"The Adventurous Voyage"

St. Roch *and the Northwest Passage, 1940-42 and 1944*

Edited by P. Whitney Lackenbauer
and Shelagh D. Grant

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OF GOVERNMENT

Arctic Operational Histories, no.7
2019

The Arctic Operational Histories

The Arctic Operational Histories seeks to provide context and background to Canada's defence operations and responsibilities in the North by resuscitating important, but forgotten, Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) reports, histories, and defence material from previous generations of Arctic operations.

Since the CAF's reengagement with the Arctic in the early 2000s, experience has demonstrated the continuity of many of the challenges and frictions which dominated operations in decades past. While the platforms and technologies used in previous eras of Arctic operations are very different, the underlying challenges – such as logistics, communications, movement, and sustainment – remain largely the same. Unfortunately, few of the lessons learned by previous generations are available to today's operators. To preserve these lessons and strengthen the CAF's ties to its northern history, this series is reproducing key reports and histories with direct relevance to CAF operations today.

Adam Lajeunesse
Series Editor

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P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Shelagh Grant
Peterborough, Ontario
February 2019

List of Acronyms

B.C.	British Columbia
Capt.	Captain
CGS	Canadian Government Ship
DCASS	Documents on Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security
HBC	Hudson's Bay Company
Hrb.	Harbour
LAC	Library and Archives Canada
N.S.	Nova Scotia
O.C.	Officer Commanding
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RG	record group
RMS	Royal Mail Ship
UBC	University of British Columbia
U.S.	United States
vol.	volume

Introduction

"To Uphold and Enforce Canada's Sovereignty of her Arctic Islands": *St. Roch* and the Northwest Passage Voyages, 1940-42 and 1944

P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Shelagh D. Grant

> The cruise of the *St. Roch* through the North-west Passage last summer and autumn was undertaken in the line of duty–to uphold and enforce Canada's sovereignty of her Arctic Islands.
>
> Sub-Inspector Henry Asbjørn Larsen (1942)[1]

> The 80-ton R.C.M.P. patrol vessel *St. Roch* again journeys through the North-west Passage, accomplishing the adventurous voyage, east to west, in less than three months–the first time it has been made in a single season.
>
> Inspector Larsen (1945)[2]

The voyages of *St. Roch* through the Northwest Passages during the Second World War are inextricably linked to its famous skipper, Henry Asbjørn Larsen, as well as with Canada's efforts to demonstrate an official presence in the region as an assertion of its sovereignty. As historian Gordon W. Smith noted, sovereignty issues were a key factor in planning the voyage, alongside defence of Greenland, search for new supply routes through the Arctic, and the potential

[1] "East through the North-West Passage," *RCMP Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (1942): 148-61.

[2] Henry A. Larsen, "Our Return Voyage Through the North-west Passage," *R.C.M.P. Quarterly* X, no.4 (April 1945): 298-320.

for favourable publicity. Based upon his writings, it is clear that Larsen "came to view the sovereignty aspect as the most important of all."[3]

In anticipation of the seventy-fifth anniversary of *St. Roch's* single-season transit of the Northwest Passage in 1944, this volume reproduces three important documents offering diverse perspectives on the wartime voyages. First, Larsen's official report provides a succinct overview of the routes taken by the ship as well as valuable descriptions of the experiences of the crews, their activities while over-wintering in the Arctic, and relationships with Inuit.[4] Geographer J. Lewis Robinson of the Bureau of Northwest Territories and Yukon Affairs, the author of the second document, focuses more on situating the ship's "conquest of the Northwest Passage" in the history of exploration of the fabled waterway.[5] A third perspective is offered by Joe Panipakuttuk, an Inuk who embarked on *St. Roch* with his family at Pond Inlet for its 1944 voyage to Herschel Island, and returned to his community by schooner and sled over the next two years. In the late 1960s, he recorded some of his experiences in Inuktitut syllabics which, in turn, were translated for the magazine *Nord/North* and are reproduced here.[6] The following introduction attempts to situate these narratives in historical context, furnishing a general overview of Canadian sovereignty and activities in Arctic waters prior to 1940, introducing Larsen and his rationale for undertaking the wartime transits, framing some dominant themes in the documents, and providing a short précis of *St. Roch*'s activities and the lives of key actors after the war.

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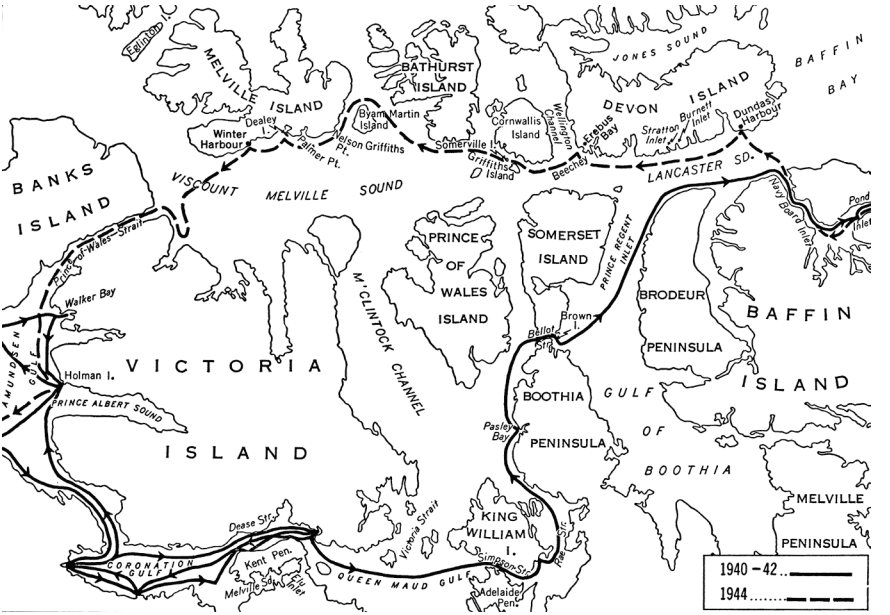
[3] Gordon W. Smith, *A Historical and Legal Study of Sovereignty in the Canadian North: Terrestrial Sovereignty, 1870–1939*, ed. P. Whitney Lackenbauer (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2014), 376.

[4] Henry A. Larsen, *The North-West Passage 1940–1942 and 1944: The Famous Voyages of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Schooner "St. Roch"* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1958).

[5] J. Lewis Robinson, "Conquest of the Northwest Passage by RCMP Schooner St. Roch," *Canadian Geographical Journal* 30, no. 2 (February 1945): 52–73.

[6] Joe Panipakuttuk, "The Reminiscences of Joe Panipakuttuk." *North*, xvi (January/February 1969): 10-17.



Arctic Waters, Sovereignty, and the Canadian State

Inuit and First Nations have occupied what is now the Canadian North since time immemorial. Apart from short-lived Norse settlements around the turn of the first millennium CE, the earliest European interest in the region fixated on trying to find a route *through* the region to reach the riches of Asia. Attempts to navigate through the icy labyrinth of islands north of the Canadian mainland from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries proved futile, however, and the much-sought after Northwest Passage did not materialize as a feasible commercial frontier. Instead, the fur trade drew both French and English interests deeper into the northern reaches of the continental mainland. The British Royal Navy resumed its quest to establish a Northwest Passage in the nineteenth century, and while the search for Sir John Franklin's ill-fated 1845 expedition proved the existence of an Arctic maritime route it also demonstrated its lack of utility.

During the mid-century flurry of British exploration in the North American Arctic Archipelago, the Admiralty and Colonial Office spent little time pondering Britain's legal claim to the Arctic islands. Sir John Barrow, Second Secretary of the Admiralty, even argued that planting the flag and making claims was a waste of time in a region unable to support European settlement.

Despite this opinion, the Admiralty carefully charted every discovery and claim made by British explorers and added them to its imperial map. Nevertheless, Britain did not explicitly annex the Arctic islands or clarify its territorial rights in the region.[7]

After Confederation in 1867, the northern limits of the new Dominion of Canada remained ambiguous, and defining them seemed a remote, future consideration. In February 1874, former U.S. naval engineer William Mintzer applied to the British government for land upon which to prospect for a potential mine, raising alarm in the Colonial Office. Consequently, the British government introduced an order-in-council on 31 July 1880 declaring that "all British territories and possessions in North America, and the islands adjacent to such territories and possessions which are not already included in the Dominion of Canada, should (with the exception of the Colony of Newfoundland and its dependencies) be annexed to and form part of the said Dominion." By this act, Britain gifted to Canada whatever territories or territorial rights it had in the Arctic Archipelago. The completeness of Britain's own title at that time, and the extent of its territories, were highly uncertain.[8] Fortunately for Canada, no foreign state questioned the transfer and no American challenges crystallized at that time.

For its part, Canada did little to consolidate its control over its new territory for the next fifteen years. Not until 1895 did the country draw boundaries on the map and subdivide the Canadian North into administrative districts. By that time, the Canadian claim to the Arctic Archipelago rested on British acts of discovery and little more. As the so-called "heroic age" of polar exploration dawned, however, questions surrounding territorial acquisition and title became more pressing. Foreign expeditions, such as those led by the American Robert Peary and the Norwegian Otto Sverdrup, fanned throughout the Arctic

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[7] Shelagh Grant, *Polar Imperative: A History of Sovereignty in North America* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2010), 105; and Peter Kikkert and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, eds., *Legal Appraisals of Canada's Arctic Sovereignty: Key Documents, 1904-58*, Documents on Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security (DCASS) No. 2 (Calgary: Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, 2014).

[8] On the 1880 transfer and the events leading up to it, see Gordon W. Smith, "The Transfer of Arctic Territories from Great Britain to Canada, and Related Matters, as Seen in Official Correspondence," *Arctic*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1961): 53-73.

Archipelago and uncovered large swathes of hitherto unknown territory. While these explorers flew their national flags on High Arctic Islands, a new flood of American whalers started to operate in the Beaufort Sea. In 1903, the Alaska Boundary Dispute exacerbated jurisdictional worries, reinforcing Canadian concerns that the U.S. thirsted for territory in the North. These events prompted officials in Ottawa to consider the historic and legal basis for Canada's claims in the region.[9] Mindful that Britain would sell out our interests to court American goodwill, the Government of Canada would have to defend its own national interests in the North.

The Klondike Gold Rush prompted the first official assertions of authority, with Ottawa initially by sending a small field force of Northwest Mounted Police, followed by major administrative changes and the creation of the Yukon Territory. Historian Richard Diubaldo explained how Canada's responded to foreign activities in the Arctic Archipelago and ongoing concerns about the strength of its title by embarking "on a long range, though relatively low-key, program of finding out more about her northern territories, securing Canadian sovereignty, and advancing the frontiers of scientific knowledge."[10] To regulate American whaling, in 1903 the North-West Mounted Police established a post on Herschel Island in the Beaufort Sea[11] and another at Fullerton Harbour in Hudson Bay. Following in the wake of earlier Canadian voyages by William Wakeham and Albert Peter Low, Joseph-Elzéar Bernier began patrolling the waters of Hudson Bay and the Arctic islands, asserting control and indicating Canada's supervision over the region. Bernier intercepted and imposed licenses

[9] On these early Canadian government efforts see William Morrison, *Showing the Flag: The Mounted Police and Canadian Sovereignty in the North, 1894–1925* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1985); Janice Cavell, "'A little more latitude': Explorers, Politicians, and Canadian Arctic Policy during the Laurier Era," *Polar Record,* vol. 47, no. 4 (2010): 289–309; Kikkert and Lackenbauer, *Legal Appraisals of Canada's Arctic Sovereignty*; and Cavell, ed., *Documents on Canadian External Relations: The Arctic, 1874-1949* (Ottawa: Global Affairs Canada, 2016). For broader international context, see Peter Kikkert, "Grasping for the Ends of the Earth: Framing and Contesting Polar Sovereignty, 1900-1955" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Western University, 2015).

[10] Richard Diubaldo, *Stefansson and the Canadian Arctic* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), 7.

[11] See Morrison, *Showing the Flag*, 78-85.

on foreign whalers, collected customs duties, conducted geographical research, and performed ceremonies of possession to reinforce Canada's sovereignty.[12] These activities marked an important shift in policy towards attempting to demonstrate Canadian presence and occupation in the region.

Concurrent to Bernier's forays into the Arctic, Senator Pascal Poirier offered an easier and more definite method for securing sovereignty in the Arctic: the Sector Principle.[13] In physical support of this idea, Bernier had his entire crew march to Parry's Rock on Melville Island on 1 July 1909 where they installed a plaque that took sweeping possession of the "whole Arctic Archipelago lying to the north of America from long. 60°W to 141°W up to latitude 90°N." Although the Canadian government never officially entrenched the sector claim in a federal statute,[14] it continued its policy of quietly extending its knowledge of and presence in the Arctic Archipelago.[15]

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[12] For more on Bernier's work in the Arctic Archipelago see T.C. Fairley and Charles E. Israel, *The True North, the Story of Captain Joseph Bernier* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1957); Yolande Dorion-Robitaille, *Captain J.E. Bernier's Contribution to Canadian Sovereignty in the Arctic* (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs, 1978); Season L. Osborne, "Closing the Front Door to the Arctic: Capt. Joseph E. Bernier's Role in Canadian Arctic Sovereignty" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 2003); Marjolaine Saint-Pierre, *Joseph-Elzéar Bernier: Capitaine et coureur des mers* (Sillery, Quebec: Septentrion, 2004); David Eric Jessup, "J.E. Bernier and the Assertion of Canadian Sovereignty in the Arctic," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 38, 4 (2008): 409-29; Janice Cavell, "'As far as 90 north': Joseph Elzéar Bernier's 1907 and 1909 sovereignty claims," *Polar Record* 46, no. 239 (2010): 372–76; Alan MacEachern, "J. E. Bernier's Claims to Fame," *Scientia Canadensis* 33, no. 2 (2010): 43–73.

[13] Canada, Senate *Debates*, 20 February 1907, 271. On the background to Poirier's statement, see Smith, *Historical and Legal Study*, 151, 181-197; and Janice Cavell and Jeff Noakes, *Acts of Occupation: Canada and Arctic Sovereignty, 1918-25* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 73-74.

[14] Grant, *Polar Imperative*, 207, 213.

[15] In the last of the "old-fashioned expeditions," Vilhjalmur Stefansson's two-pronged Canadian Arctic Expedition ventured into the western Arctic from 1913-18, ultimately discovering several islands, adding several thousand square kilometres to Canadian territory, and clarifying cartographical ambiguities. Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *The Friendly Arctic: The Story of Five Years in Polar Regions* (New York: Macmillan, 1921), 142-226, and Borden's foreword, xxiv. See also Robert Bartlett *Last Voyage of the Karluk* (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1916), 306; Diubalo, *Stefansson*

Foreign activities continued to arouse sovereignty concerns in the interwar period. When Danish explorer Knud Rasmussen intimated in a written statement that Ellesmere Island was a "No-Man's-Land," and the Danish government initially seemed to endorse his stance, there was understandable anxiety in Ottawa.[16] It blew over by the summer of 1921 when Canadian officials accepted repeated Danish assurances that they had no interest in contesting Canada's sovereignty over the Arctic islands, replacing fears of what Denmark might do in the region with what Canada should do.[17] The Danish 'threat' and the legal appraisals it spawned inspired the "transformation of Canada's earlier Arctic policy – in which proclamations and other purely formal acts of possession were deemed sufficient – into a more active and sustained postwar program that emphasized the need for 'acts of occupation' even on remote and uninhabited northern islands like Ellesmere."[18]

When the Liberal government of William Lyon Mackenzie King came to power at the end of 1921, it instituted an annual ship patrol in the Eastern Arctic and expanded the newly-renamed Royal Canadian Mounted Police's (RCMP) permanent presence on the Arctic islands, beginning in 1922 with new posts at Pond Inlet on Baffin Island and Craig Harbour on Ellesmere Island.[19]

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and the Canadian Arctic; and Trevor H. Levere, "Vilhjalmur Stefansson, the Continental Shelf, and a New Arctic Continent," *British Journal for the History of Science* vol. 21, no. 2 (1988), 238, 240.

[16] Historians Janice Cavell and Jeff Noakes argue that, in reality, Rasmussen and the Danish government never denied Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic. Instead, they allege that Stefansson stoked sovereignty concerns in the hopes that he would be rewarded with a new expedition to occupy the northern islands. See Cavell and Noakes, *Acts of Occupation*. For a somewhat different interpretation of events, see Grant, *Polar Imperative*, 217-223. See also Smith, *Historical and Legal Study*, 215-266.

[17] Smith, *Historical and Legal Study*, 265.

[18] Cavell and Noakes, *Acts of Occupation*, 6.

[19] For more on Canadian government activity in the Arctic in the early 1920s see, Morrison, *Showing the Flag;* Janice Cavell, "The Origins of Canada's First Eastern Arctic Patrol, 1919–1922," *Polar Record* 45, no. 233 (2009): 97–112; Peter Schledermann, "The Muskox Patrol: High Arctic Sovereignty Revisited," Arctic, vol. 58, no. 1 (2003): 101-109; and Smith, *Historical and Legal Study,* 341-67. On the introduction of Canada's justice system in the far north, see Shelagh D. Grant,

After another surge of activity and appraisals of Canada's sovereignty position following the American MacMillan-Byrd expedition in 1925, the Canadian government slowly continued its "peaceful penetration" into the Far North. The Eastern Arctic Patrol continued, more RCMP posts were constructed (including one on the Bache Peninsula on Ellesmere Island), and police officers extended their patrols in the High Arctic Islands, thus confirming their role as the Canadian government's key flag-bearers in demonstrating "effective occupation" over the far north until the Depression years caused major cutbacks.

"An Adventurer at Heart": Henry Asbjørn Larsen

Henry Asbjørn Larsen was born on 30 September 1899 in the village of Fredrikstad on the east coast of Norway's Oslo Fjord, only a few miles from the birthplace of famous explorer Roald Amundsen, captain of the *Gjoa* which in 1903-96 had completed the first European transit of the Northwest Passage. "It is uncertain if Larsen ever knew Amundsen personally," A.E. Porsild later noted, "but when he was an adolescent the tradition of Norwegian arctic exploration was at its height and the brilliant exploits of Nansen, Sverdrup and Amundsen undoubtedly fired his imagination and inspired a strong desire to follow the sea in search of arctic adventure and exploration."[20]

Larsen began his nautical career in 1914, sailing on a cargo sloop owned by an uncle to Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish ports. A year later, aboard Captain H. Olsen's sailing ship *Baunen*, he left Brest, France, for Barbados, Mississippi, and Buenos Aires. Over the next three years, he made repeated voyages to North and South American ports, and embarked on a long roundabout voyage in 1919 which took him from New York to Cape Town, the East Indies, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and the Suez Canal en route to Christiania (Oslo). When he arrived back in Norway, he chose to do his compulsory military service in the Norwegian Navy, graduating from the Norwegian State Navigation School as a fully qualified navigator in the summer of 1920.

Arctic Justice: On Trial for Murder, Pond Inlet, 1923 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002).

[20] A.E. Porsild, "Henry Asbjorn Larsen (1899-1964)," *Arctic* 18, no.1 (1965): 67.

As a mate on the Norwegian motor vessel *Theodore Roosevelt* from 1922-24, Larsen sailed between his home country and various ports in the Pacific Ocean, meeting Amundsen and his pilot Oscar Omdahl on one of his visits to Seattle. "Through them," Smith observed, "his long-held desire for a career in the North received new impetus and encouragement."[21] After Arctic trader Charlie Klengenberg hired Larsen as navigator in the spring of 1924, he made two trips to the Beaufort Sea in 1924–25 and 1926 on the schooner *Maid of Orleans*. While overwintering at Herschel Island, Larsen studied Inuit modes of hunting, sealing, fishing, and travelling, gaining valuable insights that would inform his future practices. He also approached the RCMP officer commanding about joining the RCMP, secured Canadian citizenship in Vancouver in November 1927, and in April of the following year was sworn into the police force.[22]

The RCMP had been exploring the possibility of procuring a small schooner "which could sail everywhere in this enormous area to act as a floating detachment in the summer and a permanent station during the winter," Larsen recounted. The Minister of Justice concurred with the plan in 1925, which

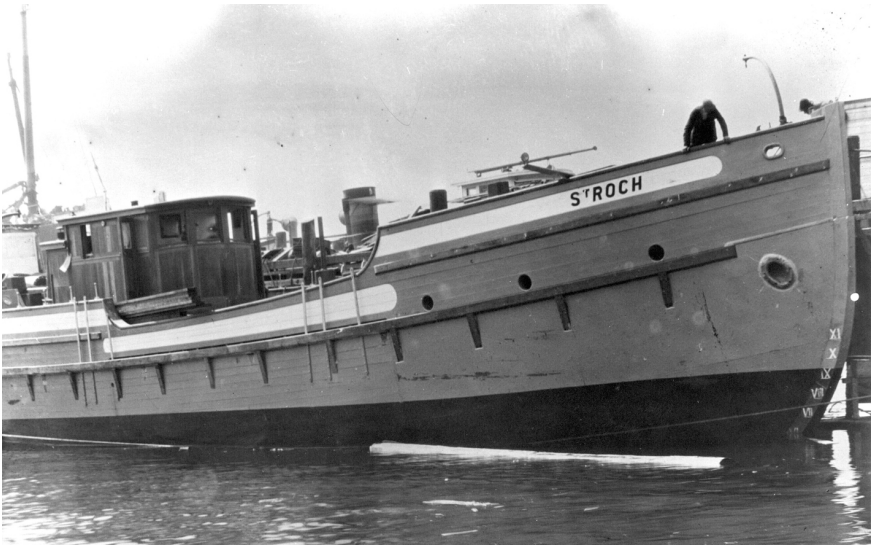
[21] Smith, *Historical and Legal Study*, 369.
[22] Larsen, *The Big Ship*, 1–2, 27, 34–35.

would relieve the police of their dependence on civilian transport and supply. The construction contract to build the ship was let to the Burrard Dry Dock Company of North Vancouver in 1927. The ship was ready by the end of June the following year and named *St. Roch* – "guardian of the poor" – after a parish in the constituency of justice minister Ernest Lapointe. As Smith described:

> The *St. Roch* was 104 feet in length, 25 feet in beam, with draft when loaded of 12½ feet and net tonnage of 80 tons. Designed especially for Arctic service, she had a saucer-shaped cross section, which enabled her to rise above the crushing pressure of surrounding ice rather than being squeezed in it. For greater strength, the ship was built solidly of heavy Douglas fir, with a complete outside sheeting of Australian ironbark. She had schooner rigging and was equipped with a 150-horsepower diesel engine.[23]

The rounded hull meant that the ship rocked and heaved heavily in open seas, but what it lacked in comfort it compensated for in strength and dependability.

During the ship's maiden voyage to the Arctic in 1928, Larsen was thrust into a leadership role when the skipper (Captain William Hugh Gillen) left the ship at Herschel Island in late August. Although Constable Larsen was "technically outranked by his fellow constables," historian James Delgado noted



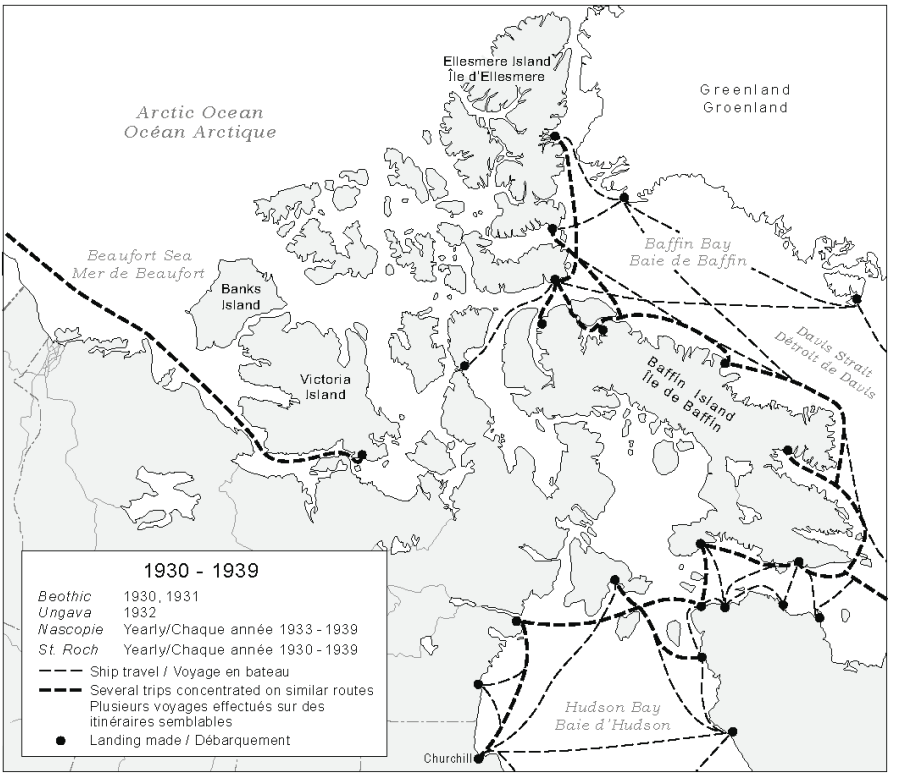
[23] Smith, *Historical and Legal Study*, 371. See also Larsen, *The Big Ship*, 36–39; and James P. Delgado, *Arctic Workhorse: The RCMP Schooner St. Roch* (Vancouver: Touch Wood Editions, 2003), 53-63.

that his experience as an Arctic mariner led to his appointment as master of the vessel (while Sergeant Andy Anderton commanded the police detachment aboard the ship).[24] "Thus, within six months of joining the RCMP, Larsen found himself commander of a ship and holder of one of the most interesting and challenging positions in the force," Smith explained. He would remain commander of *St. Roch* during her entire career of northern service from 1928–1948.[25]

Operating out of Vancouver from 1928-39, *St. Roch* spent twelve summers and four winters patrolling the Western Canadian Arctic, supplying RCMP detachments along the Arctic coastlines, and effectively serving as a floating detachment itself.[26] According to his daughter Doreen Larsen Reidel, "these voyages were undertaken largely through uncharted waters, without the benefit of sonar, aerial ice reconnaissance, regular radio contact and relying on navigational methods dating back hundreds of years."[27] Larsen explained in more detail the myriad government tasks performed by *St. Roch* in addition to its formal "policing" responsibilities:

> Firstly, to uphold and enforce Canada's sovereignty of her Arctic Islands; to act as administrators for the North-West Territories Council; maintaining game laws; making general checkups of Eskimos' living conditions; compiling Vital Statistics; authorizing the issuing of rations for the destitute aged and infirm Eskimos; taking of census; settling of any disputes which might arise; conveying children to and from the residential schools at Aklavik; and transferring sick Eskimos for treatment and hospitalization at Aklavik. Sometimes we assist in securing suitable Eskimos, with their families, who we transport from the Coronation Gulf area to the Mackenzie River Delta to learn to herd and look after the reindeer herd provided by the Canadian Government for the Eskimos in that area.[28]

[24] Delgado, *Arctic Workhorse*, 19.
[25] Smith, *Historical and Legal Study*, 371.
[26] Porsild, "Henry Asbjorn Larsen," 67; Larsen, "North-West Passage," 49.
[27] Doreen Larsen Riedel, quoted in *St. Roch: RCMP Patrol Vessel St. Roch Commemorative* (Dartmouth: Ship St. Roch Commemorative Association, 2007), 5.
[28] Larsen, "North-West Passage," 51-52.



