Excise and Game Laws. It became the law during this period that all goods meant for trade had to be landed at Herschel Island, unloaded, customs paid, and goods stored on the Island. Pedersen made inquiries directly of the government departments involved and got around the limitations on foreign traders by forming the Canalaska Company "duly incorporated under the laws of the Dominion of Canada." His Canalaska Company was so reliable that independent traders counted on him to bring in their supplies as well as their own. With this breadth of business, he kept the Hudson's Bay from achieving a complete monopoly.[32]

In 1926, Pedersen applied for land to build his warehouses on Herschel Island.[33] The property cost him $10. He now sat right in the back yard of his main competitor, the Hudson's Bay Company. Pedersen's business expanded at their expense. In 1925 he bought a bigger vessel, the **Patterson**, and later purchased two small schooners, the **Nigalik** and **Emma**. He traded all along the

Arctic coast, over one thousand miles from Herschel Island. Every year, however, he met his agent George Washington Porter Jr. at Herschel to exchange furs and trade goods. The Inuit trappers of the area were also attracted to the Island at that time of year to trade with Pederson.[34] Since he was mobile and did not have to wait for the furs to come to him, he was fierce competition for the Bay who still relied on their outmoded trade methods and an outdated reputation to draw trade.

Although the fur industry was a little longer lived than the market for whalebone, it was nonetheless subject to the same sort of vagaries. A trapper could count on a good fox harvest three years in every seven. This meant that some years they would catch almost nothing and the next, when the markets were strong, they might earn as much as $15,000, a fortune in the 1920's and '30's.[35] Following the crash of the stock market in 1929, the market for furs plummeted. Again in 1933, when the United States allowed the importation of Russian fur, the price dropped again. Pedersen saw the writing on the wall and sold out to the Hudson's Bay Company in 1936. He left the Beaufort to start fur farming.[36] The Bay, who had finally disposed of their main competitor, were forced to close their Herschel operation less than two years later.

Trading Personalities

Christy Harding

Harding was the first post manager for the Hudson's Bay Company on Herschel Island. He was an Englishman born in India and had spent many years in the North with the Bay before coming to Herschel with his wife, the daughter of Hudson's Bay Company Factor Julian S. Camsell.

Captain C.T. Pedersen

Pedersen first came to Herschel Island as a boatsteerer aboard the whaler **Fearless** in 1894. During his time on Herschel he became a proficient dog musher and traveller. Eventually he commanded the **Challenge.** He stayed in various aspects of the fishery, and also entered the fur market, trading at various times in fox and sea otter. In 1912, he purchased the **Elvira** which he lost the following year in the ice off Alaska's north coast. It was the last ship he was to lose. He became renowned for his ability to navigate the toughest ice conditions.

He joined H. Leibes and Company in 1914 and was put in command of the **Herman** to supply the company's trading posts in the Arctic. In 1915, he was hired by the Alaska Packers Association to command their ship, the **Santa Clara.** He rejoined H. Leibes in 1916 where he stayed until he left them over a salary dispute in 1923. He became the last captain to take a bowhead commercially.

Shortly after leaving H. Leibes, Pedersen set up the

Northern Whaling and Trading Company and later, to comply with Canadian trade laws, the Canalaska Company. He was probably the most successful of the independent traders in the Western Arctic and provided the main competition for the monolithic Hudson's Bay Company. With the dawning failure of the fur markets, Pedersen wisely sold out to the Hudson's Bay Company. He left Herschel Island for the last time on September 4, 1936, the last of the Arctic whalemen.

Christian "Charlie" Klengenberg

Christian Klengenberg first came to the Arctic from Denmark as a cabin boy. When he first appears in the annals of Arctic history, he was a cook for Captain James McKenna who committed a grave error by giving him command of the **Olga**. Klengenberg stole the ship, raided supplies from whaler caches throughout the Arctic and opened trade with the "Blond Eskimos" of Coronation Gulf. It was on this first voyage as a ship's master that he gained his reputation as a "sea wolf". He not only was somewhat larcenous, but he was suspected of killing four of his crew who challenged his authority. He established a trading dynasty with his many children by his Inuit wife, setting them up in posts of their own across the Arctic. Trade laws threatened to impede that commerce, in 1925, by restricting where and with whom Americans could trade. Klengenberg was allowed to take supplies to his children but was not allowed to have commerce with anyone else. A police officer was sent along with him to ensure his

adherence to the law. The police officer seems to have accidentally fallen overboard somewhere along the way.

Along with Pedersen of the Canalaska Company, Klengenberg was the major competition for the Hudson's Bay Company. When Charlie died in 1931, the Bay bought out his children by hiring them as contractors.

Chapter 5 Endnotes

1. Peter J. Usher, Fur Trade Posts of the Northwest Territories, 1870-1970, (Ottawa: Northern Science REsearch Group, Department of Indian and Northern Development, 1971), p. 101.

2. Canada, Sessional Paper Number 28, Report of the North-West Mounted Police, 1908, p. 140.

3. John R. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), p. 276.

3. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B200/b/43. fol. 755, Camsell to Chipman, 30 March 1892. Quoted in Ken S. Coates and William R. Morrison, Land of the Midnight Sun: A History of the Yukon, (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1988), p. 45.

4. It was common for ships to retain their registry as whalers since payment to the sailors on these vessels was a percentage of the whale catch. The profits made from trading were not part of the deal and were negotiated at the end of the voyage. (Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 338.)

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8. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, RG3/27B/2, Post Journals 1915-1917.

9. Vilhjalmur Stefansson, The Friendly Arctic, (New York: Macmillan, 1921), p. 388.

10. It is a strange thing that none of the personnel records for Herschel Island are to be found in the Servants of the Company records. While post journals were kept fairly religiously, the writers rarely identify themselves and they often speak in the third person, for example, referring to themselves as Mr. So-and-so rather than "I". The "voice" of the narrator also changes without warning in the middle of journals, the only clue to the change in personnel being the change in hand writing and the fact that Mr. So-and-so has disappeared from the narrative.

11. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, RG3/27B/2, Post Journals 1915-1917.

12. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, A.12/FT 295/1(b), Western Arctic Trade 1913-1918, Letter from Hall to Ingrams, 16 March 1917.

13. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, A12/FT 295/1(b), "Western Arctic Trade 1913-1918".

14. Hudson Stuck, A Winter Circuit of Our Arctic Coast, (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1920), p. 322.

15. Ibid, p. 322.

16. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B 419/A/Fol. 2, Post Journals 1932-1937.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Heather Robertson, A Gentleman Adventurer: The Arctic Diaries of Richard Bonnycastle, (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1984), p. 97.

20. Ibid, p. 100.

21. Ibid, pp. 180-182.

22. Iris Warner, "Herschel Island", Alaska Journal, Vol.3 , No. 3, Summer 1973, p. 142.

23. Robertson, A Gentleman Adventurer, p. 101.

24. Ibid, p. 143.

25. Ibid, p. 209.

26. Ibid, p. 100.

27. Ibid, p. 211.

28. John R. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 338.

29. Canada, Department of the Environment, Parks Canada, Ken S. Coates, "The Northern Yukon: A History," (Parks Canada, August 8, 1979), p. 45.

30. Fred Bruemmer, "Herschel! The Big Town," The Beaver, December 1938, p. 34.

31. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 341.

32. Ibid, p. 341.

33. Yukon, Central Registry Files, YRG I, Series 1, Vol. 56, File 33839, Letter from C.H. Clarke, Canalaska Trading Company to Inspector T. Caulkin, RCMP, Herschel Island, 28 July 1926.

34. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 342.

35. Warner, "Herschel Island", p. 141.

36. Bockstoce, Whales, Ice and Men, p. 343.

Canadian Arctic Expedition, 1913-1916
National Museums of Canada
Canadian Museum of Civilization
Neg. #38668

Chapter 6 - Other Comings and Goings

While the main "waves" of humanity to occupy Herschel's sand spit built and lived there for a certain length of time, there were many others who simply stopped by or used the Island as a supply base for their operations in the Western Arctic. These visitors did not do so much to shape the Island as the Inuit, whalers, church, traders and police but their passing often left its mark on the Arctic nonetheless.

Roald Amundsen

Amundsen was a Norwegian explorer. He left Christiana, Norway in June 1903 aboard the sloop **Gjoa** in an attempt to sail the Northwest Passage. In September 1905, he was frozen in at King's Point west of Herschel Island. On the 26th of that month, he set out for Herschel, covering the forty miles in two days. He stayed with Captain Tilton aboard the whaler **Alexander** while on the Island and was a frequent quest of Reverend Whittaker. He accompanied Captain Mogg of the **Bonanza** on a trek south to Fort Yukon where he hoped to send news of his progress to the King of Norway. There being no telegraph at Fort Yukon, he continued on to Eagle where he sent his message. He waited there for two months to receive mail for his crew then returned to Herschel. The **Gjoa** broke out of the ice in July 1906 and sailed to Herschel where she was stuck again until August 10. Amundsen made Nome and completed the Northwest Passage on August 31.[1]

Vilhjalmur Stefansson

Vilhjalmur Stefansson was an anthropologist and explorer who had a keen interest in the topic of survival in the Arctic. He had developed this idea on his expedition to the North in 1908-1912. Stefansson was convinced that the Arctic was a friendly place where man could survive quite comfortably. He says in the preface to his book "The Friendly Arctic" that, even though the Inuit did not believe one could survive for long in the land of permanent ice beyond their own lands, he took this to be an unfounded belief of an ignorant people.[2] He was supported in his experiments to prove this out by the National Geographic Society and the American Museum of Natural History. For some reason, the Canadian Government under Robert Borden wanted the entire expedition in its own hands and funded the whole venture by themselves.

He selected the trader C.T. "Theodore" Pedersen as his sailing master and the man to pick the vessel for the venture. Since the whaling industry had recently folded up, there were four whaling ships that would suit his purposes - the **Herman, Jeannette, Elvira,** and **Karluk.** The Government purchased the **Karluk** for Stefansson's expedition. Stefansson eventually added the **Alaska, Polar Bear** and some smaller vessels to his fleet after the loss of the **Karluk.**

While he spent some time on Herschel, for the most part he used the Island as a meeting and resupply point for his

expedition. His longest stay was in 1917 when he came down with typhoid and was bedridden. He developed severe pneumonia and pleurisy from the illness. Constable Lamont, who contracted the same condition, died from it. The treatment given for typhoid in those days was a strict diet of milk. Since the Island had only the particularly awful powdered kind, Stefansson suffered greatly. He told his "nurses" repeatedly that the milk treatment was antiquated and that he should get hardy food which most modern hospitals prescribed for their patients. They ascribed this to delirium. When his condition became serious and prolonged, the Reverend Fry decided he would have Stefansson sledged out to Fort Yukon. Amazingly, once he was out in the fresh air and given frozen, raw fish to eat, he recovered almost immediately. At least that is Stefansson's story.[3]

Stefansson wrote a number of learned works on the Arctic, including a work on the Inuit trade jargon developed on Herschel Island. Dogmatic about his theories of Arctic lifestyle and contemptuous of those who did not agree with him, Stefansson also managed to alienate half the members of his expedition, the police, Hudson's Bay Company traders and even the church during his time on Herschel.[4]

Royal Canadian Corps of Signals

During the 1920's, the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals planned to put a wireless station on Herschel Island as part of their system of posts along the Arctic coast. The packed a

complete set and arranged with the Hudson's Bay Company to transport it to Herschel in 1924 aboard the **Lady Kindersley.** Unfortunately, the **Lady Kindersley** went down off Point Barrow on August 31 of that year with the entire radio set up for the station. The signalers who had been stationed on the Island, spent a winter with very little to do. There were many opposed to the establishment of the station on Herschel Island. The Bishop of the Mackenzie, the police and the Hudson's Bay Company all wanted to see the main station set up at Aklavik. Only Bishop Stringer stood firmly in favour of the Herschel location. In 1925, the main station was built at Aklavik. Herschel Island received a smaller sub-station in 1930. It operated until 1938. Only the small building in which it was housed remains.[5]

And Many Others

From the time the whalers settled in at Herschel Island, visitors began to arrive. Explorers, scientists, touring clergy, company people and government people regularly stopped in at the outpost.

