

10-1-1893

Report of the Governor of Alaska, 1893

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/indianserialset>



Part of the [Indian and Aboriginal Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

H.R. Exec. Doc. 1, 53d Cong., 2nd Sess. (1893)

This House Executive Document is brought to you for free and open access by University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899 by an authorized administrator of University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact darinfox@ou.edu.

REPORT
OF
THE GOVERNOR OF ALASKA.

DISTRICT OF ALASKA,
EXECUTIVE OFFICE,
Sitka, October 1, 1893.

SIR: I have the honor to submit herewith my first annual report, in compliance with the act of Congress creating a civil government for the district of Alaska, approved May 17, 1884.

I was duly qualified as chief executive of the Territory of Alaska August 28, 1893. The brief period for which I have performed the duties of governor will necessarily limit my report to generalities, there not being sufficient time to collect accurate statistics of the diversified industries and products of the country. The civil officers, who were entrusted with the administration of both the civil and criminal law, have been vigilant and faithful in the discharge of their duties, and the people are in the enjoyment of peace and prosperity.

Mining, fishing, and the taking of furs are the leading industries that furnish employment for a large majority of the people, both white and native.

MINING.

There has been greatly increased activity in the gold-mining industry during the past year. The well-established mines have continued to yield their usual amount, and some of them have largely increased their production. Many new claims have been located, and new mines opened with gratifying results.

FISH.

The large amount of fish taken from Alaskan waters during the past few years has created some apprehension in regard to the supply. The Government has already taken efficient measures to prevent the further wasteful destruction of this valuable species of food, and we feel assured that no effort in this direction will be relaxed. The continued rains during the present season have so swollen the streams that the usual catch could not be taken, and the pack will not be quite up to the yearly output.

SEAL ISLANDS.

The decision of the Bering Sea court of arbitration, made public at Paris August 15, 1893, has given great satisfaction to the people of Alaska for the reason that it is a triumph of civilization to have a great international dispute settled by a peaceable arbitration, and also

because it will afford protection to seal life and put to an end in a great measure the wanton destruction of that animal.

The occupation of the poacher is gone if the new regulations are enforced in regard to the close season, and the prohibition of the use of firearms and explosives in fur-sealing.

But 7,500 seal skins were taken by the North American Commercial Company, lessees of the islands of St. Paul and St. George, during the season of 1893. So far as we have information, the company have complied with all the conditions of their contract, and have dealt justly and fairly with the natives.

MILITIA.

The militia organization in Alaska is in a state of disintegration. The migratory habits of the people will prevent any such organization from becoming permanent.

Militia soldiers in Alaska could only be used as home guards, or for police duty in the immediate vicinity of their organization. To be of any service to the Territory at large, each organized company would be under the necessity of having and maintaining steamboat transportation for their full complement of men, there being no roads or land travel possible in the country.

For the maintenance of peace, good order, and the enforcement of the laws, the civil government of the Territory can rely upon the United States Navy, which has always rendered prompt and efficient service.

The Executive has been informed by Lieut. Commander William T. Burwell, commander of the man-of-war *Pinta*, now lying in the Sitka Harbor, that the ship will be ready to sail for any place in Alaska in one hour after being requested to do so by the governor of the Territory.

The Commander also stated the fact that, during a recent cruise of 1,000 miles, the *Pinta* had made an average of 9 knots per hour.

The native people are not hard to control, and are easily led into better ways, when treated with kindness and consideration; but no doubt the coming of the gunboat has much to do with the amicability of the uncivilized portion of them.

LIQUOR TRAFFIC.

The law prohibiting the importation, manufacture, or sale of intoxicating liquors in Alaska is (in its present construction) a source of irritation and discontent amongst all classes of people in the Territory. It gives rise to a large traffic in smuggled liquors, mostly from British Columbia, which our custom officers can not prevent and have not the means to suppress. Either the law should be changed or the revenue officers provided with the means to enforce its provisions.

Under the regulations made by the President and promulgated in Treasury Circular No. 34, dated March 12, 1892, the governor of the Territory may grant permits to sell intoxicating liquors for medical, mechanical, and scientific purposes. He may also revoke these permits for any violations of the regulations under which they were granted.

INDIAN POLICE.

The employment of Indian police by the Government has a tendency to establish confidential relations between the two races. The native

policeman takes great pride in the performance of his duty and has proven himself to be honest, prompt, and efficient in preventing the sale of liquor and preserving peace and good order amongst his people.

Their influence has also been exerted for good in the way of having the Indian children attend the Government schools.