The origins of the idea to take *St. Roch* through the Northwest Passage appears to have begun with Larsen himself. According to Smith, "it may well be that this was a dream he had cherished practically from the time his service with the ship began." In November 1934, for example, after spending four consecutive years operating out of the Coronation Gulf area, Larsen wrote to Assistant Commissioner J. W. Phillips (officer commanding "E" Division in Vancouver) suggesting that, during the summer, *St. Roch* could proceed straight through to the eastern Arctic via Viscount Melville Sound, Barrow Strait, and Lancaster Sound. Although the proposal was dismissed as being "too risky" at the time, the idea persisted. In May 1936, while trapped in the ice after wintering at Cambridge Bay, Larsen suggested to Inspector G. M. Curleigh in Aklavik that the ship "would have no difficulty to connect with Eastern Arctic supply ship at any place along Lancaster Sound if it should be desired."[29]

[29] Smith, *Historical and Legal Study*, 372.

Again, headquarters staff in Ottawa saw the suggestion as "a trifle ambitious at this time."[30] Larsen broached the subject again with Commissioner James Howden MacBrien when the latter visited Cambridge Bay on a flying tour of northern detachments, recording in his autobiography:

> I had opportunity to mention, that I would like to at some time proceed right through the North-West Passage with the St. Roch, pointing out, that since it was decided we should spend the winter of 1936–7 in the King William Isl. area, the logical thing to do, would be to proceed East from there, instead of treading the narrow ice infested channels back Westward, and possibly be late to get back out past Point Barrow, to which he replied, that our Role in the Arctic was not to be Explorers, but to carry out the various duties and administrations on behalf of the various departments of the Federal Government, but also that he hoped that in the future an opportunity to Navigate from one side of the Arctic [to the other] would present itself.[31]

Again, Larsen's appeal gained no traction amongst his superiors. In his words, "had it not been for the war, we would never have had the occasion or opportunity to make this passage."[32]

Background to the 1940 Voyage[33]

St. Roch was recalled to Vancouver to be assigned other duties with the outbreak of the Second World War in August 1939, and Larsen travelled to Ottawa in early January 1940 to meet with senior RCMP officials. He narrated in his autobiography:

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[30] LAC, RG 18, vol. 8139, file "Patrols and Mileage of St. Roch Detachment" (formerly RCMP file G567-84), vol. 1; and Larsen to O. C. "E" Div., 27 November 1934, quoted in Smith, *Historical and Legal Study*, 372.

[31] Larsen autobiography manuscript, 621, quoted in Smith, *Historical and Legal Study*, 372. See also Larsen, *The Big Ship*, 113. From 1935-37 and again from 1938-39, the vessel operated out of Cambridge Bay.

[32] Larsen, Memo to the RCMP Commissioner, 15 November 1957, RG 18 (acc. 85-86/048), vol. 14, file G-577-14 supp "G."

[33] This section is derived from Shelagh D. Grant, "Why the *St. Roch*? Why the Northwest Passage? Why 1940? New Answers to Old Questions," *Arctic* 46, no. 1 (March 1993): 82-87.

> One morning in February I was sent for by Assistant-Commissioner T. B. Caulkin, who was then the Officer Comm[anding] "G" Division in Ottawa, and whom I had last seen at Herschel Island in 1926, prior to joining the force. He was now my commanding officer and I was glad to see him again and to give him first hand information about his many Arctic friends, both Inuits [*sic*] and whites. A/C Caulkin informed that Commissioner S. T. Wood wanted to see me and to discuss personally the next voyage for the St. Roch. I had not previously met Comm. Wood. He had succeeded Sir James MacBrien as senior Officer of the Force, upon the latter's death in 1938. As will be recalled, the St. Roch had been built as a result of Wood's far-seeing recommendations and its doings were of great personal interest to him. On arrival at his office I was both astounded and surprised to learn that as soon as the season permitted I was to take the "St. Roch" into the Western Arctic with a full load of supplies for the Detachments there, retain 18 months supplies for ourselves, and when our duties in the Western Arctic were finished, I was to take her into the Eastern Arctic and endeavour to reach Halifax, and if not, to winter somewhere in Eastern Arctic waters of the Lancaster Sound area. In simple language, I was to complete the North-West Passage, and did I think I could do it he asked, to which I replied I foresaw no great difficulty if the season was anywhere normal as far as weather and ice conditions, also that the 1939 season had been perfect with no ice whatever. Should we however experience ice seasons like the two last ones of 1936–37 it would be difficult to make it in one season and I would then have to winter somewhere handy. The place agreed upon in such a case was Banks Island, or close to it, so that patrols could cover this large Island, previously not visited by police patrols owing to distance from nearest detachment at Coppermine. It was a great moment for me. Canada was at War and the Government realizing the need to demonstrate sovereignty over the Arctic Islands, was continuing to entrust the discharge of that responsibility to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police as it had done for decades, ever since the first detachment was built at Cape Fullerton on the west side of Hudson Bay 1903.[34]

[34] Larsen autobiography manuscript, 745–46, quoted in Smith, *Historical and Legal Study*, 372-73. See also Larsen, *The Big Ship*, 140–42.

In short, Larsen immediately linked his mission to the demonstration of Canadian sovereignty – a long-standing RCMP role that he would undertake aboard his sturdy schooner.

Years later, Larsen elaborated on his personal understanding of other motivations behind the voyage in 1940. RMS *Nascopie*, owned by the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), carried 3500 gallons of fuel oil to Pond Inlet on behalf of the federal government that year, with the idea that if *St. Roch* managed to navigate the Northwest Passage in a single season "it is my understanding that our Government was planning to send her to Greenland."[35] This had everything to do with changing wartime conditions. In the winter and early spring of 1940, public attention focused on events abroad as Germany advanced across Europe. When Denmark fell on 9 April, British and Canadian military strategists were understandably concerned about the future of the Danish

[35] Smith, *Historical and Legal Study*, 373-74. Smith notes that: "It was true, as Larsen suggests, that if the *St. Roch* had succeeded in getting through the Northwest Passage in 1940, the Canadian government had planned to send her on to Greenland, which had been placed in a very insecure position by the German invasion of Denmark. This could not have had anything to do with the original plans for completion of the Northwest Passage, however, since Larsen was told of these in February 1940 and the invasion of Denmark came (without much warning) in April. Furthermore, although both Dundas Harbour and Bache Peninsula were closed before the war, Craig Harbour was not closed until the summer of 1940. So Larsen was right to anticipate that if he got through the passage, he would find no police posts on the northernmost islands." On RMS *Nascopie* and its unheralded role in supporting *St. Roch*, see Roland Wild, *Arctic Command: The Story of Smellie of the Nascopie* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1955).

colony of Greenland. In light of the increasing German U-boat activity in the North Atlantic, defence of the large ice-covered island was considered a matter of high priority, partially because of its location on the periphery of North America and its excellent harbours for submarine bases, but also because of the cryolite mine situated on the shores of an isolated 12-mile fiord at Ivigtut in southwest Greenland.

Cryolite was crucial in the production of aluminum, and this one mine represented the only natural source available to the Allied war industries. Although a synthetic substitute had recently come on the market, the Greenland mine was the only known source of the raw mineral, with the only refineries being in Denmark, the Penn-Salt Company in the United States, and the Aluminum Company of Canada (ALCAN) located at Arvida, Quebec. Previously, Britain relied on production from Danish smelters, and to a lesser extent upon Norwegian refineries that used the synthetic alternative. With both countries now in German hands, the Allies were dependent on United States and Canadian production. As long as the United States remained neutral and was utilizing vast quantities of aluminum for its own war industry, it was considered urgent that ALCAN gain assured access to the Greenland cryolite. Should Germany have decided to take over or merely sabotage the mine, the effect would have crippled the British and Canadian war efforts.[36]

Adding to the urgency were "reports of enemy ships heading in the direction of Iceland and Southern Greenland"[37] and requests from the United Kingdom

[36] Department of External Affairs memorandum, initialed "NAR," with reference to telegram from United Kingdom Aluminum Controller, 11 April 1940, and "Proposals for a Canadian Policy Relating to Greenland," 6 May 1940, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2731, file 267 J-40/1. More broadly, see Conn Stetson, Rose C. Engelman, and Byron Fairchild, *US Army in World War II: The Western Hemisphere Guarding the US and its Outposts* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1964), 442-52; Dawn Alexandrea Berry, "Cryolite, the Canadian Aluminium Industry and the American Occupation of Greenland during the Second World War," *Polar Journal* 2, no. 2 (2012): 219-235; and Berry, "The Monroe Doctrine and the Governance of Greenland's Security," in *Governing the North American Arctic*, eds. Dawn Berry, Nigel Bowles, and Halbert Jones (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 103-121.

[37] Telegram to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, London, 9 April 1940, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2731, file 267 J-40/1.

"of utmost importance to obtain maximum possible tonnage of aluminum from Canada."[38] Encouraged to take action by British government officials[39] and ALCAN,[40] it is not surprising that Canada would seriously consider all means to protect Allied interests. At first hesitant to commit forces and concerned about the "danger of disturbing American opinion," Mackenzie King finally agreed, with the proviso that Canada was merely looking into the defence of Greenland in cooperation with British forces, otherwise Canada would be "blamed for taking over."[41]

High-level discussion followed based on reports prepared by External Affairs.[42] Initially, the objective was clearly precautionary: "to prevent enemy nationals gaining a foothold there and giving them an opportunity to sabotage the cryolite mines." In the Royal Canadian Navy's estimation, only a small force would be required to occupy the island "and a small police detail at the two or three more important centres is all that will be necessary to maintain." Whether this was a realistic assessment or not, the navy did not have frigates or destroyers available for the mission, nor would "any of these ships be risked in the ice conditions prevalent in the Davis Strait." Instead, officials suggested that the

[38] Department of External Affairs memorandum, initialed "NAR," with reference to telegram from United Kingdom Aluminum Controller, 11 April 1940.

[39] Vincent Massey, Telegram Cypher No. 527, the Canadian High Commissioner in London to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, 2 May 1940, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2731, file 267 J-40/1.

[40] F.W. Bruce, Letter to Norman Robertson, External Affairs, 9 April 1940 and 11 April 1940; Bruce to H.L. Keenleyside, External Affairs, 27 April 1940, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2731, file 267 J-40/1.

[41] O.D. Skelton, note to file on discussion with the Prime Minister with handwritten notes taken at the meeting, 12 April 1940, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2731, file 2671-40/1.

[42] O.D. Skelton, "Secret" letter, 12 April 1940, from the Under-Secretary to the Acting Deputy Minister of National Defence (Naval and Air), J.L. Ralston, with enclosures of two reports dated 10 and 11 April 1940, "The Position of Greenland," and "Canada, Greenland, and the Monroe Doctrine," LAC, RG 24, vol. 3919, file 1037-6-1/1.

Canadian Government Ship (CGS) *N.B. McLean* could "easily be armed with 4 in. guns."[43]

On 14 April, a sub-committee meeting chaired by the director of Military Operations and Intelligence supported plans for defence of the mine and occupation of the former Danish colony, with the recommendation that an advance party of 100 – including 12 RCMP officers and constables – proceed to Greenland in early May aboard the icebreaker *N.B. McLean*. The expedition was given the illustrious name of "Force X," and all supplies and participants were to be mobilized and ready for departure within two weeks. Their task was to select gun sites and lay out a military camp in preparation for the arrival of the main contingent. National Defence also considered RCMP detachments critical to the success of the mission.[44]

The Chiefs of Staff Committee subsequently issued a formal document that expanded on the details to include specific lists of participants and necessary equipment. The main body of the occupation force would constitute an army unit of approximately 250 to arrive in early June. In addition to the mine location, small occupation forces would be posted to the two Danish administrative centres, Godhavn and Godthaab, on the west coast of Greenland. The cost of establishing and maintaining the occupation forces for one year was estimated at $585,000, excluding purchase of armaments and RCMP expenses.[45]

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[43] Memorandum to Chief of Naval Staff from Commander, D.O.D, 13 April 1940, "Occupation and Defence of Greenland," LAC, RG 18 (acc. 85-86-/048), vol. 34, file G-809-8-1941.

[44] Report of the Joint Sub-Committee of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, "Defence of Ivigtut, Greenland," 13 April 1940, LAC, RG 18 (acc. 85-86-/048), vol. 34, file G-809-8-1941; Department of National Defence, General Staff Instruction No. 1. Copy #10 to RCMP Commissioner, issued in confirmation of decisions made at a meeting held under the Chairmanship of the Director of Military Operations and Intelligence, 14 April 1940, LAC, RG 24, vol. 3919, file 1037-6-1/1.

[45] Preliminary report and confirmation of decisions made at 14 April meeting on "Occupation and Defence of Ivigtut, Greenland," by the Joint Planning Sub-Committee of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, 15 April 1940, LAC, RG 18 (acc. 85-86-/048), vol. 34, file G-809-8-1941; Department of National Defence, Chiefs of Staff Committee, "Defence of Ivigtut, Greenland," signed by Maj. Gen. T.V. Anderson (COS), Rear Admiral Percy W. Nelles (CNS) and Air-Commodore L.S.

After the 14 April meeting, Inspector T.B. Caulkin, the acting assistant commissioner of "G" Division, sent a memo to the commissioner suggesting the names of four officers for Greenland duty. He also raised the question of employing *St. Roch* which:

> would be of inestimable value to our personnel stationed at Godhavn and Godthaab and would be in communication with the Force Headquarters by wireless.
>
> If approval is given to have the *St. Roch* proceed from the Pacific to the Eastern theatre, I feel confident that Sergt. [sic] Larsen would prove a valuable man in that area in several different ways.
>
> If the *St. Roch* should go, consideration might be given to increasing the personnel on the boat, also whether she should be armed with at least a machine gun.
>
> Further, arrangements would have to be made for some fuel to be sent in for her, such as diesel oil, etc., this could be despatched from Montreal later.[46]

Considering that in 1940 Canada had no arctic airstrips and no RCN vessels available for polar navigation, the RCMP schooner was a logical support ship and patrol vessel.

After retirement of CGS *Beothic* in 1932, the Canadian government had rented space on the HBC ship *Nascopie* for the Eastern Arctic Patrol, which supplied the RCMP posts and provided medical aid to the isolated communities. While the *Nascopie* was also participating in the war effort, it was still needed to supply the company's fur trading posts. Thus, it was logical that the RCMP should have its own means of supply and transportation in the Eastern Arctic quite apart from other duties it might fulfil as part of security measures. *St. Roch* was the only ice-capable police vessel of any appreciable size available for arctic patrols and, if necessary, to serve as a communications and supply link with the proposed Canadian occupation forces in Greenland and the newly established consulate. The ship's home port was Vancouver, as its primary function since 1930 had been to supply and patrol the Western Arctic.

Breadner (Acting CAS), 15 April 1940, LAC, RG 24, vol. 3919, file 1037-6-1/1 and RG 25, vol. 2731, file 267 1-40/1.

[46] Caulkin, memo undated, but refers to military communiques of 13-15 April 1940, LAC, RG 18 (acc. 85-86/048), vol. 134, file G-809-8-1941.

The plan to bring the ship to the Eastern Arctic through the Northwest Passage seemed a logical solution, since a southern route through the Panama Canal would have destroyed any attempt at keeping the mission secret. As a consequence, on 16 April Commissioner Wood wrote to Inspector James Fripps of the west coast "E" Division with explicit instructions to contact Sergeant Larsen and discuss the matter. Fripps's confidential reply, sent from Vancouver on 22 April 1940, explained:

> 1. This will acknowledge receipt of your letter dated the 16th inst., on the 19th. inst. I proceeded to Victoria and on the 20th inst. I discussed the matter with Sgt. Larsen that it was your intention if possible to have the schooner "*St. Roch*" proceed through the North-West Passage to Greenland after she had discharged the supplies for Coppermine and Cambridge Bay Detachments. Sgt. Larsen stated he would be pleased to make this proposed patrol as he always had a desire to travel through the North-West Passage. He recommended that the St. Roch should pass through the North-West Passage during the month of August, not later, and to do this it was absolutely essential that the "St. Roch" depart from Vancouver not later than the 20th of June next.
>
> 2. Further he recommended that no extra duties should be given to the "St. Roch" other than delivering supplies to the Detachments. Sgt. Larsen will require an Admiralty Chart of Greenland and the North-West Passage. This would include Baffin Island.

Fripps concludes the memo with: "I impressed upon Sgt. Larsen that this matter was to be treated strictly confidential and not to be discussed with any other member of the Force." He also refers to a previous request for a "sea skiff" and outboard motor made by Larsen to Inspector Caulkin while in Ottawa.[47]

Together, these two memos testify that official approval for *St. Roch*'s voyage was not confirmed until mid-April, that approval related directly to the proposed occupation of Greenland, and that, besides Larsen and Commissioner Wood, both Inspector Fripps and Inspector Caulkin were fully informed of the plans. Additional evidence supports the contention that Larsen was fully aware of this secret mission. In correspondence with the current RCMP commissioner in 1957, Larsen defended himself against implied criticism by the captain of the

[47] Fripps, Memo from Commanding Officer of "E" Division to the RCMP Commissioner, 22 April 1940, LAC, RG 18 (acc. 85-86/048), vol. 134, file G-809-8-1941.

Nascopie and explained the circumstances leading to *St. Roch*'s voyage through the Passage in 1940-42:

> The reason for this I believe, was that prior to the "St. Roch" leaving Vancouver on its eastward journey through the Arctic, Denmark had been invaded and Greenland was more or less left on its own. Had the "St. Roch" managed to navigate the Northwest Passage that year it is my understanding that our Government was planning to send her to Greenland. I believe also that a Canadian Consulate was established in Greenland about that time, and I understand this was one of the reasons why the "St. Roch" was instructed to proceed eastward in 1940.[48]

The last statement is particularly important, since discussion of a Canadian consulate in Greenland did not arise until April 1940 and was not approved until mid-May. This reference to the consulate partly explains continuation of the voyage after the "occupation" plans were cancelled: Larsen also claimed that the fuel left at Pond Inlet by the *Nascopie* in 1940 was for use by the RCMP ship that was expected to winter in Greenland[49] or "some designated spot in the Eastern Arctic." The question of who would protect or defend Greenland was not officially decided until the following year. In the same letter, Larsen also alludes to sovereignty reasons and, "being utilized to advantage in the Eastern Arctic," with specific reference to the closure of the police posts at Dundas Harbour, Craig Harbour and Bache Peninsula.[50] This rationale was likely part of earlier informal discussions, since sovereignty concerns *per se* do not appear in the memos confirming approval and instructions in mid-April, unless defined to include national security and defence. The 1940 police memos, together with Larsen's later explanations, illuminate the multiple reasons for the voyage, which may have shifted in priority relative to changing circumstances.

Events rarely happen as planned, particularly in wartime, and the Canadian strategy to occupy Greenland proved no exception. The initial rationale for "Force X" was the mistaken belief that a small Canadian occupation force would be more acceptable to the neutral United States than British intervention, which

[48] Larsen, Memo to the RCMP Commissioner, 13 November 1957, LAC, RG 18 (acc. 85-86/048), vol. 14, file G-577-14/supp "G".
[49] Larsen, *The Big Ship,* 141.
[50] Larsen, Memo to the RCMP commissioner, 15 November 1957, LAC, RG 18 (acc. 85-86/048), vol. 14, file G-577-14/supp "G".

would have clearly violated the principles of the Monroe Doctrine.[51] This opinion could not have been further from the truth. At a meeting between Prime Minister King and President Roosevelt on 2 May 1940, Roosevelt made it clear that the United States wished no occupying force on Greenland, but admitted that if there were a German attack, then "it would be necessary for Allied Naval Forces to take action." Secretary of State Hull seemed to be of a different mind, referring to considerations of the Monroe Doctrine.[52] That same day, the acting minister of National Defence abruptly ordered the demobilization of "Force X" and "all action in connection with it suspended."[53] Supplies already in storage were dispersed and mobilization orders cancelled.

As explained in confidential memos and minutes, the U.S. Secretary of State was "insistently anxious" that any plans to occupy Greenland be dropped.[54] The ensuing discussions and debates clarified the State Department's contention that the current interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine rejected the right of any third party to interfere in the political or military affairs of Greenland. As an alternative, it believed the mine could be defended by local residents with armaments supplied by the United States. Pressured by British officials to take action yet unwilling to oppose the firm wishes of the United States, Canadian officials were caught in a dilemma.[55]

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[51] O.D. Skelton, "Secret" letter, 12 April 1940, from the Under-Secretary to the Acting Deputy Minister of National Defence (Naval and Air), J.L. Ralston, with enclosures of two reports dated 10 and 11 April 1940: "The Position of Greenland," and "Canada, Greenland, and the Monroe Doctrine," LAC, RG 24, vol. 3919, file 1037-6-111.

[52] O.D. Skelton, Memo to file, "Greenland," on meeting between the King, Roosevelt, and Hull, 2 May 1940, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2731, file 2671-40/1.

[53] Department of National Defence, Memorandum to Chief of General Staff, Chief of Naval Staff and Chief of Army Services from Military Secretary, 2 May 1940, LAC, RG 24, vol. 3919, file 1037-6-1/1.

[54] E. Reid, copy of memo to the Prime Minister from Canadian Legation in Washington, 6 May 1940, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2731, file 267J-40/1.

[55] A. Eden, Letter to Canadian High Commissioner, 2 May 1940, with reference to previous letter 15 April 1940, outlining scale of probable attack and suggested defensive measures; Department of External Affairs, "Proposals for a Canadian Policy Relating to Greenland," 6 May 1940; and Department of External Affairs, Memorandum on a meeting held in the office of American-Danish Greenland Commission in Washington, 22 May 1940, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2731, file 267J-40/1.

If "Force X" was cancelled, why was *St. Roch* still proceeding to Greenland? When viewed in retrospect, the emotions and fears attached to Germany's march across Europe may seem unwarranted, but in the summer of 1940, the security of Greenland and the Eastern Arctic was considered critical to prevent the spread of hostilities to North America. As Canadian fears mounted, various defensive contingency plans were hastily set in motion in an effort to stem the advance of aggressors. With increasing enemy activity in the North Atlantic and without a firm commitment by the United States to defend Greenland, the decision to have *St. Roch* on standby in the Eastern Arctic seems logical. Whether it was feasible depended on the ability of the captain and the ship to navigate the Northwest Passage.

As events unfolded, the governors of North and South Greenland claimed constitutional powers to take absolute control in the event of an emergency yet were without military capabilities to defend against an enemy attack. The Danish minister in Washington, meanwhile, claimed that he in turn represented the two governors and established the American-Danish Greenland Commission to act as an advisory body.[56] In 1940, neither the United Kingdom nor Canada was prepared to challenge the legitimacy of these actions. Still at issue was the status of existing contracts for the cryolite production.

Prior to the fall of Denmark, the Penn Salt Company of Philadelphia had retained a monopoly over the North American market, which involved one-third of the mine's exports. The Aluminum Company of Canada, however, had hoped to acquire the European contracts with the Danish refineries, assuring Allied control of all exports not under contract to Penn Salt. In addition, this would strengthen the wartime economy by adding revenue to the Canadian treasury. The proposal was presented at a meeting attended by representatives of the Canadian and U.S. governments, the chairman of the American-Danish

[56] This file contains multiple memos, telegrams, and reports related to the vulnerability of Greenland after the fall of Denmark, the plans for a Canadian occupation force, discussions with the U.S. State Department regarding access to cryolite production, appointment of a Canadian Consul and Vice-Consul to Greenland, and subsequent events. Sequence of events can be pieced together from numerous documents from 26 April through 6 May. Specific documents will be listed by dates or by their signature, Department of External Affairs Records, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2731, file 2671-40 (including file pocket), pts 1-6.

Greenland Commission, and the presidents of Penn Salt and ALCAN. As expected, the American representatives refused to entertain any proposal that did not give the United States company clear access to the mine's postwar production.[57]

While negotiations continued in an attempt to resolve the impasse, the *Nascopie* had departed from Halifax without fanfare and was heading northward to Greenland, ostensibly "to deliver staple supplies" as a relief measure, but with the expressed hope that "arrangements could be made also for return cargo of about two thousand tons" of cryolite. On board was the Canadian vice-consul to Greenland, A.B. Porsild.[58] Others included Canadian artillery officers, mining engineers, and RCMP officers. At the same time, another vessel, the *Julius Thomsen*, was en route to Greenland from England, carrying the new Canadian consul and senior diplomat, K.P. Kirkwood, along with several British naval officers.[59]

Also heading for Greenland and several days in the lead was the United States Coast Guard cutter *Comanche*, carrying armaments and the newly appointed U.S. consul. First on his agenda was a tour of the cryolite mine, which would also allow the American ship to guard the fiord against any uninvited "visitors" who might wish to assume control of the mine.[60] In Vancouver, meanwhile, *St. Roch* continued preparations for its voyage through the Northwest Passage.

The arrival of the *Nascopie* and *Julius Thomsen* in Greenland did not escape the attention of the outspoken Assistant U.S. Secretary of State, Adolf Berle, who called two emergency meetings on 3 June – first with British diplomats, then the Canadians. In his view, the presence of Canadian and British military officers aboard the two ships represented a blatant attempt by ALCAN to secure

[57] Department of External Affairs, Memorandum on a meeting held in the office of American-Danish Greenland Commission in Washington, 22 May 1940, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2731, file 2671-40/1.

[58] O.D. Skelton, correspondence with Governors Brun and Svane, of North and South Greenland respectively, 20 May 1940, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2731, file 267J-40/1.

[59] Reid, Telegram to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, 3 June 1940, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2731, file 267J-40/1.

[60] O.D. Skelton, "Memorandum for the Prime Minister," 14 May 1940, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2731, file 267J-40/1.

possession of the cryolite mine. Admitting that he was dispensing with diplomatic niceties, Berle declared that the president had been notified of Canada's actions and had stated he would be "very angry" if Canada attempted to occupy Greenland. The assistant secretary went on to say that "this was not the time for this type of 1890 imperialism and that the days of Cecil Rhodes had passed." In his opinion, this incident only confirmed his belief that "the Aluminum Company of Canada was trying to take advantage of the present situation in order to get control of the cryolite mine." Canadian officials were given a clear warning that defence of the mine was not their responsibility and that access to the cryolite was dependent upon cooperation with the United States.[61]

Three days later, the question of Greenland's and Iceland's futures evoked a long and heated debate in the United States Senate. Citing the Monroe Doctrine as the basis for the U.S. right to intervene, the Senate learned of Greenland's economic importance – not just because of the cryolite but its potential resources of mica, graphite, gold, and hydro-electric power. Also discussed was the possibility of negotiating a purchase or takeover of the island.[62] Regardless of the urgency expressed in the debate, however, it was almost a year before the United States formally and unilaterally assumed full responsibility for the defence of Iceland and Greenland. At that time, the United States again firmly rejected Canada's offer of assistance, stating that its participation was "not required."[63]

Although ice-bound in the Western Arctic the first winter, *St. Roch* continued to plough eastward on its voyage through the Northwest Passage, apparently still under secret orders and with extra supplies for the next year acquired at Tuktoyaktuk. When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, the schooner was again stuck fast in the ice, this time just south of Boothia Peninsula. Now well past the halfway mark, there was no

[61] Department of External Affairs, Telegram and memo from the Canadian Legation in Washington, 3 June 1940, concerning a meeting called by Assistant U.S. Secretary of State Adolf Berle, LAC, RG 25, vol. 2731, file 267J-40/1.

[62] United States Government, *The Congressional Record – Senate*, 6 June 1940:11707-11722.

