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Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, in response to Senate resolution of December 13, 1886, report of Agent Tingle on the seal islands of Alaska.

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L E T T E R

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,

TRANSMITTING,

*In response to Senate resolution of December 13, 1886, report of Agent
Tingle on the seal islands of Alaska.*

DECEMBER 20, 1886.—Laid on the table and ordered to be printed.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, *December 17, 1886.*

SIR: In response to the resolution of the United States Senate dated the 13th instant, directing that the Secretary of the Treasury furnish that body with a copy of the report of Special Agent George H. Tingle upon the condition of affairs on the seal islands of Alaska, dated July 31, 1886, I have the honor to inclose herewith a copy of the report in question, with accompanying documents.

Respectfully, yours,

C. S. FAIRCHILD,
Assistant Secretary.

HON. JOHN SHERMAN,
President of the United States Senate.

OFFICE OF SPECIAL AGENT TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
Saint Paul Island, Alaska, July 31, 1886.

SIR: I herewith transmit my report of the operations of the seal islands for the past year and up to the close of this sealing season.

The work of sealing was satisfactorily performed by the natives; in fact, a decided improvement has been made in their killing and skinning over former years. A comparison of the daily shipments for past years will show a large saving of rejected (small, cut, and stogy) skins. The saving made in slaughtering seals last fall during the stogy season for native food was accomplished without any injury whatever to the natives, as all had an abundance of meat. The reduced number of rejected skins this year is the result of constant watchfulness and peremptory orders of your agents that seals should not be killed below the size, as was claimed heretofore could not be avoided. Experience, however, has taught us that with the exercise of a little patience and care when clubbing a pod of seals, but few mistakes need be made. The number of seals which perished on the drives this season did not exceed 100, which, considering the vast numbers driven, is insignificant. The skins of all killables perishing were taken and salted, which leaves the actual loss from all causes not exceeding 50, exclusive of the rejected, as shown in Statement A, or less than one-tenth the number last year.

The drives and general conduct of the business was satisfactory this year, the natives show a marked improvement in their promptness to obey all orders, and excel in their work; they readily acknowledge the authority of the Government officer, and never show any dissatisfaction with his decisions when brought before him for any offense committed. Five persons only were summoned before the Treasury agent

on this island during the past year, who, on examination, were proven guilty of the charges preferred, and fines, aggregating \$65, imposed on them for offenses, as shown in the statement of the "general fund" account, marked D, herewith inclosed.

Transportation from the island and fines are the only modes of punishment at hand. I am happy to say no offense worthy of the former has been committed. A small lock-up, or jail, on each island would have a very salutary effect on the people, and, in my opinion, would do much more than fines to accomplish reforms. The buildings could be provided at a cost of not more than \$100 each, and whilst they might not be occupied by three persons in a year, their existence would be a constant reminder of the "strong arm of the law."

The sanitary condition of the two islands is very good, and the health of the natives for the past year has been about as usual. They are not generally robust or long-lived, and in almost every case adults die with consumption, the result of imprudence. For the past fifteen months there has not been a single case of sickness among the white persons on either island; in fact, all are in robust health.

The census taken on the 1st of January, 1886, shows the following:

ON SAINT PAUL ISLAND (COVERING PAST YEAR).

Families on this island.....	73
Adult males.....	58
Males five to seventeen years old.....	27
Males under five years old.....	15
	100
Adult females.....	76
Females five to seventeen years old.....	47
Females under five years old.....	14
	137
Total native population.....	237
Females in excess of males.....	37
Residents of Saint Paul at school in San Francisco.....	1
Marriages.....	5
Births: Females, 7; males, 7.....	14
Deaths: Adult females, 2; adult males, 3; females under thirteen years, 7; male infants, 2.....	14

SAINT GEORGE ISLAND.

Families on the island.....	27
Male adults.....	30
Males five to seventeen years old.....	16
Males under five years old.....	5
	51
Female adults.....	37
Females five to seventeen years.....	23
Females under five years.....	1
	61
Deaths: Females.....	4
Births: Females.....	1
Births: Males.....	6

The ice closed in around Saint Paul Island on the 6th of February, and finally disappeared on the 1st day of May; the coldest day of the winter was 5° below zero, and the warmest this summer, so far, was 54° above. We had a godsend on the 23d of January, when the cutter Rush came to anchor and landed all our mail up to date of her departure from San Francisco, January 2, being the first instance on record of a vessel reaching this island at that season of the year.