EDUCATION.

Fourteen Government and an equal number of contract schools were in successful operation during the past year. Eleven different denominations have established mission schools in Alaska, and the Government, recognizing the efficiency of these institutions, and being satisfied of the thorough manner in which they educate, civilize, and Christianize the native people, had for some years made annual contracts with these schools to board, clothe, and teach a fixed number of Indian children. Several of these religious denominations, through their authoritative assemblies, expressed their approval of an amendment to the Constitution of the United States to prohibit Congress from appropriating any money out of the national Treasury for the benefit of sectarian schools; and Congress laboring under the erroneous impression that no more subsidies would be accepted by these organizations, reduced the appropriation for the education of children in Alaska to \$30,000, an amount entirely inadequate to the needs of the Territory.

The conditions which cause Government aid to mission schools to be undesirable in the more advanced States and Territories do not exist in Alaska. No matter what particular denomination may be in control of a mission school here, it is the object and desire of all to have the native children taught how to speak, read, and write the English language and to have them learn something of the principles of Christian civilization; also to acquire habits of industry and a knowledge of the mechanical arts. Six years acquaintance with the management of these schools has led me to believe that sectarianism is kept entirely in abeyance. It is in the interest of humanity, and economy as well, to contract with these benevolent institutions for the education of Indian children who live remote from Government schools, or those who are orphans, waifs, or destitute. Nothing has contributed to ameliorate the hard condition of the Indian in Alaska so much as the work of the missionary and the introduction of Government schools.

For a practical demonstration of this, I invite your attention to the Indian Training School at Sitka, which has been in successful operation for many years, under the very able supervision of the Rev. A. Austin, in which many native young men and women have been civilized, educated, and qualified for all the avocations of life and good citizenship.

Previous to the establishment of these schools the native's leading occupation was war, and revenge his only law. The Alaskan Indian is entirely self-supporting, is industrious and thrifty, receives nothing from the Government, asks for nothing, wants nothing, and it is to be regarded as a blessing that he has not been demoralized and pauperized by Government aid. The Government is put to no expense for the support of Indian agencies or the maintenance of forts or regiments of armed men on account of the Indians of Alaska. Kindness is better than force. Schools and missions are the great conservators of peace in this Territory; and, in view of the fact that the natives of Alaska receive no grants, subsidies, or annuities from the Government as the Indians do in other parts of the United States, Congress can not do less than to

make the appropriation for the education of children in Alaska large enough to establish a sufficient number of schools to give the major portion of their people a chance to acquire the rudiments of an English education. A new school house is urgently needed at Juneau City for the accommodation of white children, and should be built at once. Three other new school houses should be erected next summer, but the present appropriation will not be sufficient to meet the expense. I recommend that the appropriation for the education of children in Alaska for the fiscal year 1894-'95 be \$60,000.

INTRODUCTION OF DOMESTIC REINDEER.

Dr. Sheldon Jackson, the general agent of education in Alaska, and who was the first Protestant missionary in Alaska, and by whose energy, fidelity, and good management both the mission and government schools were established and brought to their present state of usefulness and efficiency, is now engaged in the laudable work of importing domesticated reindeer into western Alaska from the tame herds of Siberia. For three years Dr. Jackson has made a voyage to Siberia each year with Capt. M. A. Healy on the revenue cutter *Bear*, without whose assistance nothing could have been done, and they returned each year with a number of domesticated reindeer which were landed at different points on the Alaskan coast. The animals suffered no damage by transportation and have wintered safely and have grown fat on the abundance of food found in that country suitable to their wants. It is claimed that the general introduction of this animal into that region will arrest the present starvation, and restock that vast country with a permanent food supply, and that by covering these great plains with herds of domesticated reindeer, it will be possible to support in comparative comfort a large population, and that a change from the condition of the hunter to that of the herder will be a long step upward in the scale of humanity and that it will hasten the elevation of the race from barbarism to civilization, and it is also claimed that the reindeer can be used as a means of transportation by which the interior of Alaska may be penetrated and explored. All of which claims I believe to be well founded.

For more than a hundred years after the discovery of western Alaska by Vitus Behring in 1742 that country supported a large population, and was swarming with sea otter and other fur-bearing animals, and was a mine of wealth to the Russians for more than a century, and of great commercial value and importance to all the civilized nations of the world.

