











OCCASIONAL PAPERS  
OF THE  
CALIFORNIA  
ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

No. XXIV

---

The Discovery of  
Wrangel Island

*By* SAMUEL L. HOOPER

---

---

SAN FRANCISCO  
PUBLISHED BY THE ACADEMY • 1956







OCCASIONAL PAPERS NO. XXIV  
OF THE CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES  
Issued February 21, 1956

COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION

DR. ROBERT C. MILLER, *Chairman*

DR. GEORGE F. PAPPENFUSS

DR. EDWARD L. KESSEL, *Editor*

# The Discovery of Wrangel Island

BY  
SAMUEL L. HOOPER

SAN FRANCISCO  
CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

1956

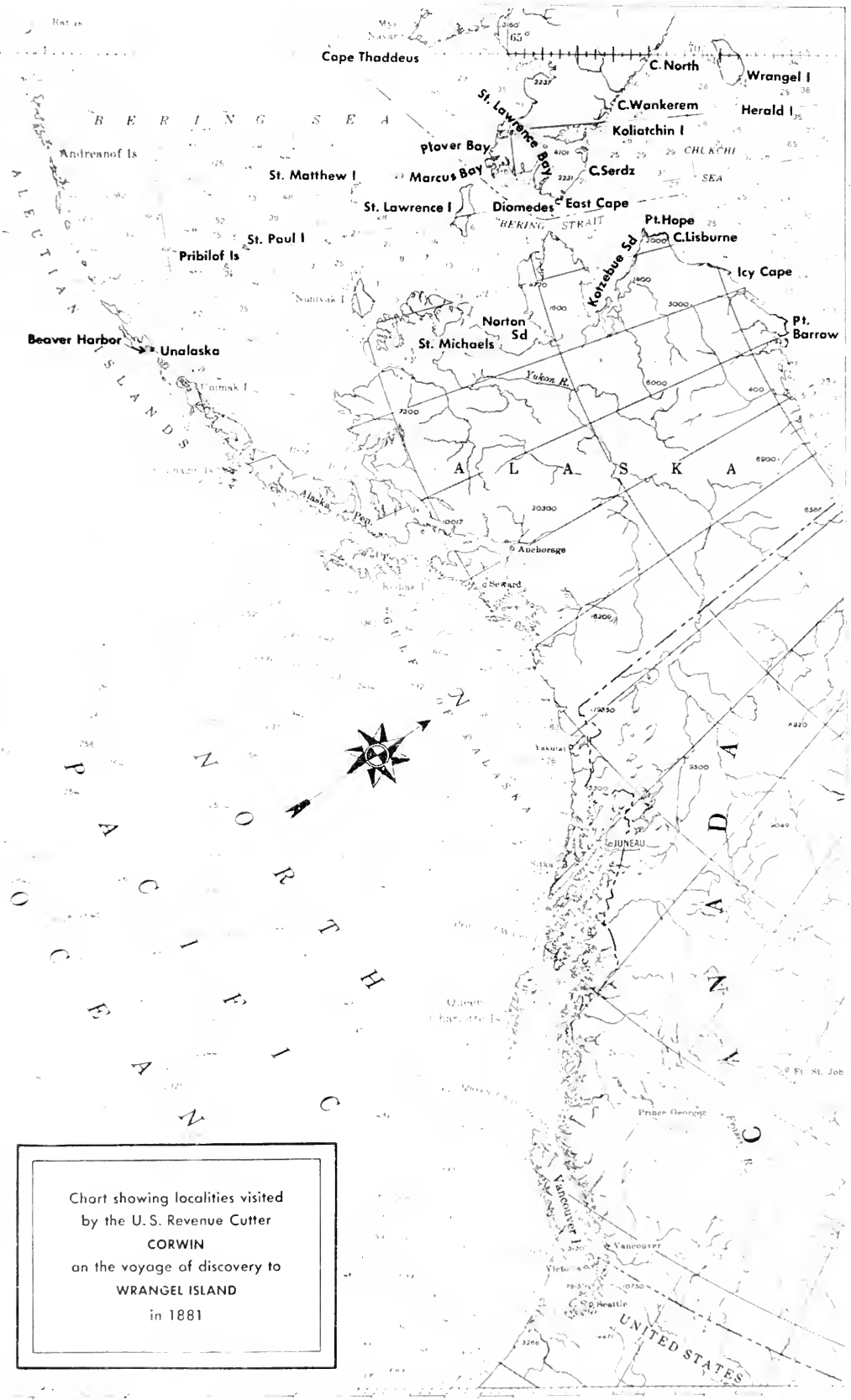


Chart showing localities visited  
by the U. S. Revenue Cutter  
CORWIN  
on the voyage of discovery to  
WRANGEL ISLAND  
in 1881

# The Discovery of Wrangel Island

THE DISCOVERER

CAPTAIN CALVIN L. HOOPER, U.S.R.C.S.

1842-1900

A century has passed since that day when a twelve-year-old boy resolutely turned his back on the warmth and security of a New England farm home, determined to seek fame and fortune on the seven seas. The exact manner of his going is not recorded, and certain it is that the path on which he set foot that day led through hardships and dangers, but by following it he gained recognition and fame and the esteem of men.

That boy was Calvin Leighton Hooper, born in Boston on July 7, 1842, the son of Samuel and Mary Leighton Hooper. Calvin's father did not live many years after his son was born. A few years later his widow remarried. Calvin never accepted the change. No doubt jealous of his mother's affections and resentful of what he considered an intruder in the family, he quickly reached the decision to follow the call of the sea.

We know little about him as a boy but it must be clear that Calvin was possessed of great strength of character and determination. Almost without formal education he made himself a very competent navigator and thereby a mathematician. In his mature years he sought his friends among men of education and refinement. His reports to the Congress were outstanding examples of excellent diction and temperate but forceful expression. Dr. David Starr Jordan, beloved chancellor of Stanford University, in writing of the discussion between the United States, Canada, and Great Britain over the operation of the Bering Sea Patrol, which had been authorized by the Paris Tribunal of 1893, an operation which Canada deeply resented, said: "During these delicate and complicated matters, Captain Hooper was always patient, considerate, and just, and his decisions, rendered as a sort of court of appeals at Unalaska, won the respect of all concerned in the acrid controversy."

It is difficult to write objectively of the life of Calvin Hooper, because the boy that we are discussing was to become my father, and any attempts to array the facts in an orderly manner bring a flood of memories that crowd the statistics into the background.

Best of all I remember climbing into his lap during those rare intervals when he was home with us between voyages. I remember the warm comfortable smell of the heavy wool broadcloth of which his suits

were always made; a sense of comfort and security is still associated with that smell. My recollections of him are of unfailing gentleness and affection, but it is recorded that he could be a strict and sometimes stern disciplinarian.

The period from his going to sea as a cabin boy until the time when he got his first mate's papers at the age of twenty-one, the youngest ever recorded, is almost a blank. My impression of it comes from the stories he used to tell as I lay curled up in his arms. These, however, were never in the first person. He would tell of the wonders of the Sargasso Sea, the graveyard of lost ships, or the myth of the Flying Dutchman, or the strange natives of far away places, but never of his own experiences. It was not that he was morose or taciturn; he loved people and was a brilliant conversationalist, but he simply did not like to talk about himself.

At the close of the Civil War competent officers were needed for the United States Revenue Cutter Service and having at that time no academy to draw from, certain young officers were selected from the merchant service. Calvin Hooper was one of the appointees and on June 4, 1866, he was made a third lieutenant by President Andrew Johnson, who had been Vice-President under Lincoln. From this point on his career became a matter of record.

