

To Find *the* Frozen Fleet That Haunts *the* Pole



Explorer Amundsen
Sets Out to Freeze His
Schooner in the Circling
Floes at the Top of the World to Verify the
Eskimo Legend of Ghostly Ships, and Perhaps
to Touch the Pole



Six Eskimo members of Amundsen's crew in everyday attire.

Amundsen will not be the first explorer to drift across the Polar basin—it was accomplished in 1893-1896 by Fridtjof Nansen—he will be the first to carry the elaborate equipment necessary for the proper study of polar conditions.

"We are taking the finest scientific instruments that were ever sent north," said Captain Amundsen. "With two airplanes and elaborate photographic apparatus, we will be able to study the surface conditions for hundreds of miles on each side of the vessel—something that was impossible when dog sleds were used."

It is his hope, therefore, not only to solve the riddle of the phantom fleet, but many others. After the completion of the polar drift he hopes to be able to tell how the weather is made, whether the frozen Arctic ever will be navigable, how deep the water is beneath the endless fields of ice, whether there are other lands never discovered in the unexplored region, of what the floor of the Polar seas is made, and whether there is animal or perhaps human life there of which the world has never known. In short, he hopes to bring the 1,000,000 square miles of uncharted territory into the knowledge of men.

Four large bodies of land—Asia, Europe, Greenland and North America—together with innumerable smaller bodies, hedge in the Arctic seas and make of them virtually a huge ice-strewn lake.

But between the North Pole and Bering Strait lies the greater part of the Polar basin and the greater part of the uncharted territory which Amundsen will invade, though part of it lies between the Pole and Franz Josef Land. Specifically the Polar basin is bounded by the

northern coast of Siberia from Bering Strait to the northern Talmur peninsula, Franz Josef Land, Spitzbergen, Greenland, Grinnel Land—one of the places touched en route by the Peary Polar expedition—Axel Heiberg Land, Ringnes Land, the Parry Islands and Alaska.

Two-thirds of the Arctic ocean—and the unexplored regions so far as known—is covered by ice fields that have an average thickness of six or seven feet. Various influences are brought to bear upon these tremendous floes and cause them to drift first in one direction and then another. But while the channels of escape from the Arctic ocean into the larger bodies of water are many, they are also very narrow and, for this reason, it has been generally assumed that very little of the ice which finds its way into the northern Atlantic comes from the Arctic regions.

As practically all necessary data is lacking, little can be told about the drift of the immense ice packs in the uncharted regions. The pack immediately north of Bering Strait, however, through the action of the winds and the currents, drifts in a north-northwesterly direction to that part of the Arctic ocean lying between the Pole and Franz Josef Land. From there it turns southwesterly toward Jan Mayen.

Some of this pack may become detached and escape into the Atlantic through Baffin bay and Davis strait, or perhaps through the Greenland sea, but the amount is relatively small. For the most part, these bodies of ice, according to the general scientific belief, continue this Arctic drift and remain practically intact. In fact, it is considered possible that glacial formations may have taken

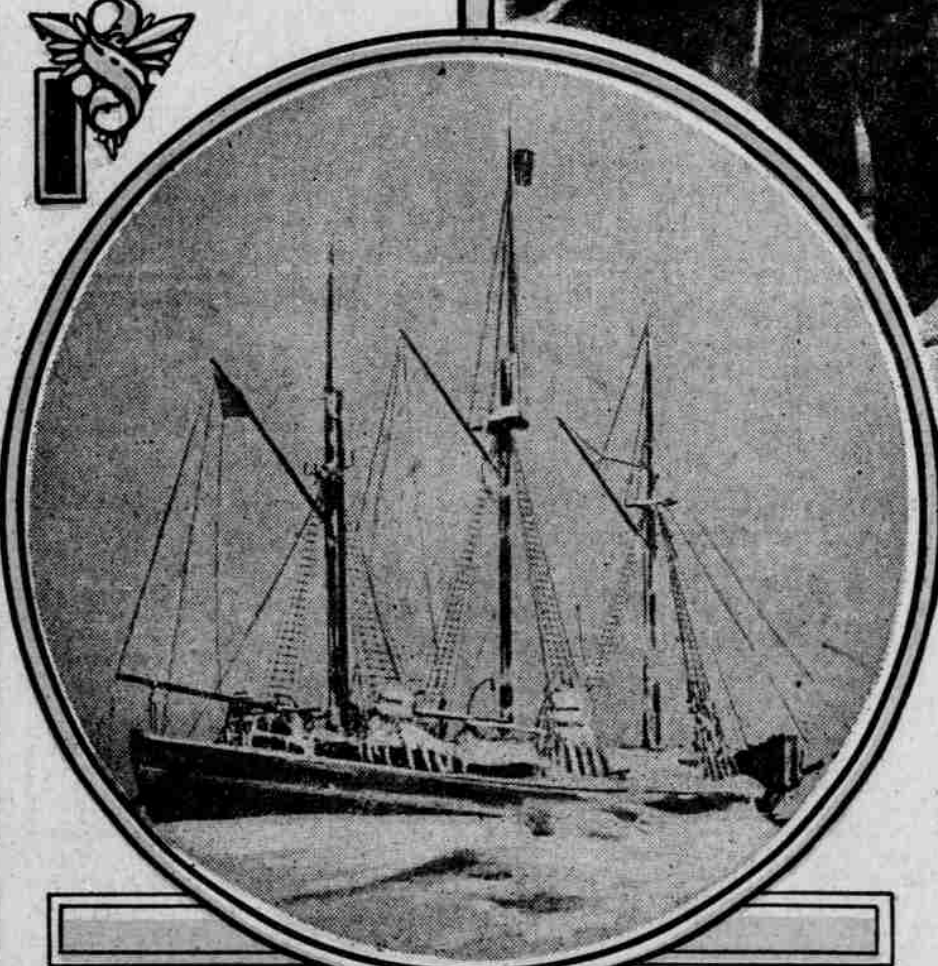
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Captain Amundsen beside one of the planes with which this latest Polar expedition is equipped.

SOMEWHERE within those vast uncharted wastes of ice that lie due north of Bering Strait a fleet of battered ships manned by frozen crews is swinging in a slow uncertain orbit about the North Pole.

Tales of this grisly flotilla have been



The schooner Maud, in which Captain Amundsen hopes to float over the North Pole in 1924. Here the Maud is shown frozen in last winter off the Siberian coast.

from stem to stern; ships that were ghastly, silent and unoccupied save for a few rigid figures looking like men, which clung to the rails or stood on the companionways.

For a long time little attention was given these tales. But their persistent recurrence finally stirred the curiosity of adventurers and scientific men. And now finally an expedition has started out, headed by no less a person than Captain Roald Amundsen, discoverer of the South Pole, to hunt down these grim wanderers of the north and to find out what manner of creatures they may have been—or still may be.

Captain Amundsen's ship, Maud, sailed out of Puget sound early in the summer, bound for Nome and then for the slow drift across the unexplored basin of the

North Pole. The ship is equipped and supplied to withstand seven years in the Arctic.

If he follows out his plans, Captain Amundsen will voluntarily submit his ship to the situation that befell other Arctic adventurers through misfortune or miscalculation. That is, he will let the Maud become frozen into the ice and drift at the will of the winter storms and the summer currents. If, as has been thought, there is a consistency to the drift of the ice field in the Polar basin, the Maud will describe much the same route about the pole as these frozen ships.

The expedition will thus be in a position to make investigation and explorations into a region that is still unplumbed by man. Whereas Captain