In 1894, two scientists, Edouard de Sainville and Frank Russell, arrived at Herschel Island. Their trip was one of exploration and mapping, although both scientists made notes on meteorology, native customs and the whalers. De Sainville produced the first reliable maps of the Peel River.[6] He also created animosity among the whalers by bringing completely fabricated news of the outside to the information hungry

Americans.

In 1897, Andrew Jackson Stone travelled to Herschel on an expedition to collect botanical data for the American Museum of Natural History.[7] He too published his views of the Inuit and whaling life along with his scientific data.

Shortly after Roald Amundsen, Alfred Harrison arrived at Herschel Island on a privately funded venture in search of the "Polar Continent". While at Herschel in 1906, he mapped the island.[8] This, and his brief comments on the condition of the whalers and the flora of the Island, were his only real contributions to our knowledge of Herschel.

On April, 1918, Archdeacon Hudson Stuck visited Herschel Island as part of an Arctic tour. While he stayed only briefly to visit Reverend Fry, he had ample time to give a clear insight into life in the Arctic and the commercial improprieties of the Hudson's Bay Company.

November 1932 saw the arrival of the Porsild brothers on Herschel Island. They were part of the extraordinary plan conceived by the Lomand Brothers to transplant a large herd of reindeer from Alaska to the Eastern Arctic in the hopes of alleviating the chronic food shortages there. It took them many months to pass by the Herschel area. During this time they visited Herschel often to buy supplies from Pedersen and the Hudson's Bay Company.

The Arctic became more accessible during the 1920's and '30's due to the advent of the airplane and a regular

transportation network through the Beaufort Sea and on the Mackenzie River. This brought in more miners in search of gold on the Firth River, who purchased their supplies at Herschel. It also brought more church and Hudson's Bay Company administrators. Even "tourists" were drawn to the Arctic, in no small part thanks to Stefansson's popular books and articles on the "friendliness" of the place. Whether arriving by airplane or ship, they almost always stopped at Herschel Island. Women such as Gladys O'Kelly and Catherine Hoare, the wives of Hudson's Bay Company employees, came in the mid-1920's and produced magazine articles on their adventures. Pioneer bush pilots flew to the island with increasing regularity. Even the famous Lindbergs flew over on their way to China.

With the closing of the Hudson's Bay and police posts, however, Herschel Island lost its status as an outpost of civilization. The loss of the **Baychimo** had shown that, although it was more expensive and cumbersome, the route down the Mackenzie River was the safest way to supply the Western Arctic. During the 1940's, shipping declined and the police became far more mobile with their ship the **St. Roch**, airplanes and snow machines. Save for acting as a base for the **St. Roch** on its two trips through the Northwest Passage, Herschel Island was all but deserted save for the police dog breeders. The warehouses were no longer required for customs or the storage of trade goods.

After the police left the Island for good in 1964, there were only periodic government inspections of the buildings and

police graves on Herschel Island to ensure they were still standing. The police buildings on Herschel Island were held by Crown Assets Disposal from 1968. During the 1970's, the buildings were used by the Polar Continental Shelf Project as a base of operations. In 1972, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada recognized the national historic significance of Herschel Island and recommended that a plaque be erected at Pauline Cove commemorating the designation.[9]

The 1970's also saw new interest in Herschel Island by companies planning to develop the Beaufort Sea oil resources. With its natural harbour, the Island held the same attraction as it had for the whalers eighty years earlier. Both the federal and Territorial governments wished to preserve the buildings at Herschel Island and felt that oil development might prove hazardous to the health of the historic community.

Even though Parks Canada took over control of the police buildings in 1977, the ownership and responsibility for the remaining structures was not clear. After some wrangling over which level of government had the jurisdiction and responsibility for the preservation of the Island, the matter was solved by both sides agreeing to include Herschel Island in a proposed Northern park, exempting it from oil development. The Inuvialuit also wished to see the Island preserved and included a clause to that effect in their land claim agreement, saying that they too wished it designated as a park.[10] Hoping to ensure the sanctity of the historic settlement, the Government of Yukon designated the

Island as a Territorial Park in 1987. This was the first site to be brought under the Territorial Parks Act. The Island now holds the rather unusual status of being a Territorial park within a federal park reserve.

While it was hoped that the status accorded to Herschel Island through its designation as a park would protect it from further development, it was not long before the military was proposing to put a large communications tower on Herschel's promontory. Fortunately, however, the government and people of Yukon objected to the special status of their Arctic preserve being taken so lightly and quashed the motion.

The Island is now populated seasonally by "ologists" of all sorts, resembling the whalers in their variety if not their manners and lifestyle. The rich floral and birdlife in particular have made Herschel a special place for study. Restoration of the historic structures on Herschel has also been undertaken in recent years to preserve the physical reminders of the Island's colourful and varied past. These gentler waves of human activity are still watched by Inuit families who come to the Island, as they always have, to hunt and fish.

Chapter 6 Endnotes

1. Iris Wilson, "Herschel Island", Alaska Journal, Vol. 3, No. 3, Summer 1973, p. 140. See also Roald Amundsen, The North West Passage: The Gjoa Expedition, 1903-1907, (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1908, pp. 164-265.

2. Vilhjalmur Stefansson, The Friendly Arctic, (New York: Macmillan, 1921), pp. v-vi.

3. Ibid, pp. 678-82.

4. Canada, Department of the Environment, Parks Canada, Ken S. Coates, "The Northern Yukon: A History", August 8, 1979, pp. 148-152.

5. Canada, Department of the Environment, Parks Canada, Richard Stuart, "Herschel Island Resource Assessment", October 1982, p. 11.

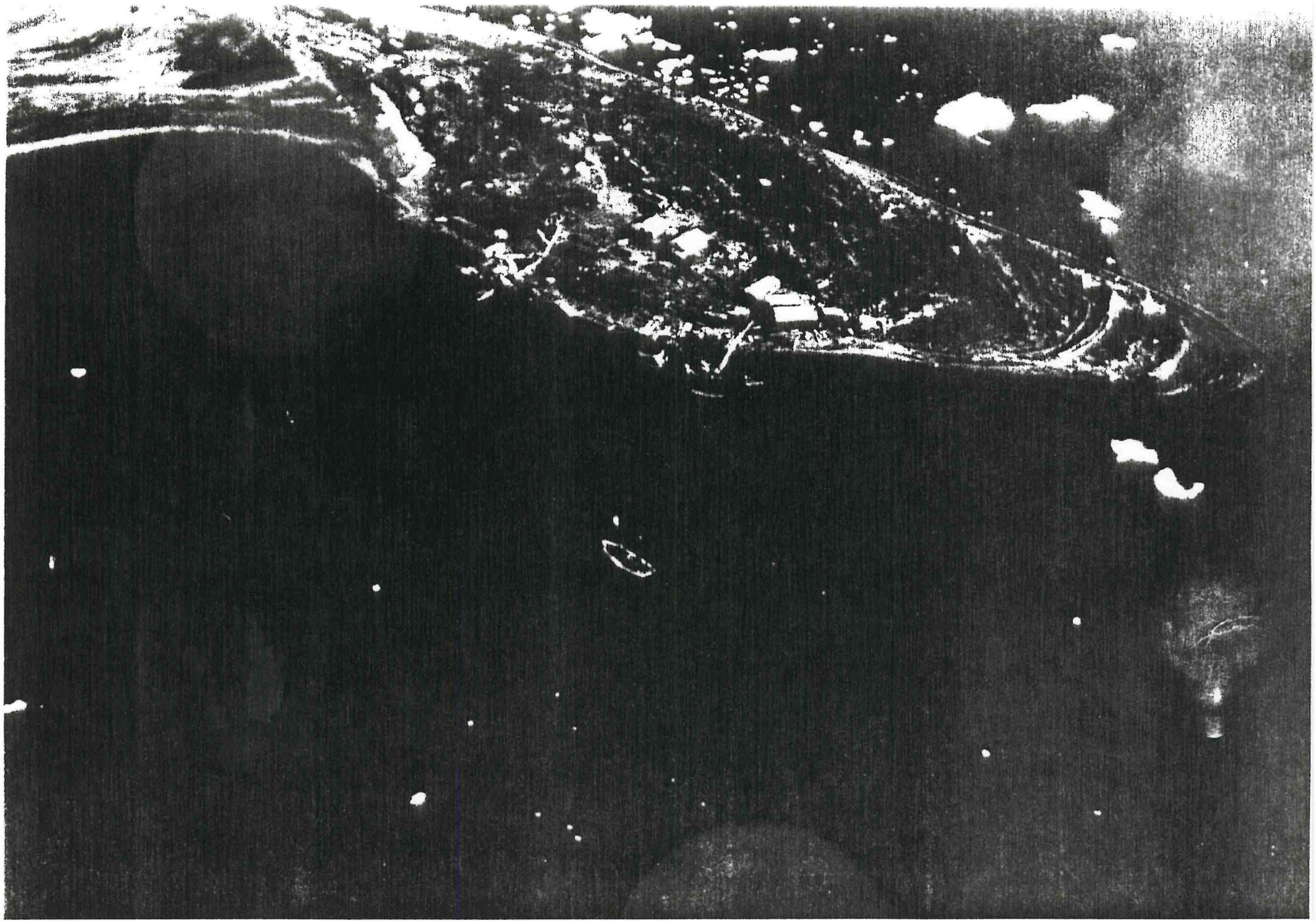
6. Coates, "The Northern Yukon: A History", p. 142.