Lieutenant Hooper's first assignment was to the cutter *Lane* at San Francisco. For the next few years he sailed out of that port and cruised mostly in northern waters where he gained the understanding of Arctic conditions that was to serve him so well in later experiences.

The young lieutenant did not spend all his time in the cold of the Arctic, however, and in those intervals when he was in port at San Francisco he became popular at social functions in the bay cities. At one of these gatherings he met a beautiful and talented young lady, Carlotta Elizabeth Hoag, daughter of a well-to-do family in Oakland. Lottie Hoag was a graduate of a popular finishing school where she acquired the graces of those days. She played the pianoforte, she wrote better than average poetry, and had real skill as an artist with oils or water colors. Added to these gracious talents Lottie won fame as a horsewoman, no mean feat in those days when custom demanded that a lady must use the dangerous and awkward side-saddle.

The handsome young officer and the beautiful society girl were immediately attracted to each other, and one evening at the old Cliff House he proposed marriage and was accepted. Unfortunately for the course of true love, just at this time Calvin, who was now a first lieutenant, was ordered to the cutter *Pessenden* at Detroit. The move came suddenly and arrangements could not be completed for their wedding

before his departure. Lottie Hoag, however, proved her fitness to be the bride of a sea captain; she followed him by train to Chicago and they were married in the old Sherman House in 1872. Such a trip by a young girl alone was almost unheard of in those days.

My father and mother were an outstanding couple in appearance, and in my home life I never detected the slightest hint of quarreling or unkindness between them. There now followed a period of about



Figure 1. Captain Calvin Leighton Hooper, U.S.R.C.S.

eight years that was typical in the life of a young officer and his family. In that time they were stationed at Detroit, Philadelphia, Boston, Erie, Baltimore, and Port Townsend, Washington. During this period three children were born, a son at Baltimore, a daughter at Erie, and another daughter at Port Townsend. Some years later another son was born at Oakland, California.

In 1880 Captain Hooper was placed in command of the cutter *Corwin* at San Francisco. This was like returning home again, which in fact it was for Lottie. Here for the first time they could begin the establishment of a real home and in the *Corwin* Captain Hooper began to shape the career which was to make him famous.

In 1880 he took the *Corwin* into the far north and found that the natives on Saint Lawrence Island and some of the other islands nearby had perished by hundreds during the previous winter; whole families and even the inhabitants of entire villages were found dead in their huts. Investigation proved that the disaster had been due to the severity of the winter which had prevented the usual hunting during the time that game was plentiful, and the deaths had been due to starvation. Captain Hooper's report to Congress on these conditions established him as a competent and able Arctic hand.

In 1881 the New York *Herald* was demanding that efforts be made to locate a polar expedition under the command of George Washington De Long, U.S.N., an experienced and capable officer, who was endeavoring to reach the North Pole by forcing his way into the Arctic ice and counting on the drift to carry him close to the Pole. The De Long party had been out over two years and no word had been received from them for a long time. As a result of the hue and cry that was raised, two relief parties were organized. The Navy sent Lieutenant Berry in the *Rogers* and the Revenue Cutter Service instructed Captain Hooper of the *Corwin* to make search for De Long's ship, the *Jeanette*, along with his usual duties as a unit of the Bering Sea Patrol.

Captain Hooper's sailing instructions, his preparations, and the details of the voyage which led to the discovery of new land in the Arctic and its claiming for the United States are all set forth in the following account.

Upon his return from this voyage in 1881 Captain Hooper found himself famous. Ships reaching San Francisco after contacting the whaling fleet brought reports of the discovery of Wrangel and of the voyage of the *Corwin*. These reports found their way into the press and a pamphlet describing the voyage was published by the Geographic Society of the Pacific. John Muir, the great geologist, who



was a member of the *Corwin* party to study the glaciation of the Arctic, wrote letters home and these were eagerly sought after by the then current publications. The result was that even before the return of the *Corwin* to her home port the fame of the voyage had spread.

As a result of this voyage Captain Hooper was now permanently assigned to the Bering Sea Patrol, he served in command of both the *Rush* and the *Corwin* at various times. For two years during this period the Patrol was handled by the Navy, and Captain Hooper served under the famous Admiral Robly D. (Fighting Bob) Evans. The two became fast friends. In his autobiography, *The Log of a Sailor*, in describing an assignment given to the *Corwin*, Fighting Bob wrote, "The captain was an able and fearless man and I knew he would carry out my orders . . . Captain Hooper of the *Corwin* carried out my instructions carefully and the result was a happy one." After the Navy turned the operation back to the Treasury Department, Captain Hooper himself was put in full command of the Bering Sea Patrol and was extended the thanks of the Department for coordinating its activities. During this period also Captain Hooper was given the responsibility of the office of superintendent of construction and repairs for the Revenue Cutter Service on the Pacific Coast. This was welcome as it gave him full activity in those months that had to elapse between Arctic voyages.

Captain and Mrs. Hooper had long planned on a home where he could settle when his days at sea were over, and in 1896 they purchased a spacious and beautiful home at 202 Santa Rosa Avenue in the Linda Vista District of Oakland. In the fall of that year Captain Hooper requested to be relieved of active sea duty in order to devote his time to his shore responsibilities. This was granted and he was assigned offices in the old Appraisers Building in San Francisco. It looked now as though he might enjoy his home and family in peace. Such, however, was not to be.

In 1898 war was declared against Spain and immediately Captain Hooper requested active duty again. The Secretary of the Treasury wired him that for the moment he was needed where he was, but thanked him for the prompt offer. Just at this time a new cutter was launched in New York and was named, as was and is the custom, after a Secretary of the Treasury. It was Hugh McCulloch whose signature appeared along with that of the President on Captain Hooper's first commission, and it was his name which was given to the new cutter.

The *McCulloch* was launched just at the outbreak of the war and

was placed under the command of Captain Daniel B. Hodgson with orders to report to Admiral Dewey's Asiatic Squadron. These orders were carried out and the *McCulloch* accompanied Dewey's fleet to Manila and took an active part in the destruction of the Spanish fleet on May 1, 1898. In June of that year Captain Hodgson was relieved of command and ordered home; he had passed the retirement age and his health had suffered in the service in the tropics.

Captain Hooper was ordered to leave San Francisco on the transport taking the troops to the Philippines and to take command of the *McCulloch* on arrival. He reached Manila on July 13, 1898, and took over his new duties at once. On August 16 of that year word was received of the cessation of hostilities and shortly thereafter Captain Hooper was ordered to carry the official news of the victory to San Francisco and to "show the flag" in Hong Kong and Yokohama en route.

At the conclusion of the voyage he retained command of the *McCulloch* until failing health forced a change. His hopes and plans for a quiet home life were not to be realized. The hard duty in the tropics had taken its toll. After a severe illness he died at his home on April 7, 1900.

Again memories flood my thoughts. I remember well the solemn services at the crowded Masonic Hall and the slow ride out Broadway in Oakland, made even slower than was usual even in those days by the fact that the casket went ahead mounted on a gun-carriage and on either side marched an honor guard from the *McCulloch*. As we passed the old Grant School at Twenty-ninth and Broadway I could not refrain from peering out and seeing all my schoolmates standing spellbound at the spectacle.

Finally the casket was lowered into a grave on a sunny California hillside, a final salute was fired, and taps were sounded for the little boy who had so resolutely turned his back on comfort and security in order to seek fame and fortune.