[63] Department of External Affairs, Aide Memoire from the Department of State, Washington, 6 June 1941, LAC, RG25, vol. 2731, file 267J-40/6.

recourse but to continue. According to Larsen, by the time they had reached Pond Inlet, the Americans had "pretty well taken over in Greenland."[64]

Why did Larsen fail to mention the defence of Greenland in his autobiography? Why mention an earlier discussion with the commissioner in Ottawa, if the orders were not finalized and approved until mid-April? In the first instance, the proposed Canadian occupation of Greenland was "top secret" and Larsen was specifically warned that "the matter was strictly confidential and not to be discussed with any member of the Force."[65] Indeed, one account alleged that even his wife did not know of the ship's destination.[66] Furthermore, diplomatic concerns compounded the potential sensitivities that might result from inopportune disclosure of the Canadian plans. Thus, it was expected that Larsen and his superiors would be bound by their strict code of ethics to maintain that confidence.[67]

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[64] Larsen, LAC, RG 18 (acc. 85-86/048), vol. 14, file G-577-14/supp "G".

[65] Fripps, Memo from Commanding Officer of "E" Division to the RCMP Commissioner, 22 April 1940, RCMP Records, RG 18 (acc. 85-86/048), vol. 34, file G-809-8-1941.

[66] G.J. Tranter, *Plowing the Arctic: Being an Account of the Voyage of the R.C.M.P. 'St. Roch' through the North West Passage from West to East* (Toronto: Longmans, Green, 1945), 2.

[67] As Grant explained in her earlier article, "why was it important to maintain the secrecy about "Force X" over 20 years after the fact? As noted above, both James

Larsen's private diary entry just before the ship set out to sea in June 1940 revealed what he believed to be the purpose of his mission:

> Well, we are set and ready for the great adventure of trying again to make the Northwest Passage. We must do all in our power to uphold Canada's claim to this section of the Arctic. I feel very proud that this important mission has been assigned to me again and I hope that I will be able to fulfil the task before me, to uphold Canada's claim to these valuable islands and the bulwark of our northern frontier. Canada and its people have adopted me as one of their own sons and it is up to me to be worthy of such an honour.[68]

The news media at the time noted that "the purpose of the trip remained secret" – although Larsen did disclose the plans to transit the Passage to his crew, either before the voyage or their first night at sea.[69]

The 1940-42 and 1944 Voyages

The documents reproduced in this volume describe *St. Roch*'s wartime voyages in rich detail. Heading out in 1940, Larsen initially intended to take a northerly route through Prince of Wales Strait and Viscount Melville Sound, which he referred to as "the one which should be used for any future enterprise among the Arctic Islands, or in yearly negotiation of the North-West Passage for any purpose that might occur."[70] Ice conditions were worse than anticipated, however, and he did not complete the supply runs to the RCMP posts until late

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Eayrs in 1965 and C.P. Stacey in 1970 freely discussed the plans to occupy Greenland in their respective publications covering the events of the Second World War. Here, too, there is a logical explanation, particularly obvious to an historian, concerning the 25-year rule restricting public disclosure of confidential government documents relating to Canadian-American relations. The fact that Larsen did not submit his manuscript for publication during his lifetime may suggest he had valid reasons. Henry Larsen died in September 1964 – one year short of being released from the limitation of the 25-year rule. Would the manuscript have been changed otherwise? Only Larsen could have answered that question." Grant, "Why the St. Roch? Why the Northwest Passage? Why 1940? New Answers to Old Questions," *Arctic* 46, no. 1 (1993): 86.

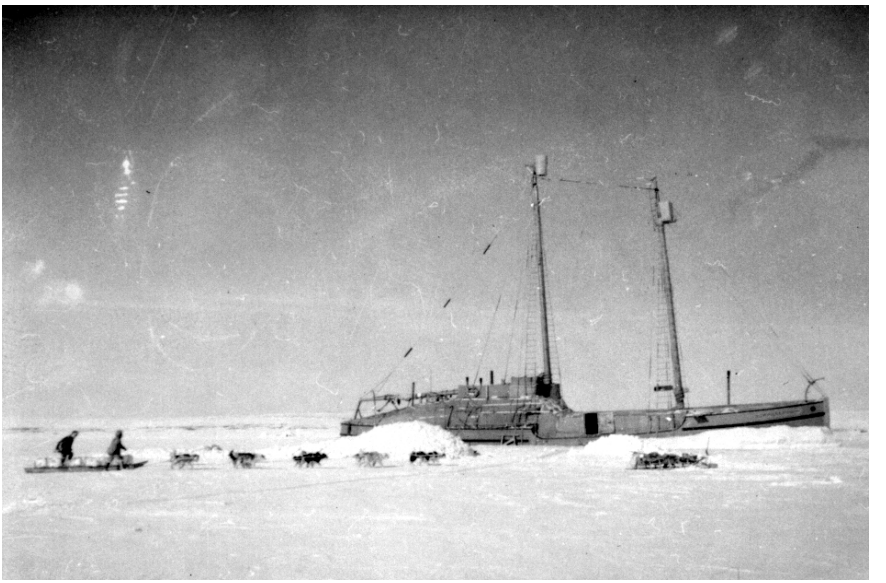
[68] Quoted in Smith, *Historical and Legal Study*, 375.

[69] Smith, *Historical and Legal Study*, 375; also Sgt. F. S. Farrar, "Arctic Assignment: The Story of the St. Roch," in *Great Stories of Canada* Series, ed. B. Bonnezen (Toronto: Macmillan, 1955), 21, 24, 34, 36.

[70] Larsen to O.C. "G" Division, RCMP, 12 November 1940, LAC, RG 18, vol. 8139, file "Patrols and Mileage of St. Roch Detachment."

September. In his narrative, Larsen describes his experiences wintering at Walker Bay on the west coast of Victoria Island, where the ship remained frozen the first winter. In addition to qallunaat equipment like primus stoves, the crew adopted Inuit techniques of using dogs to pull sleds (although much larger sleds than most Inuit would use). They also wore caribou clothing, built snowhouses, and ate frozen fish to warm up in cold conditions.

The ship freed itself from the ice on 31 July 1941 and headed west to Tuktoyaktuk (Tuk Tuk or Port Brabant) to pick up additional supplies before resuming its west-east transit of the passage. Facing heavy ice conditions, Larsen decided that the northern route was impractical and adjusted his plans to take the route charted by Amundsen in 1903-05, south of King William Island and through Bellot Strait before heading into Baffin Bay. The voyage was further delayed by an emergency detour to pick up an injured Inuk at Holman Island and take him to Tuktoyakuk, where he could evacuated to Aklavik for medical treatment. The ship continued on to the police detachments at Coppermine (Kugluktuk) and Cambridge Bay (Ikaluktutiak), then on to Gjoa Haven. After nearly losing *St. Roch* in shoal-ridden waters, ice halted the crew's progress at Pasley Bay on the west coast of Boothia Peninsula, where they were frozen in until August 1942.



Rather than sitting idle during the long winters, members of the nine-man crew[71] embarked on lengthy sled patrols to Banks Island, Princess Royal Islands, Victoria Island, King William Island, Boothia Peninsula, Somerset Island, and Simpson Peninsula. During their second winter, tragedy struck when Constable Albert "Frenchy" Chartrand, a popular member of the crew with extensive Arctic experience, died from a heart attack in February 1942. To ensure that Chartrand received full Roman Catholic rites, Larsen, Corporal Hunt, and an Inuk guide sledded 400 hundred miles from Pasley Bay to Pelly Bay (Kugaaruk) to bring back Father Gustav Henri, accompanied by several Inuit, so that the missionary could offer a funeral mass for Chartrand.

Larsen's description is colourful, sensitive and revealing, recounting his team's encounters with Inuit and expressing admiration for their ingenuity, generosity, and love for family. Although his language is outdated and condescending from a twenty-first century perspective (such as describing Inuit as "a primitive, and in many ways, childlike people"), his report shows a fascination with and deep respect for Inuit – reasons why Inuit held him in such esteem. "Some of their customs perhaps do not agree with our way of thinking," Larsen suggested, "but they are no worse than many among civilized people."[72] He also cautioned against imposing outside rules and ideas on Inuit, lamenting that the "bringers of civilization have been too busy teaching them our ways of living to find out much about these people." This included the extension of Canadian legal authority to the far north. "When I said that part of our duty is maintaining game laws, I did not mean that we make our Eskimos observe these rules strictly to the letter as far as obtaining animals for food and clothing, which are necessary for the well-being of the nomadic life these people live, is concerned," Larsen explained. "What we do, is to advise them not to kill caribou unnecessarily nor to waste the meat or skins, or use it exclusively for dogfeed. For this latter purpose, we advise them to obtain fish." Although paternalistic in tone, the RCMP message was well-intentioned. "We also endeavour to explain that the policy of the Canadian Government in protecting these animals is for the welfare of their young sons and the coming generations

[71] In his 12 November 1940 report to the Officer Commanding "G' Division, Larsen's listed his crew as: F.S. Farrar, first mate; M.F. Foster, chief engineer; J. Friederick; B.C. Hadley; P.G. Hunt; W.J. Parry; A.J. Chartrand; and J.M. Monette.
[72] Larsen, "North-West Passage," 71.

of Eskimos," Larsen noted. "They are a very intelligent people and readily understand these points, besides, they are very fond of having things explained to them. We have found that these explanations have a much better effect than just forbidding them to do certain things."[73]

In early August 1942, the crew managed to extract *St. Roch* from Pasley Bay and head north. They faced challenging conditions "in the vicinity where Sir John Franklin's ships, the '*Erebus*' and '*Terror,*' were beset and abandoned nearly one hundred years before." Larsen exploited a small lead and navigated through the narrow Bellot Strait between Somerset Island and Boothia Peninsula, despite ice barriers, strong currents, and whirlpools. "Many times we thought the ship would crack like a nut under the pressure," Larsen explained.[74] After a warm welcome at Fort Ross, the ship proceeded up Prince Regent Inlet to Lancaster Sound, entered Navy Board Inlet, and on 6 September arrived at Pond Inlet on the northeast tip of Baffin Island. Four days later they departed southward for Halifax, having to endure a gale with snow squalls in Davis Strait and pick their way through a maze of small icebergs and growlers. On 11 November, a naval escort took *St. Roch* into Halifax Harbour, thus completing

[73] Larsen, "North-West Passage," 53.
[74] Larsen, "North-West Passage," 64.

the twenty-eight month voyage and the first transit of the Northwest Passage from west to east. "It had not been an easy trip," Larsen noted in a typically understated quip, adding that "without hesitation I would say that most ships encountering the conditions we faced would have failed."[75]

Although the voyage was overshadowed by wartime developments overseas, the completion of the Northwest Passage attracted newspaper attention across North America. The *Globe and Mail* editorial on 12 October 1942, titled "Mounties Score Again," was indicative:

> The achievement of Sergeant Henry E. Larsen and eight other members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who, starting from Vancouver in the summer of 1940 in the eighty-ton vessel St. Roch, proved themselves skillful and daring navigators and successfully traversed the famous Northwest Passage, is a feat of exploratory travel which in more normal times would have received widespread publicity of a highly laudatory nature. In these times, however, when hundreds of men are risking their lives every day under enemy fire to perform feats of heroism anti fortitude, it will attract only casual attention outside of Canada, and even here will soon pass out of the public memory.

[75] Quoted in Delgado, *Arctic Workhorse*, 38.

> … Amundsen's passage was from east to west, and now Sergeant Larsen and his companions, in a voyage lasting rather less than two and a half years, have won laurels as explorers by completing the west-east voyage for the first time.
>
> Such a feat of prolonged navigation through the perils and hardships of the Arctic seas could be accomplished only by men who possessed great powers of endurance and noteworthy abllity to cope with arduous conditions for months on end. To some the exploit may seem a waste of energy and courage during a world war for freedom, but the party was assigned a definite mission, and the voyage was only incidental to it. It is, however, in conformity with the fine traditions of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that some of its members should have their names added to the limited beadroll of explorers who have successfully accomplished the famous Northwest Passage. Wllllam James, the American philosopher, from whose writings Mr. King quoted a famous passage in his latest speech, used to challenge the thesis that wars were needed by the human race to preserve the virtues of courage and fortitude by arguing that under conditions of perfect peace there would always be avallable for men and women an abundance of hazardous ventures, such as pitting their strength and mental powers against the stark forces of nature. One such venture is the conquest of the Northwest Passage from west to east.

Other stories highlighted the ship's "epic" achievement in "blazing a trail" through ice-choked waters, isolated from civilization for more than two years. As predicted, however, the story soon faded from public attention.

For Larsen, the months ahead meant looking forward, not backwards. There were accolades: he and the seven other crew members were awarded the Polar Medal on 1 January 1943, granting them "the proud right to wear on their scarlet tunics a small white ribbon, in recognition of their contribution to knowledge of the lonely Arctic."[76] The ship sailed north again that July, provisioning detachments along the Labrador and eastern Baffin Island coasts before returning to Halifax that October. The following winter it underwent

[76] "R.C.M.P. Who Made Perilous Northern Passage Get Honors," *Ottawa Journal*, 1 January 1943, 3.

extensive refit and had a 300-horsepower engine installed at Lunenburg Foundry & Engineering. All but two of Larsen's crew from 1940-42 had taken up other assignments, so he picked a new crew. Now expanded to thirteen members, they included a mix of seasoned Arctic hands and two young Newfoundland seamen with no previous experience. "Well here we are again not quite ready for the great adventure of again trying to make the North West Passage," Larsen wrote in his diary. "We must do all in our power … to uphold Canada's claim to these valuable islands and bulwark for our northern frontiers. Canada and its people have adopted me as one of their own sons, and it's up to me to be worthy of such an honour."[77]

Larsen noted that the Northern or Lancaster Sound route, which the RCMP instructed him to take back to Vancouver, "had never before been completed by any vessel, although many had tried in vain." Although *St. Roch* had to divert to Sydney for minor repairs soon after leaving Halifax on 23 July, it overcame fog and ice to reach Pond Inlet on 15 August. Here Joe Panipakuttuk, several of his family members, and seventeen dogs embarked on the ship. (Panipakttuk's recollections, reproduced as the third document in this volume, are discussed

[77] Larsen quoted in Delgado, *Arctic Workhorse*, 40.

more fully below.) Two days later the ship sailed west, encountering foul weather before making a short stop on Beechey Island to pay homage to deceased members of Franklin's ill-fated expedition who are buried there. The crew made similar stops at other locations to examine and build cairns, collect relics of previous expeditions, and assess potential anchorages. When the ship arrived at places where explorers such as Sir John Franklin had visited, Larsen treated it as "hallowed ground."[78]

Despite the expedition's rapid progress, the Larsen and Robinson accounts reproduced in this volume illustrate that it was not a smooth transit. "Near Prince of Wales Strait we encountered the heaviest ice so far in the voyage and became locked in for a short period," Larsen recounted of 31 August. The crew freed her from the ice and proceeded through Prince of Wales Strait, reaching Walker Bay on 4 September. "We had gotten through the part of the Passage that no one else had; everybody was feeling pretty good," recalled crew member Stan McKenzie upon reaching this location where the ship had wintered in 1940-41. "The *St. Roch* rode at anchor as though catching her breath…and for the first time the northern route of the Northwest Passage had been traversed."[79]

Getting through in a single season, however, remained precarious when the ship encountered heavy ice and hurricane-force winds along the coastline near Tuktoyaktuk and again

[78] Henry Larsen, "Our Return Voyage through the North-West Passage," *RCMP Quarterly* 10, 4 (1945): 320.

[79] McKenzie quoted in Ship St. Roch Commemorative Association, *St. Roch* (Halifax: Ship St. Roch Commemorative Association, 2007), 9.

faced the prospect of becoming frozen in. When the weathered opened sufficiently on 17 September, Larsen pushed through for Herschel Island. There, they unloaded coal, fuel drums, and supplies, and set up the Panipakuttuk family in a house for the winter, before the ship departed hastily as the harbour began to freeze over. Overcoming heavy ice through to Point Barrow, the ship crossed through the Bering Strait on 27 September and arrived in Vancouver on 16 October. The ship had travelled 11,740 kilometres in 86 days, becoming the first vessel to complete the Passage in a single year and the first to transit it in both directions.

G.J. Tranter, who would write the semi-fictionalized account *Plowing the Arctic* the following year, wrote enthusiastically on 17 October 1944:

> What a day this must be for everyone at headquarters!
>
> Everyone here is full of excitement at the news that the *St. Roch* is in Vancouver after her dash across the top of the world. Staff Sergeant Larsen must be in the Seventh Heaven of Happiness, for only in his wildest dreams could he have imagined himself making the trip in such a short time.
>
> I was reading the story, *Eric the Red*, the other day and, but for the name, the story might have been [Larsen's] story. The same courage in facing treacherous seas, the same love of adventure, and the same faith in his boat and men, though Eric the Red sailed in 985 and Larsen almost a thousand years later.
>
> The writer said of Eric: "Destiny had marked him out to do great deeds; proud deeds which were to be kept forever living in the sagas of his people, and told and retold after the black boats of the Vikings had disappeared from the sea and the Vikings lived only in memory."
>
> I wonder whether a thousand years from now our Canadian children will be reading the story of Larsen, marvelling at the strength and leadership of the men our age produced, and dreaming of catching and holding the torch he has held so high for our Dominion.[80]

[80] G.J. Tranter to Editor of *R.C.M.P. Quarterly,* 17 October 1944, published in *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (April 1945): 320. His book *Plowing the Arctic: Being an Account of the Voyage of the R.C.M.P. "St. Roch" through the North West Passage from West to East* (Toronto: Longman, Green & Co., 1945) contains extensive invented dialogue and is unreliable as an historical source.

The transit of the Northern route was a remarkable achievement, filled with risk and reward. "To those familiar with arctic exploration and its long history of privation, hunger and cold, the terse daily entries copied from the *St. Roch*'s log seem as undramatic and commonplace as if each voyage had been entirely routine," according to A.E. Porsild.[81] This was far from the case. Larsen's reports and diaries were full of admiration for the previous explorers who had plied the waters before him, indicating no sense of superiority or boastfulness in succeeding where they had failed. Reflecting back on the 1944 voyage, Larsen noted: "We sailed those western Arctic waters entirely by old naval charts. Those old chartmakers were marvellous. Each one was absolutely correct. How they did it, with the means at their disposal, I marvel."[82] The earlier explorers had not made it through owing to the "slow and cumbersome ships of those days," he insisted, "rather than the ice and inhospitableness of the land."[83]

[81] Porsild, "Henry Asbjorn Larsen," 67.
[82] Macdonald, W.E.G. "New *St. Roch* Record." *Scarlet and Gold* 26 (1944): 17-24.
[83] H. A. Larsen, "Our Return Voyage Through the North-west Passage," *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (April 1945): 318.

Larsen and his crew were showered with accolades and honours for their historic achievement. "The newspapers were full of the story, and Larsen, his crew and his ship were hailed and honoured by the city [of Vancouver] and the nation," Delgado observed. "For Henry Larsen, it meant a promotion to subinspector and the award of the Patron's Gold Medal by the Royal Geographical Society. The Royal Geographical Society also elected Larsen a Fellow, as did the Royal Canadian Geographical Society and the Arctic Institute of North America."[84] Members of his crew promptly received the Polar Medal in recognition of their achievement – all members, that is, except for Joe Panipakuttuk.

Joe Panipakuttuk and His Family: An Inuit Perspective

The recollections of Joe Panipakuttuk, reproduced as the third document in this volume, offer a different perspective on the 1944 transit which, for the Inuk and his family, did not end for another two years. In *The Big Ship*, Larsen (who the Inuit called Pallursi) recalled that:

[84] Delgado, *Arctic Workhorse*, 43. "As with my earlier promotions, this one too, I realized was due to my serving aboard the *St. Roch* in the Arctic, Larsen noted. "I felt a deep sense of gratitude." Henry Larsen, *The Big Ship,* 194.

> Before we left [Pond Inlet / Mittimatalik] we took aboard an Eskimo by the name of Panippakussuk [Panipakuttuk] and his family, including his mother Panippak. They were seven people in all, with seventeen dogs. They were quite willing to sail with us and made themselves comfortable in a tent on top of our deck-house, where they lived until we reached Herschel Island. Jo [*sic*], as the man of the household liked to be called, was a natural sailor although he had never had anything to do with a ship the size of the *St. Roch*, and so was his fifteen-year-old son, Arrea. None of them spoke any English but they soon picked up the odd word, especially the children, nine-year-old Anne Palluq [Pallaq], eight-year-old Mary Pannikkussuk [Panipakuttuk] and the "baby," four-year-old Sophy [Soopi Viguq].[85]

Although Inuit garner little mention in Larsen's official report or Robinson's article (where they are never mentioned by name), their services were indispensable to Larsen "and contributed in no small way to the realization of the dream and the success of the history-making voyage."[86]

By all accounts, the Inuit family got along well with the crew and made substantive contributions to the successful transit. "Captain Larsen was a nice

[85] Larsen, *Big Ship*, 184-85.
[86] "Reminiscences of Joe Panipakuttuk," 11.

man," young Sophie recalled. "He was a straight man but a nice one. His crew was the same way because he made them that way."[87] Almost immediately after joining the ship in Pond Inlet, Larsen recorded how Joe proved his hunting prowess by shooting a polar bear on an iceberg near Navy Board Inlet, thus furnishing the crew with a supply of fresh meat. Over the next five weeks, he and his son Aariak shot seals and other animals to feed the crew (and the dogs), while his wife Letia and mother Panikpak sewed clothing for the men. Larsen described Joe as a "natural sailor," and in the months ahead the two men spent a lot of time together in the crow's nest and wheelhouse charting a course throught ice-covered seas.[88] "The Eskimos have an amazing sense of direction," reported crew member Jim Diplock. "One time in the Passage we weren't sure where we were. Even Larsen was unsure. Then the Eskimo woman [Panipak] looked at the coastline and checked with the chart. 'That's where we are,' she said. That's where we were!"[89]

Although having travelled widely prior to the voyage, Panipakuttuk described the journey from Pond Inlet to Herschel Island as a voyage into the unknown for himself and his family. He recalled hearing "Eskimos talk English" for the first time at Herschel Island, where he and his family overwintered in a wood house in 1944-45. He admitted being nervous with people who "looked so different," and was amazed that "Eskimos buy things from other Eskimos for money" – a foreign concept amongst his people in Pond Inlet.

Panipakuttuk's family members also experienced many things for the first time. Sophie later recalled how the cook used to feed her and her family after the crew had eaten. She particularly liked spaghetti, which she would eating sitting at the table in the middle of a long moveable bench. (Her brother and

[87] Notes by Jacquelin Bee of an interview with Sophie McRae, Vancouver, 29 May 1982, Vancouver Maritime Museum, Crew Files: Sophie McRae, https://stroch.net/crew-files/.

[88] Notes by Bee of interview with McRae; and John Thompson to Max Sutherland, 2 May 1974, Vancouver Maritime Museum, Crew Files: Joe Panipakuttuk, Polar Medal. See also Kenn Harper, "Remembering Mary Cousins," *Nunatsiaq News*, 3 May 2007.

[89] Jim Diplock, quoted in John Beswarick Thompson, *The More Northerly Route* (Ottawa: Parks Canada / Information Canada, 1974), 76.

sister would not let her sit at the end for fear she might fall off.)[90] Joe's niece Mary Panigusiq Cousins did not have such fond memories. "I hated the trip," she reminisced. "I was very young and I was always worried. The older people didn't worry but it was terrible living in the tent on the deck. The water would come right into the tent and I got scared. And the food was so awful. Oh, the smell of the spaghetti that the cook would bring to my uncle at the tent. I never smelled anything so bad. It was really crummy. I hated the trip. I'll never forget it."[91]

Joe Panipakuttuk and his son went on hunting and fishing trips, met new Inuit and First Nations people, and trapped foxes. By summer, the family moved out of the house and into more familiar comforts of a tent. There they remained until August 1945, when *St. Roch* returned from Vancouver and took them to Cambridge Bay where they again overwintered. The following April, Panipakuttuk left with his family by dog sled heading for Gjoa Haven and Fort Ross. Although he almost died during the arduous 600-mile journey, they reached Fort Ross in August, boarded the HBC ship *Nascopie*, and arrived back in Pond Inlet in mid-September 1946. As Panipakuttuk noted at the end of his reminiscences, he had been gone so long that he had adopted a western dialect of Inuktitut and initially found it difficult to communicate with his own people.

From 1948-63, Joe Panipakuttuk continued to serve the RCMP as a Special Constable in Craig Harbour,

[90] Notes by Bee of interview with McRae.

[91] Mary Panegoosho Cousins quoted in Thompson, *More Northerly Route*, 78. The older Inuit may have worried more than Mary thought, with Joe Panipakuttuk recalling how "the bow of the boat would disappear from time to time in the water. I was very frightened." Panipakuttuk, "Reminiscences," this volume, 63.

Dundas Harbour, Alexandria Fiord, Grise Fiord, and Pond Inlet.[92] During his retirement, he wrote memoirs and recorded stories that he had heard as a young man, before passing away in March 1970 at Pond Inlet.[93] Unfortunately, he did not receive the recognition that he deserved during his lifetime. As historian John B. Thompson of Parks Canada argued when building the case for Panipakuttuk to receive the Polar Medal posthumously in 1982:

> Although Panipakuttuk was on board the St. Roch for only 37 days, during that time he did contribute to the success of the voyage…. Furthermore, none of the crewmembers who were awarded the Polar Medal endured the personal sacrifices made by Panipakuttuk in the months that followed the completion of the voyage…. Panipakuttuk and his family had spent over two years away from home on their "86-day" trip through the Northwest Passage.... He did take "an active part" in the St. Roch expedition of 1944. He was one of the "members of the team", upon whom Polar Medals were conferred following the completion of the voyage. He died, however, in 1970 without recognition of his contribution.[94]

Larsen and *St. Roch* after the Voyages

Promoted to Inspector in 1946 and to Superintendent in 1953, Larsen continued his ascent as the leading Arctic expert in the RCMP, noting that his trajectory owed much to his esteemed service on *St. Roch* during the war. The stream of honours continued. In 1947 he became an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and the following year was awarded a Bar to his Polar Medal. From 1949 until his retirement in February 1961, he served in Ottawa as Officer Commanding "G' Division, responsible for the Northwest

[92] On RCMP Special Constables, see Northwest Territories Archives, "We Took Care of Them," https://www.nwtexhibits.ca/specials/.

[93] Thompson, *More Northerly Route*, 168. Thompson later recorded that Joe's mother Panipak died in February 1963 at Pond Inlet, and that as of 1974 his wife Letia, stepson Arreak, and son Elijah Kudlu lived in Pond Inlet; his daughter Annie Pallug (now Anne Ledbetter) lived in Edmonton; his niece Mary Panegoosho (now Mary Panigusiq Cousins) lived in Buffalo Narrows, Saskatchewan; and his daughter Soopi Viguq (now Sophie Brule) lived in Resolute Bay. Thompson, *More Northerly Route*, 174.

[94] Thompson to Sutherland, 2 May 1974.

Territories and Yukon.[95] "In his northern work, whether on the bridge of his sturdy little ship or leading a winter patrol, Henry Larsen proved himself an experienced traveller and an eminently successful navigator and leader of men," Porsild wrote in his obituary of the famed navigator. "By his sympathetic understanding, patience and quiet sense of humour he completely won the confidence and lasting friendship of the Eskimo [Inuit]" for whom Larsen was "a staunch friend and understanding advocate."[96] The Royal Canadian Geographical Society made him the inaugural recipient of the Massey Medal in 1959 "for outstanding personal achievement in the exploration, development and description of the geography of Canada."[97] Following a brief illness, Larsen died in Vancouver on 29 October 1964 at the age of 65.

By then, his beloved ship had also been retired. *St. Roch* made two postwar voyages to the North, overwintering in Cambridge Bay from 1945-46[98] and Herschel Island from 1947-48.[99] "After 1948 the development of air

[95] After his retirement Larsen lived in Lunenburg, N.S. and Vancouver, B.C. Porsild, "Henry Asbjorn Larsen," 68.