7. Ibid, p. 157.

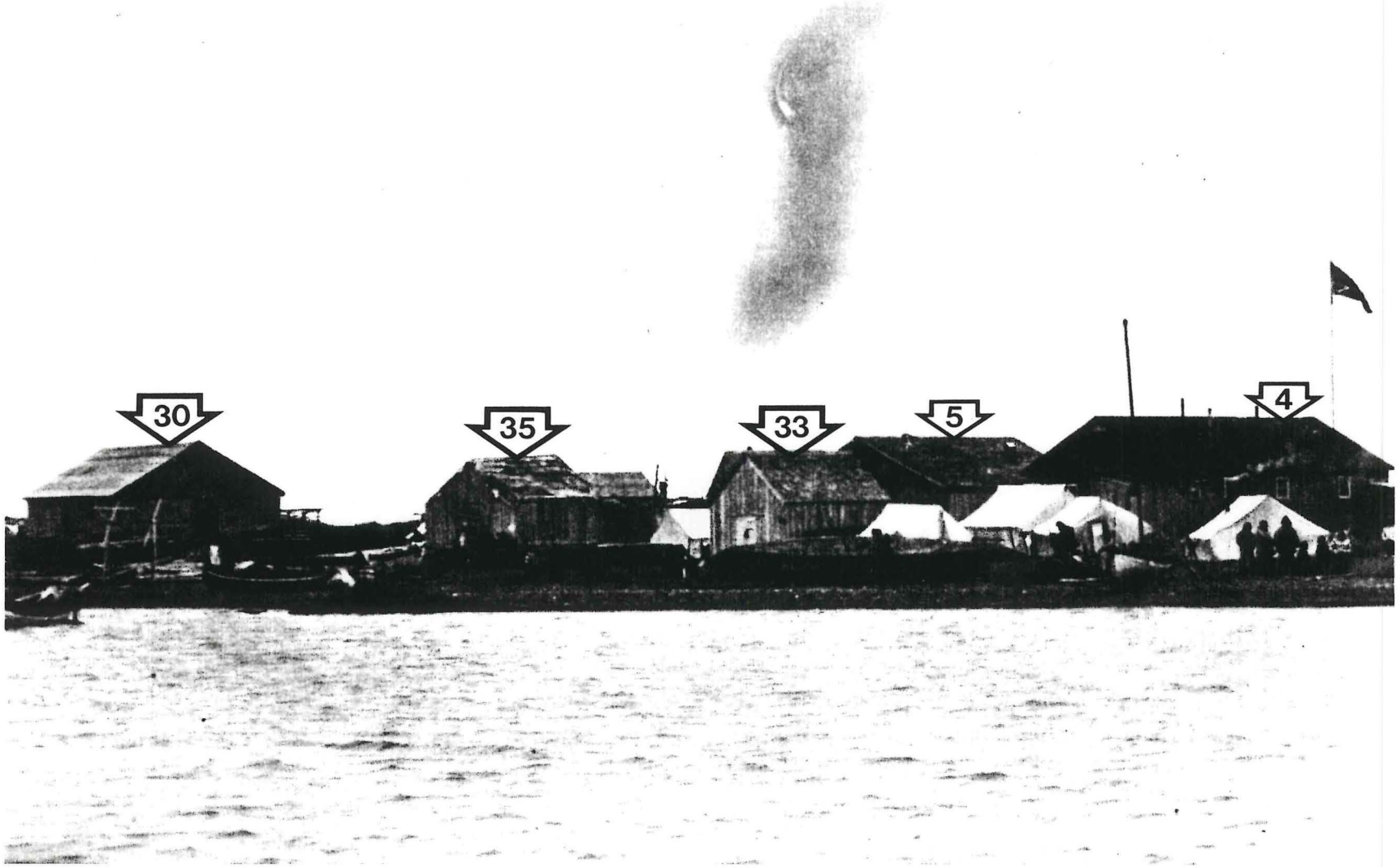
8. Ibid. p. 142.

9. Stuart, "Herschel Island", p. 13.

10. Western Arctic (Inuvialuit) Claims Settlement Act: Inuvialuit Final Agreement, Section 12.



Aerial View of spit and settlement
Charles E. Bunnell Collection
Alaska and Polar Regions Dept.
University of Alaska, Fairbanks



The numbered arrows refer to the site plan of the settlement area which follows the table of contents.
Canadian Arctic Expedition, 1913-1916
National Museums of Canada
Canadian Museum of Civilization
Neg. #51368

Chapter 7 - The Built History of Herschel Island

The Thule who occupied Herschel Island hundreds of years ago were house builders. The stone-lined depressions which formed the foundations for these structures are still to be found on the Island. The people who came after 1889 also built houses. They built warehouses, storage houses, ice houses and a mission house. These buildings are the physical legacy, or tidemark if you will, of the waves of humanity who occupied the sandspit around Pauline Cove. The Thule and later Inuit house pits are now part of the archaeological record and beyond the scope of this study. We will start the examination of the built record on Herschel Island, therefore, with the arrival of the whalers and their first structure on Herschel Island.

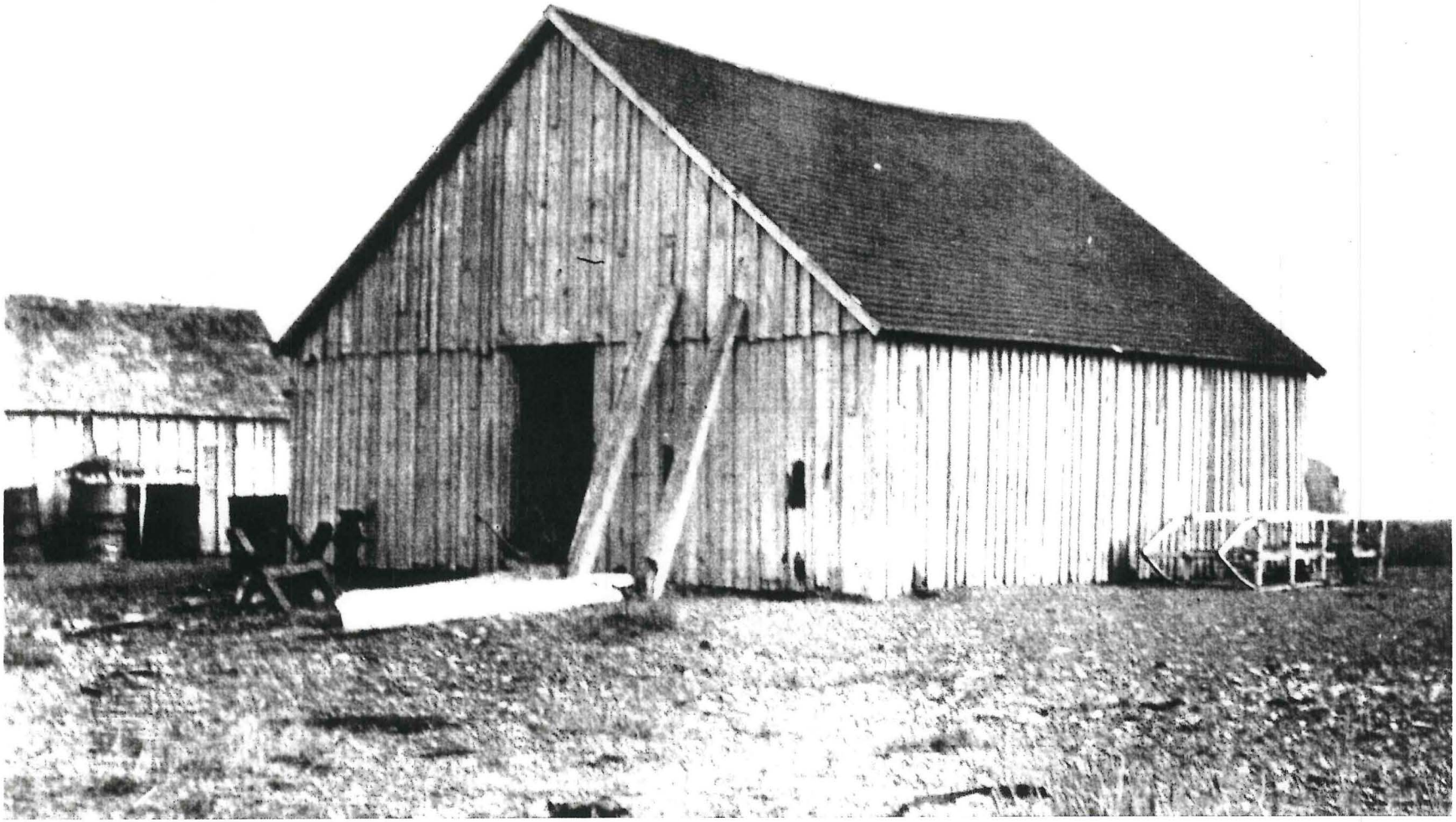
The study of the buildings on Herschel conducted by Richard Stuart of Parks Canada in 1982 is a thorough and detailed document. Rather than regurgitate the findings of his "Assessment", this chapter will provide a brief summary of each structure's history, so far as it is known, then provide references to the detailed physical data and specifications. The numbers following the building names refer to the Herschel Island site plan which follows the Table of Contents.

Which Came First?

The first building the whalers erected on Herschel Island may be a poor one to begin with as it is doubtful that it still

exists. Contrary to common assumption, the whalers did not build their first building at Pauline Cove when they arrived to winter in 1890. Why they chose not to build by the Cove first, when they knew this was where the best harbour lay, is something of a mystery. Instead they built at Advedlek Spit, on the southwestern corner of the Island where they unloaded 5,000 feet of lumber to build a structure forty feet square. A storehouse was constructed from this material, though whether its final dimensions were forty feet square is unknown. After their ships were frozen in at Pauline Cove, the crews dismantled the warehouse and moved it to the sand spit near the ships. Again, while they had material for a structure forty feet square, we do not know what was actually built. Some have speculated that the building called the "Bone House" was the original storehouse though there is no clear evidence of this to date.

It is likely that the first whaler's building was an unassuming structure called the "Pioneer House". It appears in a photograph c. 1893 where the community house is still relatively new (built in 1893) with the Newport House (probably built in 1892 according to Bockstoce) to the south of it. These are the only three major structures shown in the photograph, which includes most of the sandspit, and there is no mention in the whaling journals consulted of any others being built during this period. The police used the Pioneer House for storage until they salvaged it for materials in 1912. The lumber was used for general repairs and to build the patrol cabins which sprouted up



Identified as the woodshed by the R.C.M.P. in 1909. This building may possibly be the P.S.W.Co.'s Pioneer House.
R.C.M.P. Photo Archives

in reaction to Fitzgerald's Lost Patrol.

Sources:

Bockstoce, John. Whales, Ice and Men. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986.

Bodfish, Hartson. Chasing the Bowhead. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936.

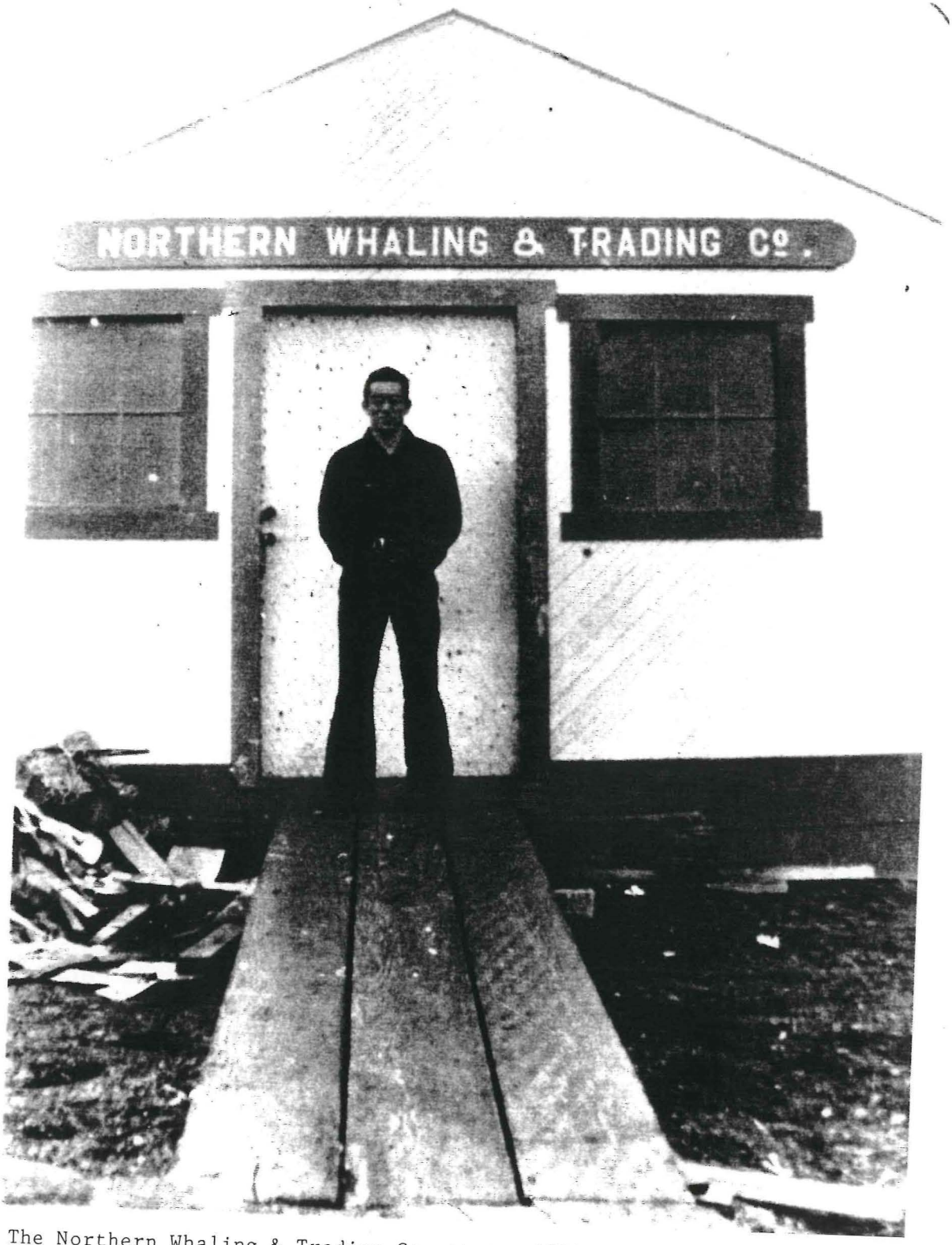
Canada. Department of the Environment. Parks Canada. Stuart, Richard. "Herschel Island: Resource Assessment". October, 1982.

