



The BEAR off Pt. Barrow in the early summer of 1898, enroute to relieve the whalers.

The Bear pushed as far north as the ice permitted stopping at various places along the Alaskan continent to procure dogs, sleds, and native clothing. Jarvis's plan was to "go light" procuring food and other necessities along the way. On December 15, 1897, the Bear had found her way as far north as possible and pulled into an Eskimo village Tununak near Cape Vancouver. Lt. Jarvis and his group departed the ship and took up company with a half-Russian trader who guided the expedition to St. Michaels. Through the confusion, some of the supplies that were sent ashore were lost before everything and everyone could be accounted for. They knew that time was of the essence as the whalers were in dire emergency and if the expedition were not able to get through, it would be the following June or July before a relief could be effected and by then death may have overtaken the entire crew due to lack of food and supplies.

The Relief Expedition got underway. Ahead lay 1500 miles of Alaskan wilderness at temperatures that would reach as low as a -60° and the gloom of a dark arctic winter. But they had to go as the President had requested the mission. Meanwhile, the Bear headed back to Seattle. Lt. Jarvis was forced to travel far inland during the first part of the journey due to unseasonable southern storms which had broken up the shore ice and created unavoidable obstacles. The weather was very warm making the snow soft and sticky and extremely hard to travel on. Only a few miles were covered each day. Food was also in short supply along the way as the villagers themselves were experiencing a hard year. After only a few days travel the dogs became exhausted and Lt. Jarvis was forced to leave Lt. Berthold, the Russian trader and the reindeer herder to travel behind. Lt. Jarvis always reminded himself that he must hurry, the others would follow behind after the dogs had rested.



The herd of reindeer enroute to Pt. Barrow.