[96] Porsild, "Henry Asbjorn Larsen," 68. See also E. Omholt-Jensen, "Henry Larsen (1899-1964)." *Arctic* 36, 3 (1983): 302-3. Historian Alan Marcus described Larsen "an unconventional policeman with what were somewhat radical ideas for the time" and a tireless "advocate for improving the standard of living of the Inuit." By the 1950s, Larsen thought the dismal state of Inuit constituted a national disgrace and that the conditions they endured surpassed "the worst evils of slum areas in cities." He hoped that relocating them would improve their standard of living and give them an "opportunity to better themselves." While he did not want any Inuit "talked into" or moved against their will, he later conceded that the government's failure to obtain the Inuit relocatees' clear and "informed consent had been a flaw in the planning." According to Marcus, Larsen held a "utopian vision of an ideal Inuit society [that] was founded on the belief that one could return a group of people to an Arctic Eden." Alan Rudolph Marcus, *Relocating Eden: The Image and Politics of Inuit Exile in the Canadian Arctic* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1995).

[97] "Supt. H.A. Larsen First Recipient of Massey Medal," RCMP *Quarterly* 25, no.3 (1960): 203-4. In 1961, Larsen also received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from Waterloo University College.

[98] See "Voyages of the St. Roch, 1945-46 and 1947," *Polar Record* 5, no.39 (1950): 451-53.

[99] After overwintering at Herschel Island, the ship travelled to Tuk Tuk (Tuktoyaktuk), Coppermine (Kugluktuk), Read Island, and Holman Island

transportation in the North made *St. Roch* less vital in R.C.M.P. operations in the western Arctic," according to Thompson.[100] The ship was transferred to Halifax in 1950 via the Panama Canal, making it the first vessel to circumnavigate North America. Superintendent Larsen sailed *St. Roch* from Halifax to Vancouver through the Panama Canal on her final voyage in 1954. The City of Vancouver, which had purchased the vessel from the RCMP, placed *St. Roch* in dry dock on permanent display. The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada declared it of national historic significance in 1962, and restoration work began in 1971. "An historic reminder of Canada's contribution to arctic exploration," Thompson noted, "the *St. Roch* was officially opened to the public on 16 October 1974 - 30 years to the day that she arrived in Vancouver following her second conquest of the Northwest Passage in 1944."[101]

In October 1974, after decades of being overlooked as a vital member of the *St. Roch* crew during its historic east-west transit of the Passage, Joe Panipakuttuk was posthumously awarded the Polar Medal which his wife Letia received on his behalf.[102] Now forty-five years later, and seventy-five years after that landmark voyage, Larsen and *St. Roch* remain poignant symbols of the RCMP's role in the assertion of Canadian sovereignty in the High Arctic during the first half of the twentieth century. Panipakuttuk's story is less known but equally relevant as an affirmation of sovereignty through the continuous presence and contributions of Inuit. Their place as rightsholders and subject matter experts is now well recognized, as is their role as protectors of their homeland. With the much-publicized decrease in ice cover in recent decades,

(Uluhaktok) before returning to Vancouver on 18 October 1948. "Voyage of the *St. Roch*, 1948," *Polar Record* 6, no.46 (1953): 788-89.

[100] Thompson, *More Northerly Route*, 160.

[101] Thompson, *More Northerly Route*, 160.

[102] "Recognition Better Late Than Never," *Inuktitut* (Winter 1975): 5.

and projections of increased accessibility in years to come, their responsibilities will increase apace. As Larsen predicted in his report:

> I believe that before long the Arctic will become better known. Large powerful steel ice-breakers driven by diesel motors will ply its waters, and during the summer carry supplies to the northern inhabitants; while planes will maintain regular flights over this area, summer and winter. As for the North-West Passage, the ice-breakers will be able to navigate it, probably by the route we took.
>
> But the Arctic Sea will always be the Arctic. On occasions planned voyages will run behind schedule, delayed by the heavy ice in Melville Sound and along the Alaska Coast. Some ships will find it easy, others difficult, and still others will meet disaster.[103]

[103] Larsen, "North-West Passage," 93.

THE NORTH-WEST PASSAGE

1940-1942 and 1944

The Famous Voyages of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Schooner "St. Roch"

SERGEANT HENRY LARSEN, F.R.G.S.,
COMMANDER

By kind permission of
Commissioner S. T. Wood, C.M.G.,
commanding the Royal Canadian Mounted Police

EDMOND CLOUTIER, C.M.G., O.A., D.S.P.
QUEEN'S PRINTER AND CONTROLLER OF STATIONERY
OTTAWA, 1948

In 1948, it was represented to Inspector Henry A. Larsen, F.R.G.S., commander of the first vessel ever to pass by the North-West Passage from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic, and the first to make the return voyage, that as his vessel, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Schooner, "ST. ROCH", was built at the Burrard Drydock, North Vancouver, 1928, and had sailed from and returned to the Port of Vancouver, Canada, that he should permit the publication of his narrative of the two famous voyages.

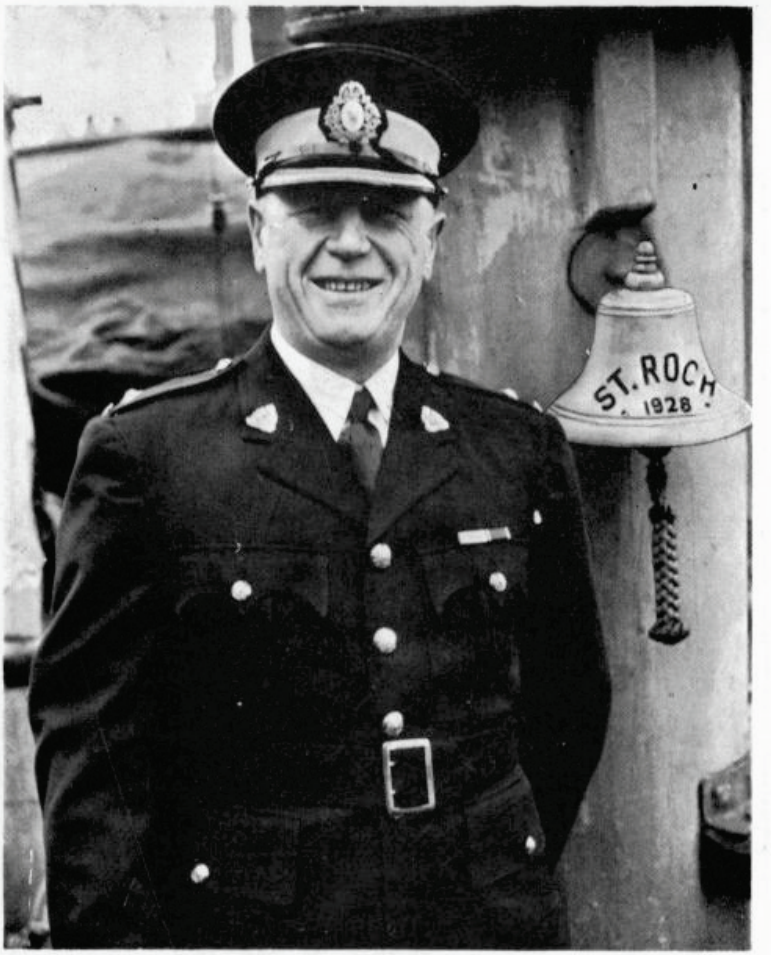
Inspector Larsen kindly acquiesced.

J. S. MATTHEWS,
City Archivist.

R.C.M.P. "ST. ROCH" RETURNS TO VANCOUVER

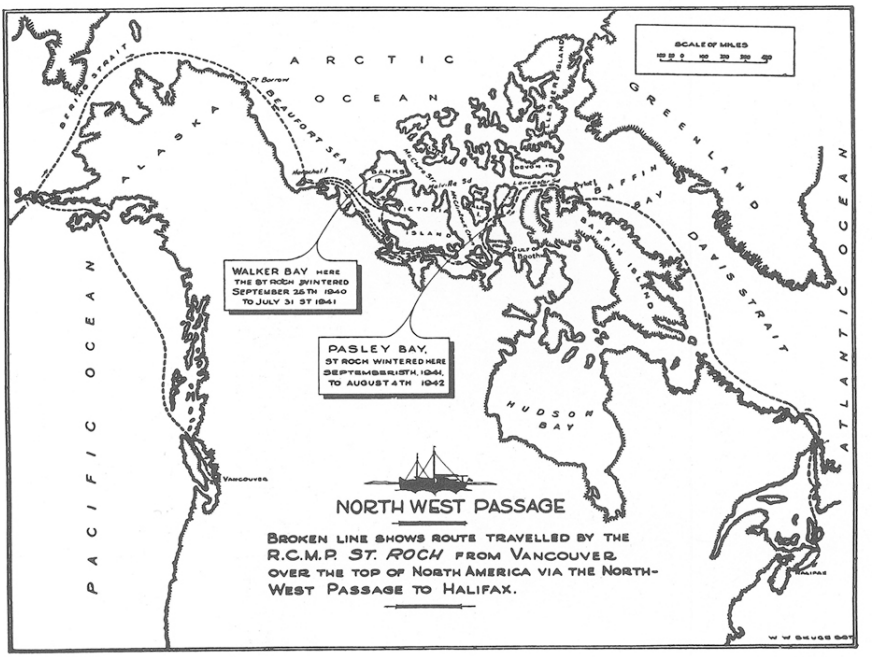
In 1950 the "St. Roch" sailed from Vancouver to Halifax via the Panama Canal and so became the first ship to circumnavigate the North American continent. In 1954, under the command of Superintendent Larsen, she returned to Vancouver by the same route and was handed over to the city where she had been built 27 years previously by the Burrard Dry Dock Company Limited. Destined to form the nucleus of a Marine Museum, the "St. Roch" made her last voyage on April 8, 1958 to the nearby shore at Kitsilano Park where she was beached in preparation for her final role.

First edition, 1948
Second edition, 1954
Third edition, 1958



To My Friend Major J. S. Matthews, V.D.
City Archivist Vancouver B. C.
From Insp. Henry A. Larsen, R. C. M. P "St. Roch"

H. A. Larsen.
Feb. 23rd 1948



Course of voyage, 1940-42

"H.M.S. Discovery, Nootka Sound,
"October 2nd, 1794.

"We arrived here this day month all in high health and spirits, having truly determined[1] the non-existence of any water communication between this and the opposite side of America within the bounds of our investigation beyond all doubt and disputation, hence I expect no further detention in this hemisphere.

"Yours with great truth and friendship,
"GEO. VANCOUVER."

From original letter in City Archives, Vancouver

[1] The underlining of "truly determined" is VANCOUVER'S.

THE NORTH-WEST PASSAGE

I will here endeavour to tell the story of the R.C.M.P. "St. Roch"; the little ship that twice made the North-West Passage–the first from Vancouver, B.C. to Halifax, N.S., 1940 to 1942, and also the return journey from Halifax, N.S., to Vancouver, B.C., during the summer of 1944.

The R.C.M.P. "St. Roch" has had an interesting career, having spent all her summers and eleven winters in the Arctic. Built in 1928 at the Burrard Shipyard, North Vancouver, B.C., especially for the R.C.M. Police, she has extra thick timbers of Douglas Fir, sheeted on the entire outside with Australian Gumwood, sometimes called Ironbark, to resist the grinding pressure of icefloes. This floating detachment of the R.C.M.P. is one hundred and four feet long, has a beam of twenty-five feet, and a draft of thirteen feet when fully loaded. Diesel-powered, she was assigned to patrol the Canadian Arctic and to convey supplies to our various land detachments along the Arctic Coast and Islands. Besides this she was meant to winter in remote places. The crew are all members of the R.C.M.P. and we generally carry nine men.

Our first winter in the North, 1928-29, was spent at Langton Bay at the foot of Franklin Bay, and the following spring we returned to Vancouver. In 1930 we again left for the North, remaining there four years, cruising in and around Coronation Gulf and westward as far as Herschel Island. After returning to Vancouver for a short period, we once more set sail for the Arctic in the spring of 1935, and the Cambridge Bay area became the "St. Roch's" field of operations for the next three winters, interrupted by a return voyage to Vancouver in 1937.

Burrard Shipyard, North Vancouver, where the "St. Roch" was built, 1928 *Aero Surveys Limited, Vancouver*

In 1939 we docked at the Naval Dockyard, Esquimalt, B.C., and the following spring we received one of our most important, and to my mind, most interesting, assignments. Our Commissioner, S. T. Wood, now informed us that when our regular duties along the Western Arctic Coast were completed, we were to proceed to Halifax, N.S., by way of the North-West Passage. On this trip we chose the Southern Passage; that is, eastward through Queen Maud Gulf, south of King William Island, then northward between Boothia Peninsula and the King Island Coast; or, in other words, we used the same route as taken by Amundsen in the "Gjoa" 1903-06, with the exception that we passed through Bellot Strait instead of Peel Sound. This gave us the opportunity to visit the remote Eskimo Tribes on Boothia Peninsula and the surrounding district. This voyage took us 28 months.

The summer of 1943 was spent in the Eastern Arctic, leaving Halifax, N.S., on July 17th with a full load for our Eastern Arctic Detachments. We returned on October 16th the same year after a patrol of about 8000 miles. We spent the winter of 1943-44 at Halifax undergoing repairs and

having a 300-horsepower engine installed instead of our 150 so as to have more power for the coming voyage during the summer of 1944. Our instructions were to return to Vancouver via the Northern or Lancaster Sound Route. This had never before been completed by any vessel, although many had tried in vain. The last one to try was the C.G.S. "Arctic" under Captain [Joseph-Elzéar] Bernier in 1910. Captain Bernier reached a point a little beyond Winter Harbour on Melville Island, from where he was forced to return to Montreal.

After our overhaul in Halifax was completed, we left on July 22nd, making a 3-day stop at Sydney, N.S., for final checkups. We finally got under way, carried out our assigned work in the Arctic, and arrived in Vancouver, B.C., on October 16th, 1944. Thus, for the first time in history, we became the only vessel to complete the Northern Routes both ways, and the only vessel that had completed the Lancaster Sound Route, which is the better of the two. This route will no doubt be used in the future.

After laying up for a bit of overhaul in the Naval Dockyard, Esquimalt, B.C., during the winter, we again proceeded to the Arctic in the spring of 1945. We had instructions to winter at Cambridge Bay, where we arrived about the middle of September. Whilst there we acted as a wireless station and assisted the planes as a radio beacon supporting the Exercise Muskox. The men we met in connection with this force, both the moving force and the pilots, should be classed as among Canada's finest. We left Cambridge Bay August 11th, 1946, and arrived at Vancouver on September 26th, 1946, thus completing our eleventh winter.

I shall here take the opportunity to mention some of the duties of the R.C.M. Police in the Arctic Territories of our great Dominion. Firstly, to uphold and enforce Canada's sovereignty of her Arctic Islands; to act as administrators for the North-West Territories Council; maintaining game laws; making general checkups of Eskimos' living conditions; compiling Vital Statistics; authorizing the issuing of rations for the

destitute aged and infirm Eskimos; taking of census; settling of any disputes which might arise; conveying children to and from the residential schools at Aklavik; and transferring sick Eskimos for treatment and hospitalization at Aklavik. Sometimes we assist in securing suitable Eskimos, with their families, who we transport from the Coronation Gulf area to the Mackenzie River Delta to learn to herd and look after the reindeer herd provided by the Canadian Government for the Eskimos in that area.

The Eskimos in the Mackenzie River Delta and its immediate surroundings are now quite civilized, many of them owning small power-schooners and small frame houses. Most of them do quite well in trapping fur-bearing animals and therefore do not take as much interest in the reindeer herding as their less fortunate brethren in the Coppermine and Coronation Gulf area. It is these latter people who, I think, will in the future receive the benefit from these herds; especially when the reindeer have multiplied to such an extent that they can be split into several smaller herds. They can then be transported eastward as far as the Coronation Gulf and Boothia Peninsula areas, where the Eskimos still live their primitive and nomadic existence in snowhouses during the winter, and tents during the summer months.

When I said that part of our duty is maintaining game laws, I did not mean that we make our Eskimos observe these rules strictly to the letter as far as obtaining animals for food and clothing, which are necessary for the well-being of the nomadic life these people live, is concerned.

What we do, is to advise them not to kill caribou unnecessarily nor to waste the meat or skins, or use it exclusively for dogfeed. For this latter purpose, we advise them to obtain fish. The lakes and the small rivers are teeming with fish that are easily caught with nets. These nets are now obtainable at all the Hudson's Bay Company Trading Posts in the Arctic. I should mention here that only about twenty-five years ago, in the central part of the Arctic–that is, the area between Coppermine River and the eastern side of Boothia Peninsula–all the hunting was done with bows and arrows. This form of hunting did not deplete the game to any extent, although it provided the Eskimos with their requirements. With the introduction of modern firearms, it was but natural that a primitive, and in many ways, childlike people, would use these new weapons indiscriminately on any game they saw, whether they needed it or not. Therefore, in many areas, much big game such as muskoxen and caribou was sadly depleted, until such time as the R.C.M. Police had been firmly established, so they could visit these people regularly. We do stop them from killing muskoxen at the present time, and point out their mistakes in killing and possibly exterminating these animals. We also endeavour to explain that the policy of the Canadian Government in protecting these animals is for the welfare of their young sons and the coming generations of Eskimos. They are a very intelligent people and readily understand these points, besides, they are very fond of having things explained to them. We have found that these explanations have a much better effect than just forbidding them to do certain things. One game regulation we make them observe strictly is the season of taking fur-bearing animals. White fox, for instance, are plentiful along the Arctic mainland, also on the Islands. The white foxes concern the Eskimos mostly, so the North-West Territories Administration in Ottawa, after very careful study of the habits of the white fox, came to the conclusion that these animals should only be taken during the period of November 1st and April 1st in any one year. The pelts during this period were found to be prime, or in good condition for commercial use. The game

regulations in this regard were therefore amended and drawn up accordingly. Nearly all the Eskimos now trap extensively in order to obtain the necessities to which civilization has made them accustomed; that is, such items as flour, sugar, tea, coal oil, rowboats, outboard motors, fishnets, tents, and most important, rifles and ammunition. They now receive good prices for their furs at many scattered Hudson's Bay Company Posts in the Arctic.

What I now would like to tell you concerns our two North-West Passages, the winters, and some of the people we came in contact with. After having loaded our little vessel to full capacity with fuel and provisions for our own need, and also for our Western Arctic Detachments, we left Vancouver at 2:50 a.m. June 23rd, 1940, and proceeded northward through the inside passage as far as the north end of Vancouver Island. From this point we headed "St. Roch's" blunt bow westward across the Pacific direct for Unimak Pass. Some bad weather was encountered, and at times our heavily laden vessel was almost completely submerged, causing large volumes of water to pour down into our living quarters, adding discomfort to the members who were off watch trying to get a little sleep. This is a hard thing to do when one constantly is on the verge of being tossed out of one's bunk with each roll of the ship. Sometimes the galley fire had to be put out owing to the back-draft, caused by the quick rolling

Sergeant Larsen of the North-West Passage

motion of the ship, blowing down the smokestack. Some of our boys had never before been on a vessel or salt water, but to their everlasting credit they stood up well; and taking everything as a matter of fact, they soon found their sea legs.

On July 4th we passed through Unimak Pass from the Pacific into the Bering Sea. We took shelter for a while in Akun Cove in order to tidy the ship up a bit before proceeding to Dutch Harbour. Here we took the opportunity to catch a few cod and halibut and had a good feed, which we all needed. On July 6th we arrived in Dutch Harbour. Next day being Sunday, we were royally entertained by the officers and crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter "Shoshone" of the Bering Sea Patrol. Some of them were, I think, a bit amused at seeing our small vessel whose decks were completely hidden under hundreds of coal sacks, oil drums, and small rowboats, stacks of cases containing fresh potatoes, eggs and various vegetables that we couldn't store in our holds, and on top of all this deckload were, of course, our men in our Mounted Police uniforms, trying to act and walk in a dignified and military manner as laid down in our training. However, friendly relations were soon established between our men and the American sailors who began to swarm aboard the "St. Roch", and to entertain us with tales that they had heard or read about in the States, regarding some of the exploits of the R.C.M. Police. Some of the feats they mentioned, I believe, far surpassed those accomplished by Superman or Flash Gordon; anyway they were all fine boys, and we soon had enough volunteers to man ten ships like the "St. Roch".

On July 9th we said goodbye to our friends and headed northward. On July 15th we entered the harbour of Teller, sometimes called Port Clarence, a small settlement about 80 miles north of Nome. It was here that Amundsen landed with his airship, Norge, in 1926 after crossing over the Pole from Spitsbergen. We called here for the purpose of picking up dried fish previously ordered for dogfeed, also to give our engines a checkover before getting into the icepack. Leaving Teller on July 16th we ran into some very dirty weather in Bering Straits, which we

passed through without seeing a glimpse of land. Thick weather and strong southerly winds prevailed and the next land we picked up and recognized was Cape Lisburne. We could expect the ice anytime now. As we all were in need of a bit of rest, and the weather was still bad with thick fogbanks, I decided to anchor at Point Hope for a while. This is a long sandspit projecting about 15 miles from the mainland into the sea. On the point itself there is a settlement of about 300 Eskimos, also a residential school teacher and his family. When we anchored, several large umiaks or skinboats loaded with Eskimos, the teacher, Mr. King, and his family, came out to visit us. However, the anchorage is exposed, and although the wind had died down, the long rolling swell made the "St. Roch" roll so violently that they all got seasick and had to go ashore after a visit of about half an hour. Shortly afterwards we were compelled to weigh our anchor and pull out to sea owing to increase and change in winds.

During the latter years the Smithsonian Institute and the University of Alaska have done a lot of work in the way of research and excavation on the sandspit of Point Hope. Many fine ivory carvings, ornamental and otherwise, were found, also tools and weapons and hunting implements, many made of green and black jade. It is estimated that people have been living there for well over a thousand years; they were a people who made their living from the sea, and even in that age hunted the whale and walrus. It is possible that they were the ancestors of the present people there, but in their days they must have been much further advanced, judging from the carvings and implements I have seen.

On July 22nd we arrived and anchored off Cape Smyth. This is a large settlement usually known as Point Barrow, although it is situated 10 miles to the southwest along the coast. The population consists of about 500 Eskimos. There is a large hospital, a church, and a large school which comes under the U. S. Bureau of Education. There is also a wireless station. We paid a short visit ashore, and were heartily welcomed by our Arctic neighbours in the traditional manner of American

The "St. Roch" in the ice, Pt. Barrow

hospitality. The most colourful figure in this place was, of course, "Old Charlie Brower", a resident of these parts for over fifty years. He was known all over Alaska as "King of the Arctic". Shortly before his death about three years ago he wrote a book called "Fifty Years Below Zero".

As the anchorage here was dangerous so early in the season we did not linger long, but pushed on in order to round Barrow Point itself. This is a long narrow point extending in the Arctic Ocean, with northerly and westerly winds causing the ice to jam up against it. It is dangerous for a vessel to remain in the west side of the point when the ice is close. Many vessels have, in previous years, been caught here, and have either been crushed or carried off with the ice. We were fortunate this time, as there was a little water between the grounded ice and we rounded the point at 3:30 p.m. on July 23rd. Once around the point the conditions became a bit better, owing to the fact that the land takes an East South East

direction, and thereby allows a freer movement for the ice, except when there are north winds, which forces the ice in along the shallow coastline.

The year 1940 was bad for ice, with prevailing northerly and northwesterly winds, and we were continually getting beset by heavy old ice. It took us from July 23rd to August 12th to make the 400 miles between Point Barrow and Herschel Island. Sometimes there was not a drop of water in sight as the ice packed itself tightly together around us. At other times we were free to move around in little pools from which there was no outlet or leads. At all times we had to be on the move to avoid damage, only moving sometimes a shiplength or two. At times black gunpowder was used to crack particularly nasty floes threatening our rudder and propeller.

At Herschel Island, long ago the winter rendezvous for the Arctic whalers, we were met by Inspector Bullard in the R.C.M.P. boat "Aklavik". He had arrived from the settlement named Aklavik, in order to receive the coal, etc., we had brought for them from Vancouver. Herschel Island at one time had a large population of Eskimos. There were several tradings posts and the wintering of the many whaling vessels with hundreds of men in the early days didn't do the native population much good. It was not until 1904, when the R.C.M. Police established there, that some of their activities were stopped, but as is often the case with primitive people, they were then already on the decline. Then to finish things off, in 1928 there was a severe epidemic of influenza, destroying most of the remaining natives. Herschel Island is for the present abandoned; the few families surviving the 1928 epidemic have moved to the Mackenzie Delta. The Hudson's Bay [Company] moved their post to a place called by the Eskimos "Tuktoyaktok" – "the place where deer cross" – now abbreviated to Tuk Tuk, or, as the Hudson's Bay Company call it, "Port Brabant". We called there on August 24th, picking up a native woman and child from Aklavik Hospital, for transportation to Cambridge Bay, also two boys from the Anglican School to be returned to their people in the East. We arrived at

Coppermine on August 31st, where we remained until September 2nd, discharging supplies for our Detachment. Then we proceeded to Cambridge Bay on the eastern end of Victoria Island. It was September 10th before we were finished there.

I had hoped when leaving Vancouver that we would be able to proceed eastward, but the season was too far advanced for the narrow passages around King William Island and as we had no particular reason to winter in this vicinity we proceeded westward in order to winter at Banks Island or Walker Bay on the west side of Victoria Island. The season before freezeup is a bit longer in this area, also we had instructions to visit the Eskimos trapping the west side of Banks Island. These are Mackenzie Delta people and they have small power schooners in which they travel every year to Aklavik to sell their furs, and purchase fresh supplies. We didn't however, find a suitable harbour for our vessel on Banks Island so proceeded across Prince of Wales Strait to Walker Bay, arriving on September 25th. It was now nearly freeze-up time, so we had to get busy setting nets in the lakes already frozen, and hunting seals in order to get dogfeed. Our dogs, also a native family, we had picked up at Cambridge Bay.

Before the winter sets in, it is necessary to cover or build a canvas housing over the ship, otherwise the fine sifting snow finds its way into our living quarters. The snow is very fine, and during a heavy blow it penetrates the finest little cracks in the doors. When the ice on the lakes is about 12 inches thick, we cut our water supply for the winter. We generally locate a lake with deep water and with an approach fairly free from rocks so that we can use our dogs to haul the ice back to the ship. All hands get busy with large ice saws and we cut perhaps 40 tons of ice to ensure a sufficient water supply for the winter. Every drop of water used must be melted. In our living quarters we place 45 gallon drums that are filled with crushed ice. On the stoves there are constantly kettles of water, and when boiling we pour the water over the ice. This performance goes on every day. We then got busy preparing for our

Taking on fresh water from pools on the ice.

journeys to Banks Island. The dogs were broken in, the steel sled runners on our large 16 to 18-foot sleighs were given a covering of mud, which was later smoothed and polished, a piece of bearskin being used for applying a thin coat of ice outside of the mud. The sleds then pull with a minimum of friction; steel pulls too hard over the frosty snow. This is the Eskimo method which we adopted. When we leave on our patrol we have often 1,500 pounds on our sled pulled by 11 dogs. Of course there is not much riding as one constantly has to mind and watch the sleds. During fairly good going we can cover 30 to 40 miles per day. We also adopted the Eskimo way of clothing with caribou skin. Double outfits in real cold weather are used. The inside has the fur next to one's body. If the going gets tough the outside garment can be removed and what we call a snowshirt, made of cotton drill or grenfell cloth, can be put on. We never carry a tent during the winter as it is only extra weight; our camps every night are made of snow. For building our snowhouses we carry long snow or butcher knives, and these are among the necessary implements on a sled trip, as, without them, camps could not be built.