Canada. Sessional Paper Number 28. Reports of the North-West Mounted Police, 1903-1912.

The Survivors

Northern Whaling and Trading Company Store and Warehouse

Captain Pederson of the Northern Whaling and Trading Company first set up his operations on Herschel Island in tents located just east of the site of his warehouse and store. Due to trade regulations, he found it convenient to form a Canadian company which he called Canalaska. In 1926, he bought land on Herschel and built a bonded warehouse on the Island which, again because of trade regulations, would allow him to continue trading east of the Island. The warehouse was a simple structure comprised of a frame covered with a single layer of boards overlaid with sheets of galvanized iron. Presumably, he erected the store at the same time. There is a small shed to the south of these two buildings supposed to belong to Pederson as well. Other than the fact that these were the only structures on the Island to have electric lights, powered by a generator on Pederson's boat, little else is known of the buildings. They



The Northern Whaling & Trading Co. store, 1934.
New Bedford Whaling Museum

were sold to the Hudson's Bay Company after Pederson left in 1936. Since the Bay left soon after, the care and use of the buildings fell to the police by default. The police used the buildings for storage and, by the late 1950's, the warehouse bore the sign "Canada Customs Warehouse". They considered purchasing them briefly in 1954 but nothing conclusive was done before the detachment closed down.

Sources:

Bockstoce, John. Whales, Ice and Men. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986.

Canada. Department of the Environment. Parks Canada. Stuart, Richard. "Herschel Island: Resource Assessment". October, 1982.

Yukon. Central Registry Files. YRG I, Series 1, Vol. 56, file 33839. Herschel Island - R.C.M.P., Northern Whaling and Trading Co., 1925 - 1955.

Pacific Steam Whaling Company Community House

In order to provide its men with recreational facilities during the long Arctic winters, the Pacific Steam Whaling Company sent precut lumber to Herschel Island in 1893 for the construction of a community house, forty by sixty feet. The building presently measures thirty by fifty-eight feet. It is constructed of "Oregon Pine", or fir, and redwood. The house was built with a large living room for card tables, a pool table, a billiard table and an office for Captain Murray, the company's manager and storekeeper. There was also a large storage room located at the south end of the building. It became the most prominent structure on the Island and formed a focus for the

little community.

When whaling activities moved further east to Baillie Island in 1897, the PSWCo. offered the community house to Reverend I.O. Stringer. The Anglican missionary used the building both for services and as a home for he and his wife. There are two descriptions of which rooms they occupied. Stringer's biographer, says they used the big front room, or billiard room, for a chapel, first aid and school room. They used a smaller room adjacent to this for their parlour, kitchen and bedroom. The latter must have been quite crowded with three Stringers and Sadie's uncle Will Young living there. Sadie Stringer, in her article, "My Husband Ate His Boots", written over fifty years later, says the whalers gave them "two rooms in the back of the warehouse where the whalebone and walrus tusks were stored...". It should be pointed out that what was back and what was front in this building is often confused. When the police described it, they often had it turned ninety degrees to the actual compass directions. It would appear, however, that Mr. and Mrs. Stringer were talking about opposite ends of the building.

After the Stringers left, Reverend Whittaker moved in with his family in 1901. The Whittakers remained in residence until the tragic death of their young daughter. They closed the mission and left the Island in April 1906. The police immediately swooped in and made the building their detachment headquarters. It took years to negotiate a sale from the PSWCo., but the police gained title to the building in 1911 in a block

lands and chattels purchase which saw them acquire all the PSWCo. buildings and property for the price of $1500. Fitzgerald's report of 1907 contains a list of the materials comprising the building and the dimensions and finish of each room. The house had been organized into seven rooms by this time. The hallway which divides the east and west rooms at the south end of the building does not appear to have been constructed yet, judging by the room dimensions given. The two rooms in the southeast corner were still one large room.

In its incarnation as police headquarters, the billiard and dining rooms were partitioned using the upstairs flooring. The partitions were covered on each side with calico, purchased from the ships, to stop the drafts. The Officer Commanding had one room and the Constables shared a small bedroom. These room divisions appear to have been made at the time of the March 1907 report. The dining room, kitchen and bedroom had been papered before the police took it over. They replaced the carpets with linoleum and repapered the walls in 1909.

The police reported on the repairs and alterations made to the house in their annual reports. Minor repairs were made regularly but, in 1912, a general upgrading of the building was undertaken which involved much painting, papering, and the beginning of shingling the exterior walls.

The community house continued to be used as police headquarters until they shut the post in 1964. Thereafter, it was occupied seasonally by such agencies as the Polar Continental

Mrs. Stringer, Rowena and Herschel at Herschel Island
Stringer Photos
General Synod Archives/Anglican Church of Canada

Looking east along the Sandspit. The Newport House is on the left and the P.S.W.Co. Community House is in the center of the photograph.
R.C.M.P. Photo Archives

Shelf Project and government departments doing work on the Island.

Sources:

Bockstoce, John. Whales, Ice and Men. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986.

Bodfish, Hartson. Chasing the Bowhead. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936.

Canada. Department of the Environment. Parks Canada. Stuart, Richard. "Herschel Island: Resource Assessment". October, 1982.

Canada. Sessional Paper Number 28. Reports of the North-West Mounted Police, 1903-1912.

Peake, Frank A. The Bishop Who Ate His Boots. Don Mills, Ont.: The Anglican Church of Canada, 1966.

Stringer, Mrs. I.O. "My Husband Ate His Boots". MacLean's Magazine, 9 July 1955.

Bone House

The building was used by the whalers for the storage of baleen or "bone", hence its name. The structure was originally 21' x 34'6", and later extended with two wings ten feet long running the length of the building. It was built of rough lumber, covered with canvas, which was eventually shingled over. Based on photographic evidence, Stuart estimates this structure to have appeared at its present location between 1896 and 1901. He refers to "present location" since he entertains the possibility that it was erected elsewhere on the Island then re-erected here sometime during this period.

There is little known about what the Bone House was used for between the time the whalers left their buildings c. 1896, and

the police beginning to use it sometime prior to 1915. There is one isolated police report that the Inuit were using the Bone House for Anglican church services in 1912.

Although the police did not indicate any real interest in the Bone House when they were negotiating to purchase the Community House, they acquired it in 1911 as part of their block purchase of the Pacific Steam Whaling Company assets. They put it to use thereafter as a storage place for various materials including items left on the Island by Inuit and itinerant traders. Mainly, however, they kept wood, coal, flammable fluids, sailing gear and dogs in the building. The western shed-roofed addition was partitioned off so that each dog had its own kennel.

Bishop Stringer thought this to be a waste of a perfectly useful building. He wrote to Prime Minister Borden in 1915 requesting that the mission be given the building so that the lumber could be used in the construction of a church or school. The police were firm in their desire to retain the building, however, and the mission was denied its request. Besides its important storage function, the police wished to retain the Bone House to serve as a bonded warehouse and, only slightly less important, as a windbreak for their headquarters.

When court was held on Herschel in 1923, the trial was held in the community house. The sentence, however, was carried out in the Bone House. The two Inuit murderers, Tatamagana and Alikomiak, were hung here on February 1, 1924. While some

The Bonehouse (left), Blubber house (right rear) and building #11 (right foreground)
Canadian Arctic Expedition, 1913-1916
National Museums of Canada
Canadian Museum of Civilization
Neg. #51360

reports refer to a gallows being erected in the House, oral tradition has it that the two were hung from the rafters. This is the reason, I was told, why one of the rafters has been cut out. It supposedly resides in the police museum in Regina.

This is one of the few police buildings reported to be in good condition when they abandoned the detachment in 1964. It has seen subsequent use for storage but little else.

Sources:

Bockstoce, John. Whales, Ice and Men. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986.

Canada. Department of the Environment. Parks Canada. Stuart, Richard. "Herschel Island: Resource Assessment". October, 1982.

Canada. Department of the Environment. Parks Canada. Personal communication from Superintendent, Yukon National Historic Sites to Rob Ingram, 1984.

Canada. Sessional Paper Number 28. Reports of the North-West Mounted Police, 1903-1912.

R.C.C.S. Wireless Building

This 21' x 25' building was constructed by the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals in 1930. It functioned in this capacity until 1938, closing down after the Bay and the rest of the community left Herschel. The equipment was removed from the building but the structure was left intact. It later became the Special Constable's Quarters for the police, who acquired it formally in 1954 after finding out it belonged to Thomas Umaok

and not the police as they had supposed. There are also references to its use as an R.C.M.P. Communications Building though no documentation was found to support this.

Sources:

Canada. Department of the Environment. Parks Canada. Stuart, Richard. "Herschel Island: Resource Assessment". October, 1982.

St. Patrick's Mission, Herschel Island

During the quarter century of formal Anglican Church operations at Herschel Island, the missionaries occupied an eclectic variety of quarters. In 1895, after Stringer persuaded the whalers to contribute to the cost of establishing a mission on Herschel Island, he purchased a small store(house) and a sod hut for the princely sum of $180. The latter structure was the Stringers first married home when they arrived at Herschel Island the following year. Despite such homey touches as curtains made from the torn muslin of Sadie's wedding dress, the hut was their abode for only three weeks before the Stringers moved to Fort McPherson for the winter.

When the missionaries returned the following year, their quarters were luxurious in comparison. They had the use of the large community house built by the whalers (see Community House). The Stringers made good use of this building; it served as church, hospital, school and personal living quarters. When the Stringers left Herschel Island in 1901, the building was occupied by the Whittaker family for another five years.

From 1906 until 1915, the island was only visited irregularly by itinerant missionaries. Probably many of these stayed with the police who had bought the Community House in 1911. When the mission was re-established on the Island in 1916, Isaac Stringer, now Bishop of Yukon, was determined that the Herschel congregation would have a suitable place of worship. To this end, he ordered a supply of lumber from San Francisco and sent Archdeacon Whittaker a set of drawings and detailed instructions regarding the type of structure he wished to be constructed. Despite his experience of several Arctic winters, Stringer appeared unconcerned as to where the new missionaries would live, casually suggesting they might dwell in either a sod hut or the partly completed church.

