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KEEPER OF THE SEAL: THE ART OF HENRY WOOD ELLIOTT AND THE SALVATION OF THE ALASKA FUR SEALS

A

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty

of the University of Alaska Fairbanks

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Lisa Marie Morris, B.A.

Fairbanks, Alaska

May 2001

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KEEPER OF THE SEAL: THE ART OF HENRY WOOD ELLIOTT AND THE SALVATION OF THE ALASKA FUR SEALS

By

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Abstract

This thesis examines the art of Henry Wood Elliott (1846-1930) and its role in Elliott's successful crusade to save the Pribilof Island fur seals from probable extinction, its importance as a visual record of the nineteenth-century Pribilof Aleut people during a time of societal transition, and how the art reveals the guiding aspirations of the artist. Elliott was one of the first American artists to work in Alaska. An experienced field artist who had served on two prior government expeditions before his assignment to the Pribilof Islands, Elliott used his watercolors of the fur seals in a successful nationwide campaign to reverse the depletion of the herds.

Less well known are Elliott's ethnographic watercolors of the Pribilof Aleut people. Created only a few short years after the 1867 Alaska Purchase, these works show the Native people accommodating their Aleut-Russian culture to American societal expectations. These images, then, are a significant visual record for safeguarding the Aleut people's past.

Nettled by scientific opponents, Elliott also turned his artistic talents to retaliation. Just as William Hogarth (1697-1764) and Honoré Daumier (1808-1879) used caricature to comment on society, Elliott created hundreds of cartoons (ca. 1910-1926) to ridicule his opponents and promote his own point of view. It is in these previously unexamined works that Henry Elliott achieved a synthesis of art and documentation.

Elliott's art also reveals his own thwarted aspirations to achieve recognition as a serious artist. His experiences as an expedition artist encouraged both his enthusiasm for science and talent for documentation. Elliott's desire to pair his watercolors with

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descriptive written details and snippets of government documents, however, transformed them into visual record. Elliott may not have realized his dream of winning respect as an artist, but his documentary images aroused more interest in the declining fur seal herds than the thousands of pages of dry testimony documenting the controversy. The attention generated by his artwork was a major contributor to the successful resolution of the Pribilof Island fur seal debate.

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The Man who did by far the Most of the work that saved the Fur Seal Industry to the People of the United States. W. T. Hornaday.

Fig. 1. Photograph of Henry Wood Elliott. Ca. 1911-1912. Archives, Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

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Chapter One

"I have learned how to use India ink": The Early Years

Henry Wood Elliott (1846-1930) is best remembered for his successful lobbying efforts to protect the Alaska fur seals, seasonal residents of the Pribilof Islands, located in the Bering Sea. But he was also an accomplished watercolorist and one of the first American artists to work in the Territory of Alaska. Elliott used his images of the fur seal herds as the centerpiece in his nationwide publicity campaign. Long neglected by scholars, these images and Elliott's impassioned rhetoric helped lead to the 1911 North Pacific Fur Seal Treaty, that ended pelagic, or open-ocean sealing, and saved the fur seals from probable extinction.

Elliott's interests, however, were not only animal-oriented. His watercolors and drawings also depict the material culture and activities of the Pribilof Aleut people only a few years following the United States' purchase of Alaska from the Russians. These images show the people on the brink of accommodating their Aleut-Russian culture to American societal norms and expectations. This visual record, then, documents a way of life that is no longer practiced on the islands. Therefore, Elliott's ethnographic images are a valuable resource for safeguarding the past life story of the Pribilof Islanders.

Elliott's art is not only an important historical record of the burgeoning conservation movement, it is also a significant ethnological resource for its glimpse into the lives of the Aleut people residing on the Pribilofs during the final quarter of the nineteenth-century. This thesis examines the art of Henry Wood Elliott and its role in the implementation of conservation measures for the Alaska fur seals, the exceptional

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cultural record preserved in his ethnographic images, and how the paintings reflect the innermost ambitions of the artist.

Nothing in Elliott's childhood suggested that he would become one of America's foremost conservationists or that he would spend his later years defending his clients, the fur seals, an animal species located in a remote chain of islands worlds away. Born on November 13, 1846 in Lakewood, Ohio to Franklin Reuben Elliott, a horticulturist, and to Sophia Hopkins Elliott, a descendant of John Eliot who translated the bible into the Algonquin language for the use of the Native people,[1] Elliott's upbringing did not prefigure his role as a challenger of Congress, let alone anyone else.

Elliott's education was interrupted early. For most of his sophomore year in high school, he remained at home, too ill to attend classes; eventually he dropped out. To pass the time during his recuperation he taught himself to draw and also studied science, languages and writing.[2] Elliott's artistic ability seems to have been encouraged by his father, Franklin, who not only wrote and illustrated his own books but also had an eye for picturesque garden settings. In his Handbook of Practical Landscape Gardening, he reveals something of his interest in art:

> The value of everything that approaches the beautiful, is enhanced by an appropriate setting. Even the most beautiful flower of nature is improved by its surrounding of delicately tinted green foliage. The artist, when exhibiting his most perfect artificial representation of nature, places it, if possible, with a surrounding which will measureably attract the eye, and yet cast upon the picture

---

[1]"Paper on Franklin Reuben Elliott," Henry Wood Elliott Collection, Box 1, Archives, Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

[2]Robert L. Shalkop, Henry Wood Elliott 1846-1930: A Retrospective Exhibition (Anchorage: Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum, 1982), 9.

