

Alaska State Library
Historical Collections

Guide to Collection

Pittenger, Robert, Collector

Robert Pittenger Photograph Collection, 1897-1898

PCA 552

8 b&w images

Processed by: Gayle Goedde
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ONLINE ACCESS: Full Collection

http://vilda.alaska.edu/cdm/search/collection/cdmg21/searchterm/ASL-P552*/order/nosort

ACQUISITION: Steve Johnson brought the Samuel J. Call photographic prints to the library to be scanned, accession number 2012-22. The prints were made by his uncle, Robert Pittenger, from Dr. Samuel J. Call's glass-plate negatives.

ACCESS: The collection is unrestricted.

COPYRIGHT: Request for permission to publish or reproduce material from the collection must be discussed with the Librarian.

PROCESSING: The location of the original glass-plate negatives, taken by Dr. Samuel J. Call in 1897, is not known. Prints were made by Robert Pittenger in Barrow, Alaska, around 1954. These prints were scanned in jpg and high-resolution tiff formats and copies were printed on photograph paper.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Samuel J. Call was a physician who spent many years in Alaska, initially working for the Alaska Commercial Company in Unalaska, starting in 1880, and later for the U. S. Revenue Cutter Service. He also worked in private practice in Nome during the gold rush years between 1899 and 1903; in 1905, he received a Congressional Medal for his heroic service in the Arctic. One of his heroic deeds involved an overland winter journey to Point Barrow as part of a relief expedition to aid the Arctic whaling fleet, which was trapped in the ice. The Revenue Cutter BEAR, under the command of Captain Francis Tuttle, was enlisted in the rescue mission but had to stop short of Cape Nome, due to the heavy ice. Volunteers from among the crew, led by Lieut. David H. Jarvis, went overland from there, gathering a large herd of caribou as they traveled toward Point Barrow. When the relief expedition reached the eight whaling ships, Dr. Call attended to their medical needs.

Robert Pittenger, who printed these eight Samuel Call photographs from glass plates in Barrow, went to the North Slope in 1946 to work for a firm doing oil exploration. How he came upon the negatives is not known, but he had his girlfriend, Jody Williamson, send paper and other supplies to print the photographs, which were then loaned by a family member, Steve Johnson, to Historical Collections for digitizing.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE

Photographs were probably all taken during the winter of 1897-1898, when Samuel Call sailed on the U. S. Revenue Cutter Service BEAR as part of the Overland Relief Expedition to rescue the 265 whalers whose ships were trapped in the ice near Point Barrow. Several of the images show the BEAR.

SUBJECTS

U. S. Revenue Cutter Service; Bear (Ship); Overland Relief Expedition (1897-1898); Arctic regions; Alaska Natives -Northern Alaska; Point Barrow, Alaska; Call, Dr. Samuel J.

INVENTORY

- 1 Revenue Cutter, BEAR [Bowsprit and masts of the BEAR stick out from behind icebergs; a few crew members visible on bow]
- 2 Revenue Cutter, BEAR [View from distance of BEAR, top sails raised; ice in foreground]
- 3 [Dogs and men on deck of ship (BEAR?); fish hang in background from cabin top; lines, masts, barrels, rope, and canvas are in view] Photographer's number 227

- 4 [Northern Native camp along coast, possibly near the village of Tanuak; an animal hide is stretched between posts of a frame; a kayak rests on a support, which may be a tusk; a sailing ship is visible offshore] Photographer's number 343
- 5 [Two Native hunters with their harvest of birds; they support their packs with tump lines across their foreheads; one man also carries a rifle]
- 6 Revenue Cutter, BEAR [Ship's name is visible on the stern, which is backed up against icebergs; partial view of masts, rigging, and lifeboat]
- 7 [Members of a ship's crew watch as a large bear is hoisted aboard their sailing ship]
- 8 Revenue Cutter, BEAR [Profile view of BEAR, anchored to ice, some sails raised]