### THE VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

Surrounded by polar ice and shrouded in the chill mists of the Arctic, lying close to the forbidding coasts of Siberia, is desolate Wrangel Island, a bleak and barren region claimed by the Soviets but actually discovered in the name of the United States by an American over seventy years ago.

Outside of the Soviet Union geographers and historians agree that an American, Captain Calvin L. Hooper, commanding the U.S. revenue cutter *Corwin*, was the first to set foot on this Arctic wasteland

and to claim it in the name of his country. The United States has never seriously disputed Russia's sovereignty over it, probably because at the time of its discovery it was so inaccessible and desolate that it seemed of little or no value. Who in those days would have dared to dream of transpolar aviation?

The story of Captain Hooper's discovery of Wrangel opened early in the afternoon of Wednesday, May 4, 1881, when the *Corwin*, under his command, passed through the narrow channel of the Golden Gate outward bound on a voyage that was to cover well over fifteen thousand miles of cruising in the then little-known waters of the far north. She was about to engage in a relentless warfare with those implacable foes of Arctic navigation, gales, ice, and fog, which would have daunted any less-hardy ships or men. However, on that pleasant spring day, with the Marin County hills blanketed in green, patched here and there with great masses of gold where clusters of California poppies grew in profusion, all of this Arctic adventure was hidden in the future. It must have been a splendid sight as the *Corwin*, her colors snapping in the breeze, escorted by the cutters *Rush* and *Hartley*, and the yachts of the San Francisco Yacht Club under Commodore Harri-



Figure 2. The *Corwin* outward bound from San Francisco.

son, passed beneath the grim guns of Fort Scott and dipped her bow to the long swell of the Pacific.

Captain Hooper's objectives in undertaking this difficult and hazardous journey into the frozen North were threefold:

First, was the regular summer assignment of the *Corwin* as a unit of the Bering Sea Patrol. The duties called for under this assignment were of such a nature as to require extreme delicacy in handling, if serious international complications were to be avoided.

The clearest understanding of these unusual operations may be obtained from an account written a few years later by Professor David Starr Jordan, widely known educator and beloved chancellor of Stanford University, in his autobiography, *Days of a Man*. In recounting his own experiences in Alaska he writes, "Captain C. L. Hooper, a brave and loyal officer, was then commander of the Bering Sea Patrol composed of three revenue cutters, *Rush*, *Perry*, and *Corwin*. The duty of this little flotilla was to see that the Canadian sealing fleet broke none of the provisions of the Paris Tribunal. . . . To this end they were directed by our government to overhaul schooners at sea and open up the barrels of salted skins to find out if they bore evidence of having been put down before the end of the closed season. Such inspections, carried out hastily in rough weather, were irksome to both parties, and the unavoidable scattering of the sealskins about the deck naturally made the operation doubly distasteful to the Canadians. Furthermore, I believe the whole operation to have been contrary to international law." Professor Jordan then proceeds to emphasize the patience, the consideration, and the justness which Captain Hooper always demonstrated while acting in the difficult role of enforcement agent in carrying out these complex and delicate diplomatic assignments.

The second objective of the voyage was a direct result of the report of the cruise of the previous year. Captain Hooper had taken the *Corwin* into the far north in 1880 and had brought back reports of starvation and death among the natives of Saint Lawrence Island due to a very severe winter. His instructions for the cruise of 1881, therefore, included these specific orders, ". . . you will in your cruise touch at such places on the mainland or islands where there are settlements of natives and examine into and report upon their condition."

The third and most important objective, which necessitated a penetration into the Arctic ice far deeper than the *Corwin* had ever before attempted and which required that a landing be effected on an unknown land where none had ever set foot, requires a word of explanation.

For many years legends had come down from the Chukchis living along the shore of the north coast of Siberia, of a land mass lying far to the north amidst the polar ice. In 1820 Lieutenant Ferdinand Wrangel of the Tsarist navy, made the first of several attempts to reach it; he was later to gain fame as admiral and baron and finally to become governor of Alaska under the Tsars, but it is a matter of record that he never saw any land located where we now know Wrangel Island to be.

The first actual sight of the mysterious land was made by Captain Henry Kellett of the H.M.S. *Herald*. In the summer of 1849, while conducting a search for the Sir John Franklin Expedition which had been lost in the Arctic, Captain Kellett discovered an island lying north of the Asiatic continent. He landed and claimed it in the name of Her Britannic Majesty, Queen Victoria, and he named it Herald Island in honor of his ship. From the summit of its highest peak (1200 feet) the tops of mountains could plainly be seen bearing due west. Kellett surmised this to be the legendary land and he named it Kellett's Land. Although Kellett only saw it from a great distance and never got any nearer than the top of Herald Island, his name is still used on some of the British Admiralty charts.

Kellett, of course, proved the existence of land in that part of the Arctic Ocean, but the various ideas regarding its size and shape differed widely. Many supposed it to be an Arctic continent which, starting at a point less than two hundred miles from the Siberian mainland, extended far to the north, possibly even to the Polar regions. Its eastern shoreline was assumed to run roughly north and south. This conception of an Arctic continent was so generally accepted that the land became known as Wrangel Land, in honor of Baron Wrangel who was among the first to be identified with the search for the phantom continent.

While much of this was pure guesswork and had no foundation in fact, the supposed existence of this land barrier exerted a tremendous influence on the thoughts and plans of those interested in Arctic exploration. Outstanding among these at that time was Lieutenant Commander George Washington De Long, U.S.N., who, with the backing of the New York *Herald* had organized an expedition to attempt to reach the North Pole, which expedition sailed from San Francisco, July 8, 1879. It was Commander De Long's plan to touch at Herald Island, and after leaving markers there, to proceed along the coast of Wrangel Land leaving records about every twenty-five miles. He planned to steer boldly into the polar ice pack and, hoped to be carried by the current to the area of the Pole if not directly

over it. He presumed that the supposed Arctic continent would bar or direct his drift.

Such planning required high courage and the fact that he put it into effect exactly as contemplated speaks well for Commander De Long's determination and bravery. The story of the fateful voyage of his ship, the *Jeannette*, and the heroic struggles of the little handful of those who survived, has been splendidly told by Commander, now Captain, Edward Ellsberg in his book, *Hell on Ice*. We know now that De Long in the *Jeannette* never reached either Herald or Wrangel Island and that the Arctic current carried him directly across the area where he supposed the "continent" to exist and far to the north and west. The *Jeannette* was crushed in the ice and sank on June 11, 1881. While the *Corwin* and others were searching for signs of her, the survivors of that ill-fated expedition were making their way over frozen seas in an attempt to reach the north coast of Siberia. A few gained the Siberian shore and with the aid of friendly natives finally reached Alaska. Commander De Long, and a small group of his crew, reached the delta of the Lena River in northern Siberia only to lose their lives there after terrible hardships.

By 1881 the newspapers, led by the New York *Herald*, were demanding that rescue expeditions be sent out to search for the De Long party, now unheard from for nearly two years. Two such expeditions were undertaken, one by the Navy under Lieutenant Berry in command of the *Rodgers* and the second by the revenue cutter *Corwin* commanded by Captain Hooper, who was instructed to make such a search in addition to his usual assignment. His sailing orders read in part: "No information having been received concerning the whalers *Mount Wallaston* and *Vigilant*, you will bear in mind the instructions for your cruise of last year, and it is hoped that you may bring back some tidings of the missing vessels. You will also make careful inquiry in the Arctic regarding the progress and whereabouts of the steamer *Jeannette*, engaged in Arctic explorations under the command of Lieutenant Commander De Long, U.S.N., and will if practicable, communicate with and extend any needed assistance to that vessel."