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> an enhanced breadth and height of coloring, combined with the softness which Nature in her hazy moods gives to all her productions.[3]

In part, Elliott's father's influence seems to have instilled a predilection for picturesque landscape settings in his work although national artistic movements contributed as well.

In 1861 when Henry had recovered, his father rewarded the boy for book illustrations he had worked on during his illness with a trip to Washington, D.C. This experience was to bring about major changes in Elliott's young life. Through an unknown connection, Franklin Elliott arranged to introduce his son to the Secretary of the Smithsonian, Joseph Henry. Henry offered the fifteen year old a job as a clerk and artist. Instead of the quiet artistic career he and his family had envisioned, however, Elliott's Smithsonian affiliation launched him on a turbulent path.

When not clerking for Joseph Henry, Elliott performed natural history work for Spencer F. Baird, Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian, and Baird's associates. One of these tasks was the drawing and sketching of birds' heads for Baird's A History of North American Birds: Land Birds, 1874 and Water Birds of America, 1884. While at the Smithsonian, Elliott showed an early predilection for stirring up trouble. For example, he had a propensity to stretch the truth, which led to conflict with William Dall, one of Baird's field researchers and collectors. A letter from Baird to Dall illustrates this:

> I always knew that our lively Henry was mendacious, but did not suppose he could manage to get quite so far from the truth as in the account of the condition of your Collections at the Smithsonian. I trust you will accept my word when I state that they are in the best possible condition, that all your injuctions as to their administration have been carefully followed . . . . It will give me great pleasure to choke Henry, for telling such lies and shall take occasion to free my mind to him

---

[3]Franklin Reuben Elliott, Handbook of Practical Landscape Gardening (Rochester, New York: D. M. Dewey, Horticultural Books, Arcade Hall, 1877), 5.

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> quite fully. He has not the slightest knowledge where the collections are stored, I am perfectly satisfied he has never laid eyes on them, or a single piece sent by you, except it be some of the birds, all of which are in a thoroughly good condition, like the rest of your specimens.[4]

Throughout most of Elliott's Smithsonian career he was unpaid though he was rewarded in other ways. He gained experience in diverse scientific fields, refined his art techniques, and participated in expeditions that would not have been open to him otherwise.

The American Landscape Painting Tradition

The art direction Henry Elliott received from both his father and from associates at the Smithsonian derived from larger trends in the American art community of the time. The development of the American landscape as a symbol of divine providence permeated the literature, music and art of the nineteenth-century. In order to understand Elliott's picturesque images it is necessary to trace the development of the American landscape tradition and the national trends that inspired and directed Elliott's way of seeing and creating.[5]

While Elliott gained artistic and scientific direction at the Smithsonian, the United States courted disintegration with the Civil War. Both before and after this conflict, however, artists celebrated the American landscape. The Victorian American belief that the American landscape was synonymous with God provided artists with a direct and

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[4]Letter from Spencer Baird to William Dall, October 11, 1874, Smithsonian Institution Archives, RU 7073, William H. Dall Papers, Box 7, Folder 7.

[5]Elliott's art was not only influenced by the American landscape tradition. He is also part of the topographic art tradition that flourished at the same time. A fine example of topographic art may be seen in the work of Elliott's contemporary, Cleveland Salter Rockwell (1837-1907), who created many topographically accurate images of southeast Alaska when he served as chief of the U.S. Geodetic Survey. For the purposes of this thesis, however, the larger American landscape painting tradition is more pertinent.

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powerful influence for their works. Stevenson explains, "Victorians believed that contemplating nature, whether in chromos or in a landscaped backyard, brought viewers in closer contact with the divine, and that places of special natural beauty showed most graphically where God had touched the earth."[6]

This perspective, however, did not appear overnight. Its development came at the right time to furnish both incentive and opportunity for artists of Henry Elliott's generation to focus on the American landscape, and to interpret it as both a symbol of divine munificence and of nationhood. The symbolic use of landscape began when artists living just prior to the American War for Independence sowed the seeds for this artistic viewpoint.

Before the Revolution, artists made a living by painting portraits of wealthy landowners. Artists did not stray far from the portraiture rut for fear of financial ruin. At the end of the war it was fashionable to commission portraits of the great men who fought for and won independence. At the same time patrons also ordered history paintings of significant battles. Therefore, the Revolution led to a short-lived heyday for the American artist. According to Harris, "The Revolution proved a godsend to art and the artist life; it created an alternative to the menial tasks and craft objectives to which American art had seemed doomed. The Revolution created a history, marked with a great

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[6]Louise L. Stevenson, The Victorian Home Front: American Thought and Culture (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 60.