The natives not wishing to use any bull-seal skins for clothing or boots this year, and there being no authority of law for killing the surplus old bulls spoken of in my report of last year, none were killed; and, with an additional year's experience, I would not now recommend their being killed, as by proper care they are handled in the drives without detriment to the younger seals, and in the water may be some protection to the young seals against their natural enemies.

THE BREEDING ROOKERIES.

Mr. Elliott embraced in his report of 1874 a measurement by him of the breeding rookeries on this island made July 10 to 18, 1872, since which time no measurement has been made so far as the records of this office show. Deeming it of great importance that the Department should be in possession of the best information as to the present condition of the rookeries, I made a thorough measurement of all on this island, commencing on the 3d day of May, before the bulls hauled up on the land, when an absolutely correct measurement could be made.

In making my measurements I was assisted by Dr. L. A. Noyes (Captain Loud, assistant treasury agent, not having returned to the islands), and four of the best-informed natives. As to the boundaries of the breeding rookeries, in July, when the rookeries were fullest, we verified our work by observation, and found the ground included within our lines fully covered some of the rookeries, viz, Northeast Point, Tolstoi Gerbutch Roliverna, were densely packed, covering more area than my statement shows, while others were not so closely packed. I do not agree with Mr. Elliott in his assignment of 2 feet square to each seal; at this date it is not enough.

I inclose my statement, marked E, as compared with Mr. Elliott's, which on his basis gives us now on the breeding rookeries 5,148,500 seals; an increase since 1872 of 2,137,550. I think the calculation of 1872, as well as 1886, would stand a reduction of one-fourth in aggregate number of seals, and be nearer the true number than our figures show. Statements at best are merely approximate estimates, but in the absence of any absolutely correct method of arriving at the count, they serve as a guide. Frequent inspection of the rookeries during last season and this shows a decided increase of cows, with an ample supply of bulls. The same report is also made by the assistant Treasury agent in charge of Saint George, on which island I was not able to obtain measurements of the rookeries this spring, but will do so next, and forward the result with my next report.

So far this season we have sighted but one schooner off this island, supposed to be sealing; she did not, however, come in close enough to disclose her real character.

At Saint George an attempt was made by a marauder to land for the purpose of killing seals on a rookery, but were driven off by shots fired at them by order of the officer in charge, as directed by me.

At 1.30 p. m., 29th of June the revenue-cutter Corwin landed here. Captain Abbey reported having boarded the schooners Vanderbilt, Captain Myers; Siera, Captain Lee, and City of San Diego, the first two about 20 miles from Ounalaska, and the last 40 miles from Saint George Island. He took from the Siera 4 rifles and 1,110 rounds fixed ammunition, and from the City of San Diego 6 rifles and 500 rounds of ammunition. The last-named vessels had seal-skins aboard, salted, and plenty of salt and seal clubs, showing clearly they intended if opportunity offered to land on the rookeries. Captain Abbey notified the captains of the trading schooners that if again caught in the waters with additional seal-skins on board he would seize the vessels and cargoes. On his arrival here, 26th instant, he reported having seized the schooner San Diego, not far from Ounalaska, sealing, having some fresh-skinned seal-skins on board, and 574 in salt, 175 of which had been clubbed, and among the skins were some small pups, this year's, showing conclusively the marauder had landed on a rookery on Saint George, as the pups had not yet gone in the water. The San Diego is an old offender, and was captured once on Otter Island sealing. Captain Abbey proposes to hand her over to the civil authorities. She is at present in custody of the deputy marshal at Ounalaska.

This commencement of captures will do much toward breaking up the marauding business about the islands this season; indeed the Corwin's presence here has undoubtedly kept off quite a fleet of schooners and destroyed their unlawful business hereabouts; with the cutter Bear to remain until fall, after coming out of the Arctic, seal life will be protected from pirates this season. It is the only means by which good can be accomplished in that direction. I do earnestly hope the Department will see the necessity of keeping a cutter around the fur seal islands every season from the 1st of June to the 1st of November.