Not surprisingly, the Frys, who were running the mission at the time, did not share this opinion and one can imagine their dismay upon arriving at the island in late July to find "no church, no wood, no house & no boat". Harding, the Hudson's Bay trader, who apparently had been contracted to build the church, refused to build a church that year but suggested he could help with a house. Under the supervision of Whittaker, a crew of Indians from Fort McPherson quickly laid a floor and raised the walls on a two-storey, twenty by thirty foot structure. Fry borrowed Whittakers boat to pick up the windows from his former mission station at Kittigazuit. When Harding sold the remainder of his lumber to another builder, Fry was forced to make use of the supplies allotted for the church to complete the mission

house. (See Anglican Church Records, Diocese of Yukon, I.l.a., Box 3, file 16 for a listing of the lumber sent for the church.)

Although no plans were drawn to show the new mission house, both the Frys give detailed descriptions of the layout of its interior in their letters. (These are quoted verbatim in Rick Stuart's report). Over the next few years they give a vivid description of life in the mission house. The building was hard to heat. The mission stoves consumed thirty-six cords of wood one winter and the Frys continually exceeded their fuel allowance. They were most appreciative of any comforts such as the linoleum rug that arrived in the summer of 1918. When Archdeacon Stuck visited the couple earlier that year, he commented on the British Admiralty Arctic Charts that were hung on the walls. No doubt these hangings served a dual purpose by discouraging drafts as well as providing information.

In March of 1917, Fry sent Bishops Stringer and Lucas an inventory of mission property on Herschel Island. In addition to the house, the list of buildings included a workshop, the old store (presumably the building bought in 1895 from the whalers which Fry later used as a hospital during the 1918 epidemic) and a small outbuilding.

After the Frys left in 1919, and the subsequent relocation of the mission to Shingle Point, the mission buildings were used for several years to house missionary visitors and by layworker Thomas Umaok when he resided on the Island. In later years, however, the mission house was gutted and now houses a large

The Anglican mission house, Herschel Island.
Yukon Archives, McCullum Collection.

summer population of guillemots.

Sources:

Anglican Church Records. Diocese of Yukon. Fry, W.H. Correspondence, I.l.a., Box 3, file 16.

Canada. Department of the Environment. Parks Canada. Stuart, Richard. "Herschel Island: Resource Assessment". October, 1982.

Peake, Frank. The Bishop Who Ate His Boots. Don Mills, Ont.: The Anglican Church of Canada, 1966.

Stringer, Mrs. I.O. "My Husband Ate His Boots", Maclean's Magazine, 9 July 1955, 11 p.

Stuck, Hudson. A Winter Circuit of our Arctic Coast. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920.

Ice Houses

The first ice house was blasted out of the frozen earth in March, 1891. Apparently, the idea was copied from the Inuit who stored their meat in the ground and covered it with skins. The whalers would dig down through the overburden until they hit ice, usually at a depth of about two feet. They then employed powder and dynamite to blast a hole eighteen feet long, eight feet wide and twelve feet deep. The hole was roofed over with driftwood logs covered with three or four feet of dirt and sod. A small door, about four feet square, was left in one end.

The ice houses were used to preserve the large amounts of meat, brought to the Island over the winter, through the relatively hot summer months.

Sources:

Icehouses
Charles E. Bunnell Collection
Alaska and Polar Regions Dept.
University of Alaska

Bodfish, Hartson. Chasing the Bowhead. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936.

Others

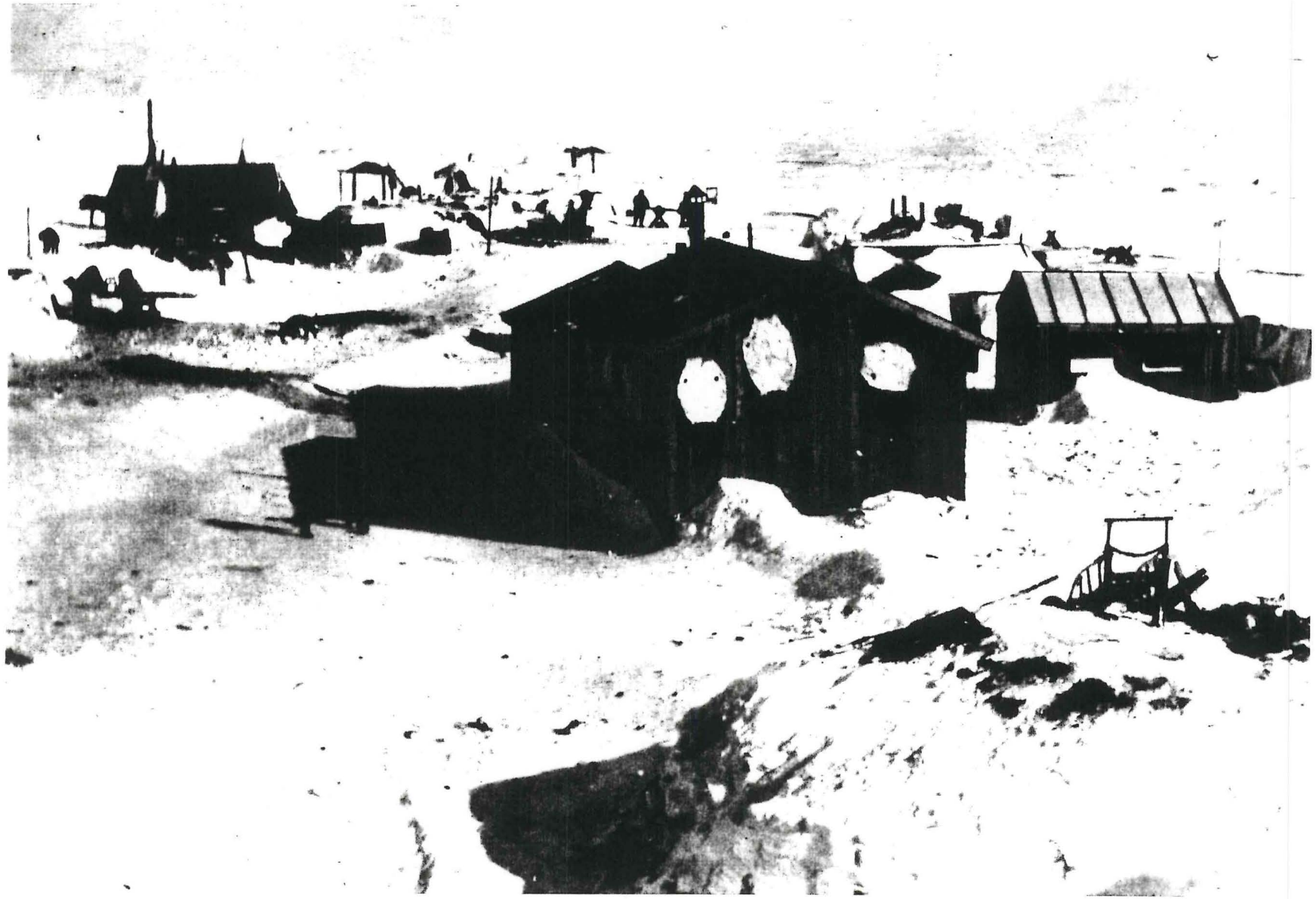
There are other survivors on the Island. These are smaller buildings about which virtually nothing is known. The appellations given here may be erroneous, or even misleading, but the names are in usage in other documents.

The **Captain McKenna House** is a small, shingle-clad dwelling to the east of the Bone House. It appears in photographs as early as 1893. The Captain's name was discovered carved into the wall, hence its appellation. It is also known from police reports that there was a house on the Island belonging to McKenna.

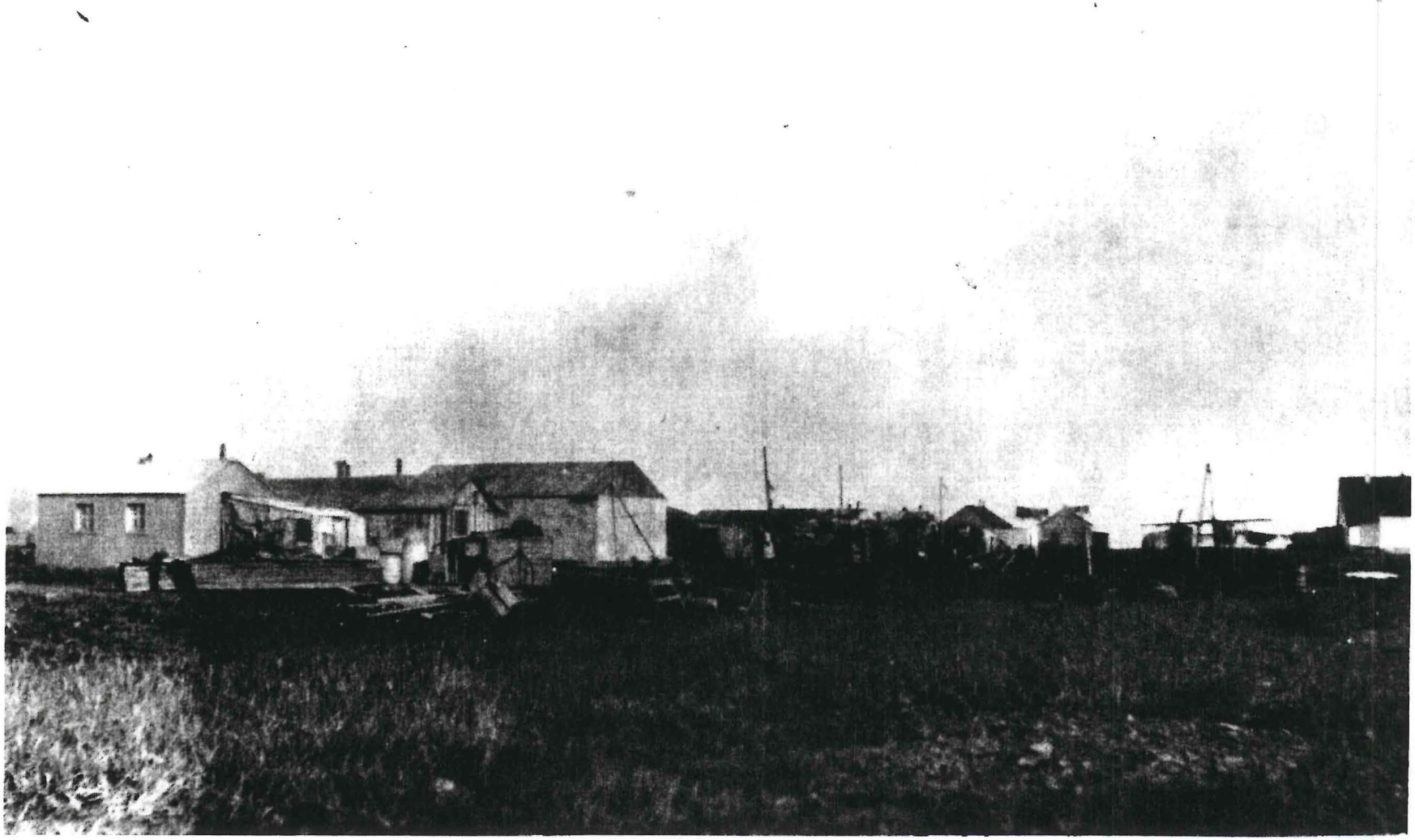
There is a small building called the **Blubber House** which shows up in police reports. Whether it was actually used for rendering or storing blubber is unknown. It stands to the south of the R.C.C.S. Building. It appears in photographs dating from as early as the turn of the century. The building was originally about twice its present size.

