

The Saga of Jarvis

Captain David Henry Jarvis pictured on the preceding page was born in Maryland and was appointed to the Revenue Cutter Service in 1881. He served with the USRS until 1905. The majority of Captain Jarvis's career was devoted to developing maritime activities in the Alaska and Bearing Sea area, many of these years and activities were accomplished while attached to the famous Revenue Cutter Bear. He was uniquely qualified for the duty that he was about to be selected for by the fact that he was an 8 year veteran of the Alaskan Arctic and spoke both Alaskan Eskimo and native dialects in every village along Alaska's coastal routes. He was small, mild mannered, seemingly placid but a man with iron will and indomitable courage.

In November of 1897, the world learned of 275 men marooned in the arctic near Point Barrow with their fleet of whaling vessels. The President of the United States, President McKinley, called on the Revenue Cutter Service to attempt relief of these Arctic victims. The Revenue Cutter Bear, which had just returned to Seattle from an Alaskan voyage was called upon for the rescue. Captain Francis Tuttle Commanding Officer of the Bear, asked for volunteers and every man volunteered for the mission.



The trio of officers from the Revenue Cutter BEAR who executed the Overland Expedition. Left to right: 2nd Lt. E. P. Berthold; Surgeon S. J. Call; 1st Lt. D. H. Jarvis (Commanding).

The objective of the mission was for the Cutter Bear to transport a rescue party to Cape Vancouver Alaska where they would be put ashore and would then collect reindeer and drive them to Point Barrow where they would be used as meat for the marooned whalers. The rescue party was appointed by Captain Tuttle and was comprised of three members, then Lt. David Jarvis, Lt. E. P. Berthold, and Dr. S. J. Call of the U.S. Public Health Service. The mission would be known as the "Overland Relief Expedition of 1897".