



WILEY

Greely Relief Expedition

Author(s): G. S. Nares, A. H. Markham and H. W. Feilden

Source: *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography*, New Monthly Series, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Apr., 1884), pp. 221-226

Published by: [Wiley](#) on behalf of [The Royal Geographical Society \(with the Institute of British Geographers\)](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1800590>

Accessed: 14/06/2014 02:09

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) and Wiley are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography.

<http://www.jstor.org>

GREELY RELIEF EXPEDITION.

WE have been favoured with an advance copy of the Report (about to be issued in Washington) of the Board of Officers appointed to consider an expedition for the relief of Lieut. Greely and his party, from which we extract the following memorandum, supplied at the request of the Board, by Sir George Nares, Capt. Markham, and Major Feilden. The valuable suggestions of these officers are likely to influence much the plan of the Relief Expedition, the more so as General Hazen, the President of the Board, reports that they coincide so nearly with the Board's own recommendations.

LONDON, 1st February, 1884.

*To the President of the Board for the relief of the Lady Franklin Bay
Greely Expedition, Washington:*

SIR,—In response to the invitation transmitted to us by His Excellency the Minister of the United States in London, we have the honour to submit for consideration the following suggestions, which may prove useful in drawing up the instructions for the guidance of those intrusted with the conduct of the expedition about to be despatched for the relief of Lieut. Greely and his party.

To ensure success, the expedition must, in our opinion, be thoroughly and efficiently equipped, competently commanded, and, above all, be under the direct auspices and supervision of the Government.

We would strongly deprecate the despatch of an expedition that was to combine any other object, such as whaling, with that of the primary undertaking.

In the first place, we are very strongly of opinion that the main relief party should consist of two ships; one of these should be engaged in advance, in the actual search, proceeding, if necessary, as far north as Discovery Bay; whilst the other should be used as a dépôt ship, placed in such a convenient position that, in case of accident to the advance ship, there would be no necessity for her crew to retreat to the Danish settlements in Greenland.

In such an eventuality, the officers and men of the ship destroyed would merely have to fall back upon their consort, from which sledging expeditions would be despatched in quest of Lieut. Greely and his party.

Both these ships should be fully equipped for ice-navigation; should, of course, be steamers, but possess sail power as an auxiliary.

They should be provisioned for at least two years, and should be provided with complete sledging equipments, which should certainly include pemmican and other provisions generally used by sledging parties.

Too much care cannot be taken in the selection of provisions of a suitable nature, but the experiences derived, in connection with this matter, from recent American Arctic expeditions can leave little to be desired. It appears to us that the possibility of adding frozen meat to the general stock of provisions should not be overlooked.

We think there is a great probability that Lieut. Greely's party has already left Discovery Bay. Adopting this view, one of the ships should, we think, be despatched as early as the 1st of May, 1884, certainly not later, with orders to proceed to Godhavn, in Greenland, and to push on as early as possible to Upernavik, so as

to meet Lieut. Greely should he have succeeded in finding his way south to any of the Danish settlements.

If he has not done so, it is quite possible that he may have passed the winter somewhere between Cape York and Life-Boat Cove. It is therefore very desirable that this region should be searched early in the season.

There are two ways of carrying out this duty: either by sending a special Government vessel independent of the main relief expedition, or by inviting the co-operation of the whaling vessels. The latter should in any case be requested to keep a good look-out for the party journeying south in boats. However, should one of the whaling vessels meet them the captain would, by returning with them to the south, necessarily have to give up his chance of making a successful fishing voyage. It is, therefore, worthy of consideration whether the vessel that communicates with the Greenland settlements early in the season should not be ordered to proceed to the northward through Melville Bay, with the whaling vessels, at the first breaking up of the ice. If Lieut. Greely's party is not fallen in with near Cape York, it would then be the duty of the commander of the vessel to diligently search the Cary Islands and the coast line to the northward, prior to the arrival of the main relief party; every endeavour being made to communicate with the Eskimos of those regions, who will be sure to have tidings of the absent party, should they have been in the vicinity.

The two main relief vessels should time their arrival at Upernavik about the first week of July, and in the event of no tidings of Lieut. Greely's safety being forthcoming at the Danish settlements they should proceed to the northward in company.

Failing intelligence of the party having been obtained on the Greenland coast north of Cape York, including Littleton Island, Cape Isabella should be visited, and the cairn on the summit of that headland examined.