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event the beginning of an epoch, and introduced the factors of time and specific creation into the consciousness of a people."[7]

By 1825, however, the history painting of the Revolution had become a cliché; with no wars imminent on the horizon, history painting ceased to be a viable form of livelihood. As the great patriots of the Revolution passed on, portraiture also suffered. Soon the American landscape filled the gap, becoming the dominant symbol of abundance, prosperity, and, indeed, of America itself.[8] According to Hughes, "Without history painting or new great men, where was a national image to be found? What would symbolize America in art? Only the landscape itself, unique, vast, marvelous, the container of all possibility. Americans were busy discovering it, and hailing their own triumphs over nature."[9]

During the early nineteenth-century, wilderness came to be thought of as a cultural and moral resource as well as a basis for national self-esteem.[10] National pride arose as a result of the ongoing conquest of the American wilderness. Since God was thought to speak through the wilderness, Americans felt justified in their assumption that the New World was morally superior to the Old and that the American continent was destined for greatness.[11] A resulting sense of nationalism swept the country, and

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[7]Neil Harris, The Artist in American Society: The Formative Years 1790-1860 (New York: George Braziller, 1966), 15-16.

[8]Robert Hughes, "The Wilderness and the West," In American Visions: The Epic History of Art in America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 137.

[9]Ibid., 137.

[10]Roderick Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind, 3rd edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 67.

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patriotic-minded American intellectuals came to see the wilderness as a balancing mechanism and a justification for greatness.[12]

The United States was not the only country utilizing its landscape to promote nationalism as a result of nineteenth-century romanticism. Many countries looked to landscape for their national identity throughout the Romantic Age. England turned to the Lake District, Germany the Black Forest, and America had most of America.[13] Nature, particularly wilderness, became associated with the Divine. According to Hughes, "The great cultural project of the nineteenth century was to explore the relations between man and nature, to learn to see nature as the fingerprint of God's creation and thus as a direct clue to his intentions."[14] Since nature was equated with the Divine and was accessible to everyone, all people had the potential to commune with God. These religious sentiments helped the landscape to serve as a metaphor for nationalism. "In the early nineteenth century in America," Novak writes, "nature couldn't do without God, and God apparently couldn't do without nature . . . . the terms 'God' and 'nature' were often the same thing, and could be used interchangeably."[15] Similarly, Hughes writes, "If American nature was one vast church, then landscape artists were its clergy."[16]

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[11] Roderick Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind, 3rd edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 69.

[12] Ibid., 73.

[13] Robert Hughes, "The Wilderness and the West," In American Visions: The Epic History of Art in America, 138.

[14] Ibid., 138.

[15] Barbara Novak, "Introduction: The Nationalist Garden and the Holy Book," In Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 3.

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A capsule history of the development of American landscape painting lends an understanding of its status at the time in which Henry Elliott began his artistic career. It can be seen in the work of Thomas Cole (1801-1848), Frederick Church (1826-1900), Fitz Hugh Lane (1804-1865), and Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902).

Thomas Cole launched this vision of the divine nature of the American landscape in the United States. Born in England, Cole immigrated with his family to Philadelphia in 1818 and worked there as an engraver. He later decided to be a painter and learned the rudiments from an itinerant limner. In 1825, Cole moved to New York. *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm*, (1836) more commonly known as *The Oxbow*, gives an indication of how Cole used storms to signal impending change.[17] The oxbow of the river forms a yoke shape on the rural landscape on the right. This taming of the land has resulted in the rich fields and pastoral farms dotting the plain surrounding the river. On the left, up on Mt. Holyoke, is the wilderness. Cole has retreated into a gully with his easel to escape the storm which has passed over on the left. Through his art, Cole introduced the great debate over America's resources: whether to utilize the bounty provided by the Almighty or to protect it as God's own wilderness.[18] Cole died in 1848, but his vision of America was carried forward by the work of his pupil, Frederick Edwin Church.

Niagara, (1857), one of Church's masterpieces gives an indication of how he advanced Cole's ideas. His painting of this North American icon surpassed all others of

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[16]Robert Hughes, "The Wilderness and the West," 139.

[17]Ibid., 146.

[18]Ibid., 146.

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the time. In it, he has created a portrait of water. Every wave and spume of the turbulent, churning green waters is individual and unique.[19] The Falls appear in their natural state. Church eliminated the tourists, handrails, and hotels that were already in evidence even as early as 1857. The viewer is unable to become a tourist because there is no place to stand amid the swift current. Mighty Niagara is a symbol of America's strength and the rainbow over the falls can be interpreted as a Divine blessing.

Church's use of calm light and stillness influenced a movement called Luminism, a form of painting that originated in marine images. "Luminism," Hughes explains, ". . . . denoted a group of similarities among rather different painters: a polished realism in which all brushwork is suppressed, gestures of the hand played down, the atmospheric effects achieved by superfine gradations of tone and exact study of the 'luminous envelope' around near and far objects."[20] Light became an important tool for landscape artists because it indicated God's moods and immanence.[21]

One of the best Luminist painters was Fitz Hugh Lane of Boston whose works are characterized by stillness. In *Boston Harbor*, (1855-58) for instance, the only movement is that of a skiff heading out into a golden sunset. The viewer continues looking past the boat to the open harbor beyond. Large ships rest at anchor in the water with still, trapezoidal sails; not even a tiny gust of wind ruffles the fabric. According to Hughes:

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[19]Robert Hughes, "The Wilderness and the West," 161.