For cooking we use Swedish Primus stoves. A finer implement for Arctic travellers, I think, has never been invented. It burns coal oil, is

very economical, and very seldom goes out of order, even with the abuse it gets. Our food we cook before leaving. We have so far never had the opportunity to try any of the special food packages put up for the Army, Airforce, or other parties going into the Arctic during the last few years. The food taken on our patrols was therefore prepared from the ordinary supplies issued to us, and it is prepared by the men themselves going on the patrols. For instance, beans are always in great demand. We generally cook up a five gallon pot; in them we put lots of fine cut bacon, canned meat (fresh if we have it), lots of canned tomatoes, onions, molasses, sugar, mustard, and salt; they are boiled until very thick, which requires constant stirring. When done they are ladled out in large pans and allowed to freeze, after which they are broken up with an axe into small chunks and placed in small canvas bags for easy carrying and handling. As a variation we also boiled rice, potatoes, other vegetables and meat; these items are all put through the meat grinder after being cooked, and worked together in a large breadpan or boiler. Instead of water for moisture, lots of canned soup or tomatoes are used, some spices added, and the whole thing made into little flat patties that are frozen and put away in canvas bags. When making camp one can then have a meal in a few minutes, by placing a few beans or some of the patties in a pot and adding a little water. Instead of the pilot bread or hardtack, which takes up a lot of room, and does not give great satisfaction to a hungry traveller, we cook up hundreds of doughnuts. They are also, of course, frozen and put in bags. Whilst making tea or coffee, a few are placed on top of the lid to thaw a bit so they can be

chewed, although they are never soft. Rolled oats are light to carry, and a big pot is generally cooked for breakfast. Besides this, we take dried onions and carrots, also some rice, as there is always the opportunity to pick up game on our way, so a good stew can be made. We also saw frozen fish into slices of about an inch thick; a slice of this is generally eaten as soon as the camp is made, while we are waiting for the snow to melt for water. Strange as it seems, this raw frozen fish gives one a warm feeling of well-being after a few minutes. The Eskimos say that the frozen fish forces the warm blood from the inside out to the skin and makes one feel warm. This sounds reasonable to me as I have tried it many times. We also pack a small bag of flour and baking powder with us. When forced to lay over, as we sometimes do during bad weather, we have lots of time to make a few hot bannocks or pancakes; these we cook mostly in beef tallow, which we pack with us, and I find it better than the lard.

For our dogs we carry dried fish and seal blubber all cut up in squares ready to be swallowed. The blubber is stowed in cans so as not to make a mess of our gear. If short of blubber we pack beef tallow for them, as they have to have fat with the dried fish. Fresh fish, or what we call greenfish, is too heavy to pack on long patrols. For sleeping gear we use the Woods Arctic sleeping robe, sometimes we use caribou skin bags, if we can get them. They are light and less bulky than the robes. There are

numerous other details in connection with a long dog patrol, taking anywhere from two to three months, during which time one practically has to pack everything.

To go on with the voyage, we remained frozen in at Walker Bay from September 25th, 1940, until July 31st, 1941, when the ice allowed us to move out. Proceeding southward, we called at Holman Island in order to pick up a young Eskimo boy accidentally shot through the cheeks by his brother with a 22-calibre rifle. This boy we took to Tuktoyaktok, where he could get transportation to Aklavik for medical attention. Whilst at Tuk, we picked up the supplies which arrived via the Mackenzie River, some for ourselves and some for the Coppermine and Cambridge Bay Detachments.

After our work in this connection was completed we left Cambridge Bay August 20th, 1941. We arrived at Gjoa Haven, King William Island, August 27th. That summer also proved bad with ice and violent snow squalls. When we reached Matty Island the ice was solid across from shore to shore, and more was driven down [McClintock] Channel by prevailing North-West gales. There, we nearly lost the ship, as the waters were full of shoals, and the force of the wind and snow in our faces made it impossible to see. We dropped both anchors behind a reef and prayed that they would hold, which they did, although great floes kept crashing down on us all night. By September 3rd we had worked up to Pasley Bay, vicinity of the Magnetic Pole, and all progress was stopped by ice. We got caught there and drifted back and forth with the ice until September 11th, when we got jammed in close to the beach, and all ice in the bay became stationary until August 4th, 1942. We moved out of the bay about 15 miles, there we again got locked in, drifting back and forth in the vicinity where Sir John Franklin's ships, the "Erebus" and "Terror", were beset and abandoned nearly one hundred years before. On August 24th a small lead opened and we worked our way up to Tasmania Islands, where we remained until the 29th, close to the beach. There was a little open water between these islands and the loose ice moved back and forth

with the change of the tides at terrific speed in the narrow channels, keeping us all awake. We had to be constantly on the move to avoid damage or getting pushed ashore. On the 29th we were able to proceed northward, by heading a bit for Prince of Wales Island, which we followed up until abeam of Bellot Strait. We cut across and entered this Strait the same night. The western end of the Strait was clear of ice, but in the middle there was a barrier right across, held there by some heavy grounded ice. This Strait is only half a mile wide and there is a terrific current. As the ice came pouring in behind us, there was nothing else to do but crash into it and attempt to drift through. This we did; the strong current causing large whirpools in which large cakes of ice spun and gyrated. Many times we thought the ship would crack like a nut under the pressure. Sometimes we became stationary off projecting points of land – high, dark, inaccessible cliffs – the Strait is about 18 miles long.

We had two young Eskimos aboard, a man and his wife. One has to admire the quality of these people. At times when things looked really bad they would go up on the forecastle head and sing at the top of their voices. They told me they were singing so the ship wouldn't get crushed, so I told them to keep on singing. They were quite pleased after we got through, when I told them their singing had no doubt helped us a great deal. Meanwhile, the people at the eastern end of the Strait, at the Hudson's Bay Company post, Fort Ross, had anxiously watched our struggles, and they all came swarming aboard to welcome us.

We considered our voyage practically over at this time as the Hudson's Bay Company ship "Nascopie" has called here regularly every year since 1937. But it so happened that in 1942 it didn't reach Fort Ross owing to the ice pouring into Prince Regent Inlet after we left. On September 2nd we proceeded to Ponds Inlet, northern part of Baffin Island, where we have a Detachment, picked up one of our men there due to go out, then proceeded southward on September 10th. In Davis Strait we ran into a strong south-east gale with snow squalls and no visibility. The sea was studded with small icebergs and growlers, as the

Sergeant Larsen on patrol with sleigh

small, almost submerged, icebergs are called, some disappearing in the swell, then bobbing up again like gigantic sea-monsters. With our low power it was hard to dodge them as the suction seemed to drag us towards them. One struck us and knocked a piece off our hardwood

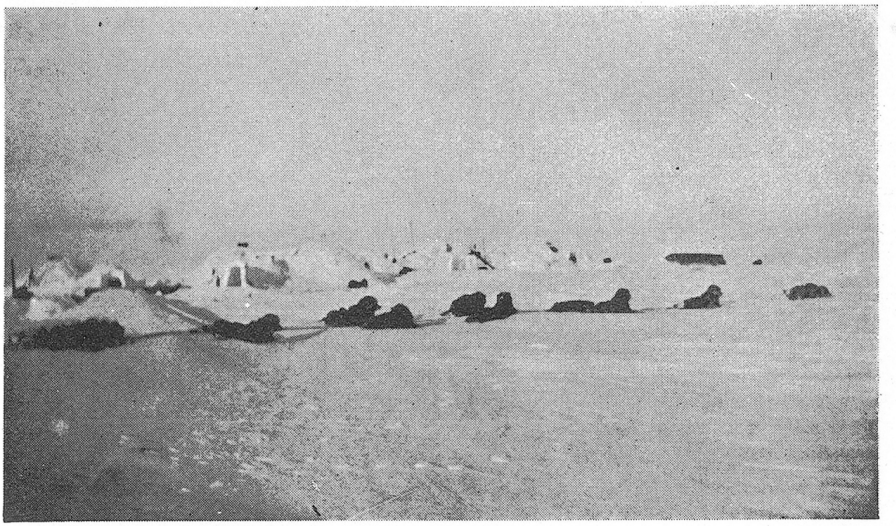
guard rail. Had it struck us lower down it would have gone right through the bottom. We finally arrived at Halifax, N.S., on October the 11th, and our voyage was over.

Whilst frozen in at Pasley Bay we made many patrols in order to get acquainted with the country and to visit and take census of the Eskimos scattered in small groups along the coast of Boothia Peninsula and North Somerset Island. One of our trips took us to Victoria Harbour in Thom Bay on the east side of Boothia Isthmus. It is the largest Eskimo settlement on that coast. The people live almost as they did in 1829, when Sir John Ross arrived there in his ship "Victory" in search of the North-West Passage. After three winters, during which time Sir John was unable to extricate his vessel from the ice, he abandoned it in the spring of 1831. We visited the place where he left the ship and found large pieces of iron plates and bolts from his little steam boiler and engine, also coils of old hemp rope. There was an old bronze cannon there which almost broke my heart to leave behind, as it was too heavy to pull on our sled. The Eskimos all had implements and seal oil lamps made from the iron plates from the boiler. The older people still vividly describe the men on the "Victory" from the tales handed down to them by their forefathers; the ship itself, they said, had finally drifted out of the harbour, and smashed up and sunk near one of the many islands in Lord Mayor Bay.

The Eskimos in these regions are very talkative. Once their natural shyness is over, they readily answer all questions about the country. They talk about the people who lived there before them; these they call the Tunit People and describe them as being very big. They lived in houses constructed of stones, whalebones and earth. The Eskimo legends are that when they (the Eskimos) arrived they had great fights with these people and finally killed them all, mostly when they slept. They can still point to the spot where they say the last of the Tunits were killed. When old implements are found they can tell with certainty whether they are from their own or from Tunit origin. Most of these legends are no doubt

true. At many places along the east coast of North Somerset Island, and the coast of Boothia, we saw remains of these Tunit villages. At one point I must have counted at least 40 large mounds, the remains of old houses. From these there were sticking out from the ground the large whale ribs used for construction, also many whale skulls. Even at the present time the Eskimos make trips to these ancient building sites for whalebone, which they split and use for sleigh-shoeing. How long ago since the Tunit people disappeared no one knows. Some day in the future I hope the Canadian Government will send competent men in there to excavate some of these old settlements, which might date back thousands of years. One thing is certain, the people who lived there must have been further advanced than the Eskimos, since they lived in houses and hunted such large mammals as the whale.

From whence the Eskimos came no one perhaps will ever know with certainty. Their legends, old beliefs and customs are dying out fast; the bringers of civilization have been too busy teaching them our history, beliefs and ways of living to find out anything about these people first. They are one of the most remarkable people in the world today. Their small number covers perhaps more territory than any other race on earth. The ones we have come in contact with, in the localities from Bering Strait to Hudson's Bay, seem to differ somewhat in appearance in different localities, although their language is universally the same, with the exception of local dialects. The ones nearest in physical appearance, it seems to me, are the ones farthest apart geographically. For example, the Eskimos from



Eskimo snow huts—a camp. Dog team resting.

the Alaskan Coast look very much the same as the ones from Baffin Island, and their dialects are nearly the same. An Eskimo family we took with us from Baffin Island to Herschel Island expressed surprise over the fact that it was much easier for them to converse with the western or Mackenzie Eskimos than with their immediate neighbours across Prince Regent Inlet and King William Island. The Eskimos living in the Coronation Gulf area, in Bathurst Inlet, and Victoria Island, as far east as Cambridge Bay, appear to be taller, with better features, some very ruddy, and of a generally more handsome appearance than either the Alaskans or Baffinlanders.

The Eskimos who have the hardest life are probably the few scattered groups living around Boothia and Adelaide Peninsulas, and in the King William Island regions; they are also the most primitive. Owing to the lack of caribou, on which they depend for clothing, they nearly always seem to be ragged and dirty. In the spring and summer they mostly go inland in search of deer, returning again to the sea-ice in the fall in order to hunt seals, which are their main source of food and fuel during the long winter. Some years when they have failed in the deer hunt, one can find them huddled together in miserable little snow huts, just eking out

an existence, waiting for spring. The best of the clothing, in many cases the sleeping skins, have to be made over for the men, in order that they may stay out on the ice to spear seals at the breathing holes, or jig for tom cods, small specie of codfish, hardly more than a head with a tail attached to it. The women and children have to stay around the snowhouses, sometimes clothed only in dirty old deerskin rags, many times with parts of their bodies exposed. Under such conditions they cannot travel very far in search of better hunting. Whatever game is secured is divided by the wife of the lucky hunter and given to the other women in camp. They all share alike; no one seems to keep anything extra for themselves; everybody is free to visit each other's snowhouse and to help themselves to any food or meat laying around. Sometimes they all congregate in one snowhouse and eat the food; the precious seal blubber used to cook the meat is conserved that way. It sometimes happens under these circumstances that some of the very old and infirm commit suicide, as is their custom, in order not to impose on the younger and able hunters. I have never heard of anyone being deliberately "put out of the way", although there have been many rumours that it is done; but these, I think, come mostly from people who have never come in close contact with the various Eskimos, or seen the conditions under which some of them exist. I know one old Eskimo who committed suicide. This man, a great hunter in his day, strangled himself–which seems to be the most popular way–just a few days before my arrival. It was during one of the bad winters I have mentioned, and took place in 1937, at a place on the ice a few miles eastward from King William Island. Upon inquiry of his wife and relatives I found that he had been ailing for nearly a year and had lost the use of his legs. The other men used to pull him out to the seal holes by sled, where he would sit for hours poised over the hole, waiting to strike a seal. Sometimes he succeeded, but finally he got worse and could no longer be taken out, and had to remain laying down in his snowhouse, which was shared by his son-in-law and his married sister. Many times during the winter, his

wife and son-in-law said, he had asked for his rifle so that he could shoot himself, but all Eskimos now had heard about the police and knew that some other people who had committed murder for other reasons had been taken away. They were scared that they would be blamed and would not help him, as was sometimes done before when men were too sick to help themselves to die. However, after many arguments from the old man, all the men left camp for the seal hunt, as it is not [customary] that they be present when someone kills himself. The old man now only had the women to deal with, and it was their custom to obey the head of the house. His wife said he asked her to fasten the line of his seal spear through the roof of the snowhouse so he could strangle himself. This she refused to do and he got so angry she said she cried and cried, and finally ran outside where they could hear her husband calling. They finally went in again and her husband kept begging them. His daughter, a girl 15 or 16 years old, then went out and fastened the line, but did not return. Her husband now made a loop, then got on his knees and called for his women folks to come. As his daughter had not returned he told his wife to get her, and when they had come back and stood around him he put his head in the loop, looked at them all, then leaned forward and died right away. After a while they cut him down, wrapped him in the skin he had been laying on, and dragged him outside. When the men came home that evening they pulled the body to a little rocky island and left it there, as no Eskimo likes to be left on the ice after they are dead. Then the whole group had to move camp perhaps ten miles or so. I went to the little island to look at the dead man so as to confirm their story that he had died from strangulation, although I believed the story. It so happened that before my return a strong snowstorm came up, lasting for several days. No one could go out hunting and they had to sit in their snowhouses, cold and miserable. On my return to camp a few days later they said the blow must have been sent by the dead man because I had disturbed him.

One cannot help but like and admire the Eskimos; especially so the more primitive groups among them, whom we have contacted; their helpfulness to one another, their resourcefulness in hard times, and their fondness for children. As far as I have seen there is no such thing as the unwanted step-child. If a child's parents die or are unable to care for it, the child is immediately adopted by some one who can, and he fares the same as their own children. In their primitive way of life they need one another in order to hunt, live and exist. Some of their customs perhaps do not agree with our way of thinking, but they are no worse than many among civilized people.

The only sad happening which took place during the second winter of our first patrol through the North-West Passage was when one of our comrades, Constable [Albert J.] Chartrand, died suddenly of a heart attack. As Chartrand was an ardent Catholic, and the only member of that denomination on the "St. Roch", we thought it but right that, if possible, he should be buried with the ritual of his Church. At Pelly Bay, about 400 miles from us, we knew there was a priest, Father Henry, living among the Eskimos, almost as one of them. Corporal [Patrick G.] Hunt and myself set out to locate him and if possible to have him come and perform the ceremony. On this journey we came in contact with many of the Eskimos scattered in small groups southward along the east side of Boothia. Wherever we arrived we were most heartily welcomed. They gave us the choicest tidbits of seal meat, fish, or any other things that might happen to be simmering in their pots, always hanging over the blubber lamps. The ladies of the house almost continuously tend these lamps and pots, some of which contained heads of large bearded

seals with long drooping moustaches and large mournful eyes staring at us from the pot. Some times an old wrinkled woman would put her hand in a pot, search around for a while, then pull out a choice piece of meat and squeeze it between her fingers, then give it a few licks with her tongue; then, with a gracious smile, she would hand it to us. Not to ignore this friendly gesture we would pull out our knives, cut off a few pieces of meat, then toss the remainder back in the pot.

On arrival at one of these snow villages near Lord Mayor Bay one evening we heard quite a commotion issuing from the largest house. After securing our dogs we crawled in through the passage leading into the house, and much to our surprise found a great big man dressed in an enormous pair of white bearskin pants and a white parka standing in the middle of the house playing a concertina. All around him stood or squatted about 40 Eskimo men, women and children singing "Shall We Gather at the River" in their own tongue. After our mutual surprise they recognized us as white men. The big man shook hands with us and introduced himself as Canon [John] Turner, the Anglican Missionary from Pond Inlet, Baffin Island. He had arrived a day earlier on his annual visit from Baffin Island. After we had shaken hands with

everyone, including the small babies, still on their mothers' backs, where they are carried so as to keep them warm, they continued on with the service, mostly singing, in which we joined. This kept up for about five hours or more, until a large section of the snowhouse roof caved in from the heat of such a large gathering. As the weather was mild outside, it was not worth while building a new roof in the dark. Instead, we all commenced eating, everybody contributing something to the feast. Some of the Eskimos brought in armfulls of frozen fish, while Canon Turner cooked a large pot of rolled oats. We contributed some tea and sugar, also the use of our primus stoves. By the time everyone was through eating, and all the news was swapped between Canon Turner and ourselves, it was after three in the morning. As many of us as possible stretched out on the sleeping platform for a bit of rest; Canon Turner, Corporal Hunt and myself in the center. On each side of us slept an Eskimo family, complete with little children. Between the small babies, which cried at times, and the snoring of the grown-ups, we did not get a great deal of sleep before they started getting up. Corporal Hunt and myself had scarcely dozed off when we were awakened by the tunes from Canon Turner's concertina. He was standing in the middle of the snowhouse holding morning service, with a number of Eskimos standing

around singing. The chanting voices of the Eskimos lulled us to sleep again, and we did not waken until a plate of porridge was put into our hands by Canon Turner, who was about ready to leave on his homeward journey. At this spot the North-West Passage was again completed. Canon Turner came from England and had arrived from an east coast port of Canada, coming to Baffin Island on the Hudson's Bay Company steamer "Nascopie", and crossed over to Boothia by dogs. We had arrived from Vancouver to the west side of Boothia, then travelled around it by dogs. Our meeting with Canon Turner was purely one of chance, neither of us knew of the other's movements.

From here we hired an Eskimo to guide us to Pelly Bay in order to locate Father Henry [Gustav Henri]. We arrived at his place late on the night before Good Friday. We found the Father living in a stone house, probably about 16 feet by 24 feet long, that he had built entirely by himself. It was really a masterly piece of work, as he had fitted all these hundreds of stones of various shapes and sizes together with clay taken from the ground, about two feet down from the surface soil. We found him to be a most charming and genial man. He lived practically on the country's natural resources, mostly seal meat and fish, at times eating raw frozen fish. This is no doubt what kept him in such wonderful health. In one part of the house, which he had partitioned off with skins and pieces of wood, he had a little heater in which he burned chunks of seal blubber and moss. Here he also ate and slept. He turned this room over to us, insisting on sleeping on the floor himself. He offered us a glass of wine, but when the little keg was brought in, it was frozen solid. It was a while before it thawed out enough to give us each a glass. The wine and the fact that we had travelled 55 miles that day made us fall asleep while the Father was saying his midnight Mass. Next morning when we awoke the Father had already held his morning service and was busy preparing breakfast for us. When we tried to excuse ourselves for sleeping through his services, the Father just laughed in his kind, humorous way and said that it was but right that we should sleep like good Protestants while he

prayed for us. The Eskimos now began to arrive from the surrounding district, and in a little while about 25 snowhouses had been built. Everyone was coming to attend Easter Service. On Easter morning we joined in the service, attended by about 80 Eskimos of all ages, packed into the little stone building. There was no room and nothing for them to sit on, so they were nearly all standing up, except for a few old ones who squatted on the floor. The Father had taught hymns and prayers to these people, and the service was held in the Eskimo language. The Father looked wonderful in his robes. He is a fine big man with a long flaming red beard, and the Eskimos just love him.

While the service was going on, a great pile of fish was thawing in one corner, and a large pot of meat was simmering over a seal oil lamp, so as to be ready for feasting immediately the service was over. A young woman next to me fainted twice, but nobody paid any attention to her as they were too busy singing. Each time I dragged her outside into the fresh air, and when she came to she just smiled and shuffled in again. I found out afterwards that she had just come about 100 miles and had given birth to a baby a few hours before the service.

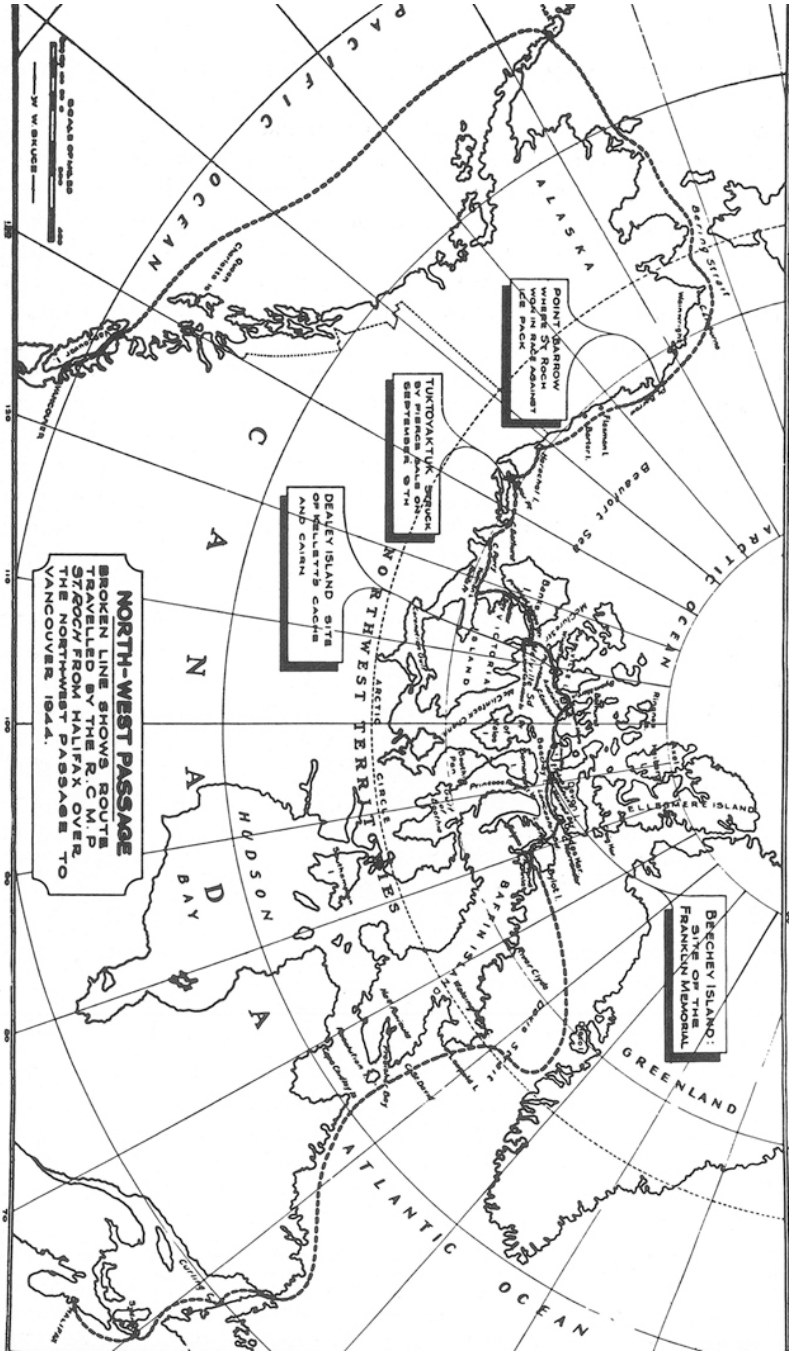
After the service they immediately began to rejoice, which took the form of eating. The Father introduced us to them as King George's men who had come especially to visit them, and told them to give us a hearty Eskimo welcome. This they did with great shouts between each mouthful. We were the first policemen to visit these people, so to give a good impression we contributed a case of beef tallow that we carried along as emergency dogfeed. The Eskimos are exceedingly fond of this kind of tallow. It is just pure edible beef tallow which we use ourselves on the trail instead of lard. At once the Eskimos began to cut the tallow up in pieces and they crunched large chunks of it as dessert. After the feast they had games outside for the men; this consisted mainly of throwing a harpoon at a snowblock, and shooting with bow and arrow. They all have rifles now, but the Father encourages them to keep up practice with bow and arrow, which I think is a good thing. I was selected to be the

judge, and as such it was my duty to hand out the prizes to the winners. The Father had some small prizes, and Corporal Hunt and I donated some of our tobacco and cigarette papers, and a pair of snow glasses, which I intended as first prize. Every man was to shoot three arrows each. Some of the older men were quite good, but there was a handsome young fellow that I thought should have first prize. He therefore got the snow glasses. We soon found out that we didn't have enough prizes to go around as each man came up for a prize whether he had made a good score or not. No Eskimo considers himself inferior to another; for had he not tried just as hard to hit the target? He had just had bad luck with his shooting, that was all. Sometimes it was the same way with the hunting. Some days certain Eskimos got game, then some other days other Eskimos got the game. They all received the benefits from it, so why should they not all get a prize, which is perhaps a good way of reasoning. We therefore had to resort to a few more pounds of tallow, which we cut in halves, thus each man received a prize. Strangely enough the ones who got the real prizes would rather have had the tallow.

Grandmother and grandchild, King William Island. She recalls the "Gjoa" expedition, under Amundsen, wintering there.

We stayed six days with Father Henry; then we asked if he could come and perform the funeral service. He said he would be pleased to come later in the spring when the seals began to come up to sleep on the

ice. It would then be easier to procure dogfeed from day to day as one travelled. This was what we had expected anyway, so we prepared to continue our journey to King William Island. The Father obtained a fine young Eskimo to guide us over the overland journey. After we left, Corporal Hunt and I developed terrible colds with headaches and fever; but we finally arrived at Gjoa Haven, King William Island. Here we were warmly greeted by Mr. Learmonth, the manager of the Hudson's Bay Company Post. Whilst there we learned of another tragedy–the death of Mr. William Gibson, the district inspector for the Hudson's Bay Post in the Western Arctic. Mr. Gibson, ex-Mounted Policeman, with many years of Arctic service, both with the Force and with the Hudson's Bay, had burned to death in an airplane crash whilst on his way to Coppermine from Edmonton. With the death of Mr. Gibson and Constable Chartrand the Arctic lost two great travellers; and Eskimos and whites in the Arctic, two good friends.