The **Dog Kennels** or **Dog House** at the extreme southern end of the site was used by the police for their dog breeding program. Whether it had seen a different use previously is unknown. They do not appear in photographs until the post World War II era.

There are two other small buildings on the Island. One is refered to as the **Storage Building** by the police reports. The other has no name and no known history.



Herschel Island, 1909. The building in the center is the blubber house.
R.C.M.P. Photo Archives



Several of the smaller dwellings on Herschel Island. Predominantly framed structures.
R.C.M.P. Photo Archives

Sources:

Canada. Department of the Environment. Parks Canada. Stuart, Richard. "Herschel Island: Resource Assessment". October, 1982.

Canada. Annual Departmental Reports, No. 21, Vol. LX, No. 4, 1937, Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The Lost Buildings

Inuit Sod Houses

It is an erroneous assumption among many people that, until modern times, the Inuit live in igloos in the winter. This is not actually the case. When the whalers brought Alaskan Inuit with them to Herschel Island, they added to the resident Inuit population and at least two winter housing styles emerged: the traditional igloo and the pit house, which was another form of traditional winter domicile.

Briefly, this latter structure consisted of four central posts with wall timbers leaning into them and a roof thickly covered with sod blocks.

From Inspector Howard's report of 1905, we get a more detailed vision. For winter:

> a square of about twenty-five feet is marked out, this is then dug out to a depth of four to five feet, and at each of the corners a pole of driftwood procured from the beach is driven in the ground about a foot from the wall of the square they have dug out. Other posts are now driven in the ground at intervals between the four corner posts. Logs of driftwood are now procured from the beach and piled between these posts and the side of the wall, one on top of the other, until the wall is built up to the top of the posts. Logs are then placed across the top to form a ceiling, and

> against the outside and upon the roof, earth and sod is piled up until it has the appearance of a mound when seen from a short distance. A small, square opening is left in the roof, in the centre and across this is stretched the transparent bladder of the seal or walrus. A small platform runs around three sides of the room, and is the place where they sit during the day and sleep at night. These platforms are covered with deerskin robes. A small doorway is made in the fourth side of the square leading to a smaller room built in the same manner as the larger one already described. At the far end of this room is a small shaft of varying depth leading to the outside. This is the entrance to the house, and is kept closed during stormy weather to prevent snow from drifting in, being covered either with boards or skins. These houses are very warm, but of course are very dark and badly ventilated, and must be unhealthy. When the warm weather comes these houses become so damp that they are no longer habitable, and the Esquimaux are compelled to move to summer quarters.

Later photographs and descriptions depict these structures put together in a less formal manner using any wood, including packing crates and finished lumber and fixtures, that could be found as driftwood had become scarce. Old pieces of canvas and hides were thrown over them to make the structure somewhat waterproof. The appearance and aroma of this Arctic Ghetto caused one woman to dub the string of ramshackle huts "Rotten Row".

Sources:

Bockstoce, John. Whales, Ice and Men. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986.

Canada. Sessional Paper Number 28. Reports of the North-West Mounted Police, 1907.

O'Kelly, Gladys. "A Woman's Arctic Log. No.3 -Arctic Flora and Strange People." The Beaver. May 1924.

Sod dwellings
R.C.M.P. Photo Archives

RCMP Officers Quarters

Upon his arrival on Herschel Island in 1927, Inspector Kemp notes that a house had been put up recently by his predecessor, Inspector Caulkin. The foundations for this structure, or at least a configuration of timbers suggesting underpinnings, show up in a photograph dated c. 1925. The house itself appears in subsequent photographs until the late 1930's. It then disappears from the pictorial record, leading one to suspect that this was the "C" type dwelling mentioned in police reports as being removed to Aklavik in 1936.

Sources:

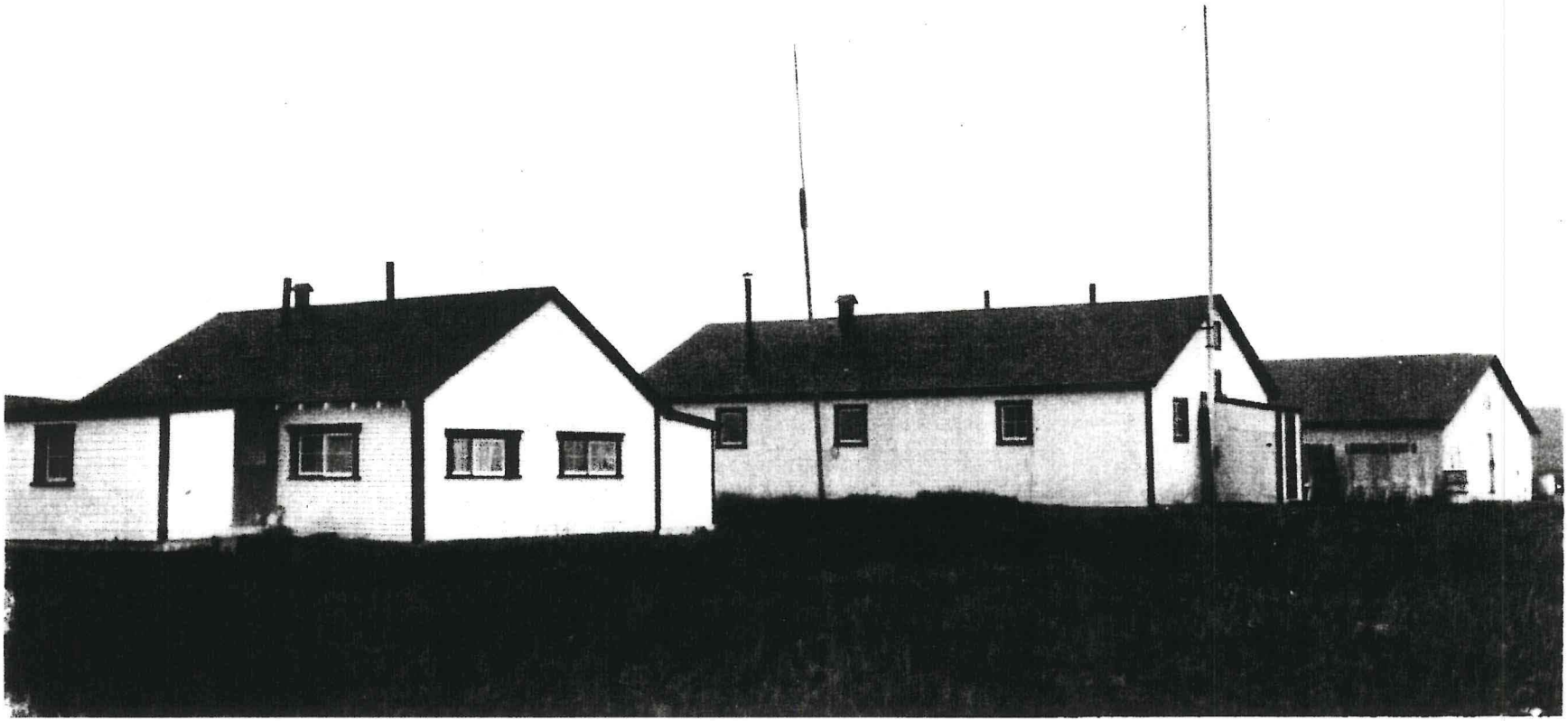
Kemp, Vernon. Without Fear, Favour or Affection: Thirty Five Years with the RCMP. Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1958.

Canada. Annual Departmental Reports, No. 21, Vol. LX, No. 4, 1937, Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Newport House

This structure was standing by 1893. Little information is available concerning its use during the time of the whalers but it probably served as another warehouse for winter supplies.

By 1907, the R.N.W.M.P. were renting this building, the detachment quarters and a wood shed from the PSWCo. for twenty dollars a month. Staff Sergeant Fitzgerald briefly described this building in a report. It was twenty by forty feet, constructed of "surfaced" Oregon Pine, had a porch on the east end, the roof was shingled and the walls and roof were doubled. In a brief evaluation of the structure, he determined that the



Police detachment buildings. Left to right, type 'C' dwelling, barracks, bonehouse.
R.C.M.P. Photo Archives

"Newport House will hold more stores than is needed here for years". This was one of the buildings included in the PSWCo. property at Herschel Island bought by the police in 1911.

Despite Fitzgerald's doubts regarding the need for this structure, over the next decade it became important for storage. It could hold up to two years of supplies and was "a good distance away in case of fire, all provisions etc. being stored in this building." After Bishop Stringer of the Anglican Church was turned down in his attempts to buy the Bone House, he approached the police in 1917 attempting to purchase the Newport House for lumber. Again, they firmly refused.

The Newport House was used by the detachment until the police post closed in 1964. By the early seventies, it was being used informally for fuel storage by a number of groups. As well, Dr. John Bockstoce used it to store a number of artifacts collected on the Island. The building and its contents were destroyed in an accidental fire in 1973.

Sources:

Anglican Church. Diocese of Yukon. I.1.b. Communities, Box 9, file 6, Herschel Island.

Bockstoce, John. Personal communication to Rob Ingram, 1981.

Canada. Department of the Environment. Parks Canada. Stuart, Richard. "Herschel Island: Resource Assessment". October, 1982.

Canada. Sessional Paper Number 28. Reports of the North-West Mounted Police, 1907.

Feeding police sled dogs - Fall 1916. Newport House in the background.
R.C.M.P. Photo Archives

Hudson's Bay Store, Warehouses and Residence

The Hudson's Bay made two efforts to open their post at Herschel Island. The first, in 1914, failed when the two ships carrying lumber and supplies from Vancouver were caught in the ice while travelling the long route through the Bering Strait and along the Arctic coast. In July of 1915, the **Ruby** arrived at Pauline Cove carrying Bay trader Chris Harding and sufficient lumber to build a store, dwelling and warehouse.

Harding and his assistant, Rudolph Johnson, put up a store, house, warehouse, shop, dog house, store house, coal house, outhouse and wharf in the autumn of 1915. The wharf was destroyed soon after in a gale and had to be rebuilt but the others stood for many years. From a Company report for the years 1922 and 1923, the buildings listed include:

1. Oil House
   12x18x8
   corrugated iron walls and roof

2. Warehouse
   30x60x10 foot walls x 8ft.*
   corrugated iron walls, 2x6 studding

3. Shop
   16x30-8ft. walls x 6*
   shiplap inside and out

4. Dwelling House
   27x33-8ft walls x 13*
   five ground floor rooms, including office, and five upstairs rooms, including warm storage.

5. Coal Shed and Dog House
   11x12x8
   corrugated iron walls

(* This is the way the dimensions were written out. The last figure may refer to the height of roof peak above the side wall.)

This is only a partial description of the buildings. The report also lists the building materials and other details such as doors, windows and rubberoid roofs. For some reason it does not include a description of the store. A later report lists the "Old Store and D.O. Office" (district office) as measuring 15x30 plus lean to. The "Old Store" likely refers to the fact that the store function was moved into the old warehouse sometime before the post was considered abandoned in 1937.

In 1923, the Bay built a new warehouse closer to the Cove from the original one. It measured 32x122.

By 1938, the Bay had locked up all their buildings and moved their operations to Shingle Point. Although the buildings were considered abandoned in 1937, a 1943 Company report lists the condition of each building and notes that they are to be demolished and the material moved to "Tuktuk".