[20]Ibid., "The Wilderness and the West," 167.

[21]Barbara Novak, "Introduction: The Nationalist Garden and the Holy Book," In Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 17.

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> There was a difference between Fitz Hugh Lane's marines and the more routine productions of other ship painters. It is in their stillness, and the peculiar self-effacing beauty of his paint as well: an even, stippled skin, whose brushmarks are blended and suppressed. His stillness, with its exquisite nuances of light and atmosphere, became one of the essential marks of American Luminism. . .[22]

During the years of westward expansion the paintings of Albert Bierstadt became tangible representations of America's belief in its Manifest Destiny. Born in Germany, Bierstadt grew up in New Bedford, Massachusetts. At age twenty-three he returned to Europe, where he received his art training at the Düsseldorf Academy. Back in the United States once more, Bierstadt joined Colonel Frederick Lander's 1858 surveying expedition to the west. Bierstadt sketched along the way and explored the Wind River and Shoshone country on his own. Inspired by what he saw, Bierstadt created some of the first panoramas of the American west.[23] His large, mostly composite works were an instant success. The grandeur of the landscapes delighted his audience.

Emigrants Crossing the Plains, (1867) speaks eloquently of Manifest Destiny. A wagon train heading west travels into a golden sunset of promise. Scattered cattle bones in the foreground suggest past misfortune, but the livestock near them are sleek and plump, indicating a hopeful future.[24] The first wagons of the train are already well past an Indian encampment just visible through the glow of the setting sun. Divine Providence leads the settlers west to a promised land.

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[22]Robert Hughes, "The Wilderness and the West," 169.

[23]Ibid., 194.

[24]Ibid., 196.

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Early Field Expeditions

Thus Henry Elliott fell heir to a burgeoning tradition of American landscape painting that celebrated the majesty of the land. Its influence permeated his images even though they retained a distinct stamp, mainly because he painted almost exclusively in watercolor.[25] Certainly, some sense of the American landscape tradition would have seeped into Elliott's art at least by virtue of his participation in two expeditions to the west, adventures that would not have been open to him but for his ties to the Smithsonian Institution.

In 1865, on the recommendation of the Secretary of the Smithsonian, Joseph Henry and the Scientific Corps leader, Robert Kennicott, Elliott became a member of the Western Union Telegraph Survey (1864-1866), also known as the Collins Overland Telegraph Survey. The goal of this project was to link Russia and America via telegraph line.[26]

Henry Elliott eagerly jumped at the opportunity to join the survey. Just nineteen years old and intensely interested in science, he saw the expedition as an opportunity to participate in a Smithsonian collecting excursion. In a letter to his parents, Elliott jubilantly wrote, "Kennicott has given me the best chance to work for Natural History."[27] It also provided him with the first of many trips to Alaska. The Telegraph Survey

[25]There is a rumor that one Elliott oil painting is held by the Smithsonian Archives of American Art in Washington, DC but staff members could not locate it during my visit.

[26]Two years after the survey began, however, a competing group completed the laying of the Trans-Atlantic cable, rendering the Western Union Telegraph line useless.

[27]Letter from Elliott to his parents, May 2, 1865, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma, Henry Wood Elliott Collection, Box 1, Folder 1.

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explored the country between Sitka, Fort Halkett, and Victoria during the autumn of 1865.

During the 1866 field season Elliott again traveled west, this time with Major Frank Pope's exploring party to British Columbia. Due to several mishaps, natural history research could not be carried out, but all four party members honed their exploring skills and Elliott found time to sketch before the party's early dissolution. As Elliott explained to William Dall, who was also on the Scientific Corps, "I can do but little for Natural Science as the rush and bustle of a lively construction party will divert all my attention and will wait for a better opportunity but will have a good opportunity to fill my portfolio with sketches."[28]

Few of Elliott's images from this survey survive, though it is certain that he brought his portfolio along. *Two Women in Costume with Painted Dugout Boat and Paddles Outside Plank House; View of Village with Two Other Plank Houses Near Water; Forest and Mountains in Background*, (October 1866), (National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, MS 397,353) illustrates Elliott's keen interest in the material culture of the Native people. The attention lavished on the canoe, paddles, plank house, and lashings in comparison to the two rather wooden figures reveal this early fascination.

Following the purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867, Elliott again turned westward for more adventure. During the summers of 1869-1871 he worked for the U.S. Geological Survey of the Colorado, New Mexico, and Wyoming Territories led by

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[28]Letter from Elliott to Dall, May 24, 1866, Smithsonian Institution Archives, RU 7213, Western Union Telegraph Expedition Collection, Box 1, Folder 9, Item 1.

