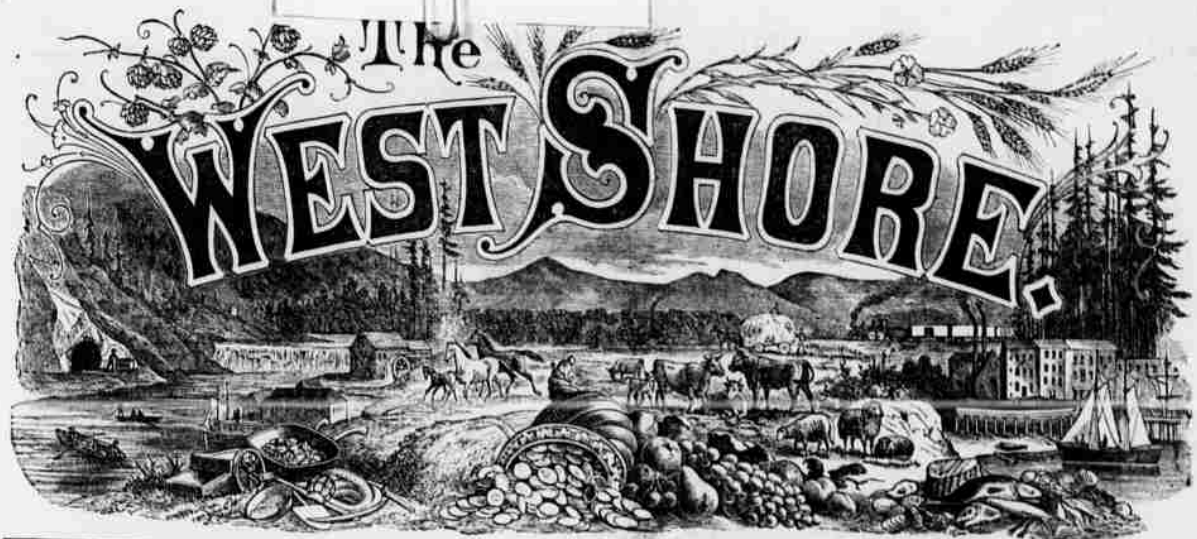


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A CRUISE TO ALASKA, IN 1875

BY JAMES G. SWAN, U. S. SPECIAL CENTENNIAL COMMISSIONER.

On the 26th day of May, 1875, I received a dispatch from Washington informing me that I had been appointed by the Secretary of the Interior as a special commissioner to procure articles of Indian manufacture for the National Museum, to be exhibited at Philadelphia during the Centennial Exposition of 1876, and that arrangements had been made for me to go to Alaska, on the U. S. Revenue steamer *Oliver Wolcott*, to make collections among the Indians of the Northwest Coast. Accordingly, after having made due preparation, we left Port Townsend on the 7th of June for Victoria, B. C., for some necessary supplies, and at midnight found ourselves under way for a cruise to the North.

The officers of the *Wolcott* were: Captain, Charles M. Scammon; First Lieutenant, Henry W. Harwood; Second Lieut., W. F. Kilgore; Third Lieut., W. K. Orcutt; Chief Engineer, James T. Wayson; First Assistant, Horace Hassel; Second Asst., A. L. Broadbent; crew, 28, including firemen, coal passers, and boys.

The *Wolcott* was under sailing orders to proceed to Sitka, touching at Fort Wrangell and Tongass, and from Sitka to proceed west to the Aleutian Islands; and as there were no coal supplies at Sitka, we had to take on board an unusual quantity at Nanaimo, B. C., where we arrived on the 8th. Our course

was to the east of Vancouver's Island, affording us quite as good a view of the shores on both sides, as may be seen while cruising on Puget Sound. From Victoria, we passed through Haro Strait and through Trincomalie Channel, till we reached Dodd Narrows, on Northumberland Channel, west of Gabriola Island. Through these narrows the tides rush with great

velocity, except at high and low water, when, for a short time, they are quiet. We passed through easily, and soon were at Nanaimo, where we filled every available space, even to covering the quarter deck and the waist of the cutter, making her look more like a coal barge than a revenue steamer.

We left Nanaimo the next afternoon, and passed up the Strait or Gulf of

Georgia, reaching Seymour Narrows at 4 A. M. June 10th, and passing through that turbulent passage at slack high water, which was so quiet as to cause those officers who had never passed it before, to regard the stories of its terrors as a myth. But before we returned all hands were satisfied that Seymour's Narrows are fraught with great dangers, and it was in this

very passage where but a few days after we had gone through safely, the U. S. steamship *Saragoc* struck on a sunken rock and was totally lost, sinking in nearly 100 fathoms of water. Seymour Narrows lie between Valdes Island and the east coast of Vancouver's Island, in about 50 deg. 4 min. north. The temperature of the water, as reported by the engineer, was 50 deg. in Foca Strait, 60 deg. in the Strait of Georgia off Nanaimo, and 50 deg. after passing Seymour Narrows, which is to be accounted for in the following manner: The temperature of 50 deg. was that of the Pacific ocean, brought in by Foca Strait on the south, and from Queen Charlotte's Sound through Johnston's Strait on the north. The temperature of 60 deg. in the Strait of Georgia was occasioned, undoubtedly, by the fresh waters of the many sluggish streams, and the flats on the east side of Vancouver's Island becoming heated by the summer sun, which at that time was at 90 degrees. The warm, fresh water flowing on the surface of the salt water of the Georgian strait or gulf, was what was dipped up by the engineer.



MATERNAL HAPPINESS—From a Painting by CARL HUBNER.