

PATENTS

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EXPLORING ALASKA.

RETURN OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT EXPEDITION.

Lieut. George M. Stoney, U. S. N., Spends a Year and a Half in Seeking the Secrets of That Frozen Land--Some Light on the New Territory.

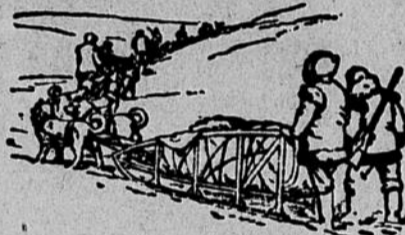
Slowly but surely is the territory of Alaska forced to give up its secrets. Government and private expeditions have recently returned after visiting unexplored portions of this territory, while missionaries and mercantile companies are settling in the country for permanent conquest.



WINTER QUARTERS OF STONEY EXPEDITION.

The latest expedition to return was that of Lieut. George M. Stoney, U. S. N. This expedition was sent out over a year ago to explore that portion of Alaska north of the great Yukon river and between it and the Arctic ocean. The winter quarters of the expedition were at Fort Cosmos, and from there as a center sledging parties were sent out in all directions. As much of the country had never been visited by a white man before, many of the natives threatened to resent the intrusion of the explorers, though they were representatives of the government of that region, carrying the Stars and Stripes.

Mr. A. D. Wolfe, who accompanied the expedition, writes briefly of some of its points of interest as follows: The Nushegak river is the fourth largest river in Alaska, the Putnam or Kookak river, which has attracted so much attention lately, being but a small stream in comparison with the Nushegak. Fort Alexander is the name of the trading post of the Alaska Commercial company. Large quantities of land furs are obtained here, the source of supply being the entire Alaska peninsula on its western side. Within the past few years three salmon canneries have been established on the banks of the river. The fish, which are very large, are caught in great numbers by means of traps set at low water in the mud. One of the peculiarities of this river is the immense rise and fall of the tide. At low water, in order to obtain a landing, nearly a mile of mud flat has to be traversed before reaching the house. Upon its upper portion, the Nushegak spruce abounds, forming dense groves, while the precipitous cliffs on either side form very picturesque scenery.



THE EXPEDITION ON THE MOVE.

From November until May the river is frozen over; and then the hunting season commences. Moose, deer and grouse abound in the mountainous district between the lakes of the northern portion of the peninsula. The snow lies very deep in the forests, and it requires the aid of snowshoes to traverse the country when engaged on sled trips or hunting expeditions. In the summer traveling is done by means of a three-hole klyack, portages being made between the various lakes that stud the country.

Lake Ilamna is the largest body of fresh water in the territory. It requires from two to three days to cross from shore to shore. High mountains, some extinct volcanoes, others only partially smoldering, border on the lake. It has been supposed that Lake Balkal, in Siberia, was the only interior body of fresh water into which seals run up from the sea, but investigation proves that the spotted seal also frequents the waters of Lake Ilamna. Lake Teechak is another large body of fresh water, but its position has not yet been definitely placed upon any Alaskan chart. The natives at Nushegak and upon the Alaska peninsula are docile, and possess similar traits to those of the Eskimo race. Schools are about to be established among them. Although perhaps without much success at the outset, they may eventually be somewhat educated. At present the people want the teachers to pay them to come to school. Many of these natives are members of the Russo-Greek church, a resident priest having dispensed religious comfort to them for a number of years.



NATIVE HUTS AND CACHE.

Their houses are similar in form to those seen throughout the western portion of Alaska, viz., built of timber and earth, underground. Their caches, raised on poles, are receptacles for dried salmon and other food for winter supplies. Salmon forms the main food, and as the run of these fish upon the Nushegak is immense, large quantities are stored. Numerous small rivers empty into the Behring sea, the Ugashik and Tagiak being the principal ones, while the second largest river of the territory, the Kushkoquim, embouches into Bristol bay. Numerous glaciers are seen on the shores of Lake Ilamna, the clear, blue ice appearing like a mirror set in a deep, slender framework of green spruce and brown rocks. Some interesting forms of glacial action may also be seen, the cliffs being worn almost smooth by ice and the rocks chiseled as if by human hands.

The entire Alaska peninsula presents picturesque, and, with its large lakes and their wonderful scenery, is one of the most interesting portions of the territory.

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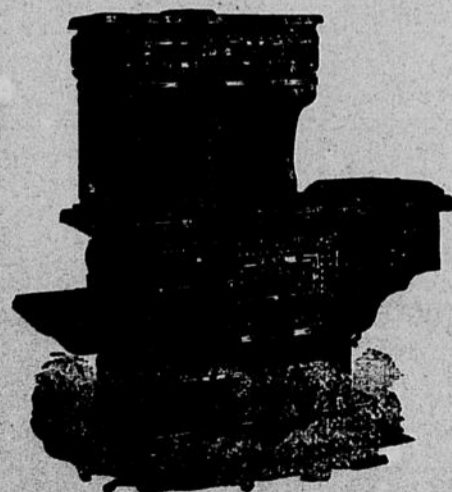
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