Supposing that no tidings or traces of the missing party are forthcoming at the entrance to Smith Sound, it will then devolve on the commanding officer of the relief expedition to organise further plans for prosecuting his search through Kennedy Channel, even if necessary, to Discovery Bay.

In such an event it appears to us essential to consider the course of action that would probably have been pursued by Lieut. Greely up to the present date.

What Lieut. Greely's views were in August 1881, may be gathered in some measure from his letter to the Chief Signal Officer, U.S.A., dated Fort Conger, August 17, 1881,* which was brought back to the United States by the S.S. *Neptune* [*Proteus*], after her successful voyage with the members of the international expedition to Discovery Bay in the autumn of 1881.

Lieut. Greely, in that communication, appears to have fully recognised the contingency that the relief ship of 1882 might not be able to reach Discovery Bay; but it does not quite appear that he realised the possibility of the ship not making good her passage to some point on the east coast of Grinnell Land (west side of Kennedy Channel) where at some prominent point he recommended a depôt† should be landed.

He further requested that a similar depôt to No. A might be placed on Littleton Island, and a boat at Cape Prescott, to enable his party to retreat across the waterway between that point and Bache Island, and thence to Cape Sabine.

He evidently contemplated that under every circumstance "Depôt No. A" would

* Sig. Ser. Notes, No. X., pp. 22, 23, Washington, 1883.

† For contents of this depôt (A) *vide* Sig. Ser. Notes, No. X., p. 22, Washington, 1883.

be placed in the autumn of 1882 at least as far north on the shores of Grinnell Land as Cape Hawks.

His views as to the relief to be afforded in 1883 are thus expressed in the above-quoted communication :

“If the party does not reach here (Discovery Bay) in 1882, there should be sent, in 1883, a capable, energetic officer, with ten (10) men, eight of whom should have had practical sea experience, provided with three whale-boats, and ample provisions for forty (40) persons for fifteen months. In case the vessel was obliged to turn southward (she should not leave Smith Sound, near Cape Sabine, before September 15th), it should leave duplicates of depôts A and B, of 1882, at two different points, one of which should be between Cape Sabine and Bache Island, the other to be an intermediate depôt, between two depôts already established. Similar rules as to indicating locality should be insisted on. Thus, the Grinnell Land coast would be covered with seven depôts of ten days’ provisions, in less than three hundred miles, not including the two months’ supplies at Cape Hawks.

“The party should then proceed to establish a winter station at Polaris Winter Quarters, Life-Boat Cove, where their main duty would be to keep their telescopes on Cape Sabine and the land to the northward.

“Being furnished with dogs, sledges, and a native driver, a party of at least six men should proceed, when practicable, to Cape Sabine, whence a sledge party northward, of the two best fitted men, should reach Cape Hawks, if not Cape Collinson.”

It is clear, therefore, that whenever Lieut. Greely decided to retreat from Discovery Bay his plans would be based on the supposition that Dépôt No. A of 1882 had been placed at or to the northward of Cape Hawks; that a large supply of stores would have been cached at or near Cape Sabine, and that a relief party would winter at Life-Boat Cove in the winter of 1883–84, even if the relief ship had turned south in the autumn of 1883.

The results of the relief expeditions of 1882 and 1883 may be briefly summarised as follows :

On the 10th of August, 1882, the steamer *Neptune*, with a relief party and stores on board, reached her most northern point in Smith Sound, latitude $79^{\circ} 20'$, being 12 miles from Cape Hawks and 17 from Cape Prescott, but was there stopped by the ice. The record * of the voyage shows that from the above date to the 28th of August, 1882, repeated but unsuccessful attempts were made to reach Cape Hawks. On the morning of the 31st August a landing was effected on Cape Sabine, western side of Smith Sound, and there stores and a whale-boat were placed (presumably Dépôt A), but no distinct mention is made as to the amount of provisions left. On the 3rd September, 1882, Mr. W. M. Beebe succeeded in landing stores on Littleton Island (presumably Dépôt B), and the *Neptune* then turned homeward.

In 1883 the steamer *Proteus*, carrying Lieut. Garlington, U.S.N., relief party and stores, rounded Cape Alexander at the eastern entrance of Smith Sound on the 22nd July, and entered Pandora Harbour; that same afternoon Smith Sound was crossed to the western side and a landing made at Payer Harbour, in the vicinity of Cape Sabine. Lieut. Garlington satisfied himself that the stores left there from the *Proteus* [*Neptune*] in 1882 were in good order, though the whale-boat had been slightly damaged by bears. At 8 P.M. on the evening of the 22nd July, the *Proteus* was again under way, and attempted to force a passage to Cape Hawks; she was, however, caught in the ice-pack, crushed, and sunk early on the morning of the 23rd July, 1883, between Cape Sabine and Cape Albert.