Sources:

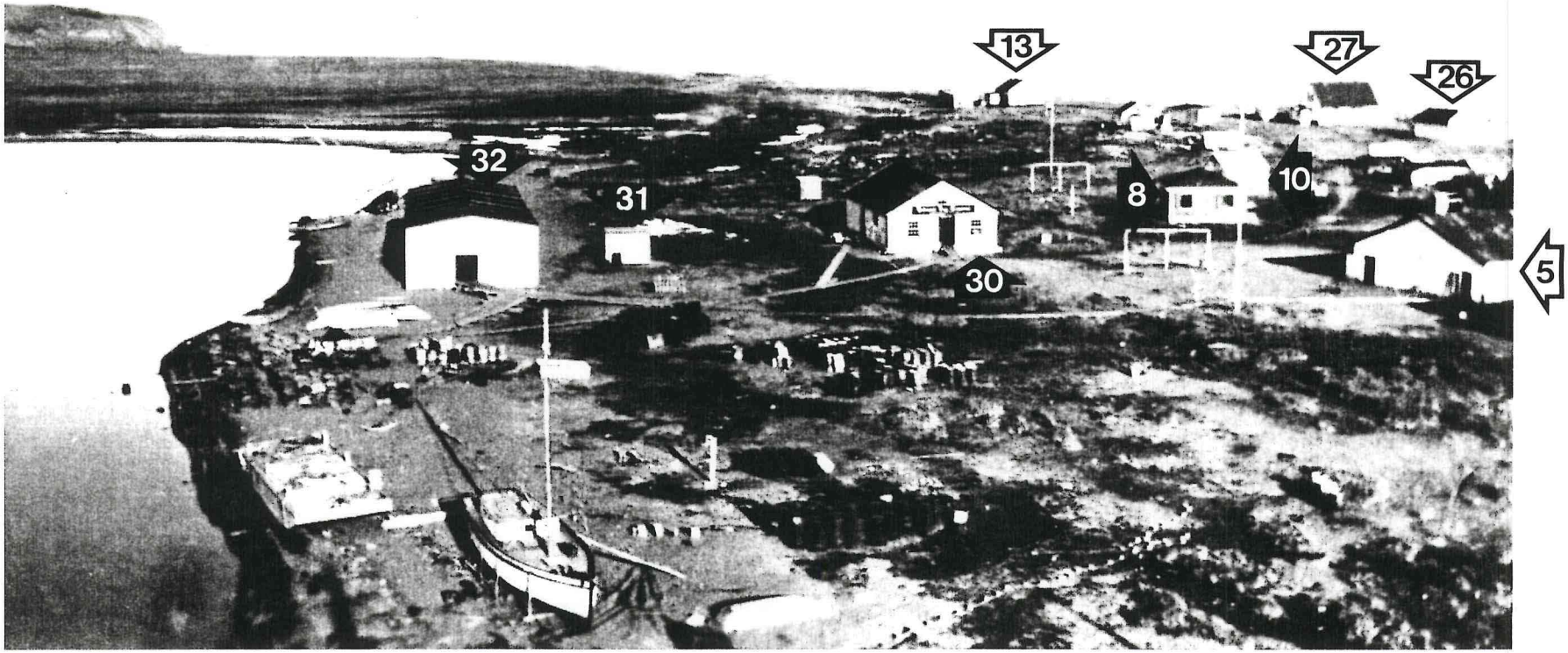
Hudson's Bay Company Archives. Record Group 3/27b/2. Journal Western Arctic Outfit, 1914-1917.

Record Group 7, RBL B/20. Herschel Island, 1923-1942. Summary of Lands and Buildings.

G 7/5 (30). Description of Buildings at Herschel Island Post, Western Arctic Outfit 252 and 253.

G 7/6 (15). Plan of Buildings at Herschel Island. Western Arctic District, 1920 (with revisions to 1923).

The H.B.Co. store (left) and dwelling (right). Smaller storage buildings are visible behind the dwelling.
Canadian Arctic Expedition. 1913-1916
National Museums of Canada
Canadian Museum of Civilization
Neg. #51364

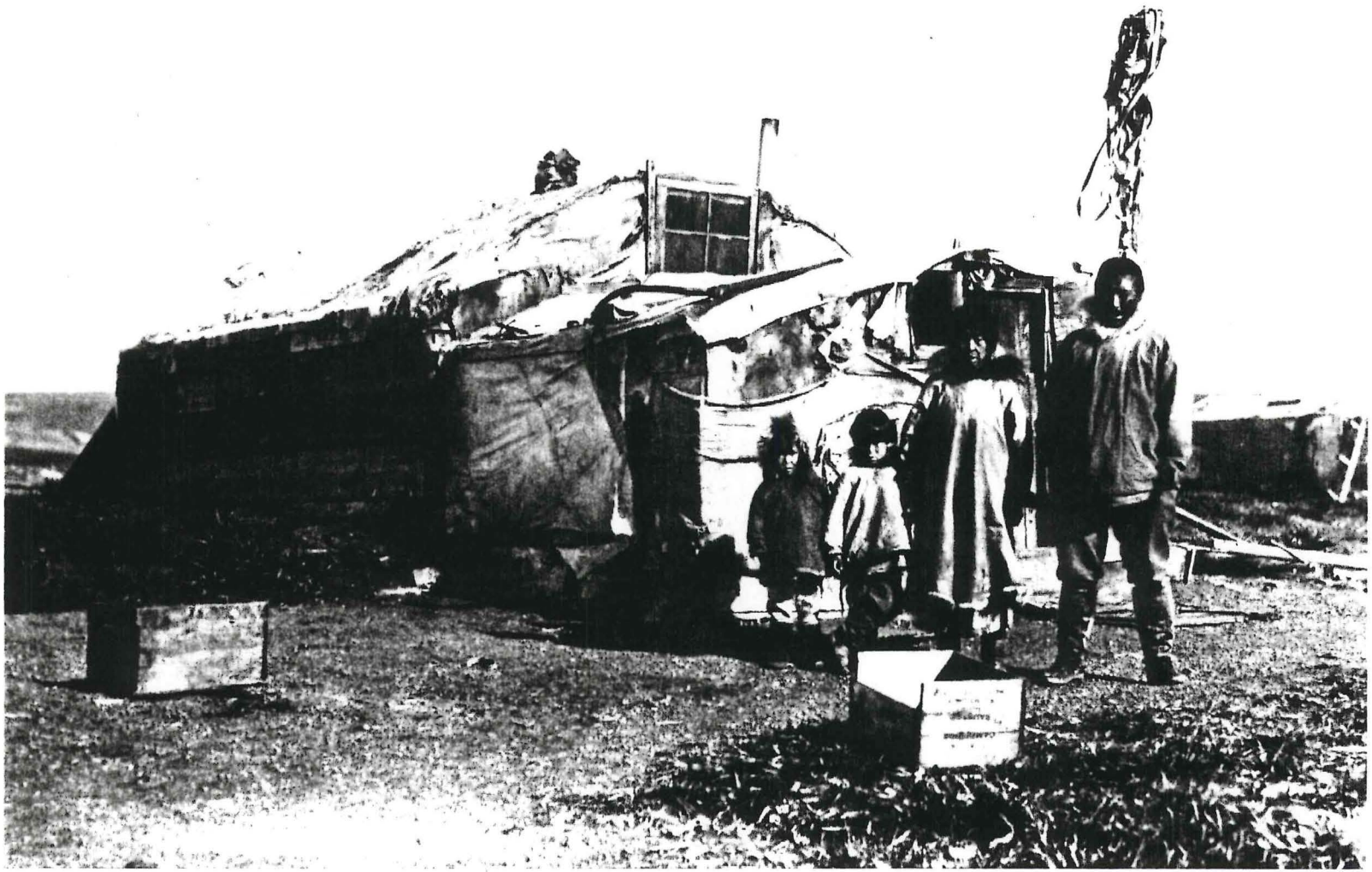


The numbered arrows refer to the site plan of the settlement area which follows the table of contents.
New Bedford Whaling Museum

Also Lost

There were literally dozens of small huts and storage houses used by the whalers and Inuit. For the most part these occupied the now empty stretch of the point between the main cluster of buildings and the Anglican Mission. Photographic evidence indicates that these were not all squalid little heaps or ramshackle collections of boards. There were some fairly sizable frame dwellings on the sandspit as well. Since the evidence found to date on the company and government buildings is sparse, it is unlikely that the identity and composition of these "lesser" structures will ever be discovered.

Various types of dwellings on Herschel Island. Building #10 is possibly visible on the left side of the photograph.
R.C.M.P. Photo Archives



Typical Inuit dwelling, ca. late 1920's.
Yukon Archives, Finnie Collection

APPENDICES

HERSCHEL ISLAND: CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

1826 . In July, Sir John Franklin stops here on his second expedition and christens the island, Herschel Island

1837 . Peter Dease and Thomas Simpson pass by Herschel Island while mapping the Arctic coast from Return Reef to Point Barrow. This was an HBCo. sponsored venture.

1888 . Little Joe Tuckfield travels east of Point Barrow to scout whaling prospects. Found good whaling in the eastern Beaufort Sea and a safe harbour at Herschel Island.

1889 . Seven whaleships and the **USS Thetis** drop anchor on the east side of Herschel Island.
. Stockton makes first map of Island and names many of its features including Pauline Cove. Map was published the following year.

1890 . The **Grampus,** the **Nicoline** and the **Mary D. Hume** reach Herschel Island prepared to overwinter.
. J.A. Drayton dies and becomes first occupant of whalers' cemetery.
. Mackenzie River Diocese is split in two; the new Yukon District is christened Diocese of Selkirk and Bompas becomes its Bishop.
. Canadian Government notified of the presence of whalers in western Arctic.

1891 . Bompas writes government authorities complaining of treatment of Inuit by American whalers.

1892 . The **Mary D. Hume** arrives in San Francisco with record whale catch, a cargo of 37 whales worth $400,000.
. The **Jeanie** arrives as the first tender or supply ship for the remaining PSWCo. vessels.
. Isaac Stringer ordained May 15 in Toronto then travels north to mission among the Inuit of the Mackenzie Delta and Arctic Coast.

1893 . The most profitable year for whaling with 286 whales taken.
. PSWCo. community house built.
. Stringer leaves Fort McPherson for first visit to Herschel Island on April 2nd, arrives May 1st and stays three weeks.
. Returns to Herschel Island in November and conducts first service in PSWCo. house using the billiard table as an altar.

1894 . Edouard de Sainville and Frank Russell arrive at

Herschel Island.
. The first game of baseball was played in the Arctic.
. Stringer visits Herschel Island in Sept. Stayed with Capt Murray who was caretaking the PSWCo. property. Slept on the billiard table in the company house and helped shingle the roof.
. First season the wives and families of the captains overwintered at Herschel Island.
. Stringer, McDonald, Firth and Camsell sign petition requesting end to liquor trade between whalers and Inuit.

1895 . Stringer arrives at Herschel Island April 16. Holds a large service the following Sunday in community house.
. In May, Stringer holds christening service for Helen Herschel Sherman on board the **Beluga**.
. Captains of the whalers sign an undertaking to "suspend the liquor traffic" as it related to area natives.
. Arrival of Charles Edward Whittaker in the Arctic.
. In June, Bishop Reeve, Stringer and Whittaker visit Herschel Island. Over $650. is collected from whaling captains toward establishment of a mission on Herschel Island. Sod house and small store are purchased for temporary accommodation.
. Isaac Stringer leaves north on furlough via the **Jeanie**.
. Captain Weeks dies.
. Whittaker visits Herschel Is. while Stringer outside.
. John Firth, Hudson's Bay trader at Fort McPherson threatens to cut off the whaler's mail if they don't cease trading for fur.