Aboard the *Corwin* on this voyage were two well-known scientists whose work added much to its importance. Professor John Muir, who was to identify the great Alaskan glacier which now bears his name, and Dr. E. W. Nelson, who joined the ship at Saint Michaels and was later to become chief of the U.S. Biological Survey. It was Professor Muir's desire to study the glaciation of the Arctic and Dr. Nelson's to study and report on its plant and animal life.

No discussion of the personnel of the party would be complete, however, without a word about Captain Hooper himself.

Born in Boston in 1842, he was thirty-nine years old at the time of this voyage. Like so many boys from New England seaports, salt water had gotten into his veins at an early age. When only twenty-one he was first mate on one of the famous American clipper ships, and early photographs show him wearing a very formidable looking set of dundereries in order to hide his age, or lack of it.

In 1866, just at the close of the Civil War, young Calvin Hooper was commissioned a third lieutenant in the Revenue Cutter Service, now the United States Coast Guard. With that was begun a career which spanned thirty-four years of devoted and loyal service to his country. This was climaxed by his command of the revenue cutter *McCulloch* operating as a unit of Admiral Dewey's fleet in the Spanish-American War.

In addition to the glowing reference to his tact and judgment accorded by Dr. Jordan in his book, we have a splendid tribute to his character and ability in the published autobiography of Admiral "Fighting Bob" Evans, *A Sailor's Log*. He describes a dangerous and critical operation which he entrusted to Captain Hooper and goes on to comment on the ability and fearlessness of the captain. Admiral Evans found that in every situation Captain Hooper could be relied upon to carry out his instructions carefully and intelligently and with happy results.

The captain's report to Congress of the voyage of 1881 was published as Senate Executive Document No. 204. Also Professor Muir wrote a splendid account of the same trip in his book, *The Cruise of the Corwin*. These two complete the published record of the journey.

In addition to these sources, much of the information regarding the details of the voyage comes from an hitherto unpublished personal diary meticulously maintained by Captain Hooper. Each day in the privacy of his cabin, he carefully began with a description of the weather and often a statement of their position, then followed a brief statement of the day's events. Sometimes the writing was hardly decipherable as the little vessel struggled against heavy seas, often it must have been written by the light of the ship's lantern as they rode out a gale in the lee of an Arctic island. This personal diary must not be confused with the ship's log, which, of course, was carefully kept and was the basis of the report to Congress. This record was truly personal, as for example when he writes on May 4, the day of departure:

May 4, 1881. Weather fine, said goodbye and God bless you to my darlings and

went to the vessel—made all ready and started at 1:00 p.m., accompanied by the cutters "Rush" and "Hartley" and the yachts. Got well clear of the land before dark. Am feeling blue enough about leaving home.

Or this choice entry of March 8, 1881, during the preparations for the cruise.

Weather fine. Stayed on board all day. Lieut. B — — called on board to see me. Received him as he deserves, would like to kick him over the side.

As the *Corwin* headed into the north Pacific her log shows fair winds and a following sea, and aided by these she made splendid time. On May 7, three days out, the captain wrote:

We are doing well. At noon we were as far along as we were at noon on the fourth day out last year.

However, the favorable weather was not to continue. On May 13, the wind was rising and on the following day the entry was:

Still blowing from the southward. Thick and raining. Bar. very low (29.40). Heavy sea, carrying sail and steam, hard in hopes of getting in tomorrow night.

May 15, 1881. Wind blowing a gale N.W. with a heavy head sea. Within fifty miles of Onalga Pass at meridian. If this gale had not come on we would have reached Unalaska today and made the passage in eleven days.

The state of the weather forced the *Corwin* to seek shelter in Beaver Harbor which they reached "barely escaping the loss of our boats." After the storm had blown itself out they reached Unalaska on May 17 and immediately hauled the *Corwin* on the beach to repair the oak sheathing which had been torn away by the force of the waves. After the repairs were completed they took on coal and water and nine months' extra provisions which they arranged to return to the Alaska Commercial Company without loss to the government if they were not needed on the voyage.

The *Corwin* cleared from Unalaska on May 22 and shaped a course for the Pribilof Group where the great fur-seal rookeries are located. Saint George Island was reached in a fog so thick that they found their way only by the great flocks of sea birds that filled the air. No attempt was made to land here but they proceeded on to Saint Paul Island where a landing was effected.

It was too early for the main body of the seal herds, only a few



old bulls had arrived so far to take possession of the ground upon which, on the arrival of the cows, they would establish their harems. Only a short stop was intended here and as soon as they had rigged a "crow's nest" at the masthead and had secured their icebreaker in position and made other necessary preparations a course was laid for Saint Matthew Island. The entry reads:

May 23—At 8:00 p.m. got underway, shaped course for St. Matthews to have a bear hunt.

May 24—Wind S.W. and cloudy—steering for St. Lawrence Island. At 1:00 p.m. made the ice and hauled off to the westward and shaped a course for Cape Thaddeus, Siberia. Will have to defer the bear hunt.

Having encountered the ice pack as far south as latitude  $58^{\circ} 42'$ , the only course open to the *Corwin* was to work her way back and forth seeking to penetrate the pack where possible and to follow the ice as it receded to its summer limits. In the official report the captain stated, "Remembering our rough experience of last year in trying to get north along the east side of Bering Sea, we determined to keep, if possible, to the westward of the pack, and, if necessary, follow the land water along the Siberian coast, proceeding no faster than the ice should leave the shore. According to my experience, the west shore is navigable much earlier than the east."

Accordingly they steered for the Siberian coast, using both sail and steam and keeping a sharp lookout for the whaling fleet which could be expected heading for Bering Strait. They worked their way north and west keeping the ice pack always in sight on their starboard beam and making slow headway through the loose drift ice. Only logging about five knots against a strong current and an east wind of gale force and in a blinding snowstorm, it was not until May 28 that they reached a native settlement on the northeast end of Saint Lawrence Island.

The arrival of the *Corwin* was hailed with joy by the natives who came aboard in large numbers. It had been noted that an American flag was flying from one of the native huts. It turned out to be the property of the schooner *Lolita* which had been wrecked on the north coast of the island in the fall of 1880 while on her way to San Francisco under seizure by the *Corwin* for a violation of law in Alaskan waters.

Some trading was done with the natives but they had little of value and could furnish no authentic information about any of the vessels for which the *Corwin* was searching. After a short stay a course was

laid for Plover Bay on the Siberian coast, taking along two families of natives who were anxious to reach the mainland.

Finding Plover Bay icebound they headed for Marcus Bay a few miles farther south and on the way there they spoke the whaling bark *Rainbow*, Captain Lapham, and delivered to him the mail for the whaling fleet, which the *Corwin* had brought from San Francisco.

Captain Lapham had learned from the natives that a party of seal hunters had discovered a wreck near Cape Serdz which was believed to be one of the missing whalers. Considering this report to be of sufficient importance, and because it would still be some weeks before the *Corwin* could make her way north along the coast, Captain Hooper determined to put a sledge party ashore to attempt to learn the facts.

It was proposed that this party proceed along the Siberian coast, contacting the natives and making thorough inquiry in order to determine, if possible, the exact location of the wreck and at the same time to secure any information regarding the *Jeanette*.

Steps were immediately taken. At Marcus Bay a native known as "Chuechi Joe" was engaged as a dog-team driver and guide and one team of fine dogs was secured. No other supplies were available so a course was laid for Saint Lawrence Bay farther north. The bay was choked with ice but an anchorage was found off a small settlement on the south side of the bay. No dogs were to be had either for purchase or hire.