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Ferdinand V. Hayden. Appointed as the expedition's field artist he sketched landforms and other natural phenomena. Following his first season with the survey through Colorado and New Mexico Elliott reported to Fielding B. Meek, a colleague at the Smithsonian, "I made some 400 sketches of the country—nearly every picture illustrating some thought or principle connected with geology. I know that you will be very much pleased with them—for I have made some big strides in the art of delineation since my experience with you—I have learned how to use India ink."[29] This suggests that Elliott taught himself art techniques in the field as well as learning from associates at the Smithsonian.

Elliott also sketched the Native people he encountered, paying special attention to their activities or personal mode of dress. For example, *Old Woman Wearing Buffalo Robe Near Group of Tipis at Washaki's Camp*, (1870) (National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, MS 397, 353) shows an elderly Shoshoni woman weaving an object on a striped mat. Intent on her work, the woman seems completely isolated despite the other tipis in the background. Her clothing and weaving are carefully depicted and are the focus of the drawing.

By far the most striking images that Elliott drew during the Hayden Survey are the geological subjects. According to Trenton and Hassrick:

> Elliott's field sketches and finished drawings for the expedition document of 1869 reflect the geologist's observations. Contours and geological formations are carefully illustrated and identified; basic resources essential for development and settlement, like mineral veins, rivers, coal and lignite beds, and iron deposits are

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[29]Letter from Elliott to Meek, November 30, 1869, Smithsonian Institution Archives, RU 7062, Fielding B. Meek Papers, 1843-1877, Box 2, Folder 12.

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> recorded; and picturesque scenic areas chosen to attract the tourist and sportsman are singled out.[30]

Elliott uses a great deal of shading to bring out the details of the enormous rock in *Granite Rock Near Point of Rock, Base of Laramie Peak on Lumber Road*, (1870) (Smithsonian Institution Archives, RU 7369, Henry Wood Elliott Drawings, 1870, Box 1, Folder 1) (Fig. 1.1). The tiny figure sketching at the right of the boulder enhances its size. In Elliott's early work, he frequently places himself in the image to aid the viewer in discerning the true scale of an object. The recurrence of these self-portraits, though, especially in images where the size of an object is relatively unimportant or already established, seems to be an attempt to please his already well-developed ego and occurs throughout much of his later work as well.

Rocks on Chugwater. 8 m. N. of Station, (1870) (Smithsonian Institution Archives, RU 7369, Henry Wood Elliott Drawings, 1870, Box 1, Folder 4) is an example of Elliott's interest in geology. It is a depiction of a large rock formation with a flat top. Enormous boulders are scattered about the formation. On the right of the large rock is a smaller platform where a tiny figure, looking like a stick person wearing a hat and jacket, holds a surveying staff. Even the figure's arms look much too long for his body. On the verso of this image is a pencil sketch of two horses. The model was probably Elliott's horse Grasshopper.[31]

An Artist's Influence

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[30]Patricia Trenton and Peter H. Hassrick, The Rocky Mountains: A Vision for Artists in the Nineteenth Century (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), 160.

[31]Personal Communication with Carl Droppers, Berea, Ohio, December 5, 1999.

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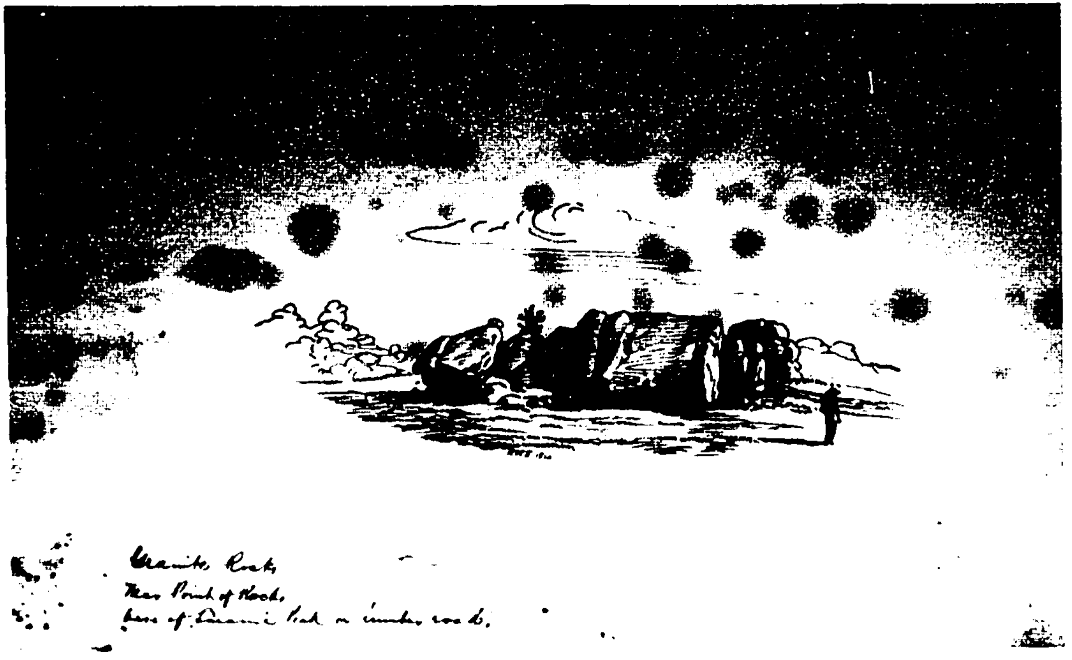