Course of voyage, 1944

THE RETURN VOYAGE 1944

While at Halifax during the winter 1943-44 we again received instructions to navigate the North-West Passage. This time we were to use the Lancaster Sound Route. On the way we were to call at Frobisher Bay and bring supplies to our Detachment at Pond Inlet. During the winter we had several alterations carried out to the living quarters so as to be more comfortable and we had a large diesel engine installed. We left Halifax Harbour, July 22nd. The next day we noticed the deck around the exhaust pipe had become very hot, causing the pitch to boil and run; it was therefore necessary to head for Sydney, N.S., to have the [exhaust] pipe altered. This took us three days, and it was July 26th before we eventually headed northward. We called at Curling Cove, Newfoundland, to fill our oil tanks, as this was the last place on our trip where oil could be obtained. On July 29th we passed through the Strait of Belle Isle. From there the icebergs became very numerous, and we were greatly hampered by fog along the Labrador Coast. No observation could be obtained, and on August 2nd we got a short glimpse of Cape Chidley. Shortly afterwards we obtained a radio bearing from Resolution Island. The weather continued thick and foggy and drift ice now made its appearance. As we could not afford to lose any more time we decided to pass up the call at Frobisher Bay and continue northward. By August 4th we had worked up to Leopold Island, the north side of Cumberland Sound. As we proceeded toward Cape Walshingham, the ice became heavier and we could make no progress. I therefore proceeded across to the Greenland coast, which we sighted on August 6th. On this side there was fine clear weather and open water except for giant icebergs. Off the Great Halibut Bank conditions looked good to westward, so we again crossed over to Baffin Island, and picked up the land around Clyde River. There again was fog and floe ice which slowed us down

considerably. It was August 12th before we finally anchored in front of our Pond Inlet Detachment. Had our instructions not included this call we would have continued on Northward along the Greenland coast until a little past Lancaster Sound, where we would have cut across, and thus saved much time from working ice. During the early part of summer there is much less ice on the Greenland side than the Baffin Island side. Our time was spent in unloading supplies and taking on previously cached "St. Roch" equipment. We took on board a native, his wife and family and 17 dogs. They were all quite willing to venture forth with us. There were seven of them all told. They made themselves comfortable in a tent on top of our deckhouse, where they lived until we reached Herschel Island. We got away from Pond Inlet on August 17th; proceeding up Navy Board Inlet, we made a short stop at Low Point to pick up some articles belonging to our family. While crossing Lancaster Sound we ran into a strong south-easterly gale with snow and sleet. Due to the absence of floe ice a nasty choppy sea came up and finally we found shelter in the lee of a huge flat-topped iceberg near Cape Warrender. We cruised back and forth in the lee of this iceberg for six hours while the whole vessel became covered with a sheet of ice from the spray and sleet. Our poor dogs on top of the deckload were suffering most from the freezing spray until we finally got them all bundled into a little cargo scow that we somehow covered with bits of canvas. When the gale abated we proceeded to, and anchored at, Dundas Harbour, North Devon Island. We had a Detachment there, and as it had been closed for some time it was desirable that we should call and ascertain the condition of the buildings for future occupation.

We left there again on August 19th. There was still a fresh south-east wind with sleet and no visibility to speak of, so we skirted the high cliff-like shore. At noon we came abreast of a good sized inlet, which at first appeared as a small opening in the cliffs. We entered here and after proceeding up this inlet we found anchorage close to shore in a little cove with a depth of 18 fathoms of water. We went ashore and built a cairn,

into which we placed a brass cylinder containing a record of our visit. We saw numerous bear tracks but no other game. On the bank of a stream running from the hills into the cove we discovered the ruins of three ancient dwellings made of stones and bones. Poor weather prevented me from determining our exact position, but as far as I could judge it was either Stratton or Burnett Creek. A heavy snow fell during the night, but we could not afford to linger long, so proceeded westward along the coast. The falling snow at times shut off all visibility. The weather cleared after we crossed Maxwell Bay, Devon Island, which seemed suitable for shipping, and before us lay a remarkable stretch of high, flat-topped tableland. The steep walls rose directly from the water's edge leaving no beach. To the southward we could see Prince Leopold Island and some icebergs. We neared Cape Hurd at noon, August 20th. Late that afternoon at Beechey Island we anchored in six fathoms of water in Erebus Bay, named after one of Sir John Franklin's ships that spent its first winter here. On the island we went immediately to the cenotaph erected in memory of those who perished in the British Naval Expedition in 1852 under Sir Edward Belcher while in search of the Franklin party. On the

Franklin's Monument on Beechey Island.

Sergeant Larsen, and some of the crew of the "St. Roch". Relics of the yacht "Mary" left at Beechey Island by Sir John Ross. Also some relics picked up at Dealey Island.

beach we examined the remains of a cache known as Northumberland House, established in 1854 by Commander W. S. Pullen of H.M.S. "North Star". All that was left were thousands of oak barrel staves and pieces of coal. Nearby we came across pieces of the keel, stem and planking of the yacht "Mary", a small vessel of 12 tons left at Cape Spencer, Devon Island, in 1850 by Sir John Ross, who hoped it would save chance survivors of the Franklin Expedition. Two years later Commander Pullen moved it to Beechy Island, where it has remained throughout the years. Captain Bernier visited this place in 1906 and we found his records in a cairn on an elevated plateau, and supplemented them with an account of our own doings. Our brief tour revealed nothing more of historic interest. The island is desolate and barren and without fresh water. We did not venture far inland because snow fell continuously during our stay and the country-side was buried under a deep mantle.

Fine old Eskimo who knew where one of Franklin's ships sank, and, as a small boy, made visits to get pieces of iron from her.

We left Beechey Island on August 22nd, passed Cape Hotham, Cornwallis Island and Wellington Channel, which was clear of ice to the northward; but soon the weather changed and ice drifting eastward made its appearance. Our course took us north of Griffiths, Somerville and Brown Islands through floes which, though of one year's formation, kept getting heavier and more tightly packed. Here we bagged four walrus that provided a welcome

change in food for us, and especially for our Eskimos and our dogs. Owing to heavy packed ice along the Cornwallis Island shore we were unable to land. During the morning of August 23rd we reached a point about 8 miles eastward of Cape Cockburn on Bathurst Island, but were unable to penetrate farther as the thickly packed ice moved eastward at great speed, carrying us along with it for about 20 miles, until abeam of Ackland Bay, where we managed to get loose. We then worked our way inshore and anchored behind some shoals on which heavy ice was grounded, breaking the flow of drift ice. It sheltered us until the morning of the 24th, when the wind changed and cleared the ice from the shores. We followed up the lead and anchored off Cape Cockburn. We immediately went ashore to look for the cairn built by Captain Bernier, but failed to locate it. Perhaps it had been destroyed by bears, because we saw many of their tracks in the snow.

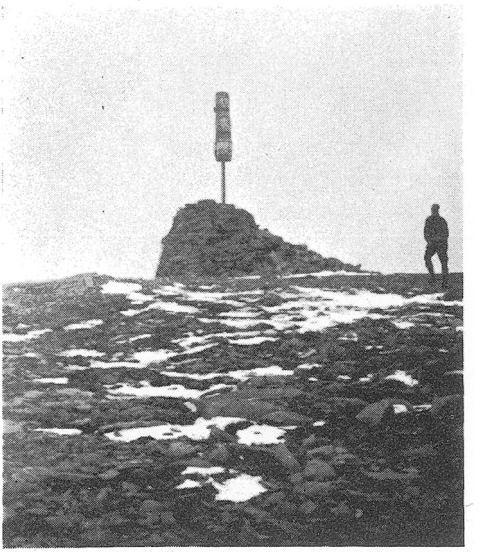
In a conspicuous place close to jutting rock about 300 feet high we built a cairn for our records, and from this vantage point we saw that the ice in Viscount Melville Sound was tightly packed to the west and south. The whole countryside here was packed in deep new fallen snow. Ice pressure from Austin Channel made it imperative that we move without delay, so we at once started working northward. Though the ice was not heavy, and the surface broken, the constant westerly winds, assisted by the heavy snowfall, held it together. We alternately steamed and shut down and drifted until late p.m., when we had reached a point off Schomberg Point.

From here we found a good lead westward to the north end of Byam Martin Island, where we anchored, went ashore to build a cairn and deposit a cylinder with a record. Only a small cairn could be built, owing to snow covering the land, and it was hard to find stones and rocks. We saw several caribou tracks in the new snow.

In the early morning of August 26th we got under way again and headed westward for the Melville Island. We enjoyed the first clear weather for days and saw very little ice while crossing over to Melville. As

we approached the beach of Consett Head we sighted a dozen musk-oxen grazing on the grassy lowland close to the beach, and as we proceeded southward we saw several small herds. At 1:30 p.m., perceiving what in the distance appeared to be a large cabin, we anchored in a shallow bay north of Griffith Point. A party set out to investigate, but the object of our attention proved to be a lone bull musk-ox, motionless as the land on which he stood. A mile and a half inland a small cairn was built and a record placed in it. Getting under way again, we reached Palmer Point at midnight and anchored close to shore in 25 fathoms of water. The navigation had been difficult the last few days owing to constant snowfall and thick weather, which obscured the sun and the land most of the time. The magnetic compasses had been bafflingly unresponsive for several days, many times with its North point fixed on the ship's head, irrespective of our direction. During the night and forenoon of August 27th we again had heavy snowfall and no visibility. We ventured ashore, however, and deposited a record on a pyramid-like rock. Rock piles of this kind made by Eskimo hunters signified that in the remote past this land had been inhabited. Green vegetation could be seen protruding through the snow which was covering the ground fast, and discouraged us from going very far inland. During the afternoon of August 27th the weather cleared and we pulled out for Island. The cairn on top of the island, consisting of a huge pile of stones, on which a large spar. surmounted by three barrels, could be seen for a long way. We anchored close inshore and at once set out to examine the massive cache which, like the cairn, had been built in the spring of 1853 by Captain Henry Kellett, who had spent the winter there, in H.M.S. "Resolute". The cache, partially destroyed and its contents scattered everywhere by marauding bears, had been erected in the shape of a house. Although most of its sturdy stone walls still stood, the roof had long since fallen in. At one end were iron tanks of hard tack, the tanks were rusted through and the hard tack was wet and soggy. Canned meats and vegetables stacked up and covered with sod formed

part of one wall. The centre of the building was a conglomeration of broken barrels of flour, clothing, coal, rope and broken hardwood pulleys for ships blocks. Everything was still frozen in ice, which covered the interior of the cache. Outside were scattered leather seaboots, broken barrels of chocolates, peas and beans, all wet and soggy. On the beach were two broken Ross rifles and boxes of ammunition nearly buried in the sand. The rifles had been left by Captain Bernier in 1909, whose records we found in the cairn. We picked out a few good tins, some of which contained ox cheek soup made in 1850 by a manufacturer situated opposite East India House, London. Directions for opening were, take a hammer and chisel and cut out one end, being careful not to let flakes of the paint which cover the cans to get into the soup.



Captain Kellett's cairn, 1853, visible for miles, on summit of Dealey Island. Three empty barrels, one above another.

As the season was getting on we could not afford to remain long, so in the morning of August 28th we pulled for Winter Harbour about 30 miles to the westward. The weather was very thick when we arrived there, so had to anchor outside for a few hours, waiting for the weather to clear. Finally we got inside and anchored in about five fathoms of water. In the harbour itself there were many large pieces of heavy ice aground. We immediately went ashore to visit Parry Rock, which could be clearly seen. On the rock was carved the names of H.M. ships "Hecla" and "Griper", also the names of several seamen from these ships. These two vessels were the two first vessels to arrive and winter here and were under the command of William Edward Parry, Royal Navy, who was, I

think, the most outstanding of all the Arctic explorers of those days. On the rock was also a large copper plate inscribed with the Union Jack and the Canadian Coat of Arms, and the following inscription:

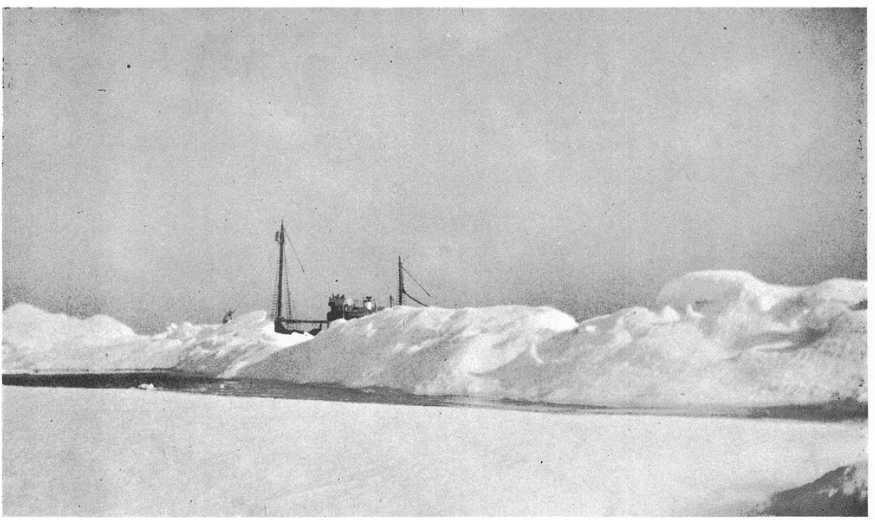
> "THIS MEMORIAL IS ERECTED TODAY TO COMMEMORATE THE TAKING POSSESSION FOR THE DOMINION OF CANADA, OF THE WHOLE ARCTIC ARCHIPELAGO, LAYING TO THE NORTH OF AMERICA. FROM LONG. 60 W. TO 141 W., UP TO LAT. 90 NORTH, WINTER HRB., MELVILLE ISLAND, C.G.S. ARCTIC. JULY 1ST, 1909, J. E. BERNIER, COMMANDER, J. V. KOENIG, SCULPTOR."

Whilst in Winter Harbour we also found a bottle containing a notice deposited in 1929 by the late Inspector [Alfred Herbert] Joy, R.C.M.P., who had then visited this spot, making perhaps the longest and most famous patrol in Arctic history. While there we were still hampered by heavy snowfall, which prevented us from venturing very far behind.

After placing a record of our visit on Parry Rock, we left Winter Harbour, 1:20 p.m. August 30th, and enjoyed a clear run south-westward

Front of Captain Kellett's cairn, 1853. Hundreds of broken barrels scattered around. Nothing usable remained.

for 30 miles, although the heavy pack could be seen to the south of us. We were now in waters never before traversed by any vessel, the eastern entrance to McClure Strait. We encountered the heaviest ice of the voyage here, of large unbroken floes. We were soon forced to moor to the ice, and so took the opportunity to fill our fresh water tanks from the fresh water pools on the ice. We were hampered a great deal by thick fog and sleet, but taking advantage of every little opportunity we gradually worked southward, alternately tying up to the ice and drifting. Fortunately the weather now was almost calm, with only a slight draft of wind from the north. The floes to which we moored appeared to revolve in a clockwise motion, as we always found ourselves on the north side of the floe, after being tied up to it for a few hours. Late p.m. September 2nd land suddenly loomed up ahead through the fog and we were again forced to moor to a grounded floe close to shore and await better weather, for, because of our merry-go-round drift, I couldn't decide whether we were near Russell Point on Banks Island or Peel Point on Victoria Island. Daylight, September 3rd, we continued up what proved to be Richard Collinson's Inlet. We soon found out our mistake, so turning around we followed the coast back and soon were in Prince of Wales Strait. There were only a few small pieces of ice, and wonderful



Progress stopped, September, 1944. In McClure Strait.

clear weather and sunshine greeted us. It was really the only fine day we had during the entire passage; that night we were off the southern end of the Strait, and shutting down our engine drifted until daylight, when we were close to Ramsay Island. Shortly afterwards we passed the entrance to Walker Bay, our winter quarters of 1940-41. Shortly after noon, September 4th, we anchored at Holman Island. I thought it strange that no one came to meet us, as there is a R.C. Mission, a Hudson's Bay Post and several natives there. A blast from our whistle brought no life whatever. When we went ashore we learned that the people had been up all night unloading supplies from the H.B.C. vessel "Fort Ross", which had left only a few hours before our arrival, and, tired out, they had been in bed. When awakened by our whistle they thought the "Fort Ross" had returned for some reason.

There more history was made, there two Canadian vessels had completely circumnavigated the North American Continent, the "Fort Ross" had left Halifax three months before us and had sailed through the Panama Canal, up the west coast to Vancouver, where she had loaded for the western Arctic. On September 5th we left the island and before midnight were in a field of heavy ice, 20 miles north of the mainland off Keats Point. Next day, buffeted by strong winds, we crawled through tightly packed ice along the shore to Cape Parry, then cut across Franklin Bay and followed the shore-line to Cape Bathurst. We were now in what we might call home waters, but it did not give us a very warm welcome, as we ran into a blinding snowstorm, and all day and the next we bucked heavy ice which gradually forced us closer to shore, and late at night on September 7th we were forced to tie up to grounded ice near Toker Point.

Next morning we were able to make very little progress for fog had settled down and joined with the ice as though to deliberately impede us. At noon, however, it lifted, and visibility improved sufficiently for us to see that the way to the west was closed completely, and as fresh north winds were driving more ice upon us, I decided to bear toward Tuktoyaktuk. The shallow water and the strong current from the

Mackenzie River kept a large stretch of open water there. When we reached the harbour's mouth at 6 p.m. the entrance markers were indistinguishable in the darkness, and we grounded on the mud flat. Fortunately we had very little headway on, so backed off again. We anchored in three fathoms of water, although we hated to do so, as we knew a gale was on its way, and it came. Daylight of September 9th brought a gale and pouring rain. Before we got under way the entrance markers had blown down. The entrance is very tricky, but the only thing we could do was to attempt to enter. In no time the sea and water was nothing but churned-up mud, the vessel rolled so violently one of our dories rolled right on to the boat deck from the davits. How we got over the shallows is a miracle. It was only the swell which lifted us over. Once inside we dropped both anchors and let out all our cable. The gale reached hurricane proportions and the water rose ten feet, flooding the Hudson's Bay Company buildings, washing away goods and equipment, and drowning several native-owned dogs. Small islands of peat land embedded with willows and cranberry bushes drifted by. It was the worst storm that ever had struck the settlement, but the "St. Roch" rode it out. However, we had entered the harbour only in time to save ourselves and the ship from certain destruction. P.M. September 10th we managed to get ashore, and the sandspit was completely changed. Huge chunks of soil had been torn from the banks of the island, revealing old blue ice. Mackenzie Bay was turned into a solid mass of packed ice. Though the gale had subsided, unfavourable weather continued for several days, with alternate snow squalls and pouring rain, and when a cruising plane from Aklavik reported that unbroken ice lay between Pullen and Herschel Islands, it looked as though we were fated to winter at Tuktoyaktuk. So we set our nets and began storing up dog feed. On September 17th, as fresh winds blew from the east, the weather improved, and I decided to attempt the crossing at least to Herschel. The storm had made the entrance of the harbour shallower still, and we again grounded for a few minutes. We passed Pullen Island that night, and had exceedingly fine

weather, of which we took advantage, steaming in leads, appearing as if just made for us. At dawn very heavy ice slowed us down, but there was a single lead towards Herschel Island. Some floes were easily ten miles long. One we steamed past had seven bears on it, but there was no time for hunting. As we drew near Herschel, fog again settled down, but finally we entered the harbour, and immediately moored to the beach, where we unloaded some fuel drums, gasoline and kerosene. The bay was choked with heavy old ice, all aground, and the island was snowed under. That night a blow came so severe it confined us to the ship all day of the 19th, but fortunately the great slabs of grounded ice acted as a natural breakwater.

Next morning our prospects brightened. There was a possibility that we could get through and not have to winter. We immediately got to work, installed our Eskimo family in one of the empty houses, unloaded eleven tons of coal and some of our excess stores. Fortunately we could hitch our dogs and drive the sled right along the shipside. We had been in radio communication with Point Barrow, and they said the ice pack was solid to the shore, also that the season was the worst in years. The harbour at Herschel was freezing over fast, but a slight draft of easterly

wind now made its appearance. Right away we ceased unloading and made preparation to leave, and were underway by 2:30 p.m. September 21st. We made good time to Barter Island. From there we were forced to hug the shoreline and next afternoon steamed past Flaxman Island. Then, still hugging the shore, we groped our way through thick fog off the North Coast. We couldn't see the sun and were dependent entirely on our hand lead line. We moved along slowly and took frequent soundings. Suddenly at 1:45 a.m. September 24th the leadsman shouted, "We've lost the bottom", and I knew then we had passed the point. Shortly afterwards we saw the welcome lights of the settlement, but there was no stopping here. The ice was setting in on the shore again very rapidly, it was pitch dark, and we were still bucking ice. About noon that day we reached the settlement of Wainwright, and were clear of the ice. On September 27th we passed through Bering Strait, and that evening anchored under the steep rocky shore of King Island. There is a village there, built almost like birds' nests, on the sloping south side of the island. We had our Blue Ensign flying, and I thought it strange that we saw no sign of life. We signalled, but no one appeared. We then thought of hoisting the Stars and Stripes. Right away the village came to life, natives appeared from the cliffs, kayaks were put in the water, and soon we had a dozen or more men aboard, eager to trade ivory carvings. We asked why they hadn't come out before, and they said they were kind of scared of our Blue Ensign, as they thought we might be enemies, but when they saw the Stars and Stripes as well, they knew we must be friends, and as they were eager to trade with us, decided to take the chance.

We made good time down the Bering Sea and arrived within sight of Akutan Island on October 1st. Early that morning our old enemy returned–fog and dirty weather–but we finally entered Akutan Harbour, and after proper identifications were made to the United States naval officers, were permitted to moor alongside the fueling wharf. Commander Lee and his staff came aboard and heartily greeted us. The

officers and sailors, true to American hospitality, as on our previous passage, welcomed us ashore, opened wide their messes, and treated us to a special showing of a movie and a dinner. What pleased us most, though, was that we were able to take a bath. I had not been able to sleep without my clothes on ever since we left Sydney, N.S. It was therefore a treat to be able to relax for a few days. We remained as guests of our good neighbours in this friendly haven until October 4th, when we proceeded to sea for the home run. After an uneventful passage across the Pacific the "St. Roch" entered the inside passage and anchored for the night in Shushartie Bay, October 12th. 6:00 p.m. October 16th we arrived and moored alongside Evans-Coleman-Evans Wharf, Vancouver. Our North-West Passage was over. In 86 days we had travelled 7295 miles. During this time we had only steamed 1031 hours and 34 minutes.

This account of our latest and most successful voyage would not be complete if I did not pay tribute to all members of my crew. Tribute must also be paid to those early explorers whose sacrifices and exploits blazed most of the trail we took; whose successes and failures became a pattern of lessons from which we learned much. It is true that many pioneers were defeated by the North; but I think it was because of the snow and cumbersome ships of those days, rather than the ice and inhospitableness of the land. Ships at that time were powered mostly by sails, or inadequate steam engines, and when winter held them in a frozen berth, there was often a crew of over a hundred to be fed. These men lived in cramped quarters for long tiresome months, with little means of diversion and practically no opportunity to travel. Yet a few of the more intrepid set out on foot to explore and chart the country and claim it for the Empire. This is the spirit we must not let die in Canada. In their own way the Mounted Police are endeavouring to do their part. They have made long patrols which frequently surpassed those of many explorers. I have in mind the long overland journeys of ex-Assistant Commissioner C.D. LaNauze, then Inspector; Inspector French, ex-Assistant Commissioner T.B. Caulkin, then Sergeant Major, who

covered by sled in the early days the territory recently covered by the famous "Musk-Ox" Expedition. Also I have in mind outstanding patrols made by the late Inspector Joy, ex-Sergeant Major H.W. Stallworthy, the presently serving Sergeant R.W. Hamilton, and many others. I believe that before long the Arctic will become better known. Large powerful steel ice-breakers driven by diesel motors will ply its waters, and during the summer carry supplies to the northern inhabitants; while planes will maintain regular flights over this area, summer and winter. As for the North-West Passage, the ice-breakers will be able to navigate it, probably by the route we took.

But the Arctic Sea will always be the Arctic. On occasions planned voyages will run behind schedule, delayed by the heavy ice in Melville Sound and along the Alaska Coast. Some ships will find it easy, others difficult, and still others will meet disaster. But one thing is certain: modern ships will have the advantage in power and strength, and if held up, will merely have to wait until a little later in the season. To future Arctic vessels, the young ice that forms even in open calm water and which stopped us many times will present no obstacle. They will plough right through it. The main thing is to watch the ice movements and be in the right spot at the right time, for the ice does not wait for anyone.

But getting back to the early explorers, when I reached places which had known the footsteps of such men as Sir Edward Parry, Sir John Ross, Captain Henry Kellett, Captain Francis L. McClintock, Captain Robert McClure, Sir John Franklin and many others, I felt that I was on hallowed ground. I pictured them and their crews wintering in isolation and discomfort in crowded ships, optimistically waiting for spring and better ice conditions. Some of them perished, all risked death, to carry the proud flag of Britain into new territory. Some times during our passage I fancied I could see the tall majestic ships that had preceded us in most of these waters, over a hundred years ago.

CONQUEST OF THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE BY R.C.M.P. SCHOONER *ST. ROCH*

by J. Lewis Robinson

The Search for the Northwest Passage forms an intriguing chapter in the history of Canadian exploration. The stories of early navigators who faced the dangers of polar pack-ice in tiny wooden sailing ships, travelling, with doubtful compasses, along uncharted coasts, are accounts of hardship, courage and perseverance. The fruitless quest for a route north of the North American mainland to the wealth of the Far East resulted in the exploration and charting of most of the numerous Arctic Islands of Northern Canada. As more and more knowledge of this inhospitable region was obtained through exploration, the trading incentive behind the search for a northwest route waned in the light of geographic facts which showed the route to be commercially impractical.

In the sixteenth century Europe began to look towards the new continent to the west, and expeditions from England, Spain, Portugal and France groped their way along the unknown coasts. At first this new land-mass was regarded chiefly as a barrier, of little value in itself, blocking the route to the fabled riches of the East. Exploration was interested in a way around or through it, and in 1576 Martin Frobisher first entered the Eastern Arctic seeking such a route. John Davis, who followed Frobisher's lead, reached Baffin Bay before the end of the century and noted several westward openings on the barren rocky coast.

Exploration in the early seventeenth century was side-tracked by the broad opening of Hudson Strait, and many years were spent in defining the limits of extensive Hudson Bay. The failure of several expeditions to find

openings west of Hudson Bay dampened interest in the search in this direction, and for a time exploration was neglected.

After the Napoleonic Wars expeditions from the British Navy renewed the search for a northern route through the sea reported north of America. Edward Parry entered Lancaster Sound in 1819 and twisted through eastward-moving ice-floes as far as Melville Island before freezing his ship in for the winter. The next season ice choking the channel to the westward prevented further progress, and Parry returned to England. In 1821 Parry tried the southern route through Hudson Strait and Foxe Channel, and reached the entrance to Fury and Hecla Strait before being stopped by ice. Later attempts to pass through this strait also failed, and it has not yet been navigated by other than Eskimo mariners. Further exploration by John Ross, beginning in 1829, confirmed the existence of Boothia Peninsula extending north from the mainland of Canada and discouraged all hopes for a passage through this region. Since Ross did not see Bellot Strait, the strategic opening to the west, it was believed that Somerset Island was part of this long barrier peninsula.