However, when questioned about the wrecks, one old native became a self-appointed spokesman and after asking for a glass of water he waxed quite eloquent. With a wealth of appropriate gestures he related in detail the position of the wrecks and described the corpses lying around on the ice, one of which he readily identified as that of Captain Nye of the *Vigilant*. Captain Hooper says, "It would be difficult for anyone unacquainted with Chuechi character to realize that most of this was manufactured on the spot for the sake of the reward which was expected to follow." After making allowances in full for native imagination there seemed to be some foundation for the story and the captain was more determined than ever to proceed with the sledge party.

Leaving Saint Lawrence Bay the *Corwin* headed for the Diomedes, a pair of small islands lying directly in the middle of Bering Strait. The international date line which also marks the boundary between Russia and the United States passes between these two islands, with the result that when it is Saturday on Little Diomede, which is United States territory, it is Sunday on Big Diomede, which is Russian territory although they are only three miles apart and each can be plainly

seen from the other when the weather is clear. The entry in the captain's private notes for the day reads:

Monday, May 30, 1881. Weather stormy and disagreeable. Snowing hard all day—anchored at Diomedes, bought boots, fur clothing and . . . also bought 19 dogs and two dogsleds. Paid one sack of flour each. Left in the evening for Cape Serdz to land the shore party.

Cape Serdz Kamen, to give it the full name on current charts, lies on the northern coast of Siberia about one hundred miles west of East Cape, which is the most easterly point of the Asiatic continent. This promised to be a difficult objective to reach but on the way there they spoke the bark *Helen Mar*, Captain Beaudry, who reported the ice well broken to the north. As the *Corwin* followed the coast they encountered a rim of ice ranging from five to thirty-five feet high and extending from two to ten miles offshore. They followed this shore ice westward with the "blink" of the pack always in sight to the north although the pack itself was below the horizon. An ice blink is simply the light reflected into the sky by the sun's rays shining on an ice field and it often serves to locate the ice floes before they are actually in sight.

The next day, June 1, the *Corwin* encountered solid-pack ice showing that the end of the open lead had been reached. Although the captain was anxious to put the sledge party ashore he did not feel it prudent to embark them on the ice until the land could be plainly seen.

While waiting for a change in the weather, which was blowing a moderate gale, or a change in ice conditions which would enable them to approach nearer the land, the *Corwin* cruised under sail in the open lead. Shortly after midnight the ice closed in on them and it became necessary to use the engines to work out of it. In endeavoring to free themselves the rudder was broken and unshipped, every pintle being carried away. The official report reads, "The situation was anything but pleasant, caught in the end of a rapidly closing lead, 120 miles from open water in a howling gale and driving snowstorm and without a rudder. It at first appeared as if the destruction of the vessel was inevitable."

Describing the experience in *The Cruise of the Corwin*, Professor Muir writes, "The situation was sufficiently grave and exciting, dark weather, the wind from the north and freshening every minute, and the vast polar pack pushing steadily shoreward. It was a bleak stormy morning with a close sweeping fall of snow, that encumbered the deck and ropes and nearly blinded anyone compelled to look to windward. Our twenty-five dogs made an effective addition to the general uproar, howling as only Eskimo dogs can howl. They were in the way, of

course, and were heartily kicked hither and thither. The necessary orders were promptly given and obeyed. Soon the broken rudder was secured on deck, four long spars were nailed and lashed firmly together, fastened astern and weighted to keep them in place at the right depth in the water. This made a capital jury rudder. It was worked by ropes attached on either side and to the steam windlass. The whole was brought into complete working order in a few hours, nearly everybody rendering service, notwithstanding the blinding snowstorm and peril, as if jury-rudder making under just these circumstances were an every-day employment."

When the jury rig was all ready the bell was rung to go ahead and the captain waited with some anxiety to test the *Corwin's* response to the makeshift rudder. To everyone's great relief it was found to answer admirably and the vessel controlled without difficulty.

The captain now planned to work his ship toward the open end of the lead as there was danger that the northerly wind would close it entirely, and to be caught between the pack and the shore ice would mean certain destruction. In the afternoon the snow let up for a brief period and they clearly saw Koliatchin Island which lies very close to the mainland, and having determined from the native guide that the condition of the ice was "pretty good," preparations were made to land the shore party. They were embarked on the ice and a party of native seal hunters rendered them invaluable aid in getting their heavily loaded sleds over the rough spots.

The little party struggling over the hummocks and pressure ridges of the shore ice consisted of First Lieutenant Herring, Third Lieutenant Reynolds, Coxswain Gessler, and two natives. They had twenty-five dogs, four sleds, and one skin boat, together with provisions, arms, ammunition, and the necessary navigation instruments. They also carried a supply of trade goods as gifts and rewards for the natives they expected to encounter.

Instructions were given Lieutenant Herring to proceed along the coast as far as practicable, communicating with the natives at each settlement and if possible to find the parties who were said to have discovered the wreck and to gather all facts in connection with it that could in any way throw light on the fate of the missing whalers or the *Jeannette*. As regards rejoining the *Corwin*, when this task was completed they were instructed as follows: "The *Corwin* will be at Tapkan June 15, June 20, and July 15. If you do not meet the vessel at any of these dates proceed to East Cape, leave letters at all settlements stopped at both going and coming. In case the vessel does not reach East Cape by the fifteenth of August, go to Plover Bay; on the

way stop at Saint Lawrence Bay and leave letters with the natives to be put on board whaling vessels or to be delivered to the *Corwin*, giving information of date of passing, etc. Inform all natives met with of the object of your visit, and request them to assist any parties of white men that may at any time appear on their coast, and assure them that any services rendered will be well rewarded."

Little is known today of the previous ice experience of Lieutenants Herring and Reynolds, but it took plenty of courage to start out over the rough ice on a journey of over two hundred miles in a thoroughly inhospitable land. The feelings of the little party may well be imagined as, looking back over the pressure ridges of the shore ice, they saw the masts of the *Corwin* gradually disappear as she worked her way to clear water.

As soon as the sledge party was safe ashore, the *Corwin* made haste to escape from the rapidly closing lead. When she reached open water, expecting to head for Plover Bay to effect repairs, she found Bering Strait to be filled with ice, probably driven in from the Bering Sea by the same storm that had set the pack on shore. The route to Plover Bay being closed, a course was shaped for Saint Lawrence Island which was reached at midnight and an anchorage was found near the northeast point.

The following day was spent in searching for the wreck of the *Lolita* which was known to be on the north shore of the island. The captain hoped to be able to use her rudder pintles in making the needed repairs to their rudder. The wreck was found but her pintles were already broken; however, they did secure some material which was useful to them when the opportunity came finally to complete the repairs.

The next day, June 10, the wind was still southwest, the weather very thick and snowing hard. The *Corwin* was lying close in under the shelter of the towering cliffs of the island. Because of the uncertainty of the weather and the somewhat precarious situation which they were in, a sharp lookout was maintained, the fires heavily banked so that steam could be gotten up quickly, and chains on the windlass made ready to get away on short notice. This alertness was well repaid.

About 4:00 a.m. the lookout reported a large field of ice moving toward the ship; this proved to extend as far as they could discern in either direction and was high enough to endanger the boats hanging in the davits. This probably represented fifteen to twenty feet of ice above the surface of the water and a total depth of sixty to eighty feet and this tremendous mass was moving inexorably toward the

shore, with the *Corwin* anchored in the rapidly closing area of open water between.

