

**A TRIP TO ALASKA: A
NARRATIVE OF WHAT WAS SEEN
AND HEARD DURING A SUMMER
CRUISE IN ALASKAN WATERS**

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A Trip to Alaska: A Narrative of What Was Seen and Heard During a Summer Cruise in Alaskan Waters by George Wardman

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GEORGE WARDMAN

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A Narrative

OF WHAT WAS SEEN AND HEARD DURING

A
*SUMMER CRUISE IN ALASKAN
WATERS*

BY

GEORGE WARDMAN

UNITED STATES TREASURY AGENT AT THE SEAL ISLANDS

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A TRIP TO ALASKA.

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A TRIP TO ALASKA.

CHAPTER I.

SAN FRANCISCO TO NANAIMO.

NOTWITHSTANDING all that has been written about Alaska there seems to be an amazing lack of general information among the people of the United States concerning that country, its inhabitants, climate, resources, and even its extent. People ask, "Is it very cold in Alaska?" when there is a range of nearly twenty degrees in latitude, reaching from fifty-four to seventy-two north and a variation in temperature of one hundred and fifty degrees, Fahrenheit, between the hottest summer and coldest winter weather. The general idea of Alaska is based upon crude notions concerning Sitka, and are not much more valuable than would have been the notions of a wild African cast away upon Key West four hundred years ago about the region now known as the United States.

In the summer of 1879 the writer obtained permission from Hon. John Sherman, at that time Secretary of the Treasury, to proceed in the United States revenue steamer "Richard Rush," Captain Bailey, on her cruise from San Francisco to Sitka, the Fur Seal Islands, the Sea Otter Grounds, and other points in Alaskan waters. The voyage proved exceedingly interesting, and the author gave an account of what he saw and heard to certain newspapers, in a desultory way, but he has been led to believe that his observations may be read in a more permanent form with interest, and he hopes with profit, by those who may be in search of information concerning Alaska.

Going from California, or the east, to Sitka, the most practical route of travel is by steamer from San Francisco. The course is coastwise to Cape Flattery, and then up the Straits of Fuca and by inland passages to the objective point. The interest of the voyage to the tourist begins at the mouth of the Straits, where the vessel leaves the open sea and enters a broad channel with Washington Territory upon one hand and Vancouver Island on the other. From this point to Sitka the scene is one of varied interest to the traveller, and quite free from the usual discomforts of ocean travel.

De Fuca, who reported the discovery here of a great inland passage to Hudson's Bay or some Mediterranean sea, gave a wonderfully imaginative account of the rich and rare products of the country and the wealth of the natives, who were said to be decorated with gold and silver ornaments in great profusion, thus proving very conclusively that he knew nothing about the country, but had only been mildly endorsing in 1640 what De Fonte, another alleged Spanish navigator, told about as early as 1582. This bold liar, whose existence, however, was never fully established, related that he had found a northwest passage through, in about latitude fifty, to the Atlantic, along which he sailed for three hundred leagues, till he met a ship from Boston, commanded by a Captain Slade, who gave him not only a succinct account of the passage, but sold him charts of the entire coast on both sides for ten thousand dollars. The charts never appeared in print, having been mislaid somewhere on board the purchaser's ship. It is more than strange they have never been published. There is no doubt that a book was published purporting to have been written by De Fonte, but the fact that it was published in English, by an Edinburgh house, leads to the suspicion that De Fonte never existed outside of the print-shop.