In 1845 Sir John Franklin led a British Naval expedition into Lancaster Sound, and, after being stopped by ice in Barrow Strait, wintered at Beechey Island, the south-western corner of Devon Island. The next year he continued westward and was lost, never to be seen again. Despite the fact that sixteen rescue expeditions entered the Arctic from both the east and west, discovered 6,000 miles of new coastline in their search, and covered about 40,000 miles by winter sledge trips, Franklin's fate remained a mystery until [Frances] M'Clintock brought out some clues in 1859. This extensive search well illustrated the vastness of the Canadian Arctic. Many famous explorers, whose names are now commemorated on our maps, travelled widely by small boat in summer and by sledge in winter, and their mapping brought forth the first definite outlines of the Arctic Islands. All their accounts lay stress on the short navigation season after the land-fast ice breaks up, on being obstructed by extensive masses of pack-ice moving eastward from the Arctic Ocean through the many channels of the Arctic

Islands to Baffin Bay and the North Atlantic, and on an early freeze-up followed by a severe winter, with sledges as the only means of travel.

In 1854 the long-sought Northwest Passage was finally traversed by Captain [Robert] M'Clure and part of his crew. They abandoned their ice-bound ship north of Banks Island in 1853 and sledged eastward to meet Captain [Henry] Kellett at Dealey Island. The next spring M'Clure sledged to Beechey Island and was brought out from there by ship. When the news that the difficult route had been found was combined with geographic information which was reported on ice and navigation conditions by the many expeditions, enthusiasm for the Northwest Passage declined among explorers. In the meantime, commerce now knew safer and more dependable routes to carry the world's merchandise, and no longer encouraged interest in the Passage.

The Northwest Passage, which had brought so many ships to destruction in the ice during three long and arduous centuries of polar exploration, remained unconquered by any one vessel until the beginning of the present century. In 1903, Roald Amundsen, Norwegian Arctic adventurer, entered Lancaster Sound in a small 47-ton vessel, the "Gjoa", and took a route southward into uncharted Peel Sound, between Somerset and Prince of Wales Islands. He navigated as far as southeastern King William Island, where his party spent two winters at Gjoa Haven (Petersen Bay), studying terrestrial magnetism near the North Magnetic Pole on western Boothia Peninsula. In leaving the Arctic, Amundsen sailed westward through Queen Maud and Coronation Gulfs but was caught in the ice near Herschel Island, where he passed his third winter in 1906. Next summer he and his crew continued westward, becoming the first persons to navigate the Northwest Passage successfully from east to west in a single ship.

Within the modern period the Hudson's Bay Company has experimented with the use of the northern route to bring supplies to its far-flung northern trading posts. In 1928 the H.B.C. schooner "Fort James", drawing 9 feet of water, entered the Western Arctic from the east through Lancaster Sound and Peel Strait and brought supplies to the Gjoa Haven trading post on King William Island. After spending two winters there, the

Fort James returned to the Eastern Arctic via the same route. This was the first commercial use of part of the passage, but when the Fort James was sent to the Western Arctic in 1934, she travelled via the Panama Canal.

In 1937 the Hudson's Bay Company icebreaker "Nascopie", carrying the Canadian Government Eastern Arctic Patrol, opened the trading post of Fort Ross at the eastern end of Bellot Strait, and here met and exchanged freight with the small H.B.C. schooner "Aklavik", which came up from King William Island. Thus Bellot Strait, which had five times defied Captain M'Clintock and his "Fox" in 1858-59, became the meeting-place between the Eastern and Western Arctic on the Northwest Passage. Shallow seas along the western section of this route, however, limited the size of boats to small schooners like the "Aklavik", causing the route to be of little economic value, and the scheme was dropped in 1940.

The boat which was to make history in the Northwest Passage, the R.C.M.P. schooner "St. Roch", was built in 1928 and entered the Western Arctic around the Alaskan coast. In the following years the 80-ton, two-masted vessel travelled along the Western Arctic coasts and islands as a "floating police detachment", carrying supplies and doing routine patrol work without fanfare, through the same difficult ice conditions which had cost so many ships and lives among the early explorers. These hardy adventurers were able to brave only one or two winters in the Arctic, but the sturdy "St. Roch" has spent ten of her sixteen years frozen into the ice of some Arctic harbour. Four successive winters, 1930-34, were spent at Tree River, in Coronation Gulf, and three winters, 1935-37 and 1938-39, were passed frozen in at Cambridge Bay. Aided by modern equipment and radio communication, the R.C.M.P. boat has been performing feats of Arctic ice navigation equal to those history-making voyages of less than a century ago. But to Staff-Sergeant Henry A. Larsen, who has been the unassuming Captain of the schooner during all of these years, this difficult work of navigation and long winter dog-sled patrols are the usual routine in maintaining law and order in the Canadian North.

On June 23, 1940, the "St. Roch" left Vancouver, British Columbia, beginning the historic voyage which was to make the 80-ton schooner the

first ship to complete the elusive Northwest Passage from west to east. The voyage northward through the Inside Passage and across the north Pacific to the Aleutians was uneventful. The "St. Roch" entered Bering Sea through Unimak Pass and anchored at Akutan Harbour to check her engines and fill the fresh-water tanks. The schooner continued to Dutch Harbour in the Aleutians on July 8 to load a supply of fuel oil for the diesel-powered engines. Adverse weather, with strong winds, rain, and fog, was met in crossing Bering Sea and, after stopping at Teller Harbour for a day, the "St. Roch" passed through Bering Strait in a dense fog and entered the Arctic Ocean on July 17.

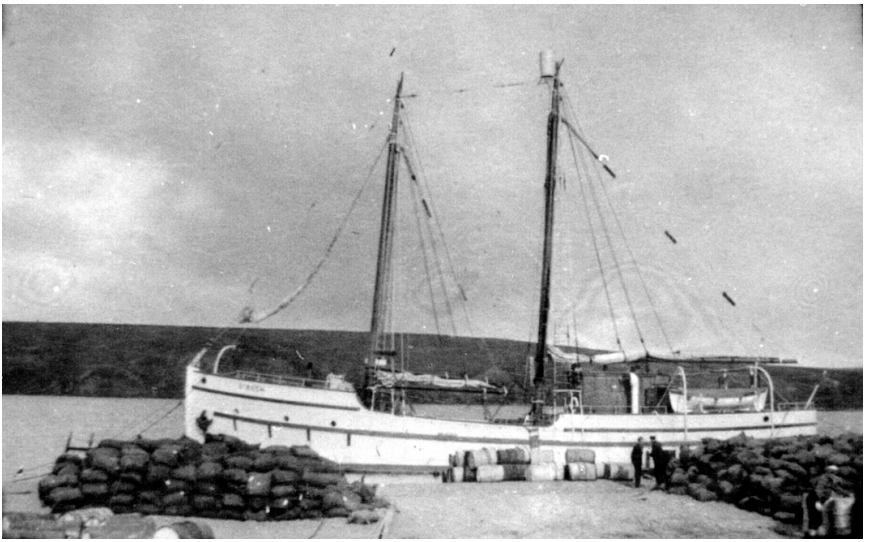
On July 23, the "St. Roch" rounded Point Barrow spit and met the first loose-scattered ice-floes. By evening the blocks had become more numerous, and the "St. Roch" began the familiar task of slowly "working the ice" -- twisting and turning from one lead to another opening, edging around large floes and pushing aside small blocks, drifting with the pack and waiting for a lead to appear; Larsen and the "St. Roch" had been doing this patient work in partnership since 1928. Progress was slow and it became apparent that this was going to be a bad year for ice along the northern Alaskan coast.

Ice conditions are unpredictable in the Arctic, and are greatly dependent upon prevailing winds. The polar pack-ice, which moves in a general clockwise direction in the Arctic Ocean, presses southward against the Alaskan coast. In years when prevailing winds are easterly or southerly, the

ice is moved westward and leaves an open strip along the coast; but northerly winds will pack the floes against the shore, impeding or blocking passage. Although this northern route was formerly used by whalers, many were lost during bad years, and since 1936 only the H.B.C. schooner "Fort Ross", in addition to the "St. Roch", has entered the Western Arctic via this route. Small schooners have more success along the Alaskan coast because they can travel close to shore inside of the ice which grounds in the shallow coastal water. The only large ship to attempt this route, the H.B.C. icebreaker "Baychimo", after a few successful trips was caught in the ice off Point Barrow in September, 1931, and abandoned.

For eighteen days the "St. Roch" struggled in the pack-ice, east of Point Barrow. During much of this time the schooner had to be continually tied up to large floes for protection, and movement was mainly concerned with preventing the ship from being crushed. The weather was constantly foggy, further curtailing chances to see leads. At one time the "St. Roch" was able to anchor close to shore near Beechey Point, but as the ice began to close in again Larsen had to put the schooner back into the pack to avoid being shoved ashore. It was then moored to a grounded floe for two days so as not to lose distance by being pushed westward during a furious northeasterly gale. On August 2 the police vessel resumed working eastward and reached Cross Island before being caught once more. Northwest winds jammed the ice against the shore and pressed hard against the boat, so that on August 10 Larsen had to start blasting the ice in order to work free. After each blast the schooner charged into the opening and finally reached open water near shore. Thereafter good progress was made eastward, although the vessel scraped bottom several times. Barter Island was passed on the morning of August 11, and very little ice was encountered between there and Herschel Island.

After loading coal and other supplies, the "St. Roch" left Herschel Island on August 18 and crossed Mackenzie Bay to Port Brabant (Tuktoyaktuk or Tuk-tuk). From this harbour the police schooner continued her normal routine patrol work of carrying supplies to the various R.C.M.P. detachments in the Western Arctic. Bad weather, fog and strong winds



caused several delays in the eastward trip to Coppermine and Cambridge Bay, and it was not until September 16 that the schooner returned to Coppermine with her freighting duties finished.

Captain Larsen had originally hoped to proceed through the Northwest Passage via Prince of Wales Strait between Victoria and Banks Islands after completing the freighting work, but the delays caused by ice and bad weather discouraged any such attempt so late in the season. A decision was then made to winter either on Banks Island or at Walker Bay on central west Victoria Island, and to be ready to navigate the Passage early the next summer. The "St. Roch", therefore, left Coppermine on September 19 and went to Holman Island and thence to DeSalis Bay, Banks Island.

September 25 was spent in examining the enormous harbour and surrounding country at DeSalis Bay, but when Larsen noted high ridges of rock and gravel pushed up along the shore, indicating heavy ice pressure during break-up in the spring, he considered it unwise to winter here. Since no other good harbours were known in the area, the "St. Roch" sailed for Walker Bay, where the explorer, Collinson, had wintered in 1851-52. The vessel had a total of 5,240 miles to show for a season's work when she was anchored in the southeastern part of this bay.

A continuous strong east wind blew during most of October and prevented Walker Bay from freezing over until October 30. It was the latest

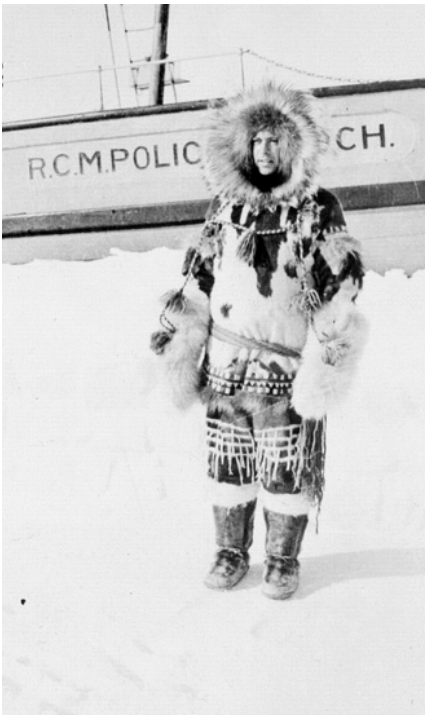
freeze-up known in this area, and, if Larsen had had any way of knowing that it was to be so delayed that year, it is possible that he might have been able to make his way immediately through the Passage to the Eastern Arctic. The vagaries of Arctic weather are unpredictable, however, and what is done in one year may not be possible in another. After the schooner was frozen in, a framework was constructed and the deck was completely housed over with canvas.

During the winter of 1940-41 the "St. Roch" detachment made several normal patrols through the area, visiting native camps to investigate Eskimo conditions and welfare, registering vital statistics and firearms, and generally carrying out the many other duties of the R.C.M.P. in supervising this vast Arctic region. As is customary, travel was by Eskimo dog-team and sled, and the nightly shelter was a snow-house of their own construction. Short patrols totalling 990 miles were made to Holman Island for mail, to Minto Inlet, to Prince of Wales Strait and inland on Victoria Island. One especially long patrol of 41 days, covering about 600 miles, was made for the purpose of visiting the prosperous Eskimo camps on the western side of Banks Island.

During the spring, when days became longer, the vessel and equipment were scraped and painted and all machinery was examined and overhauled. The ice in the harbour began to break up in July, but westerly winds kept Walker Bay blocked with floes for some time. On July 31, Larsen decided to

try to work his way out, and, after much manoeuvring, finally reached the trading post and mission at Holman Island. Here duty intervened, preventing the schooner from attempting the Passage through Prince of Wales Strait. A native boy had been accidently shot and needed to be taken to hospital at Aklavik. Large and numerous ice-floes, foggy weather, and a storm off the mainland coast made progress slow, and the harbour at Port Brabant was not reached until August 5. Whereas Amundsen Gulf had been free of ice until very late in the preceding year, during the summer of 1941 floes jammed the northern part of it throughout the whole season. Thus does the natural environment limit planning in the Western Arctic.

Supplies were loaded into the "St. Roch" at Port Brabant on August 8, and the vessel left for Coppermine to fulfil her freighting duties. Scattered ice, rain and fog made travel to Baillie Island difficult, while large unbroken floes extending eastward to the horizon forced the schooner to travel along the shallow shores. Open water was finally reached in Dolphin and Union Strait, and the vessel arrived at Coppermine on August 12. Coronation Gulf favoured the "St. Roch" with good weather and open water, and she anchored in Cambridge Bay early on August 16.



Since the detachments had now been given their year's supplies, Larsen decided to continue eastward and attempt the Passage around King William Island and through Bellot Strait. On August 19 he left Cambridge Bay, but strong westerly winds, rain and fog were ill omens. Larsen was forced to anchor in the shelter of Lind Island and was held there until August 24. The compass was now useless, owing to the proximity of the Magnetic Pole, and

navigation through island-studded Queen Maud Gulf was by experience and seaman's "sixth sense". The "St. Roch" proceeded cautiously towards Simpson Strait, south of King William Island, taking soundings continually, since no vessel of her draught (13 feet) had ever been in these waters. Because Simpson Strait is narrow and full of small rocky islands, Larsen sent the motor launch ahead to sound a course. The bottom was uneven, with depths averaging from 6 to 8 fathoms, and with several shallow places of 3 fathoms. On August 26 the vessel remained at anchor during a thick fog. The next day she proceeded carefully and reached Gjoa Haven (Petersen Bay) in the afternoon.

The sea-faring policemen left this trading post on August 30 and were soon inching their way through shoal water and strong tide rips in Rae Strait. A northwesterly storm, accompanied by hail and snow, forced the schooner to the coast in the shelter of Mt. Matheson, on the eastern tip of King William Island. Here she pitched and rolled for a day before proceeding northward, with one man continuously sounding with the lead and another at the masthead on the lookout for shoals. East of Matty Island large shoals, which rose abruptly from 10 to 2½ fathoms, forced the schooner to seek deeper water.

In the narrowest part of James Ross Strait, northeast of Matty Island, the "St. Roch" was stopped by a solid wall of grounded ice extending from shore to shore. Since the vessel was not built or powered to break such a barrier, she was anchored near by to wait for the tide to change direction. Early in the evening the ice began pushing southward in a strong current. The only shelter available was in the lee of a small rocky islet only slightly larger than the schooner herself. A snow-storm shut off visibility, and throughout the night the "St. Roch", with both anchors out, was continually battered and pushed by grinding ice blocks, and the little company on board did not know whether they were still near the islet or were caught in the ice. The morning of September 2, however, found them still there and undamaged, and when a south wind began pushing the ice northward they moved along with it.

On September 3, improved weather allowed the "St. Roch" to proceed northward between the coast and the ice. The low land was now snow-covered, and when visibility became poor the white shore could not be distinguished from the grounded ice. During the day the wind changed to the west, gradually moving the ice closer to the coast. It became apparent that there was a definite danger of being caught and crushed. Fortune was with the valiant ship, however, for Pasley Bay, a long inlet, erroneously shown on the charts as a broad bay, appeared ahead, and the "St. Roch" was forced into it.

The next morning its crew made a trip to a near-by hill to look westward over the ice of Franklin Strait and M'Clintock Channel. It was jammed against the coast as far as could be seen, and extended in a jumbled mass to the horizon. In the afternoon large floes began to shove into the inlet, and the "St. Roch" had to move farther in. Soon the ship was completely surrounded by heavy ice and could no longer manoeuvre. On the morning of September 6 the ice carried the vessel against a shoal in 1½ fathoms,

The "St. Roch" in the ice, McClintock Channel

turned the schooner twice, listed it to alternate sides, and then pushed it completely over the shoal, dragging two anchors and 90 fathoms of chain.

Heavy snowfall and variable winds continued, and the "St. Roch" remained locked in the ice until September 9, when deep water was found in an opening close to the shore. On September 11 the ice movement ceased. New ice soon formed rapidly in the open places, and the whole inlet froze over solidly. As it was now impossible to escape, the ice was cut away from the ship, which was anchored farther off-shore so as not to be grounded in the spring. Preparations were then made to spend the winter in Pasley Bay, close to the North Magnetic Pole on Boothia Peninsula, and the news was radioed outside. The schooner had travelled 1,660 miles during the summer. The season was still early by normal standards, and Bellot Strait and the Northwest Passage were only 100 miles away, but the fickle Arctic had again frowned on the "St. Roch".

The stranded R.C.M. Policemen had an important task to perform during the winter of 1941-42. In the taking of the census of the Canadian Arctic areas, their job was to meet as many as possible of the Canadian Eskimo in this little-visited region. In order to do this Larsen travelled by dog-team to the trading post at Fort Ross in early December and obtained information as to the location of the native camp-sites in the area. In early January Constable Chartrand patrolled to King William Island to prepare a fish cache for the long spring census trip, and also to bring back additional winter clothing made by the natives for the detachment. Towards the end of February, Sergeant Larsen and Constable Hunt, having picked up a native guide, left their winter headquarters on the "St. Roch" for an epic patrol which was to cover 1,140 miles and extend over a period of 71 days. They travelled north to Fort Ross and beyond to Creswell Bay, then southward along the east coast to Boothia Peninsula to the mission at Pelly Bay. After spending Easter there, they travelled westward to Gjoa Haven, King William Island, where both were laid up for fourteen days with influenza. This illness curtailed the patrol, and they returned to the "St. Roch" on May 6.

The winter weather at Pasley Bay was quite different from any other that Sergeant Larsen had known previously in the Arctic. Continued fog and

snow-fall with variable winds made visibility poor, while sudden changes in temperature from 30 below zero to zero and back again within a short time made it difficult to become acclimated. As summer approached it became apparent that the ice was not going to break up early in this region. It was still packed solidly outside the inlet, and pressure ridges, 50 to 100 feet high along the coast north of Pasley Bay, showed the results of enormous ice forces. Since the ice was to remain that year there was virtually no navigation season for the west side of Boothia Peninsula during the years 1941-42.

The "St. Roch" and police crew spent eleven months at Pasley Bay. On August 4, fresh water draining into the harbour loosened the ice and allowed them to move out of the inlet. On the shore behind they left a new cairn and grave. On February 13, Constable Chartrand had had a sudden heart attack and died almost immediately; his death was the only tragedy of the trip.

Captain Larsen navigated shoreward of the main pack-ice and made 15 miles northward along the coast before being stopped by a solid mass of floes. He then put the vessel into a small lead extending westward to await a break-up. The opening closed, however, and the schooner was caught and held there helpless for twenty days. On several occasions, while they were beset, severe pressure lifted the boat high in the ice and threatened to turn her over. At these times charges of black powder were set off near the vessel

to relieve the pressure, while the police crew worked with ice-chisels to keep free the propeller and rudder. An easterly wind carried the schooner farther and farther away from the coast.

On August 24 a strong northerly gale split the ice and opened a long lead south from one of the rocky Tasmania Islands. It took two anxious days for the "St. Roch" to break through the short distance to the lead and then to follow the twisting, grinding opening to the safety of a deep anchorage among this small group of high islands. A strong current set back and forth through the islands, with the regular 5-foot tide, and on August 29 Larsen decided that the leads looked promising. They worked northward to Dixon Island and then found easier going to Bellot Strait.

With the Northwest Passage practically in their grasp, tragedy almost struck the "St. Roch" and crew in Bellot Strait. The western end of the strait was free of ice, but the tide was changing direction to the eastward as the vessel entered. The ice from Peel Sound was carried in behind them. Half-way through the strait, Larsen suddenly saw that an ice-jam had formed ahead from shore to shore. They could not turn back and were headed for a large, thick, grounded floe. Then, just as they were about to crash and be wrecked, a smaller floe hit the larger one and broke off its southern half. The next moment the "St. Roch's" prow went into the widening crack and she drifted forward between the two floes.

The "St. Roch" left Fort Ross on September 2, surrounded by moving floes, and worked north in Prince Regent Inlet, with young slush ice already forming. The "Nascopie", on the Eastern Arctic Patrol, was to have entered this inlet later in the month, but although she had reached Fort Ross successfully for five previous years, she was stopped this time by the ice which was already threatening the "St. Roch". The hurrying schooner entered Navy Board Inlet and stopped at the Pond Inlet post on Northern Baffin Island to discharge stores and coal for the police detachment and to pick up Constable Doyle. On September 10 it left this Eastern Arctic post and travelled through numerous bergs and storms southward along the Baffin Island and Labrador coasts.

After stopping at Labrador, Newfoundland and Sydney, Nova Scotia, the "St. Roch" and crew arrived in Halifax on October 11, having travelled 2,840 miles en route during their third summer season. The historic news that the "St. Roch" was the first ship to complete the west-to-east voyage through the Northwest Passage in Northern Canada was then released. The trip of 27½ months bettered Amundsen's time, and, with improved weather and ice conditions, it might well have been less. To Staff-Sergeant Henry A. Larsen this historic feat was an achievement of which to be proud, but nothing about which to become excited. He and his police crew had been travelling around amid the ice-floes of the Western Arctic in good and bad seasons for fourteen years, and had conquered the Passage as a side-activity while successfully carrying on with their other police duties. Larsen discounted his long winter patrols by Eskimo dog-team and sled as something which the R.C.M. Police are doing every winter throughout the Arctic in keeping contact with our migratory Eskimo population.

During the 1943 navigation season the "St. Roch" had a change of scenery while patrolling the Eastern Arctic detachments. She entered Hudson Strait after most of the ice had gone, and had little trouble in sailing around in this new region with no ice impediment except the huge bergs met off the eastern Baffin Island coast. The Eastern Arctic, however, is not always so friendly.

During the spring of 1944 the "St. Roch" was provided with greater engine-power, one mast was removed, and she was fitted with the luxury of a new gyro-compass. The R.C.M.P. were going to patrol another route through the Arctic Islands as part of Canada's work in maintaining sovereignty over these barren, uninhabited islands, and the partnership of Larsen and the "St. Roch" was scheduled for another history-making voyage.

On July 22, 1944, the "St. Roch" left Halifax, but developed engine trouble which forced her to put in to Sydney. She left there on July 26, but had to moor again at Curling Cove, Newfoundland, to make further engine adjustments. On July 28, she put to sea once more, and thereafter had no further engine difficulties. Numerous bergs and thick fog were found off the Labrador coast, but Larsen navigated around icebergs just as efficiently as he

worked through floes. Cape Chidley, the northern tip of Labrador, was passed on August 2, and the next day the patrol was greeted with the familiar sight of pack-ice off Hall Peninsula, Baffin Island. The ice was broken, but tightly packed, and progress was impossible, so Larsen swung over to the usual open water off the Greenland coast on August 4. On August 6 he turned westward towards Baffin Island, and again met pack-ice and fog slightly south of River Clyde. For several days the gyro-compass had been unreliable, and would suddenly change 10 to 20 degrees; finally it had to be ignored as useless. Larsen's navigation from then onward was by sight, experience and the wavering magnetic compass.

In trying to work through the ice to travel near the coast off River Clyde, Larsen found that the land-fast ice had not yet broken up and he had to stay offshore. His difficulties were further increased by an amazingly strong mirage effect which made the leads difficult to pick out. Progress was stopped on August 9 by floes that were very large and unbroken, although only about 2 feet thick. Bylot Island was glimpsed through a thick fog that evening, but the "St. Roch" remained moored to a large floe off the entrance to Pond Inlet until August 12, when she slipped forward and anchored off the post settlement.

Detachment supplies were unloaded at Pond Inlet, and the police picked up a native, his family and seventeen dogs. The Eskimo was quite willing to adventure into the unknown, and so, in case the "St. Roch" should be forced to winter, he was taken along to hunt food and aid in winter travelling with his dog-team. The expedition left Pond Inlet on August 17 and, proceeding up Navy Board Inlet, crossed Lancaster Sound to Devon Island. A strong southerly gale off Cape Warrenden caused the "St. Roch" to pitch a great deal before shelter was found in the lee of a large flat-topped iceberg. There it cruised back and forth until the storm subsided.

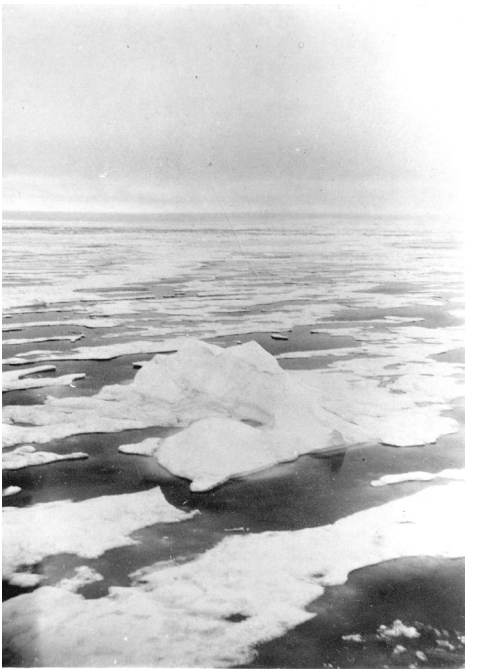
The "St. Roch" arrived at the former R.C.M.P. post at Dundas Harbour, Devon Island, on August 18, and found the unoccupied buildings in good condition. The patrolling schooner and police crew left the next day and followed along the high, cliffy coast until they came to a good harbour in a little-known 7-mile inlet (either Stratton Inlet or Burnett Creek). Here they found ruins of an Eskimo culture of several centuries ago; after building a cairn and depositing records of their visit, they departed. That evening (August 19) the first snow fell, heralding the coming winter.

Larsen and the "St. Roch" continued westward, but the coastline was usually hidden by frequent heavy snow-squalls. The weather cleared near

Maxwell Bay, Devon Island, and they saw a steep-walled coast with no beach and a flat-topped upland. A few bergs could be seen to the south, but otherwise Prince Regent Inlet was free of ice. On August 20, they arrived at historic Erebus Bay, Beechey Island.