The official report reads, "It came in like a solid wall, drifting directly towards the shore and extended each way as far as we could see and looming up through the blinding snowstorm, growing higher and more distinct as it came nearer until it seemed all ready to fall on and crush us. On the other side the perpendicular cliffs of the island seemed directly overhead and the discordant notes of the sea birds perched on the rocks were becoming more and more distinct each moment as the narrow belt of water between the boulder-lined shore and the incoming wall of ice grew gradually less. To be caught under such circumstances meant certain destruction, and but one way of escape seemed possible, namely, to force the vessel into the floe and take the chances of a nip in the ice, which was sure to follow."

Such a floe always presents some cracks or leads and the captain now proposed to force the ship into one of these in hopes of entering far enough so that when the ice crushed against the shore she would be out of the pressure area. This was certainly not a comfortable spot to be in and to make matters worse in attempting to find such a lead in which to escape, their jury rudder was broken and had to be triced up under the stern to prevent it from fouling the propeller. Finally by backing full speed the *Corwin* was forced several lengths into the ice.

Then followed a period of tense anxiety on the part of everyone on board. Would the pressure of the oncoming ice continue until they were crushed against the shore? Would the offshore movement of the floe close the lead into which the *Corwin* had been forced? No action on the part of the crew of the *Corwin* could in any way alter the situation, but they at once prepared to take advantage of any opportunity for escape that might present itself, by making temporary repairs to their rudder.

After several anxious hours the lookout from the masthead reported that the ice was again setting offshore and soon open water appeared once more between the pack and the land. Some fortunate change in wind or current had reversed the movement of the floe and the *Corwin* was quick to take advantage of the situation, to free herself from danger.

A course was shaped for Plover Bay but because of loose drift ice in the strait it was a slow and hazardous journey. On June 13 they anchored in the bay and proceeded to coal ship from an open coal mine on the Siberian shore. This was not a coal mine in the commercial sense, but simply a surface deposit of coal so much exposed that it was possible to dig it and load it onto sleds without the need of any

equipment except picks and shovels. It was well known to all Arctic vessels and was available to any who needed it. The report says, "On the morning of the thirteenth all hands were turned to coaling ship. We had constructed two large sleds which would carry about half a ton each, and dividing the crew into three parts, one was put at the coal pile to fill coal into sacks, while the other two were drawing it to the ship on the sleds. The distance from the coal pile to the vessel in a direct line was about a mile and a half, and the rapidly melting ice was very soft on the surface and covered with deep pools of water. Notwithstanding the long distance and the unfavorable conditions, with the assistance of the natives we succeeded in taking on about nine tons a day."

Late in the afternoon the whaling bark *Thomas Pope*, Captain M. V. B. Milliard, came in and made fast to the ice in order to take on fresh water and fuel for her galley ranges. Some of the whalers were away from their ports two years or more and the matter of getting such supplies was a serious one. Coaling continued until late on the fourteenth when a movement of the ice indicated that it was breaking up. The *Corwin* took the *Thomas Pope* in tow and made her way through broken ice to clear water.

The weather clearing somewhat, the *Corwin* now shaped a course for Norton Sound directly across Bering Sea on the Alaskan side. The move from the Siberian mainland to Alaska brought about a remarkable change. The short Alaskan summer was at its height, the weather was beautiful, the fields were bright with wild flowers, and the abrupt contrast between these beauties and the gales and fogs they had been experiencing seemed almost miraculous.

Several days were required for repairs to the rudder and boilers and then the *Corwin* sailed again for Saint Lawrence Island and from there to Plover Bay to complete the coaling which had been interrupted by the breaking up of the ice. Full bunkers were needed because ahead of them lay a long journey with no further supplies available for some time. Taking on board fifty-four additional tons of coal they shaped a course for Tapkan to learn whether the sledge party had reached there. The *Corwin* had been forced to miss the first two of the assigned dates for meeting the shore party and there was anxiety to make contact as soon as possible.

As the *Corwin* nudged and buffeted her way through heavy drift ice toward Tapkan village on Koliatchin Island, the little group in her pilot house were deeply concerned. Had the shore party arrived? Were they all right? Had they suffered any accidents? These questions filled their thoughts.

Finally, through the glasses they made out something moving on top of one of the native huts. It soon proved to be an American flag and they wondered if it indicated the presence of the shore party. They recalled the flag flying on Saint Lawrence Island which had been taken from the wreck of the *Lolita* and were not sure. Soon, however, they were able to identify Lieutenant Herring and the rest of the party as they hastened preparations for joining the ship over the ice. Word was now passed that the shore party were safe and waiting, and immediately all was excitement on board. Had they found the *Jeannette*? Had they learned anything definite about the missing whalers? These and hundreds of other questions awaited an answer. The sledge party in their eagerness to return to the *Corwin* were now making their way out over the ice, and two small boats were at once dispatched to pick them up. The swell of the sea was keeping the ice in so much motion that it was only with greatest difficulty and considerable danger to all concerned that the operation was successfully completed.

All the men were warmly welcomed on board, including the Tapkan dog driver, who came aboard to receive his pay. By the time this was attended to the wind had increased so that he could not be put on shore. On being asked if he could get back from East Cape he assured the captain that he could walk back in only three days, so the *Corwin* proceeded toward the strait.

The sledge party under Lieutenant Herring had reached Cape Wankarem, about one hundred miles west along the Siberian coast. They had found the actual discoverers of the wreck and had secured a number of articles from the lost vessel, for which they amply reimbursed the natives. From the markings on some of the items, as well as from the description by the natives of a wreck having a pair of deer antlers made fast to the bowsprit, the wreck was established as that of the *Vigilant*. The party also received definite word that the *Jeannette* had contacted some natives in the fall of 1879, and while this was already known, having been received from the whalers, it showed that the statements of the natives could sometimes be depended on. The results obtained by the shore party had been most successful. In return for hardships and difficulties undergone, they had fully established some of the facts which were the objectives of the voyage.

With her full crew again on board the *Corwin* was now free to make further search to the north, and the strait being free of ice, they headed for the Diomedes and then touched at Saint Lawrence Island and from there crossed over to Norton Sound on the Alaskan shore. Everywhere they went native settlements were contacted wherever



they were known to exist and at the same time a check was made on any strange vessels that the *Corwin* encountered.

After anchoring a few days at Saint Michaels, and taking on further supplies, a course was laid for Kotzebue Sound on the north side of the Seward Peninsula and they finally worked their way around Point Hope where they had to anchor and ride out a full gale that lasted four days. July 22 found the *Corwin* again under steam and sail and headed north and east along the top of Alaska hoping to reach Point Barrow where there was a large settlement. At Icy Cape, however, the pack was encountered and further progress in that direction was out of the question for an indefinite period, since the ice showed no signs of breaking up.

Under these conditions Captain Hooper decided to make a determined attempt to accomplish his principal objective, to land on Herald and Wrangel islands in order to determine whether the *Jeannette* had touched there and left a record. In putting this plan into effect the *Corwin* was, first of all, headed for Cape Lisburne on the north coast where, during the previous summer, they had discovered an open coal mine whose product was fully equal in quality to the Siberian mine at Plover Bay.

Upon arriving at the mine they found almost the entire whaling fleet lying at anchor waiting for the ice to move offshore and open the way to Point Barrow. From them it was learned that the bark *Daniel Webster* had been seen entering the ice, and no further word having been received from her there was considerable anxiety as to her fate. However, no action could be taken until the ice opened up, so the *Corwin* was headed for Herald Island as planned. Before sailing they took on about twenty tons of coal and cleared at 4:00 p.m. on July 28.