Why not make an effort to reclaim this part of the country, and return it in part to its former commercial value and importance, when it can be done so cheaply, if taken in connection with our other important interests on the seal islands of St. Paul and St. George, which are in the immediate vicinity. The money to pay the expense of the first and second purchases of reindeer in Siberia was donated by philanthropic individuals. Congress on March 3, 1893, made an appropriation of \$6,000 for that purpose, which was made immediately available, and was put to immediate use.

This summer Dr. Jackson made one voyage with Capt. M. A. Healy on the U. S. revenue cutter *Bear*, and Capt. Healy made several additional voyages during the same season to Siberia and the ship was freighted each time with domesticated reindeer purchased in Siberia

and landed in Alaska on the shore of the Behring Sea. This subject is worthy of the attention of Congress.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

At a nominal cost the several public buildings located at Sitka and Wrangell have been repaired and put in good order, and out of almost chaos these buildings have been reconstructed into handsome, substantial, and useful buildings. Such improvement had been so long felt necessary that they are greatly appreciated by the people.

That old log building, erected many years ago by the Russians at Sitka, and known as "The Castle," and about which clings many a legend and a multitude of historical events, had long been going into decay when, at a very reasonable expense, it has been transformed into a large two-story edifice of spacious rooms, and will be occupied by the United States district court, the United States commissioner's court, and other officials. It is situated on a bluff on the beach, some 60 or 80 feet above the surrounding town site, and from the observatory on its roof a magnificent view of Sitka, the bay, and its hundred of islands, together with a glimmering of the ocean beyond, can be had.

The other old Russian ruins at Sitka are too much decayed and are beyond repair, and while it has been wise and economical to have made these repairs already complete, yet it would be much cheaper to build anew than to attempt the further repair of the remaining ones.

The building at Wrangell known as the hospital has been recently put in good condition, and being repainted presents a very slightly appearance. The rooms in it are mostly large and airy. The first floor is occupied by the United States commissioner's court and offices. The second floor has been thrown into a large, nicely arranged Government schoolroom, accessible by an outside staircase. This building was built over twenty years ago. There are also several solid log houses at Wrangell that might with propriety be repaired. One, at least, should be selected and permanently arranged to accommodate the post-office business, as this is a distributing office for many points in Alaska and British Columbia, and the post-office should be in much better quarters than it is at the present time.

The spacious two-story house used by the customs officers at Wrangell is in fair order, but a few necessary repairs now would save a much larger outlay in the future.

THE ORGANIC ACT.

The act of Congress approved May 17, 1884, creating a civil government for the Territory of Alaska, did much to develop the country, promote civilization among the Indians, and advance the prosperity of the people. Courts were established for the administration of the civil law. The military rule which had prevailed from the time the country was first occupied by the United States Government was displaced by the civil authorities.

Population has increased, towns have been built, rich mines have been discovered, commerce has advanced, fishing and other industries are being developed to a very large extent, the territory has outgrown its swaddling clothes, and the organic act is no longer sufficient for the administration of justice and the enforcement of law and order, or the economical administration of government in the Territory. The peo-

ple of Alaska are intelligent, energetic, enterprising, and self-reliant, and whatever reforms they may ask Congress to inaugurate will be in the interest of good government and the prosperity of all.

We believe that it is the desire and the intention of the United States Congress to legislate justly and generously for the Territory of Alaska, and to enact such laws as will best promote the happiness of her people and the development of the country.

The great distance intervening between Alaska and the seat of Government at Washington, and the isolated location of the Territory renders it difficult for our national legislators to become acquainted with the needs of the district, or for any member of Congress to draft a bill that would be suitable to the wants of our people.

Several bills have been introduced into Congress that, had they become laws, our last condition would have been worse than our first.

No one but those who have resided in the Territory can appreciate our peculiar condition, or form an intelligent opinion as to the laws by which this Territory should be governed. Therefore I would recommend that Congress, either by joint resolution or by bill, empower the governor of the Territory to appoint a commission of five members who shall be residents of Alaska, and whose duty it shall be to formulate amendments to the organic act of May 17, 1884, and also to prepare a code of laws, both civil and criminal, for the government of the Territory; which amendments and code of laws shall be submitted to Congress for their approval, and unless approved by act of Congress, said amendments and laws shall be null and void. The United States district judge for the district of Alaska, and the United States attorney for the district of Alaska, shall be members of said commission; and the members of said commission shall serve without compensation, but clerk hire, printing, and traveling expenses shall be paid out of the Treasury of the United States, to the amount not to exceed \$1,000.

Very respectfully yours,

JAMES SHEAKLEY,
Governor of Alaska.

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, D. C.