

DRIVING REINDEER IN ALASKA

The reindeer of Alaska are before the public eye. The completion of the five-year drive to the starving Eskimos of Canada of a herd that has just completed a march of twelve hundred miles at an average of about two-thirds of a mile a day is proclaimed. A Committee in Washington, D. C., is considering the future of the industry.

There are many who will remember the halt of a herd of 556 reindeer in Woodland Park, in 1898, on their way to the Gold Fields of the Klondike for the relief of the miners of that region. It has been the impression of many that those were the deer from which the present herds of Alaska sprang, but this is an erroneous belief. Those were sled deer, geldings, not breeding stock, and were intended to be driven with loaded sleds to Dawson, then to be used for food for the people in want. All of the reindeer now in Alaska are bred from Asiatic stock imported from Siberia.

In northern Lapland 539 reindeer were bought, loaded on the Steamer *Manitoban*, shipped to New York and landed there with the loss of but one animal. They were shipped across the continent and arrived in Seattle where they were placed on grass in Woodland Park until they could be forwarded to the North. While in Seattle there were four died on account of the change in forage, and after they left eight more were lost. The reindeer were loaded on the bark *Seminole* which left on March 10th and reached Haines, Alaska on the 27th.

In Alaska it was found that the destitution in the mining region was not so acute as supposed, and the need was not pressing so the interest in the drive was lost sight of. The moss brought from Norway was exhausted, and the animals were fed on alfalfa hay and other foods, but began to die, rapidly.

It was decided to drive the herd through Canada to Alaskan territory, and the surviving animals were moved up the Chilkat River to pasturage on reindeer moss about fifty miles from the coast, where 185 reindeer arrived on May 6th.

After a short recuperation the remaining deer, numbering 164 by that time, moved slowly northward until on September 27th it was near the Hootchie Valley. During the winter of 1898-9, the

herd made its way down to Circle City, where it arrived February 8th, 1899.

The herd was under the charge of H. E. Redmeyer, and the drivers were Per Johannessen Hatta, Per Nilsen Siri, Klemet Persen Boini, Hans Anderson Siri, Anders Aslaksen Bahr, and Emil Kjeldberg.

Anders Aslaksen Bahr is the "Arctic Moses" who completed the trek through the "unmapped arctic tundra," which is the pasture ground for seven native-owned reindeer herds of Alaska, on his way to the Canadian boundary.

At Circle City it was planned to sell part of the sled deer herd to P. C. Richardson, who had a contract for the mail route newly established from St. Michaels to the new Gold Fields at Dawson. That project failed and the herd, which had dwindled to 114 animals, was taken over the trail to the Tanana, to about where Fairbanks is now situated, and from there down to the mouth of the river where they were exchanged with the Episcopal Mission at St. James, for female reindeer, and were used for food and draft purposes.

The account of the journey states that "Often a wolf or a mountain lion would appear and cause a stampede of the herd," and that "provisions ran out and they were threatened with starvation," otherwise the drive was made without special incident.

There were 113 persons brought from Europe with the expedition. These included Norwegians, Finns, and Laplanders, and several brought their families. In the party were sixty-eight men. All of these, except the seven who went with the drive to Tanana, were sent to St. Michael or Unalakleet, on the S. S. *Navarro* or on the Schooner *Louise J. Kenney*. Many of them left the Government Service by which they were brought, as soon as they reached St. Michael. Although the adventure was under the appropriation for the "purchase of subsistence stores, supplies and materials for the relief of people who are in the Yukon country," and under the War Department, of \$200,000.00, the whole of the immigrants were turned to the Interior Department and put on the Reindeer Service. Fortunately of the 78 Lapps, 25 Norwegians, and ten Finns, in the party, several of them, actually 43 in number, left the service by October 10th, 1899. Some of them, notably Jafet Lindeberg, found wealth in the gold fields of Nome. There is room for suspicion that

several joined the expedition to get transportation to the gold country, which was a ruling passion with many at that time.

This drive, from Haines Mission to the mouth of the Tanana River, is possibly the second in length of the Alaskan drives, of reindeer. In the course of the distribution of reindeer over western and central Alaska, there were about twenty drives made of from one to two hundred miles to about one thousand miles in length.

Perhaps the most notable of these in point of expedition, brief notice to prepare, difficulty of securing provision, equipment, etc., was the one made in 1898 from Capt Prince of Wales to Barrow. On ten days' notice, T. W. Lopp, Missionary Teacher at Wales, secured provisions, repaired harness, sleds, etc., and all this in an Eskimo village without even a trading post owned by a white man, and on February 3rd left Wales for Barrow, seven hundred miles distant, and without a supply station on the way. He made the drive with seven Eskimos, George Ootenna, James Keok, Thomas Sokweena, Stanley Kivearzruk, Ituk, Charley Artisarluk and Tautuk. Ituk, Kivearzruk and Sokweena were turned back at Cape Espenberg, after Kotzebue Sound was crossed.

At the crossing of the Sound, it is fifty miles from Cape Espenberg to Cape Krusenstern, the ice is rough, with pressure ridges and new ice where leads had opened. A day's travel out from Espenberg night came and a stop was made for rest and sleep. Before day the herd, except the sled deer, left and started back. At daylight it was found the herd had gone, the herders started on the run after them and caught them just as they were about to leave the ice at Espenberg, turned them and overtook the sleds at night of the second day. At the lead that was open from a foot or two to several feet at the edge of the shore ice the herd balked, milled and broke through the ice, most of them plunging into the ocean. They were finally got out at the land side, and had their first feed on the third day.

The reindeer were delivered at Barrow on March 30th, 382 in number, 34 being separated in a storm, but a herder was left who found them and kept them at Point Hope. Thirty-two were eaten, supplied to Captain Jarvis for his use, were killed by wolves or fell exhausted and died.

Dr. C. O. Lind, with Eskimos and Lapps made a drive from Unalakleet, to Bettles on the Koyukuk River, covering 550 miles between Nov. 10, and Dec. 31, 1904. Four Eskimos made a drive of

deer from Unalakleet to Shungnak between January 1, and February 15th, 1908. Perhaps the second in length of the Alaskan drives was made under Earle Forrest and B. B. Mozee, by Eskimos between November, 1921, and August, 1922, from the Kuskokwim to Broad Pass, on the Government Railway.

Through the courtesy of the Revenue Cutter Service the Bureau of Education Reindeer Service has delivered reindeer, 40 head to the Bureau of Fisheries on the Seal Islands in 1911; 40 to Atka Island for the Aleuts there, in 1913; 36 deer to Umnak Island in 1914, for the use of the Biological Survey; and 19 to Amaknak Island in 1913 for the Biological Survey. Reindeer have also been taken to Anette Island in Southeastern Alaska, and to Kodiak Island, by the Reindeer Service of the Bureau of Education.

This briefly sketches the principal drives in the distribution over western and northern Alaska in stocking the country with the reindeer, in establishing the industry for the Eskimos.

The authorities for above, are in *Reports of the Reindeer Service* for 1898, 1899, 1905, 1906, and *Bureau of Education Reports* for 1908, 1913, 1914. *Revenue Cutter Reports*, 1914, p. 168; 1914, p. 11; 1923, p. 23. *Unpublished Journal*, W. T. Lopp, Barrow Drive, MS., *The Eskimo Bulletin*, Cape Prince of Wales, 1898. *Report of Cruise U. S. Rev. Cut. Bear, and the Overland Expedition*, Gov't Ptg. Ofs., Washington, 1899.

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