The *Corwin* was now far north of the Arctic Circle and headed almost due west across the length of the Arctic Ocean. Her course lay almost exactly on the seventy-first parallel and while they had clear sailing the Polar pack was always in plain sight to the north.

The weather held clear and on July 30 at 5:45 p.m. they entered the ice which surrounded Herald Island, still some twelve miles away. The stanch little vessel worked her way through the ice and at 10:00 p.m. reached the island and made fast to the grounded ice on shore. Wrangel Island was now in plain sight to the west. All hands that could be spared went on shore to conduct a careful search for any records or other evidence that the island had been visited. There were no signs of anyone having been there. They weighed anchor on July 31 and worked their way to clear water. The captain writes in his notes:

I begin to feel as if there is some hope of our getting on W. L. now that we have reached Herald Island.

Now the final dash to their goal was about to start. A course was set for Wrangel Island but they soon encountered heavy ice and were forced to cruise along its edge while keeping a sharp lookout for an open lead. On August 4 they sighted Cape North on the Siberian coast but were unable to land. On the fifth, however, they hauled in for Cape Wankarem and were greeted by two large skin boats loaded with natives who swarmed aboard. The natives immediately recognized and greeted Lieutenants Herring and Reynolds from having seen them with the sledge party and some of the women caused a good deal of merriment by imitating Lieutenant Reynolds as a dog-team driver.

Several days were spent visiting the native settlements, making inquiries regarding the missing whalers and trading with the natives, always with a weather eye to the ice conditions in order to make a quick start as soon as a favorable opportunity presented itself. Conditions turning favorable on the eighth, the *Corwin* got under way again and worked her way along the coast through the heavy sea ice to Cape North. Leaving the coastline there she headed out through the broken ice of the pack and in a few hours was able to reach open water and set a course for Wrangel.

On August 11 the report reads: "By 1:00 a.m. the atmosphere was perfectly clear and Wrangel Island in plain sight about 30 miles distant. . . . The ice pack, which was within half a mile, surrounded us on all sides except between south and southeast by east, in which direction there was open water. A narrow lead of open water also showed toward the northwest as far as we could see from the masthead. We got under way immediately, and, entering this lead steamed in towards the land until 2:30 a.m., when we came to the end of the lead, but the drift ice still being open, we continued on until 4:00 a.m., when the ice, which had been gradually getting closer as we approached the land, became so densely packed that it was found to be impossible to force the vessel any farther. . . . After making several ineffectual attempts to force our way in closer to the land, and finding it impossible, we reluctantly turned our backs on it and pushed out for clear water to wait for a more favorable chance. The ice was so closely packed around the vessel that the operation of turning around, assisted by steam and sail, poles, and small spars to push against the ice, and all means at our command, occupied just one hour. . . . Although sadly disappointed at the failure of this third attempt this season to reach

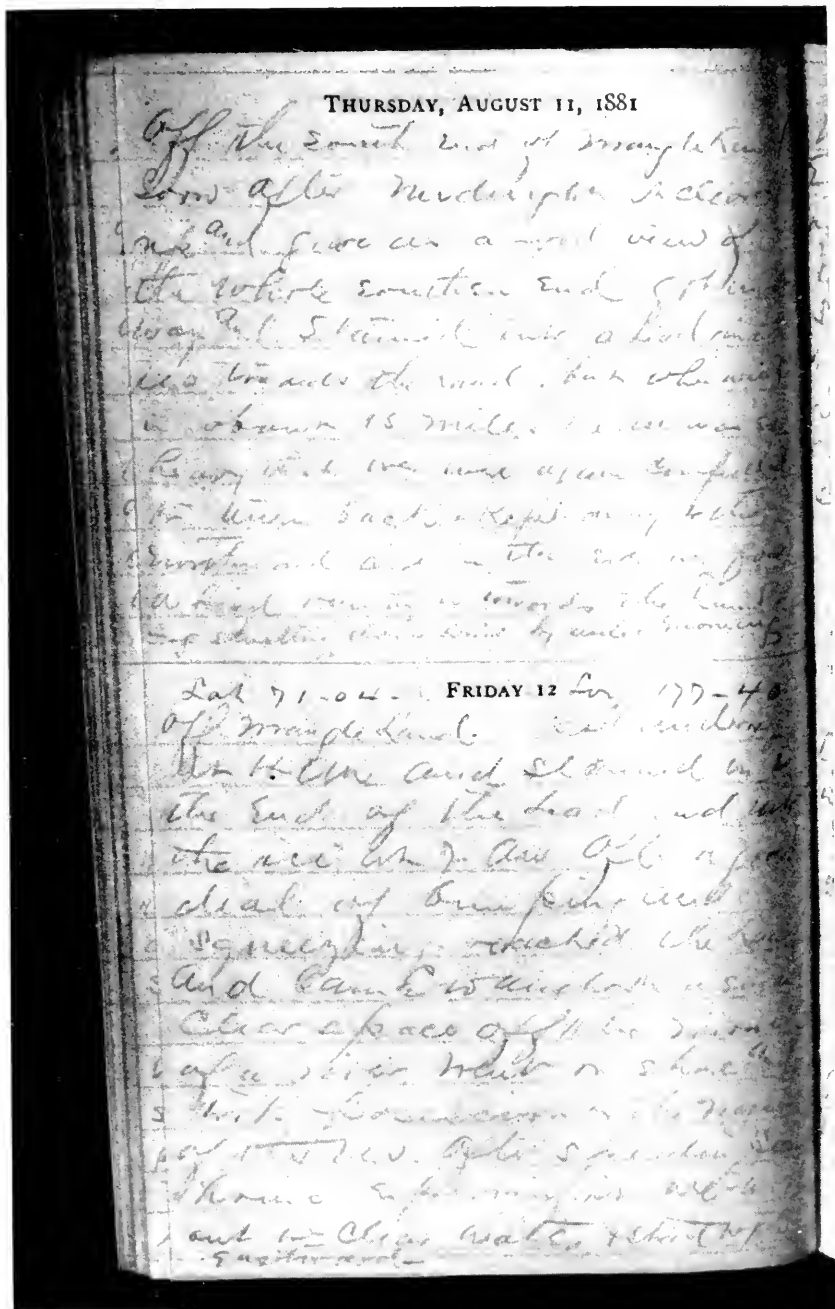


Figure 3. The original account of the discovery of Wrangell Island in the captain's own handwriting. This entry in his diary was written at the scene on the very day of the landing.

the land, I felt relieved to be in clear water, and did not despair of ultimate success."

The movement of the ice due to the set of the e currents made it necessary to change positions several times during the night. At 4:30 a.m. the *Corwin* again entered the ice and this time with all preparations made to reach the land by crossing the ice if necessary, using the sledges and taking along the skin boat for crossing any open leads that might be encountered. However, as they fought their way closer to the land ice conditions improved. Inside the ten-fathom curve they found much of the ice aground while the floating portion was drifting past and occasionally shooting up over the top of the grounded pieces. Navigation under these conditions was neither comfortable nor safe, but they all felt that the land was now actually within reach and they pushed on. The captain's notes for that important day (see figure 3) read:

Friday, August 12, 1881. Lat. 71-04 Long. 177-40 off Wrangle [sic.] Land. Got under way at 4:00 a.m. and steamed in toward the end of the lead and into the ice at 7:00 a.m. After a good deal of bumping and squeezing we reached the land and anchored in a small clear space off the mouth of a small river. Went on shore and took possession in the name of the U.S.