* Sig. Ser. Notes, No. V., Washington, 1883.

Lieut. Garlington, assisted by Lieut. Colwell, U.S.N., succeeded in saving some stores from the *Proteus*, out of which some 500 rations were cached by those officers about three miles west of Cape Sabine.

The relief party and crew of the *Proteus* then crossed the sound to Littleton Island, which they reached on the 25th July. From there they started southward in their boats for the Danish settlements in Greenland, reaching Upernavik on the 24th August, 1883, after a most fortunate boat-voyage, entailing, however, great exposure and suffering on the party.

There has been, therefore, no depôt of provisions, stores, or boat established anywhere north of Cape Sabine since Lieut. Greely's party arrived at Discovery Bay in 1881; so, whilst retreating along the east coast of Grinnell Land to Smith Sound, their only means of subsistence, until reaching Cape Sabine, would be the supplies brought away with them from Fort Conger, the animals procurable on the journey, and the depôts left behind by the British expedition of 1875-76.

When, in the autumn of 1882, the party at Discovery Bay realised that relief had failed to reach them that year, Lieut. Greely would at once husband his remaining stock of provisions. Discovery Bay being a peculiarly favourable position for procuring musk oxen, he in all probability eked out his subsistence with a considerable supply of meat. Consequently, if he decided to start southward from that station in July 1883, as we think he would, and run the risk of passing the relief ship on her way north, it may reasonably be hoped that the party had with them a large supply of food, dependent of course on the capacity of the boats at their disposal.

The first difficulty would be to cross Lady Franklin Sound, 10 miles wide, but, provisions advanced in the spring of 1883, this part of the journey would probably be accomplished before the first week of August. By that time Kennedy Channel would be comparatively free of ice, and few troubles need be expected while proceeding south along the shore of Judge Daly Promontory. In latitude $80^{\circ} 5' N$, the British expedition left a cache of 240 rations, sufficient to last Lieut. Greely's party for at least ten days; with this supply, in addition to his own resources, he would be the better able to face the forty miles of the route before reaching Cape Hawks in latitude $79^{\circ} 30' N$, where, although he would not find the expected Depôt A, he would find a boat and a supply of biscuit left there by the British expedition. The party would then be sixty miles from Cape Sabine, where they knew that a cache of 240 rations had been left by the British expedition, and where, in addition, we now know he would find the stores left by the *Proteus* [*Neptune*] in 1882, besides a whale-boat, also the 500 rations left by Lieut. Garlington and Lieut. Colwell, three miles west of Cape Sabine, in 1883.

Reaching this position would probably be the most difficult part of the journey, but once at Cape Sabine, and strengthened by this supply of provisions, and supplemented with an additional whale-boat, it would be an extraordinary misadventure if an opportunity did not offer in the fall of 1883 for the party to cross over Smith Sound and reach the neighbourhood of Littleton Island. No doubt extreme disappointment would be felt when the absence of a relief party and want of a winter station at Life-Boat Cove (*Polaris* winter quarters) was discovered; but as, in all probability, Lieut. Garlington's record announcing the loss of the *Proteus* would have been found at Cape Sabine, the disappointment would have been in a great measure anticipated.

Once arrived at Littleton Island, with the help of the depôt left there in 1882 by the *Proteus* [*Neptune*], and with assistance from the Eskimos of Etah, there is no reason why the winter of 1883-84 should not be passed in safety.

If, on the other hand, Lieut. Greely and his party, owing to contingencies, such as sickness, may have determined, rather than risk the hazard of a boat-journey in 1883, to chance the arrival of a relieving ship at Discovery Bay in the fall of 1883, and have remained there, the position of the party, though precarious, is not, we think, by any means hopeless.

With the addition of supplies of musk oxen, birds, hares, and perhaps a few seals, we may hope that they will not be absolutely without supplies before August 1884.

The relief of Lieut. Greely's party differs in one vital respect from the Franklin search expeditions. In that case, expedition after expedition was pushed into an unknown area; the uncertainty of where Franklin had been lost intensifying a hundredfold the difficulties of the quest.

Now there is a definite objective to strike for, and the difficulties to be overcome are those arising from the forces of nature in the Polar world, but in a comparatively well-known area.