Fig. 1.1. "Granite Rock, Near Point of Rock, Base of Laramie Peak on Lumber Road," 1870. 5 3/8 x 10 inches. Pen and Ink. Smithsonian Institution Archives. Henry W. Elliott Drawings, 1870. Record Unit 7369. Box 1. Folder 1.

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Elliott was not the only artist on the Hayden Survey. During the 1871 field season, Thomas Moran (1837-1926) joined the expedition into Yellowstone as a guest artist and his influence on Elliott's later life-course would be profound. Born in England and raised in Philadelphia, Moran was a self-taught painter who worked with his brothers as an engraver. Photographer William Henry Jackson also joined the survey for this field season. The two men worked together in Yellowstone: one provided the objective proof of the region's bizarre geo-thermal landscape while the other supplied the lurid colors.[32]

Unlike Elliott's documentary and scientific renderings, Moran's artistic background and training led him to use his careful observations of the world about him as a means to an end. He did not create factual renderings of the landscape; rather, he delineated an impression of the land. Moran's *Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*, (1893-1901), for instance, depicts the sublime expanse of the chasm as it leads to the falls.[33] As Moran explained, 'Topography in art is valueless. The motive or incentive for my Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone was the gorgeous display of color that impressed itself upon me . . . and while I desired to tell truly of nature, I did not wish to realize the scene literally but to preserve and convey its true impression.'[34]

Elliott, torn between his twin interests of science and art, tried to balance the two in his paintings and strove for factual accuracy that was also artistic. He embraced the American landscape tradition as fully as the other artists of his time, but his desire to

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[32]Robert Hughes, "The Wilderness and the West," 199.

[33]This large painting became the first American landscape by an American artist to be purchased by the Federal government. See Robert Hughes, "The Wilderness and the West," 200.

[34]Wallace Stegner, Beyond the Hundredth Meridian, 182. As quoted from: G.W. Sheldon, American Painters (New York: 1879), 125. Quoted in Taft, Artists and Illustrators of the Old West, 250.

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capture exactly what his eye saw made his images too documentary to be "artistic." This is especially true of his later works when he was not acting as an appointed field artist.

While Elliott's scientific drawings paled in comparison to Moran's achievements, the association deeply influenced his later life. In 1872, when Congress created Yellowstone National Park on the basis of Moran's artistry and Jackson's photographs, Elliott learned that images were a powerful ally in the development of nascent conservation policies. Elliott would embrace this lesson when he began his own lobbying crusade almost two decades later.

Perhaps because of what may have been a humbling artistic experience for Elliott, he did not join the expedition the following season but found employment with the U.S. Treasury Department where he was appointed Assistant Treasury Agent for the Pribilof Islands in Alaska. A separate verbal commission from the Smithsonian Institution instructed him to embark on a study of the fur seals that bred on the islands every summer. Unaware that he was on a date with destiny, Elliott arrived on the island of St. Paul in April of 1872.

To summarize, the first twenty-four years of Henry Elliott's life provided him with the influences and direction that would shape his later actions. As a child, his family encouraged him artistically as did his associates at the Smithsonian Institution. He fell heir to the American landscape tradition that reflected American consciousness during the nineteenth-century, but sought a more documentary approach. More importantly, his thirst for adventure led him on two expeditions, one of which brought him into contact with Thomas Moran from whom he learned that art could be a powerful tool that had the

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potential clout to influence and sway not only public opinion, but that of Congress as well. This was the most important lesson Elliott learned during his early years and one that he would file away carefully in his mind for the future.

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Chapter Two

Pribilof Island History

Since the vast majority of Henry Wood Elliott's artistic subjects derive from the landscape, people, and animal life of the Pribilof Islands, Alaska, a discussion of the island group is in order. While the fur seals were Elliott's primary interest, he also created some of the earliest images of the Pribilof Aleut people only a few short years after the United States' purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867. Elliott arrived at the islands at a time when American corporate interests dominated the lives of the Aleut people. This chapter will primarily discuss the human history of the islands since this directly affected what Elliott saw there. His own cultural biases, however, determined how he would translate what he saw into his ethnographic works.

The Pribilof Islands lie in the Bering Sea, three hundred miles off the coast of Alaska and two hundred twenty-five miles north of Unalaska (Fig. 2.1). The Pribilof group consists of two islands and three islets. St. Paul and St. George are the principal islands; surrounding St. Paul are Otter Island, Walrus Island and Sea Lion Rock. These seemingly insignificant volcanic islands are the largest remaining fur seal breeding grounds in the world.