I leave the island of Saint Paul with Capt. A. P. Loud, assistant Treasury agent in charge, feeling that everything will go on smoothly under his efficient and careful management, and take passage on the Alaska Commercial Company's steamer Saint Paul for San Francisco, from which place I will "report by telegraph for further orders."

I am, very respectfully,

GEORGE R. TINGLE,
Treasury Agent.

Hon. C. S. FAIRCHILD,
Acting Secretary of the Treasury, Washington, D. C.

SEAL ISLANDS OF ALASKA.

D.—*Alaska Commercial Company in account with Saint Paul Island, Alaska.*

OIL FUND.

1885.
 June 2. To balance \$188 02

CR.

1886.
 • May 8. By Yerelampoy Viatkin..... \$6 00
 Terrenti Stepteen 6 00
 Anton Meloredoff 6 00
 Karp Buterin..... 6 00
24 00
 164 02

GENERAL FUND.

1885.
 July 12. To balance 56 70
 Sept. 16. Anton Meloredoff fined for breaking in the company's store-room and stealing and drinking alcohol belonging to Charles H. Townsend, naturalist, and becoming stupidly drunk..... 20 00
 Jack Kechuten for same offense..... 20 00
 Oct. 31. Timofoy Serebnikoff for entering native house, when locked and family absent, and stealing coat..... 5 00
 1886.
 Apr. 15. Arcena Arkiskoff (married) assaulting a young girl with immoral intentions... 10 00
 May 1. Martin Pophoff, on complaint of Metrofon Schuytchogin for habitual disturbance of his domestic relations and enticing his wife from him for immoral purposes... 10 00
121 70

CR.

May 28. By amount paid natives for cleaning streets..... 11 00
 Balance 110 70

E.—*Measurement of breeding rookeries, Saint Paul Islands, Alaska.*

Name of rookery.	By W. H. Elliott, assistant Treasury agent, July 10 to 18, 1872.				By George R. Tingle, Treasury agent, May 3 to 8, 1886.			
	Sea margin.	Width.	Total area.	Total seals, allowing 2 feet square to each female seal.	Sea margin.	Width.	Total area.	Total seals on Elliott's basis.
			<i>Feet.</i>				<i>Feet.</i>	
Reef.....	4, 016	150	602, 400	301, 200	5 550	175	971, 250	485, 625
Garbutch.....	3, 660	100	366, 000	183, 000	2, 750	275	756, 250	378, 125
Zoltoi.....					700	30	21, 000	10, 500
Keetaria.....	2, 200	150	330, 000	165, 000	2, 700	140	378, 000	189, 000
Lukannon.....	2, 270	150	340, 500	170, 250	1, 660	175	280, 000	140, 000
Tolstoi.....	3, 000	150	450, 000	225, 000	3, 100	250	775, 000	387, 500
Lagoon.....	750	100	75, 000	37, 500	1, 625	75	121, 875	60, 937
Northeast Point.....	15, 840	150	2, 376, 000	1, 188, 000	14, 825	205	3, 039, 125	1, 519, 563
Polirena.....	4, 000	150	600, 000	300, 000	6, 600	175	1, 155, 000	577, 500
North Zapadnie.....					5, 500	100	550, 000	275, 000
West Zapadnie.....	5, 880	150	882, 000	441, 000	3, 800	550	2, 090, 000	1, 045, 000
Sea Lion Rock.....					1, 100	145	159, 500	79, 750
Total.....	41, 616		6, 021, 900	3, 010, 950	49, 850		10, 297, 000	5, 148, 500
Increase in 14 years.....					8, 234		4, 275, 100	2, 137, 550

NOTE.—Zapadnie is divided by a sand beach over 700 feet wide at the S. W. Bay landing. In order to show the shape of the rookery better, I call that portion north of the sand beach North Zapadnie, and the other side West Zapadnie. Mr. Elliott treats it as one rookery; he also leaves out Sea Lion Rock, which is an old rookery. Zoltoi is new since his date. I think the space assigned to each seal by Mr. Elliott is not large enough, and a reduction of one-fourth from the figures above would give more nearly correct the actual number of seals on the rookeries named.—George R. Tingle, Treasury agent, Saint Paul Island, Alaska.

*For assistance in measuring breeding rookeries.