We will now suppose that the search of the relief expedition of 1884, between Cape York and Littleton Island and Cape Isabella, has proved fruitless; in this event the commander of the expedition would naturally attempt to reach Cape Sabine, and there will probably be no very great difficulty in his making good a landing at that point.

If Lieut. Greely's party is not found there, then only two conclusions can be arrived at: either they are still at Discovery Bay, or else the party has met with misfortune in its attempt to retreat southward.

In this case the depôt ship should move into Payer Harbour; the other ship should take advantage of any favourable movement in the ice, and, keeping to the land water, *always carefully avoiding the main pack*, proceed northwards. Patience and skill would, there is little doubt, be rewarded in the end, and it may reasonably be hoped that an opportunity of gaining Discovery Bay will offer itself during the navigable season of 1884.

The east side of the entrance to Smith Sound, after being carefully examined for traces of the missing party, should be shunned, particularly during strong south-west and west winds, for those are the winds that give favourable opportunities of reaching Grinnell Land and proceeding northwards, along the eastern coast.

As a precaution, in case of an accident to the advance ship and her crew having to retreat by land, depôts and a boat should be placed at or near Cape Prescott, and some other points further north, as proposed by Lieut. Greely.

It may be suggested, if not already provided for, that great advantage would accrue from heliography; a pair of instruments, therefore, on both ships, and a trained operator in each vessel, might be of the greatest service.

We now arrive at our final consideration: Supposing the advance ship is unable during the navigable season of 1884 to reach Discovery Bay, or to find Lieut. Greely's party along the coast of Grinnell Land, its fate must be ascertained.

The depôt ship should find winter quarters, not later than the 1st September, in the safest and most convenient station near Payer Harbour, on the west side of Smith Sound; this would enable her sledge parties to start early in the spring of 1885, along the east shore of Grinnell Land, and with those from the advance ship, complete the search of the whole coast line. Payer Harbour itself has the disadvantage of being somewhat too exposed a station for winter quarters, but the leader of the expedition may be safely intrusted to decide that point. Port Foulke or Pandora Harbour offer more eligible wintering stations than Payer Harbour or any other known place in its vicinity on the west side of Smith Sound, but wintering on the Greenland side of the sound would involve uncertainty in the despatch of the sledge parties

along the shores of Grinnell Land in the spring of 1885, for it must be borne in mind that the ice in Kennedy Channel is not to be relied on remaining unbroken during the winter months, and is certain to break up early in the spring.

No dependence should be placed on detached boat relief expeditions, except in the extreme case of the advance vessel becoming disabled early in navigable season of 1884, for no boat party can, in addition to the provisions necessary for their own support, convey sufficient supplies to relieve a large distressed party of men, and return with them to their station.

Too much reliance should not be placed by such parties on the natural resources of the shores of Grinnell Land. But although the British expedition of 1875-76 did not actually meet with any musk oxen, reindeer, or bears, between Port Foulke and Discovery Bay, traces of them were seen, and with good fortune a retreating boat party might come across some of these animals, walrus, or a few seals. After leaving the warmer waters of Baffin Bay, the great breeding haunts of sea-fowl are left behind. Port Foulke is the most northern summer haunt of the little auk, where it breeds in countless numbers, and contributes largely to the summer food of the Eskimos of Etah. Neither does Brünnich's guillemot, the well-known Arctic loom, extend its breeding range beyond the entrance of Smith Sound. Along the shores of Grinnell Land a few black guillemots nest, but not gregariously. At certain localities, such as the more protected bays, a few eider ducks will be found, whilst on the fresh-water lakes a considerable number of brent geese rear their young. None of these birds are to be obtained without an expenditure of time beyond the capacity of travelling parties, with whom delay means consumption of the stores they are carrying with them. The bird life of that region will not afford to sledge or boat parties more than an occasional addition to their rations, and cannot be reckoned on as a certain means of subsistence, such as the loomeries and aukeries of Baffin Bay afford during the breeding season of those birds.

In conclusion, we think it would be advisable to obtain the good-will and assistance of the Cape York district Eskimos by the timely and judicious distribution of presents, and the leader of the relief expedition should receive directions to this effect. Finally, we are desirous of expressing our heartfelt sympathy with the United States regarding the object of the contemplated expedition, and our readiness to afford, at any time, any information or assistance that it may be in our power to render.

We have the honour to be, sir, your obedient servants,

G. S. NARES, *Captain R.N.*

A. H. MARKHAM, *Captain H.M.S. "Vernon."*

H. W. FEILDEN, *Major H.B.M. Army.*