The history of human habitation on the Pribilofs only extends back into the eighteenth-century. At that time, the Russians dispatched several expeditions into Alaskan waters for purposes of trading, mapping, and colonization. By far the most expensive of these was Vitus Bering's second voyage of 1741-42, which set out to determine if the American coastline connected with Russia's. While the expedition

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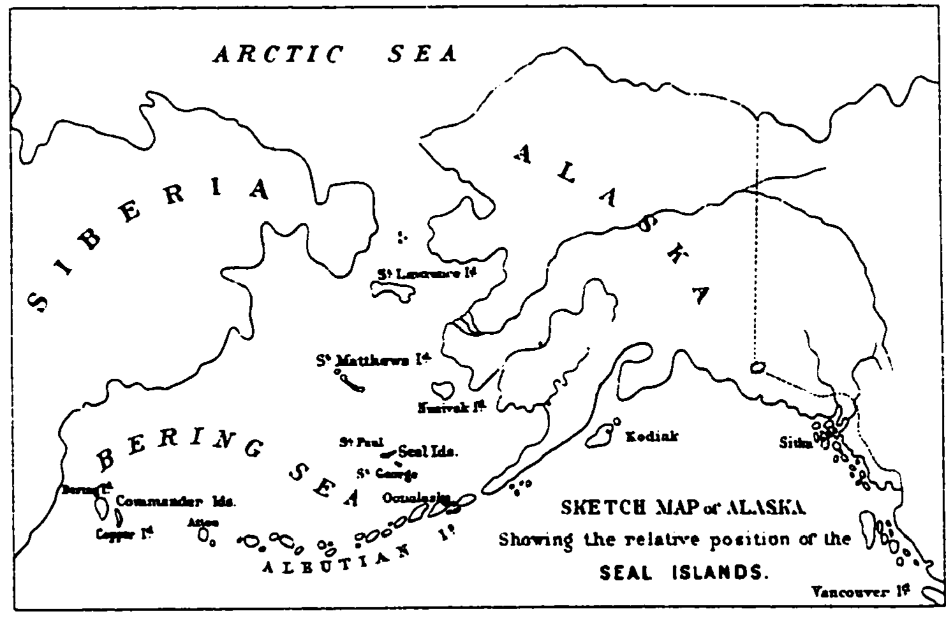

Fig. 2.1. "Sketch Map of Alaska." ca. 1872-1874. Inset map on end paper of The Seal-Islands of Alaska by Henry W. Elliott.

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ended disastrously,[1] it did lead to the discovery in the Aleutian Chain of the lucrative fur-bearers, such as the otter and fur seal.

The news of this valuable new fur resource launched the first of many stampedes to Alaska as the Russian *promyshleniki*, or fur-hunters, swarmed east to the Aleutian Chain to hunt them. Working their way eastward through the chain of islands, the promyshleniki enslaved the resident Aleut people, forcing them to use their marine hunting expertise to stalk for the furs the Russians coveted to sell on the international market, especially to China. The Aleuts resisted and atrocities were plentiful on both sides.

By 1771 reckless over hunting had nearly exterminated the sea otter, forcing the Russian hunters to look for another source. The northern fur seal was the obvious choice. The invention of a machine that shaved the skin side of the pelt so thin that it cut the roots off the guard hairs greatly speeded up the dressing process, as these coarse hairs could be brushed off the pelt, revealing the soft under-fur.[2] Eager to cash in on this new prey, the Russians, who had witnessed the annual migration of these animals year after year, redoubled their efforts to find the fur seal breeding grounds.

In 1786, the mystery was solved. In 1781, Gerasim Pribylov, Assistant Navigator

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[1]Two days into the voyage fog permanently separated the *St. Peter* and the *St.Paul*, captained by Bering and Lieutenant Alexei Chirikov. Chirikov returned to port safely while Bering ran his ship aground on one of the Commander Islands during a gale. There, Bering died and the survivors over-wintered and returned home the following summer bringing with them the pelts from marine mammals they had hunted to survive.

[2]William H. Dall, Alaska and Its Resources (Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1870), Reprint 1970, Arro & the New York Times, 495.

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of the *Sv. Georgii*, outfitted by merchant Lebedev-Lastochkin of Iakutsk, sailed away in search of the seal breeding grounds.[3] In 1786, Pribylov discovered the island of St. George and with it, the fur seals. Pribylov left some of his crewmembers on the island to hold his claim and departed to re-supply his ship. The following summer, when the habitual covering of fog lifted, the men spotted another island and named it St. Peter and St. Paul Island after the holy day on which they first sighted it.[4]

Russian fur companies managed fur seal conservation no better than they had the sea otter. Word of reckless slaughter soon reached the Imperial government. According to Father Ioann Veniaminov, parish priest of the Unalaska district and author of the founding ethnography of the Aleut people, during the first thirty years of sealing (1787-1817), the Aleut hunters employed by their Russian captors killed 2.5 million seals.[5] In 1799, Tsar Paul I, son of Catherine the Great, leased the Pribilofs to the Russian-American Company for a twenty-year period. As is often the case with colonial enterprises, he charged the company with the additional duty of administering Russia's North American affairs.[6]

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[3] Vasilii Nikolaevich Berkh, Trans. by Dmitri Krenov, A Chronological History of the Discovery of the Aleutian Islands (1823; reprint Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1974), 59.

