

CORRESPONDENCE WITH U. S. NAVAL OFFICERS IN
ALASKA.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY,
IN RESPONSE TO

*A resolution of the House of Representatives transmitting correspondence
with United States naval officers in Alaskan waters.*

DECEMBER 13, 1882.—Referred to the Committee on Naval Affairs and ordered to be
printed.

NAVY DEPARTMENT,
Washington, December 11, 1882.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of an attested copy
of a resolution adopted by the House of Representatives on the 8th
instant, as follows:

That the Secretary of the Navy be directed to communicate to this House, as far as
may be compatible with the interests of the public service, all instructions given to,
and correspondence had with, Commanders Henry Glass and E. P. Lull, United States
Navy, whilst they were on duty in the United States ships Jamestown and Wachu-
sett in Alaska waters.

In compliance therewith, I respectfully submit the following described
copies of instructions given to Commanders Henry Glass and E. P. Lull
in relation to affairs in Alaska, and a copy of a report from Commander
Glass:

A.—Letter of the Acting Secretary of the Navy (dated January 27,
1881) to Commander Glass, with reference to an officer of the United
States Government visiting Alaska for the purpose of making inquiries
respecting the number and condition of the people, &c.

B.—Order of the Secretary of the Navy (dated April 8, 1881) to Com-
mander Lull, to proceed with the United States steamship Wachusett
to Sitka, Alaska, and relieve the United States steamship Jamestown.

C.—Order of the Secretary of the Navy (dated April 8, 1881) to Com-
mander Glass to return to the navy-yard, Mare Island, California, with
the Jamestown.

D.—Letter of the Secretary of the Navy (dated June 15, 1881) to Com-
mander Lull to maintain the order of things established by Commander
Glass.

E.—Additional orders from the Secretary of the Navy (dated June 28,
1881) to Commander Lull to proceed with the Wachusett to Sitka.

F.—Letter of the Secretary of the Navy (dated July 11, 1881) to Com-
mander Glass, approving his action in the cases of Nicholson Deru and
Henry Imhof, residents of Alaska, charged with attempt to commit
murder.

G.—Letter of the Secretary of the Navy (dated July 13, 1881) to Commander Glass, approving his measures to preserve order, to promote the education of Indians, and to maintain friendly relations between the Indians and the whites.

H.—Copy of report of Commander Glass (dated March 6, 1882) to the Secretary of the Navy, of the condition of affairs in Alaska. (This is the only report from Commander Glass which was received after those communicated to the House of Representatives February 24, 1882.)

In connection with this subject, I have the honor also to transmit the following described copies of communications from the Secretary of the Navy to Commander L. A. Beardslee (the predecessor of Commander Glass in command of the Jamestown), for the reason that Commanders Glass and Lull were, in a great measure, acting in pursuance of the wishes of the department as expressed in its correspondence with Commander Beardslee.

L.—Original instructions from the Secretary of the Navy (dated May 8, 1879) to Commander Beardslee.

K. L. M.—Letters of the Secretary of the Navy (dated July 26, August 9, and October 30, respectively) to Commander Beardslee, approving of his course in Alaska.

N.—Letter of the Secretary of the Navy (dated January 17, 1880) regarding the pre-emption of lands in Alaska on lots occupied by the public authorities.

For a full history of the operations of Commanders Beardslee, Glass, and Lull in Alaska, I beg leave to refer to the following named printed executive documents:

Forty-sixth Congress, second session, Senate Ex. Doc. No. 105. Reply of the Secretary of the Navy, under date of March 3, 1880, to a resolution of the Senate of February 26, 1880.

Forty-seventh Congress, first session, Senate Ex. Doc. No. 71. Reply of the Secretary of the Navy, under date of January 19, 1882, to a resolution of the Senate of January 18, 1882.

Forty-seventh Congress, first session, House of Representatives Ex. Doc. No. 81. Reply of the Secretary of the Navy, under date of February 24, 1882, to a resolution of the House of Representatives of February 1, 1882.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

WM. E. CHANDLER,
Secretary of the Navy.

HON. J. WARREN KEIFER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

A.

NAVY DEPARTMENT,
January 27, 1881.

SIR: In accordance with the request of the honorable Secretary of the Interior, the department directs that you will inform the people of Alaska with whom you may come into communication that an officer of the United States Government will visit that country in the spring, for the purpose of making inquiries respecting the number and condition of the people, &c. The officer referred to is Mr. Iran Petroff, special agent of the Census Office for Alaska, and you will please do all in your power to facilitate his work.

Very respectfully,

WM. N. JEFFERS,
Acting Secretary of the Navy.

Commander HENRY GLASS,
Commanding U. S. S. Jamestown, Sitka, Alaska.

B.

NAVY DEPARTMENT,
April 8, 1881.