1896 . Stringer marries Sarah Ann "Sadie" Alexander on Mar. 10 and returns to north. After a few weeks at Herschel Island, the Stringers spend winter in Fort McPherson where Sadie gives birth to Rowena Victoria.

1897 . Five die in sudden blizzard during baseball game.
. Four ships crushed in the ice: **Navarch**, the **Jesse H. Freeman**, the **Rosario** and the **Orca**.
. Most of the fleet begins wintering at Baillie Island.
. Stringers and W.D. Young return to Herschel Island to establish mission. Building supplies ordered from San Francisco for church and residence were appropriated by whalers. PSWCo. give Stringers use of community house for use as residence and chapel.
. Andew Jackson Stone arrives at Herschel Island.

1900 . No ships overwinter at Herschel for the next two years.
. Birth of Frederick Herschel to Stringers in May.
. Comptroller White begins inquiry into establishing police post on Herschel Island.

1901 . Stringers leave Herschel Island on the **Narwhal.**
. Whittaker takes over Herschel mission.

1903 . Sgt. F.J. Fitzgerald, Cst. F.D. Sutherland and an interpreter arrive at Herschel Island to set up a RNWMP post.
. Stringer takes up work at Christ Church in Whitehorse at invitation of Bishop Bompas.

1904 . Fitzgerald and Sutherland return to Herschel and open the detachment in a sod hut rented from the Anglican Mission.

1905 . Amundsen arrives at Herschel and stays with Captain Tilton aboard the **Alexander.**
. Most of the whaling fleet trapped by pack ice; six ships unexpectedly forced to overwinter at Herschel.
. Crews were near mutiny when iced in at time when their ships' articles ran out.
. Stringer elected Bishop of Selkirk upon resignation of Bishop Bompas.
. Klengenberg disappears with the **Olga.**

1906 . Market for whalebone collapses; price drops from over $5 per pound to 40 cents.
. Whittakers leave Herschel Is. after death of their youngest daughter and move to Fort McPherson.
. Amundsen leaves Herschel Island and completes first navigation of the Northwest Passage.
The police on Herschel receive authority to act as magistrates.
. Klengenberg returns to Herschel and makes statement to police re deaths of four of his crew.

1907 . End of commercial whaling in the western Arctic.
. Jarvis makes 2000 mile patrol on the **Beluga.**

1908 . No ships, scarce game, near famine conditions on Herschel. Police feed the 47 Inuit on the Island from their own stores.

1909 . Stringer pays visit to Herschel Island. Baptises six Inuit including Thomas Umaok and wife Susie Atoogaok, James Atoomikchina and wife Hanna Nashoogaloak.
. Wedding of Thomas and Susie.
. Vilhjalmur Stefansson arrives in district.
. First special constable mentioned in Herschel police reports.

1910 . Herschel Is. becomes official headquarters for Mackenzie River subdistrict.
. Police implement rural mail delivery along Arctic

coast.
. Fitzgerald returns to Herschel as an Inspector.

1911 . "The Lost Patrol" Inspector Fitzgerald and his party die of starvation Feb. 5 while on patrol from Fort McPherson to Dawson.
. H.J Knowles (shipping and commission, marine & fire insurance) sell PSWCo. bldgs to RCMP for $1500.
. W.D. Young visits Herschel Island.

1912 . Thomas Umaok and wife confirmed by Stringer at Fort McPherson.

1914 . Hudson's Bay Co. fails in first attempt to set up post at Herschel Island.

1915 . Hudson's Bay Company establish trading post on Herschel Island.
. Police arrest Uluksuk and Sinnisiak for murder of Catholic priests Rouvier and LeRoux at Coronation Gulf.

1916 . Anglican Church returns to Herschel Island. Rev. and Christina Fry come to re-establish mission.
. Construction of mission house by Whittaker and crew of Indians.

1917 . Birth of Walter Fry in May.
. Bishop Stringer visits Arctic Coast including Herschel Island; 47 Inuit confirmed; Holy Communion held with 83 communicants and an offering of 37 pounds.
. Bishop brings two Eskimo boys, Frederick Amegrak and Alex Inyunak, to the Carcross Indian Boarding School.
. The **Herman** is the only whaler to visit Herschel Island this year.
. Whittaker supervises the construction of a woodshed for the Herschel mission.
. Stefansson at Herschel Island ill with typhoid.

1918 . Severe typhoid epidemic at Herschel Island from Christmas 1917 to April 1918. Const. Lamont of RNWMP dies and Stefansson has to be evacuated to hospital at Fort Yukon.
. In January, Fry and Umaok visit the mountain Inuit.
. Whittakers leave Fort McPherson for posting at Whitehorse.
. April 5th, arrival of Archdeacon Stuck during a trip along the Arctic Coast.
. Sinking of the police whaleboat during a storm when harbour entrance was iced in.
. Pedersen sets up trading station at Shingle Point.
. Birth of Herschel Noel Fry on Christmas morning.

1919 . Departure of the Frys from Herschel Island.

1920 . Weather station was established on the Is. and the coldest day recorded for that year was -54 F.
. Wm Young builds mission house at Shingle Pt.
. Typhoid epidemic, especially serious at Herschel Island. Thomas Umaok very ill. Geddes (and Dr. Doyle?) visit Herschel Island and stay at RCMP barracks.

1921 . Death of William Henry Fry.

1922 . Rev. W.A. Geddes and Young begin building church at Shingle Pt.
. Police given the power of government agents to enforce ordinances, collect taxes and issue licenses.
. Police arrest Alikomiak and Tatamagama for murder of police officers Doaks and Binder.
. Suggestions of moving district police headquarters to Aklavik.

1923 . Hoares living on Herschel Island.
. James Atumaksinna dies at Herschel Is. in June.
. Bishop Lucas visits Herschel Island; spends 10 days with Mr. Hoare.
. Capt. Pedersen no longer working for Liebes Co.
. The **Tiliyak** is dismantled and broken up. **Lady Kindersley** arrives with church furniture.
. Alikomiak and Tatamagama convicted of murder with execution date set for Dec. 7. Bishops Stringer and Lucas write Ottawa recommending clemency.
. Police become timber agents for Herschel.

1924 . Four members of the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals travel north to establish radio stations at Herschel Island and Aklavik. They winter at Herschel in the RCMP-HQ.
. Execution on Feb. 1 of Alikomiak and Tetamagama.
. Poor year for white foxes. Hudson's Bay Co. no longer giving credit to natives.
. Bishop Stringer visits Arctic coast. Attempts to visit Herschel Island but prevented by ice floes and fog. Stringer dedicates new church at Shingle Pt. (St. John's)
. Cpl. Pennefeather in charge of RCMP detachment.
. Inspector and Mrs. Wood return to Herschel Island in summer and living in a residence of their own.
. The **Lady Kindersley** sinks after being caught between two ice floes on north coast (with outfit of army men wintering on Herschel Island).
. Geddes on furlough for part of 1924 and 1925.
. Capt. Klengenberg's crew overwinter at Herschel Island.

. Anglican Church applies for land to build church on Herschel Island.

1925
. Post Office opens on April 17, first postmaster is Inspector (later Assistant Commissioner) Thomas Benjamin Caulkin, RCMP.
. Office administered by Edmonton Postal District.
. Police appointed to receive immigration applications.
. Bishop Stringer purchases Liebes bldgs. at Shingle Pt. for $750.00.
. Col. Leonard donates $10,000 to Bishop Lucas for hospital at Aklavik.
. Repairs made to Anglican warehouse at Herschel Island.
. Pedersen trading at Herschel Island during summer.
. McCullum joins Geddes at Shingle Pt. bringing radio set.
. In Nov., Geddes travels west. Only encounters 5 families between Herschel Island and boundary line w. Alaska.

1926
. Herschel Is. established as customs-excise outport and has bonded warehouse.
. Installation of radio equipment at Herschel Island by Lieut. H.D. Cluff for intercommunication with Aklavik, where main station was installed in 1925.
. Bishop Lucas resigns from Diocese of Mackenzie. . Whittaker appointed commissary for diocese for summer.
. In Novkember, Bishop Stringer appointed commissary as endowment fund overdrawn and no funds for new bishop.
. McCullum transferred to Rampart House & Old Crow missions. Is ordained at Old Crow.
. Hospital completed at Aklavik.
. Geddes has headquarters at Aklavik and is in charge of Shingle Pt. and Herschel Is.
. Thos. Umaok conducting services at Herschel Island.
. Insp. and Mrs. Caulkin at Herschel Island; Murray is HBCo. post mgr.
. HBCo. planning to close post at Shingle Pt. in summer.
. Pedersen applies for land upon which to build his warehouse at Herschel Island.

1927
. 67 natives and 10 whites at Herschel Island for Christmas festivities.
. Thomas Umaok ordained in St. Patrick's Mission Chapel at Herschel Island on July 30th. First Inuit deacon.
. Geddes made archdeacon of Yukon at Herschel Island, July 30.

1928
. Geddes becomes engaged to Miss Terry from the hospital. Geddes elected fourth Bishop of Mackenzie. River.
. Inspector & Mrs. Kemp stationed at Herschel Island.

. Umaok writes Stringer re scarcity of white foxes and seal at Herschel Island that winter.
. Influenza epidemic kills six at Herschel Is.

1929 . Anglican residential school opens at Shingle Point.

1930 . RCCS substation built at Herschel Island.

1931 . administration of P.O. transferred to Yukon Gov't and B.C. Postal District.
. H.B.Co. trader on Herschel Island, Fred Ware, is fired for inefficiency.
. The H.B.Co. supply ship **Baychimo** is lost in the ice.
. Police HQ for Western Arctic subdistrict is moved from Herschel Island to Aklavik.
. Death of Charlie Klengenberg.
. Isaac Stringer is made Archbishop of Rupert's Land.

1932 . The Porsild brothers visit Herschel Island.

1933 . Sept. 7, the RCMP detachment closed. Subsequently opened as a summer detachment for six to eight week periods from 1934 to 1937.

1934 . Death of Archbishop Isaac O. Stringer in Winnipeg.

1936 . New residential school opens at Aklavik.
. The Officers Quarters building moved from Herschel to Aklavik.
. Pedersen makes last annual trip to the Arctic from California; sells out to the H.B.Co.

1937 . No furs traded at Herschel Island.

1938 . Post Office at Herschel Island closed Sept. 14 on the grounds of "limited usefulness" and not reopened when the RCMP detachment again operated between 1948 and 1968.
. RCCS substation closed down.
. Hudson's Bay Co. Post at Herschel Island closes down; the Bay sets up operations at Shingle Point.

1940 . RCMP schooner **St. Roch** sails NW passage from west to east, stops at Herschel Island on August 12.

1944 . **St. Roch** sails NW passage from east to west becoming the only vessel to have navigated the Northwest Passage in both directions.

1948 . Herschel detachment re-opened.

1964 . RCMP close the detachment on Herschel Island.

1968 . RCMP buildings handed over to Crown Assets Disposal who in turn pass buildings over to the Polar Continental Shelf Project; Energy, Mines and Resources.

1972 . Historic Sites and Monuments Board recognizes national significance of Herschel Island and places a plaque on the island.

1977 . Parks Canada assumes control of police buildings.

1987 . Herschel Island designated as the Yukon's first Territorial Park.

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Kemp, Vernon. Without Fear, Favour or Affection: Thirty Five Years with the RCMP. Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1958.