Beechey Island is actually connected to Devon Island by a low spit which is dry at low tide. A narrow lowland at the base of the former high cliffed "island" was the site of the winter quarters of several early Arctic explorers. Within recent times the site had been visited by one of Otto Sverdrup's sledge parties in 1902, by A.P. Low in 1904, by Captain Bernier in 1906 and 1908, and by the C.G.S. "Arctic" in 1923. Numerous police patrols from Dundas Harbour, and also the "Beothic", carrying the Canadian Government Eastern Arctic Patrol in 1927 and 1928, called there to keep a watchful eye on the historic ruins. Except for part of the keel and a bit of planking, all that was left of the yacht "Mary", placed there in 1850 by Sir John Ross, was the mast, which was stuck in the sand. Only ruins remained of the cache called Northumberland House, left by Commander [William J.S.] Pullen of the H.M.S. "North Star" in 1854. A further search of the island revealed nothing of historic interest. Since the land was barren and desolate, with no fresh-water supply, the "St. Roch" proceeded from Beechey Island on the morning of August 22.

Wellington Channel was clear of ice as far as could be seen to the northward, but the first floes were met drifting eastward at Cornwallis Island. Larsen followed leads through the tightly-packed floes, staying inside of the line of Griffith, Somerville and Brown Islands, along the Cornwallis Island coast. Several walrus were seen in this area, and four were shot and brought on board to be used as dog-feed. At other times, along the way, seals were shot to feed the team of hungry Eskimo dogs. Since the ice was packed solidly to the south, Larsen turned north along Cornwallis Island as far as Cape Airy, where he found leads pointing westward towards Bathurst Island, the south shore of which was obscured by a heavy snow-storm. Despite being turned and buffetted by the ice, the "St. Roch" maintained a forward course, and Cape Cockburn was reached about noon on August 23. Here solidly-packed floes blocked further progress. The tide set to the east,



and the "St. Roch" was carried 20 miles back to Ackland Bay before anchoring close to shore. Larsen's difficulties were further increased by the failure of his magnetic compass, which had pointed fixedly at the bow of the schooner for several days. For the remainder of the voyage he had only his Admiralty charts and an amazing sense of direction upon which to depend as navigation aids. Even the sun was hidden by continuous snowstorms.

Early in the morning of August 24 the "St. Roch" once more slipped along the coast to Cape Cockburn and anchored, while a party went ashore to look for Captain Bernier's cairn. No trace of the cairn could be found, but numerous bear tracks in the area suggested that these curious animals might have scattered it. Larsen left an R.C.M.P. cairn near a conspicuous rock on the south side of the point and placed a record of their visit inside it for historical reference. From this high cape it could be seen that Viscount Melville Sound was filled with ice to the horizon. The ice was broken but tightly-packed, and was pushed against the islands by a strong south wind. Ice was also being carried southward by currents through Austin Channel, west of Bathurst Island.

Since he could not proceed westward, Larsen decided to try a route north of Byam Martin Island. He experienced a great deal of trouble near Graham Moore Bay on western Bathurst Island, due to the "St. Roch" drifting southward with the current each time she was stopped by the ice. After patiently working back and forth from one small opening to another, shoving the floes when possible, or letting them drift by, the "St. Roch" made the north coast of Byam Martin Island on the afternoon of August 25.

Here Corporal [Patrick G.] Hunt and a party went ashore to build a cairn and leave a record of the patrol. Because of a heavy snow-fall, no observation of the surrounding land could be made, but fresh caribou tracks were seen.

August 26 began with clear weather and a fresh westerly wind. After rounding the northern tip of Byam Martin Island, the expedition found open water to the westward. Melville Island was soon sighted, near Consett Head, and the men saw a herd of twelve musk-oxen grazing on the grassy lowland. Other herds of musk-oxen were seen on the tundra farther south, proving that these protected animals, part of the remnant of the species, had survived on their isolated sanctuary. Except for a long patrol by the late Inspector Ernest Joy of the R.C.M.P. to the island in 1929, no white man has visited Melville Island since Stefansson's party in 1917.

South of Griffith Point, Melville Island, where a cairn was built, the "St. Roch" was forced to travel slowly, due to shoal water of 4 to 8 fathoms for 2 miles off the coast. At midnight the expedition anchored off Palmer Point, with still no ice in sight, and another record was deposited. An excellent harbour north of the point was examined the following morning, when thick weather discouraged further sailing. At noon on August 27 the weather cleared, and they approached Dealey Island, where the huge cairn, topped by three barrels on a post, could be seen for miles at sea. The party went ashore and examined the large cache left by Captain Kellett of the H.M.S. "Resolute" in 1852-53. The walls of the cache were still standing, but there was no roof and most of the contents had been destroyed by the weather and marauding bears. The skeletons of two bears found near by suggested that they might have been poisoned by consuming some of the spoiled feed. Some of the barrels contained clothing, sea-boots, flour, chocolate, peas, beans, and tea; all were in a soggy, rotten condition. Some of the iron cans and tanks contained hard-tack and canned meats and vegetables, but most of them had been broken into and the contents had spoiled. On the beach close by the men found two broken rifles and a case of ammunition left by Captain Bernier in 1909.

They left Dealey Island on the morning of August 28, and travelled along the low coast to Winter Harbour, about 30 miles to the southwest. Winter Harbour was chosen by Captain Bernier as the winter quarters for his Canadian Government Expedition of 1908-09, and was visited again by him in 1910. The storehouse built by Bernier in 1910 was still in fair condition, although almost empty, and from a rafter hung a bottle containing the record left by Inspector Joy who had last patrolled there in 1929. Numerous tracks of musk-oxen, caribou and wolves were noted around the harbour, but only one old bull musk-ox was seen.

After depositing a record at Parry Rock, Larsen and his crew left Winter Harbour on August 30 and had a clear run 30 miles to the south before meeting heavy ice. Due to mist and rain, they moored to a large floe to await visibility and replenished their fresh-water tanks from pools on the ice. Early the following morning they began working their way through the heaviest ice yet encountered, as it pushed eastward from the Arctic Ocean through M'Clure Strait. Several times heavy fog, which obscured leads, prevented progress, and they were gripped by the general counter-clockwise revolving motion of the churning, growling ice. Soundings of 50 and 63 fathoms were obtained during the crossing of the strait. They drifted throughout September 1, but towards evening of September 2, after they had worked forward again, the fog lifted and a cape loomed ahead. Larsen did not know which coast of Prince of Wales Strait the cape marked, but decided to turn

eastward. The cape proved to be Peel Point, and he soon realized that he was in Richard Collinson Inlet. Since there was much ice in the inlet and more pouring in behind the boat, Larsen did not consider it wise to explore the inlet to its head, and so turned around and retraced his course to Peel Point.

The "St. Roch" entered Prince of Wales Strait on September 3 in bright, clear weather. No ice blocked the passage and good time was made to the southward. Holman Island was reached in mid-afternoon of September 4, and the exciting news that the vessel had come through the Northwest Passage was given to the amazed Hudson's Bay Company manager. Although many explorers had spent years in unsuccessfully trying to work through the eastward-moving ice, it had taken Larsen and the "St. Roch" only eighteen days from the time they entered Lancaster Sound until they were at Holman Island in the Western Arctic.

Larsen received instructions from Ottawa to proceed outside to Vancouver and to complete the coast-to-coast voyage if he could. After he left Holman Island on September 5, heavy ice gave difficulty all across Amundsen Gulf and forced the "St. Roch" to proceed slowly close to the shallow shore of the Canadian mainland west of Cape Parry. On September 8 she was freed of the ice off the harbour at Port Brabant, but ran aground

trying to enter it in the dark. Larsen backed her off and was able to get in just in time to ride out the worst storm ever known at this place. Two days later, when the storm abated, the entrance to the harbour was completely changed and Larsen erected new markers. The ice was packed solidly in Mackenzie Bay by the northerly hurricane, and it appeared that the "St. Roch" would have to winter at Port Brabant. On September 17, however, Larsen decided to attempt the crossing, and, after making slow progress through the heaviest ice seen during the voyage, successfully reached Herschel Island. The Eskimo family and dogs from Pond Inlet were left here, along with a large share of the "St. Roch's" coal and other supplies.

The history-making "Mounties" left Herschel Island on September 21, as the harbour was beginning to freeze over, and met more heavy ice and fog along the Alaskan coast. With their goal so close, the cruel Arctic weather was teasing them by making their progress more and more difficult, but the "St. Roch" and her determined crew were not to be denied this time, and their experienced captain countered every aimless movement of the ice. The last of the polar pack was left behind near Wainwright Inlet, Alaska, and the remainder of the voyage became merely a matter of reaching port. Stops were made at King Island in Bering Sea and Akutan Harbour in the Aleutians.

After they left the Aleutian port on October 4, a violent two-day storm and heavy swells on the North Pacific provided but a fitting finish to an exciting historic voyage. Towards evening on October 16, the "St. Roch" came into Vancouver Harbour with all flags flying and a large white banner proclaiming the successful trip through the Northwest Passage. Three hundred and sixty-eight years after Martin Frobisher first attempted to enter the Arctic, seeking a northern route, the R.C.M.P. schooner "St. Roch" became the first ship to complete the Passage in a single year from east to west, with a total elapsed time of 86 days. As Captain Larsen expressed it: "We were lucky and had the breaks. No one can predict ice or navigation conditions in the Arctic. What we accomplished this year might be repeated the next, or it might be many years. Much would depend upon the type of vessel used, and the ice conditions of that particular year. Our voyage

showed that the Northwest Passage can be traversed in a single year, but does not prove that this could be accomplished every year."

The Reminiscences of Joe Panipakuttuk

North/Nord (Jan.-Feb. 1969): 10-17.

I remember I left Pond Inlet on the RCMP boat in the summer of 1944, on the 17th day of August. On our way we stopped at Nalluaq where I got two dogs. Captain Larsen obtained two narwhal tusks at this place. I shot one bear when we were leaving. On crossing Lancaster Sound from Nalluaq a very heavy gale set in rocking the boat on either way. We sheltered near an iceberg on the leeward side. The iceberg was very big and long. The boat was headed against the wind and the engine running all the while, but the wind was so strong the water was as white as in a snow storm.

With the wind not so strong, we left the following day, but the swells were big and the bow of the boat would disappear from time to time in the water. I was very frightened. We arrived at the island [Devon] where the police used to have a detachment. It was very windy and where we anchored it seemed we were on land. The police looked over the vacant buildings. Next day we left and followed along the coast close to the high cliffs of the island. Another gale arose and we were forced to anchor in another cove [Stratton Inlet]. Ashore we walked around and found some old, old Eskimo houses made of whalebone and sod [Thule culture]. Mr. Larsen and the crew built a landmark [inukshuk] and put some papers in it. That night we had a snow storm. We moved farther along the coast with heavy squalls so that sometimes we could not see the land. We did see some icebergs.

On August 20th we arrived at a small island off the west end of the big one we had been sailing alongside [Beechey Island]. It is said that in the old days some white men got lost and the head of the expedition was never found although many ships had called here searching for him. The name of the man was Franklin. On the island I saw some stone markers and graves of white men [Franklin cenotaph placed here by McClintock, 1858].

Two days later we left for Resolute Bay and on the way I killed three walrus and a fourth at a place where the boat was touching the bottom because of the shallow water. I killed another walrus when we were anchored

on the west coast from Resolute Bay. The white men climbed up the cliff and built an inukshuk and left a note in it. We left from there because there was a lot of ice. We travelled only a short distance at a time because there was so much ice. Sometimes we would stop and I would hunt. I shot three seals, but one bearded seal sank. We stayed overnight and left the following day travelling around the north side of the small island [Byam Martin Island] and anchored where the white men put up another inukshuk with a note. This inukshuk was taller than a man.

When we left again we travelled through a lot of rough ice. The floating ice was old ice. We came to a large island [Melville Island] and a small island [Dealey Island] on which there was once a building. It is said that here there was once a shipwreck. The building was made of rock with a wooden roof. They had a lot of firewood inside and quite a lot of food. The crew of this wreck had been found, it is said; they did not starve. There we found old clothing and canned food which they had left. [Captain H. Kellett Expedition, H.M.S. *Resolute*, 1852-53. Remains of large cache left by him.] We stayed here for part of the day.

Mr. Larsen, whom we called Pallursi, made notes and another inukshuk. We left to cross to the big island and during our travel Mr. Larsen told me that there were musk oxen on the land. I went to where he directed me. I searched the land with a telescope and saw no sign of live animals. All I could see were huge rocks. Mr. Larsen said that these were musk oxen, these very things I thought to be rocks. So 1 looked again through the telescope and the rocks began to move. We got near the musk oxen and I found out

that they were carrying something on their backs. I thought to myself they must be carrying their little ones, but I soon learned that this was part of the animal. When you see musk oxen for the first time they have such a huge back on them!

We travelled on through a lot of ice and came across an old building. The building belonged to Kapitaikallak [Captain Bernier], where his ship used to winter [C.G.S. *Arctic* 1908-09— revisited 1910]. There was a pole standing with a model of a fox attached to it which signified that the land was very rich in foxes. The man left the boat, rifles and such, because he caught a lot of foxes. We slept there for approximately three days. On August 30 we left and met heavy ice as we were crossing to Bank's Island but we got lost in a fog. We turned back to a little cove [Richard Collinson Inlet— Victoria Island]. In the morning we were again on the right route and we were in a long inlet [Prince of Wales Strait]. We travelled all day and night and when we woke up Mr. Larsen told me that we would get to Holman Island that day and see people. About mid-afternoon on September 4th we could see a building on a point. For the first time since leaving Pond Inlet we would now get to see a strange people and we began to feel shy.

The Eskimo people on the boat were myself and my wife and Aariak, my son; Pallug, my daughter; Kalluk, my son; Soopi Viguq, my daughter; Panipak my mother; and my granddaughter Mary Panigusiq. On the day of our arrival at Holman Island a person had died. We could see all the people climbing a hill where they were burying the body. We anchored after the people had finished the burial. All the white people and ourselves waited in the bow of the boat and I felt nervous to be among strange people. But at last I

went to a group of people when they asked me to come and I was told not to fear them. I shook hands.

They wanted us to come to their settlement which we did and we went to the house of Kanguaq. The settlement had only two white people, the missionary and the Hudson's Bay Company man. We stayed overnight here and left the following day for Tuktoyaktuk.

One of the narwhal tusks which belonged to Mr. Larsen was stolen by someone. I was frightened when Mr. Larsen found out that one of his tusks was missing. I was afraid to tell a lie so I told Mr. Larsen about the white person who stole the tusk and I also told him at what time. Mr. Larsen got very angry and when he went for lunch he started asking us again who had stolen the tusk. Though he knew who had taken it the rest of the crew tried to blame me. They told Mr. Larsen that it was me but he got more angry with them and he said "Some of you people are not honest. This man already knows who has taken the tusk and he is the one who told me who did it. So you had better tell the truth right now." They never said anything about the tusk again.

For the next two days we sailed through a lot of ice on our way to Tuktoyaktuk. We anchored near Tuktoyaktuk when we hit shallow water. A boat came out to welcome us and I saw that there were many white people in the boat and I thought there was only one Eskimo with them but when they came up to our boat it was the other way around. These people were all Eskimos and there was only one white man with them. That was the first time I had ever heard Eskimos talk English. The white man in the boat was the Hudson's Bay Company manager.

The next day it was very stormy and the wind was coming down hard against our boat. Another Eskimo came aboard with us and he and Larsen steered the boat together as the wind was blowing that hard. We faced the wind and the boat rocked as though it was going to turn over so we had to anchor it with two anchors.

The people slept on the boat and the next day they went ashore. The people in Tuktoyaktuk were building houses. There had been a flood there. There were some dogs on an island and they had all died, all thirty-five of

them. Across the Bay there was a house and there were two rooms in it. When the water started to come into the house they went outside and brought in a canoe. They sat in the canoe inside the house for two nights because the house was full of water. The ten-gallon oil tanks were all blown away and the Hudson's Bay office was also blown away. There were some people out in a boat during the storm and they never found them. They only found a young child on the shore wrapped up in a blanket. The boat had been trying to get to Banks Island. The people went out looking for it but it was never found again. There was a white man on board also. While we were there I fished most of the time and we stayed for a week.

We left for Qikirtarjuaq [Herschel Island] where again we got caught in a storm. We kept going southward and the wind was very strong. We got to Qikirtarjuaq [September 17] during the night. There was a house ready for us to live in. Mr. Larsen said that he was going to leave us because he wanted to go on through to Vancouver in the south. He left and we were alone there. When I looked through my binoculars and saw there was a house, some dogs and people, I became nervous. The people looked so different.

All summer long I went out sealing and caught quite a few. In the fall a man came to our camp who said he was from Alaska. My mother called him "son" so after that I called him my brother. He said that there were many caribou where he came from. He was going out hunting and said that I would always be welcome to go along with him. He talked to me a lot and he told me not to be scared to talk to the people that I saw. I understood

very well the way he talked except for a few things; sometimes he would have to try to explain to me, even in English.

The next day we went on a hunting trip. When we were getting quite close to the houses I again got nervous. The people there were very nice. They asked us to come into their house which was very interesting as the house inside looked like a white person's home. After spending a little time with them we left in our sled again. Not too long after that we spotted another house where there were only two ladies. They told us that their husbands were out hunting. We left expecting to meet them, but didn't. We stayed overnight in another camp. The next morning we went to hunt again and I got four caribou to take back home.

All winter long my son and I would go out hunting and there were caribou all of the time. I went to Aklavik with another man. It was quite a way and we slept nine times before we got there. There were many white people, Indians and Eskimos in the town of Aklavik and a school and hospital. We stayed there for three days before returning back to Qikirtarjuaq. I had sixteen dogs when I started on the trip but they began to die off and I returned home with only eight.

During the summer I caught a lot of seal, caribou and fish. In a day I would get sixteen to eighteen seals. There were also white and brown bear

and many different kinds of birds. The Western Eskimos have ways very much like the white people and they would buy meat from me. I got $200 from the Eskimos there just by selling them meat. When they wanted seal they would give me $10 for it; caribou meat, $5, or if it was back meat of the caribou only they would pay me $10. I told them that we were all Eskimos and that they should not pay me for the meat, but they said that they had to pay for everything they take from someone. They even tried to buy dogs and that was the first time I found out that Eskimos buy things from other Eskimos for money.

During the winter I caught twelve foxes and in spring many seals including two square flippers and one whale.

On August 11, 1945 the *St. Roch* with Captain Larsen was back from the South and we were all happy to see him back. Larsen did not like it when he found out that we were not living in the house that he had got ready for us. We were living in a tent now. He asked me why we were not staying in the house and I told him that we liked a tent in the summer. We got all of our belongings together and loaded them on the *St. Roch* and when we left that night for Tuktoyaktuk we all slept aboard. We stayed at Tuktoyaktuk for two weeks.

Before we left the police found a white man who was almost starving. He did not have any food, tea or flour. He had an Eskimo wife who did not have any needles. My wife gave her some needles, clothes and soap. They had five dogs in a camp between Tuktoyaktuk and Coppermine. They had a big wooden house but I did not find out what he was doing up there. We arrived at Coppermine and stayed there for three weeks. When we did leave it was for Cambridge Bay and it took many days. We stayed in Cambridge Bay all that winter. There was a Hudson's Bay Company Store and an RCMP detachment there.

When spring came Mr. Larsen asked me to go to Pond Inlet by way of Gjoa Haven and Fort Ross. I had eight dogs with me and five pups when I left Cambridge. Kanayuk from Cambridge Bay went with me as a guide to Gjoa Haven. A man by the name of Tiitaa, a Nittillimmuit, came with me as a guide from Gjoa Haven to Ikirasak. The following people were with me

on the expedition: my wife and son, Aariak, who was now seventeen; my daughters, Palluq and Soopi, and my baby boy who was two years old, my mother and granddaughter, Mary Panigusiq. The total of us was eight and we had the same number of dogs as we had people on that journey. Our sled was twenty feet long and we had five pups besides the eight grown dogs.

The journey began on April 22, 1946 from Cambridge Bay to Gjoa Haven. When we finally arrived at Gjoa Haven we stayed for one week waiting for dog food.

We left with the young man Tiitaa and his wife for Ikirasak. During our journey I took very ill and with the windy weather it was difficult. We went for two days and two nights without food. Then the weather calmed down and I stocked up on a seal as did Aariak and Tiitaa but I was so ill that I couldn't eat the meat. Though I was ill I wanted to keep on going so they all got ready while I was sitting on the ground. We left at night and the next day we made a camp. Aariak and Tiitaa had just left to go seal hunting when a large polar bear came to the camp. It was early morning and everyone else was still sleeping. So I took the gun and tried shooting it but missed and it started to run away. I unchained all the dogs and let them run after the bear but when I tried running I was so weak that I kept falling down. The dogs finally stopped the animal and I shot it. I walked back feeling very sick and

my lungs were sore and burning. I walked for a while then saw Tiitaa and Aariak returning from their hunt. They put the bear on their sled and we rode home. It was only 600 yards from our tent that I shot the bear but it seemed so much farther. I had to stay in bed for two days feeling very weak. I found out that a shaman was trying to kill me, but he killed himself instead and I got better when he died.

When we were moving again we found the tracks of nine caribou. We went after them for quite a while and I shot four. We returned to our camp where everyone was waiting for us. My wife was the only one awake when we got there so we woke everybody up and had some caribou meat which tasted very good.

We left again. Tiitaa had only four dogs, and I told him to put the caribou meat on his sled. In June we started off for Fort Ross and were travelling on land but soon the snow was almost gone so we moved out onto the sea ice on June 29. On our way we met Taqulik a former Cape Dorset Eskimo. When we got to Fort Ross where there were also white people and we were told to stay there until the ship came in. All through that time I caught seals and earned money from the skins. In early summer Taqulik, Tiitaa and myself would go out in a boat and hunt. Finally the *Nascopie* came and soon we were all on our way to Pond Inlet. There were some RCMP officers, Mattaw and his family, Qillaq and his family, also on board and they were going to a place not far from Pond Inlet. We had left Pond Inlet in 1944 and here we were coming back in 1946. It was hard for me to talk with my own people when we first got back because I kept talking in Western dialect, I had been away that long.

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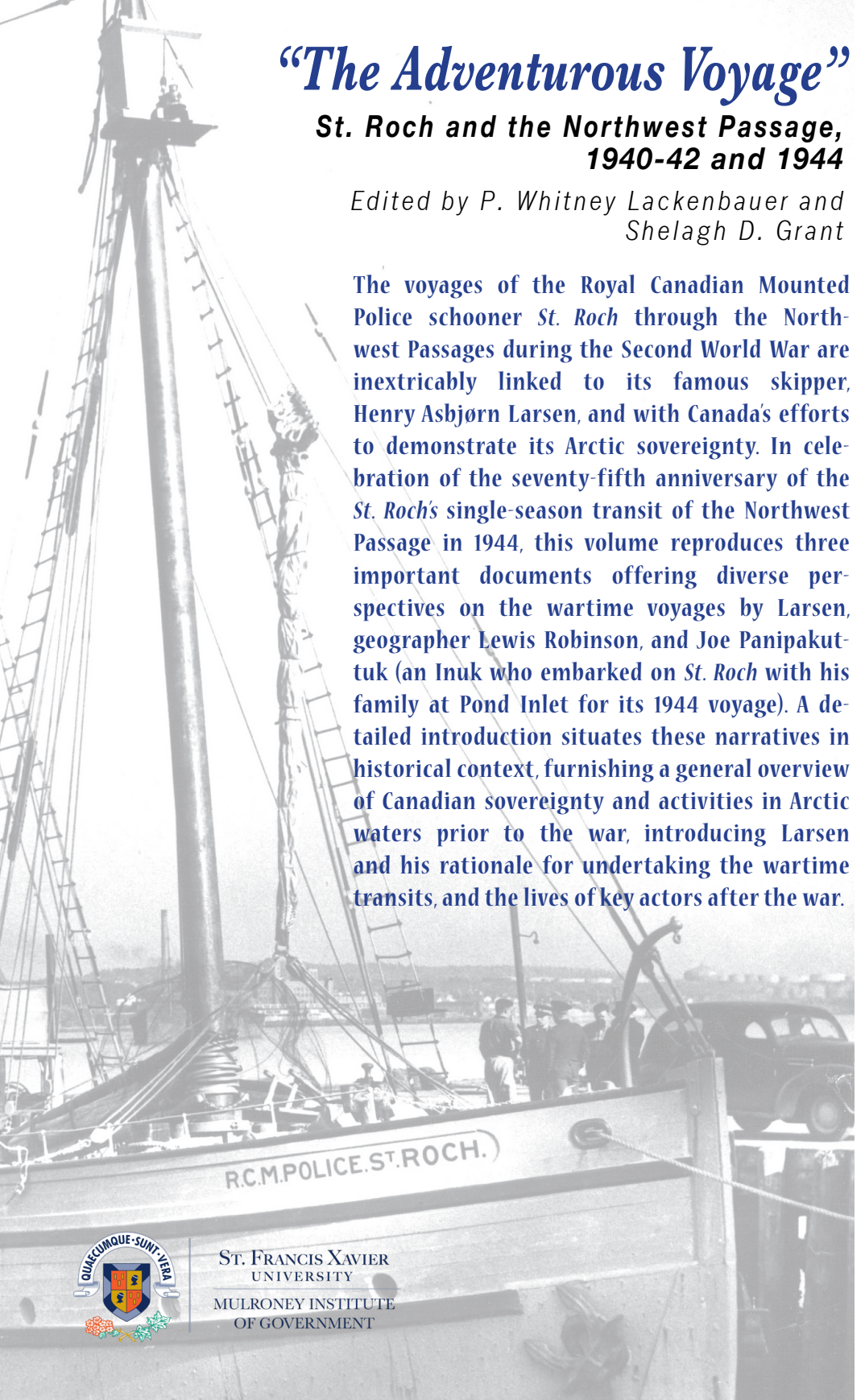
SHELAGH GRANT taught history and Canadian Studies at Trent University for seventeen years. After undergraduate studies in nursing science at the University of Western Ontario and time out to raise a young family, she returned to university earning a Hons. BA in History and Canadian Studies in 1981 and an M.A. in History in 1983. With further archival research in London and Washington, she expanded her master's thesis into her first book, *Sovereignty or Security? Government Policy in the Canadian North, 1939-1950* (UBC Press 1988). Her second book, the award-winning *Arctic Justice: On Trial for Murder — Pond Inlet, 1923* (MQUP 2002), required yearly trips to Baffin Island for oral history interviews and follow-up discussions. Later she returned to Pond Inlet to supervise an Inuktitut translation of her manuscript on the history of Mittimatalik, published in 2008 by the Nunavut Department of Education for use in schools and elders centres. She compiled thirty years of research on Arctic sovereignty into *Polar Imperative: A History of Arctic Sovereignty in North America* (Douglas & McIntyre, 2010). Shelagh was the first historian and first woman to receive the Northern Science Award (1996) and was active on various Inuit policy advisory committees, editorial boards and northern scholarship committees. In November 2011, she was made a Fellow of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in June 2012 and the Governor General's Polar Medal in July 2015, and granted an honorary Doctor of Letters (DLitt) from Trent University in June 2014. Long time partner of Jon K. Grant, they have three children and six grandchildren.



"The Adventurous Voyage"

St. Roch and the Northwest Passage, 1940-42 and 1944

Edited by P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Shelagh D. Grant

The voyages of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police schooner *St. Roch* through the Northwest Passages during the Second World War are inextricably linked to its famous skipper, Henry Asbjørn Larsen, and with Canada's efforts to demonstrate its Arctic sovereignty. In celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the *St. Roch's* single-season transit of the Northwest Passage in 1944, this volume reproduces three important documents offering diverse perspectives on the wartime voyages by Larsen, geographer Lewis Robinson, and Joe Panipakuttuk (an Inuk who embarked on *St. Roch* with his family at Pond Inlet for its 1944 voyage). A detailed introduction situates these narratives in historical context, furnishing a general overview of Canadian sovereignty and activities in Arctic waters prior to the war, introducing Larsen and his rationale for undertaking the wartime transits, and the lives of key actors after the war.

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