SIR: When the United States steamer Wachusett, under your command, is in all respects ready for sea, you will proceed with her to Sitka, Alaska. On arrival there you will confer with Commander Glass, commanding the Jamestown, and having received from him the original instructions to the Jamestown, all unexecuted orders, and such information of affairs as he can impart, you will render all needful aid to the Jamestown to prepare her to return to San Francisco. The department desires that you will acquaint yourself with affairs in the Territory of Alaska, and will look out for the interests of citizens of the United States and the government, and render such protection and assistance as may be required. You will learn from Commander Glass what has been done since the arrival of the Jamestown at Sitka, and will take such further steps, within the limit of your authority as an officer of the Navy, as may, in your judgment and discretion, seem lawful and proper. As opportunity offers, you will visit other important points in Alaska, besides Sitka, and will, from time to time, communicate to the department the condition of affairs.

Very respectfully,

WM. H. HUNT,
*Secretary of the Navy.*Commander EDWARD P. LULL,
Commanding U. S. S. Wachusett, Navy-Yard, Mare Island, Cal.

C.

NAVY DEPARTMENT,
April 8, 1881.

SIR: On the arrival of the U. S. S. Wachusett at Sitka, you will transfer to Commander Lull the original instructions to the Jamestown, all unexecuted orders, and impart to him all information within your knowledge of the condition of affairs at Alaska, and of what has been done since the arrival of the Jamestown at Sitka. When the Jamestown is in all respects ready for sea, you will proceed with her to the navy-yard, Mare Island, Cal.

Very respectfully,

WM. H. HUNT,
*Secretary of the Navy.*Commander HENRY GLASS,
Commanding U. S. S. Jamestown, Sitka, Alaska.

D.

NAVY DEPARTMENT,
June 15, 1881.

SIR: It is desirable, unless you have strong reason for other action, that you should maintain the order of things which Commander Glass, your predecessor, saw fit to establish in Alaska.

Very respectfully,

WM. H. HUNT,
*Secretary of the Navy.*Commander EDWARD P. LULL,
Commanding U. S. S. Wachusett, Navy-Yard, Mare Island, Cal.

E.

NAVY DEPARTMENT,
Washington, D. C., June 23, 1881.

SIR: As soon as your vessel is ready for sea, you will proceed to Sitka, Alaska, and relieve the United States steamer Jamestown, receiving from the commanding officer of that vessel all orders which have been hitherto sent him by the department, by which you will be governed until otherwise directed. You will hasten the sailing of the Jamestown from Sitka. It is necessary for her to arrive at Mare Island and for her homeward voyage as soon as possible.

Very respectfully,

WM. H. HUNT,
*Secretary of the Navy.*Commander EDWARD P. LULL,
Commanding U. S. S. Wachusett, Navy-Yard, Mare Island, Cal.

F.

NAVY DEPARTMENT,
Washington, July 11, 1881.

SIR: I have received your dispatch No. 16, reporting that on the 6th ultimo you caused the arrest of Nicholas Deru and Henry Inhof, residents of Sitka, on a charge of attempting to commit murder in that place, and that they, with James Taylor, a discharged seaman, are held in confinement awaiting instructions from the department. Your action in this matter is approved by the department. In the absence of any legally constituted judicial tribunals, the peace and good order of society demand that the naval authority in control of the Territory should interpose its power to maintain the protection of the lives, persons, and property of individuals within its reach. You will keep these men in confinement so long as in your judgment the interests of peace and good order in the settlement require their imprisonment.

Very respectfully,

WM. H. HUNT,
*Secretary of the Navy.*Commander HENRY GLASS, U. S. N.,
Commanding U. S. S. Jamestown, Sitka, Alaska.

G.

NAVY DEPARTMENT,
Washington, July 13, 1881.

SIR: Your No. 15, dated the 16th ultimo, reporting the condition of affairs in Alaska, has been received with its several inclosures.

The department is gratified with your statement of the steadily improving condition of the Indians in the Territory, and approves of your measures to preserve order, to promote the education of the Indians, and to establish friendly relations between them and the whites.

Commander Lull has been instructed to preserve, as far as possible, unless there is sound cause for changing it, the condition of things as established by you.

Very respectfully,

WILLIAM H. HUNT,
*Secretary of the Navy.*Commander HENRY GLASS, U. S. N.,
Commanding U. S. S. Jamestown, Sitka, Alaska Territory.

H.

UNITED STATES STEAMER WACHUSETT (3d rate),
Sitka, Alaska Territory, March 6, 1882.

SIR: I have the honor to report that on my arrival on this station, in obedience to orders transmitted through the commandant of Mare Island navy-yard, I find that perfect quiet and good order exist in all parts of this Territory, no change whatever in the situation of affairs having occurred since the date of my last report.

On the passage from Fort Simpson to Fort Wrangel, I met the revenue steamer Oliver Wolcott, and was informed by her commanding officer, and by the deputy collector of customs at Fort Wrangel, who was a passenger on board, that during the absence of the Wachusett from Alaska no circumstances had occurred which would warrant fears of any trouble on the part of the Indians in the Territory. These statements are fully indorsed by Collector Morris at this port, who also informs me that an idle rumor becoming current in the mining camp at Juneau City, of threatened aggression on the part of the Indians, all the chiefs went promptly to the leading men in the camp, assuring them of their support in suppressing any possible disturbance.