This landing unquestionably established a valid claim to the area on the part of the United States. Muir in his text says, "A notable addition was made to the national domain when Captain Calvin L. Hooper landed on Wrangell Land and took formal possession in the name of the United States." Later the great Arctic explorer Vilhjalmur Steffansson in his book, *The Adventure of Wrangel Island*, describing an expedition undertaken in 1921 wrote, ". . . following 1881 . . . the island was United States territory."

Many years later the Soviet claimed that Lieutenant Wrangel had actually discovered the island but unfortunately for their claim, Wrangel himself in his book, *The Narrative of a Voyage to the Polar Seas in the Years 1821, 1822, and 1823*, which was written long enough after his experiences so that he had plenty of time to make any changes or corrections, wrote "with a painful feeling of the impossibility of overcoming the obstacles with which nature had opposed us, our last hope vanished of discovering the land which we yet believe to exist . . . we had done what duty and honor demanded, further attempts would have been absolutely hopeless and I decided to return." Wrangel located on his chart "from native report" the land which "we believe to exist" but he placed it some distance west of where it actually turned out to be located.

As soon as the official shore party had completed the formalities of discovery, a careful search was made along the shore in each direction for evidences of a landing of any kind. After several hours of searching it became impossible to remain at anchor any longer and a gun was fired to recall all shore parties. Leaving an American flag flying and a complete record of their visit the *Corwin* now worked her way out to the lead.

She was soon in open water and making all speed with steam and sail across the Arctic Ocean but this time with the Polar ice on her port beam. Having found no records of the *Jeanette* on either Herald Island or Wrangel Island, for the very good reasons as we now know that the De Long party had never touched on either of them, the *Corwin* was hastening to Point Barrow in hopes of rendering assistance to the *Daniel Webster* in case she was still in the ice. On the way, however, they spoke the whalers *Howland* and *Rainbow* and learned from them that the *Daniel Webster* had been crushed in the ice and that part of her crew had reached Point Barrow. The remainder were supposed to still be on the pack. Upon learning this the *Corwin* skirted the Alaskan coast line closely and kept a careful watch for signs of any who might have reached the land before the ice went offshore. Constant contact was also made with the native villages along the way and many reports of the wreck were received, all of which were in some agreement.

Point Barrow was reached on August 16 and several whalers, which had arrived only a few hours earlier, were found at anchor there, the ice having gone offshore the previous evening. The crew of the *Daniel Webster* were all at Point Barrow and every man accounted for. They were divided up among the whalers except for nine men who had their fill of whaling and "wanted out." These were taken on board the *Corwin* to be returned to civilization and extra supplies were distributed to the other ships to allow for the extra hands taken aboard.

While the *Corwin* was at Barrow the bark *Legal Tender* arrived, bringing the first mail they had received since leaving San Francisco; the *Legal Tender* had sailed from there on June 11. Since she was leaving at once, loaded with surplus bone and oil from the whaling fleet, the crew of the *Corwin* sent mail sacks aboard for their dear ones at home.

On August 19 the *Corwin* sailed for Cape Lisburne hoping to again take coal from the mine, but a strong northeast wind had kicked up such a sea that boating coal was out of the question. The night of the nineteenth was the first night that could be called dark; until then the nights had merely been long twilights. On August 22 they passed close to the Diomedes but never saw any part of them on account of

the thick fog that lay on the water; their presence was well announced, however, by the screaming of the thousands of sea birds that inhabit the rocky cliffs of the islands.

The *Corwin* headed for Plover Bay sometimes under steam and sail and sometimes under sail alone, as they had only about enough coal for one night's run; in fact, when she reached the bay there was only one ton left in her bunkers. While there they took on coal and water and completed minor repairs to their rudder. They got under way on August 27 and headed again for Cape Serdz in order to pick up the dogs and other property left earlier in care of the natives.

On the way the *Corwin* encountered a full gale which broke the fastenings of the icebreaker. Since the seas were running so high that it could not be taken aboard without great danger to the crew, orders were given to cut it adrift to save the bow from being battered by it in the heavy seas. All day on the twenty-eighth both Herald Island and Wrangel Island were in plain sight, but the pack had closed around them.

A course was now laid for Saint Michaels where coal and water were taken on and some of the extra supplies were returned to the Alaska Commercial Company. The *Corwin* set sail on September 17 and reached Unalaska on the twenty-third, the entry for the day reads: Friday, September 23. Unalaska—Weather fine—landed all extra rations received from the A. C. Co. at St. Michaels, cabin and wardroom stores. Also sold a lot of extra cabin stores. All hands at work stripping off the remainder of the sheathing, and cleaning ship generally.

Several days were spent cleaning and painting and finally at noon on October 4, the *Corwin*, with a homeward-bound pennant long enough to reach from the masthead to the water, floating in the Arctic breeze, took the schooner *Kodiak* in tow and made her way through the pass before releasing her tow and finally starting the long voyage home.

After five months of continuous battle with the elements it would seem fitting that this last two-thousand-mile leg of her journey should be smooth sailing. Such, however, was not to be the case for the sea was to make one last attempt to gain a victory. On October 5 the wind increased to a strong gale from the northeast, the seas ran very high, and in her struggles the *Corwin's* bobstay parted and her bowsprit was carried away. All hands were put to clearing away the wreckage and as soon as the storm abated somewhat a small spar was rigged as a temporary bowsprit so that she could carry her headsails and make a proper appearance on reaching her home port. The *Corwin* had to buck strong head winds and foul weather until the nineteenth.

On October 20 we come to a significant entry in the captain's private notes. This record had been faithfully kept every day since the first of the year. All through the period of anticipation wondering whether the *Corwin* would be given the assignment, through the time of preparation, and finally on the entire voyage in fair weather and foul, not a single day had been missed. Now the *Corwin* had rounded Cape Mendocino on the California coast and was feeling her way toward San Francisco Bay in a dense fog. All hands on deck were straining ears and eyes to locate a bearing, if only the low moan of the giant foghorn guarding the entrance to the bay. The entry for the day reads:

Thursday, October 20. Still trying to get into S.F., thick all day, caught a glimpse of the hills . . . also saw a number of vessels.

Here the record ends; there is no further entry of any kind. To one who is familiar with the fogs that blanket the Bay Region at certain seasons the picture is plain enough. After being enveloped in an impenetrable mist and not caring to risk the dangerous channel by compass alone, suddenly as though some gigantic door had opened, the *Corwin* emerged from the fog and before her, warm in the golden California sunshine lay the brown hills of Marin County and the Golden Gate with welcoming arms outstretched. Beyond lay homes and loved ones and surcease from the relentless battles against the Arctic. No further entries were needed.

No more fitting close to the account of the cruise of the *Corwin* could be made than to quote from Captain Hooper's report his remarks about the fate of the *Jeannette*.

"In closing my report of the cruise of the *Corwin* I cannot refrain from making brief reference to the fate of one of the objectives of our search . . . the *Jeannette* and her officers and crew . . . I desire to express my unbounded admiration for their fortitude and their heroic exertions in making the most remarkable retreat over the ice ever made by man, from where their vessel sank to the Lena Delta, for their brave struggle for existence after reaching land, and their cheerful resignation to fate when death in its most awful form stared them in the face and claimed them one by one."

More than seventy years have passed since the little shore party from the *Corwin* effected the first landing on Wrangel Island and took possession in the name of the United States. Blasted by Arctic gales and scorched by the polar pack it still lies surrounded by frozen seas, a land which at the time of its discovery seemed inaccessible and valueless, it now lies directly across the most direct air routes between the capitals of Europe and those of the Western Hemisphere.

