Photograph Album of the Cruise of the Revenue Cutter "Corwin" in Alaska: Finding Aid

Finding aid prepared by Michelle Sanchez.
The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens
Photo Archives
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San Marino, California 91108
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URL: http://www.huntington.org
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Overview of the Collection

Title: Photograph Album of the Cruise of the Revenue Cutter "Corwin" in Alaska

Dates (inclusive): approximately 1881-1883

Collection Number: photCL 97

Extent: 36 photographs in 1 album; album 18 x 27 cm (7 x 11 in) + 1 preservation microfilm copy reel.

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Abstract: This photograph album illustrates the sights and peoples experienced during a voyage of the United States Revenue Cutter Thomas Corwin to Alaska and the Arctic Ocean during the early 1880s. There are many views of native (Inuit) villages and inhabitants in Alaska and coastal Siberia, along with scenery and seascapes. All photographs are accompanied by detailed manuscript captions by an unknown individual. Photographs depict Alaskan nature scenes and harbors; Inuit people, dwellings and villages; and documentation of the fur trade in the 19th century.

Language: English.

Note: Finding aid last updated on April 28, 2014.

Access
Open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, contact Reader Services.

Publication Rights
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Preferred Citation
Photograph Album of the Cruise of the Revenue Cutter "Corwin" in Alaska. The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Provenance
Purchased from Shorey Book Store (Seattle, Washington) in 1956.

Historical Note
The USRC Thomas Corwin was a United States Revenue Cutter that patrolled the Arctic Ocean and Bearing Sea, beginning in the late 1870s. In 1882, Michael A. Healy (1839-1904) became commander of the Corwin, and he rose to the position of captain in March of 1883. While in command of the Corwin, Healy patrolled the Arctic to prevent illegal sale of guns and alcohol to the Alaskan natives and to control illegal fur seal hunting. The captain was also concerned for the well-being of the Alaskan natives, and ferried Siberian caribou to help reestablish the natives' food supply, since many seals and walruses were killed by white traders.

Scope and Content
This album contains photographs that were taken during a voyage of the USRC Thomas Corwin to Alaska and the Arctic Ocean during the early 1880s. With images of the Inuit inhabitants including portraits; views of homes and villages; and the killing and skinning of seals. There are also views of non-Indian hunters and traders. The Inuit villages and dwellings illustrated are in Sitka, St. Michael, King's Island, and locations in Siberia. There is one view of an "Eskimo" [i.e. Inuit] grave at an unidentified location.

The photograph album has the title "Scenes in Alaska and the Arctic Ocean. 1883" embossed on the front cover. An ink manuscript title page reads: "Cruise of the Revenue Cutter 'Corwin' 1881." All photographs are accompanied by detailed manuscript captions in ink by an unknown individual.

Alternative Form of Materials Available
Visit the Huntington Digital Library; Photographs to view digitized images from this album.

- Photograph Collection of the Revenue Cutters "Bear" and "Corwin" in Alaska, 1880s (photCL 131) contains related photographs concerning the "Corwin."
Box 1 Photograph Album

Note
Item titles transcribed from handwritten captions.

Item 1 Departure Bay. East side of Vancouver Island B.C. A coal depot; extensive mines 5 or 6 miles inland.
Item 3 Sitka. Capital of Alaska. Indian village on the left.
Item 4 Harbor of Sitka. Alaska.
Item 7 Mountain Scene and waterfall. Island of Ounalaska [Unalaska]
Item 9 Interior of Greek Church. St. Paul's Island.
Item 10 Fur seals on the beach. St. Paul's Island.
Item 11 Group of fur seals. St. Paul's Island.
Item 12 Killing fur seals. The animals are killed by a blow on the head with a large club. Party on the right are the killers; on the left are the skinners who strip the fur coats off of the dead bodies with sharp knives.
Item 13 "Rocks beside the Sea". St. Paul's Island.
[Group of men, women, and boy sitting on rocks. Boy may be Fred Healy, son of Captain Michael A. Healy. Woman to the right of the boy may be Mary Jane Healy, Healy's wife.]

Item 14 Indian town, St. Michaels [Michael], Alaska.
Item 18  "Western Fur Co.'s" trading post. St. Michaels [Michael].
Item 19  Village on Kings' Island, Behring (Bering) Sea. Island very steep, rocky, and barren; rises about 1000 feet in height and is about 1 mile across. Houses in view are of walrus hide, outer end supported by poles of drift wood. Some live in caves. Natives very healthy, strong, and active.
Item 21  Groups of natives at Plover [Providence] Bay, Siberia. Central figure is "Cornelius", a native who has been abroad and received some education on Long Island. Speaks English well.
Item 23  Village at Indian Point. Siberia.
Item 24  Groupe [Group] of natives at Indian Point, Siberia.
Item 25  Summer encampment of Esquimo [Eskimo] at Hotham Inlet Arctic Ocean.
Item 28  Esquimo [Eskimo] grave.
Item 29  "Itit-karook". Showing peculiar lip ornaments worn by men, only, on the American shores of the Arctic & Behring [Bering] Sea.
Item 30  Spafarief Bay. Kotzbue [Kotzebue] Sound. Arctic Ocean. Skin houses, canoes, oil bags &c
Item 31  Original posts, Chamisso Island. Arctic Ocean. Erected in 1826 by H.M.S. "Blossom" in search of Sir John Franklin.
Item 32  Groupe [Group] of natives from Point Hope, Arctic Ocean.
Item 33  Cape Thompson, Arctic Ocean.
Item 34  American whaler in the Arctic. Bark "Abram Barker" of New Bedford.
Item 35  Sunset in the Arctic Ocean. July 27th 1883. 10:30 p.m.
Item 36  Coal Mine Bluff, Arctic Ocean. About 200 miles north of the Arctic Circle.

Preservation microfilm copy

Access Information

Advance arrangements for viewing the preservation microfilm must be made with the Curator of Photographs.

Note

Microfilm reel of copy negatives held in cold storage.