The boilers of this vessel needing certain repairs, which the shortness of her stay at San Francisco did not permit, and the need of which is becoming daily more urgent, she will be detained at Sitka four or five weeks, after which I propose visiting other portions of the Territory.

From the inclement weather experienced on the passage from San Francisco, the officers and men were necessarily subjected to very great exposure at times, but I am glad to report the health of the ship's company good.

Very respectfully, &c.,

HENRY GLASS,
*Commander, Commanding.*Hon. WILLIAM H. HUNT,
Secretary of the Navy.

I.

NAVY DEPARTMENT,
Washington, May 8, 1879.

SIR: As soon as the Jamestown, under your command, is in all respects ready for sea, you will proceed with her to Sitka, Alaska, and relieve the U. S. S. Alaska at that place, and remain there until further orders.

You will communicate with the department from time to time, as opportunity offers, as to affairs in that Territory, looking out for the interests of citizens of the United States, and rendering them such protection as may be required.

On your way to Sitka you will make such soundings and hydrographic examinations as the nature of the route and existing charts will suggest. While at the station you will execute surveys and examinations of harbors, islands, shoals, &c., as far as the nature of the service and available means will permit, for which purpose the Bureau of Navigation will prepare and forward to you the necessary memoranda and directions from time to time. All hydrographic data thus to be obtained will be forwarded to the Bureau of Navigation, retaining copies on board.

Very respectfully,

R. W. THOMPSON,
Secretary of the Navy.

Commander L. A. BEARDSLEE, U. S. N.,
Commanding U. S. S. Jamestown, Navy-Yard, Mare Island, California.

K.

NAVY DEPARTMENT,
July 26, 1879.

SIR: Your communication of the 23d ultimo, reporting state of affairs in Sitka, has been received.

The department entirely approves of what you have done, and submits the future of your action to your discretion until something shall occur to render specific instructions necessary. It is believed that at the next session of Congress such an organization of Alaska will be authorized as shall designate the necessary civil officers to protect the person and property of citizens. In other words, the government will not neglect to extend its authority over Alaska in such manner as shall secure to the people there all the rights it assumed to protect when the country was acquired. In the mean time, the department has full confidence in your wisdom, capacity, and discretion to dispose of such matters as may require your intervention during your stay in Sitka.

If anything should occur rendering more specific instructions necessary they will be forwarded, either by mail or by telegraph, to Victoria.

The department is gratified at being informed of the good health of yourself and the other officers and men of the Jamestown, and has given the necessary instructions to the proper bureau to furnish the articles needed by you.

Very respectfully,

R. W. THOMPSON,
Secretary of the Navy.

Commander L. A. BEARDSLEE, U. S. N.,
Commanding U. S. S. Jamestown, Sitka, Alaska Territory.

L.

NAVY DEPARTMENT,
August 9, 1879.

SIR: Your letters of the 9th and 15th of July last, inclosing report of Ensign N. R. Usher, on trip to Wrangel and return, in search for the Pacific Mail steamer California, supposed at the date of starting to have met with an accident, and forwarding statement of Lieut. J. Burwell in regard to the causes which induced the citizens of Alaska to telegraph to the President for relief and protection, have been received.

In reply thereto, you are informed that the department is gratified at your success, and hopes you will be able to carry out your purposes.

Your course is approved, and you and your officers and men are entitled to the thanks of the department.

Very respectfully,

R. W. THOMPSON,
Secretary of the Navy.

Commander L. A. BEARDSLEE, U. S. N.,
Commanding U. S. S. Jamestown, Sitka, Alaska.

M.

NAVY DEPARTMENT,
October 30, 1879.

SIR: I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 7th and 8th ultimo, and a telegram of the 15th ultimo, and a letter without date in reference to affairs in Alaska.

The department remains of the opinion heretofore expressed that you are doing all in your power, and doing it for the best.

There is nothing shown in the condition of affairs that the department does not approve, and has full confidence that you and the officers of the Jamestown will continue to perform all their duties satisfactorily and well.

Very respectfully,

R. W. THOMPSON,
Secretary of the Navy.

Commander L. A. BEARDSLEE,
U. S. S. Jamestown, Sitka, Alaska.

N.

NAVY DEPARTMENT,
January 17, 1880.

SIR: Your letter of the 19th ult. in regard to the rights of pre-emption of public lands at Sitka, Alaska, has been received. Your course in reference to the pre-emption of lands on lots occupied by the public authorities is approved.

You are not expected to resort to force in such cases as those referred to, but will, as you have done, notify settlers that such lands are occupied exclusively for the use of the United States.

As regards other lands, the department is of opinion that they cannot be embraced within the pre-emption laws of the United States, but upon this subject you will leave the collector to act upon his own responsibility; a decision in regard to questions of this kind, does not properly pertain to the jurisdiction of the commanding officer of the Jamestown. Whether parties whose claims are recorded by the collector get their titles hereafter must depend upon what Congress may do in regard to this matter.

Very respectfully,

R. W. THOMPSON,
Secretary of the Navy.

Commander L. A. BEARDSLEE, U. S. N.,
Commanding U. S. S. Jamestown, Sitka, Alaska.

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