[4] Later, St. Paul became its shortened name.

[5] Ivan Veniaminov, Notes on the Islands of the Unalashka District, Trans. by Lydia T. Black and R. H. Geoghegan. Richard A. Pierce, ed., (University of Alaska: Elmer E. Rasmuson Library Translation Program and Kingston, Ontario: Limestone Press, 1984), 138.

[6] Barbara Boyle Torrey, Slaves of the Harvest, (TDX Corporation, 1983), 2nd Printing., 51.

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Belatedly, the Russians employed conservation measures to protect their newly discovered fur resource. According to Veniaminov: "Reason demands that all possible measures be taken, without exterminating the fur seal species, to utilize it to the best possible profit."[7] One measure employed was halting the seal harvest until the animals regained their numbers through natural increase. The first of these closed seasons occurred in 1805. The herds did not truly begin to increase, however, until 1835, when the company prohibited the killing of females.

Aleut settlement of the Pribilofs was gradual.[8] At first, the Russians transported the Aleuts to the islands only to work in the seal harvest and then returned them to their homes. Thereafter, however, the Russians established permanent villages on both St. Paul and St. George because it was more cost-effective.[9] Occasionally, deaths on the islands forced the Russians to supplement the work force by importing additional Aleuts, primarily from Unalaska.

Working conditions in the Pribilof Island seal harvest were far from ideal. The Russian-American Company required all Aleut males aged eighteen to fifty to work and paid them approximately sixty rubles annually, about one-fifth of an average Russian's salary.[10] Despite payment for their labor, the Aleuts' economic status was effectively the

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[7] Ivan Veniaminov, Notes on the Islands of the Unalashka District, 335.

[8] Prior to the Russian discovery of the islands, the Pribilofs were uninhabited but some people living in the Aleutian Chain seem to have known that the archipelago existed.

[9] Susan Hackley Johnson, The Pribilof Islands: A Guide to St. Paul, Alaska, 10.

[10] Barbara Boyle Torrey, Slaves of the Harvest, 53.

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same as that of a Russian serf. As time went on, however, a reciprocal relationship developed. The Aleuts grew to depend on Russian goods and the Russians, in turn, relied on the Aleuts' hunting skills. This had the effect of keeping the relationship between the two groups in balance, possibly diminishing the worst of the exploitation.

The Russian era brought another cultural change for the Aleuts, the introduction of Russian Orthodoxy. Early in the encounter with the Aleut people, the promyshleniki began baptizing the inhabitants of the Aleutian Chain, both out of religiosity and the need to foster peaceful relationships.[11] The majority of the Russian hunters came from Siberia, where baptized Native people became, at least, spiritually Russian.[12] Therefore, baptism into the Russian Orthodox Church benefited both groups. For the exploited Aleuts, it afforded them with an opportunity to improve their status with the Russians and it provided the promyshleniki with a more compliant and reliable work force.[13] The advent of Orthodoxy led to friendlier relations between the two groups.

Eventually, the Aleut people, including those relocated to the Pribilofs, wholeheartedly embraced the Russian Orthodox Church.[14] In 1821, the community of St.

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[11]Sergei Kan, Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity Through Two Centuries (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 36.

[12]Ibid., 36.

[13]Ibid., 36.

[14]Sergei Kan, in his discussion of Russian orthodoxy and the Tlingit people in Memory Eternal, states that certain aspects of the Orthodox Church were similar to the indigenous religious system. For example, water immersion as a means to cleanse the body of both physical and spiritual impurities was already a part of the Tlingit spiritual world. Similarly, the wearing of a cross wasn't all that different from wearing an amulet. While Kan concerns himself primarily with the Tlingit, it is not impossible that the Aleut people found themselves in a similar situation. Therefore, the widespread conversion to Christianity in the

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Paul built a church and St. George followed suit in 1833. The people followed mass through an Aleut grammar and phonetic alphabet devised by Father Ioann Veniaminov in Unalaska. In his sermons, he praised the Aleut people in his district for their loyalty to church, their work ethic, and their ability to learn. Russian orthodoxy socialized the Aleut people to such an extent that Empress Catherine the Great made them Russian subjects as early as the 1770s.

The fur seal harvest never provided the Russian-American Company with the fortune it had anticipated. One major problem was that the Company's lease agreement with the Imperial government limited its trade to Russian supply ships that were unpredictable at best.[15] These supply problems weakened the company and the Russian-American colony as a whole. Occasionally Yankee whaling ships brought goods to the desperate Russians in Alaska.

These whaling vessels, however, were a mixed blessing. In 1824, as increasing numbers of American ships began to ply Alaskan waters, the wary Russians prohibited them from approaching within thirty nautical leagues[16] of the Russian colony.[17] The Russians insisted that they adopted this prohibition to prevent the Americans or "Boston

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Aleutian Chain was not just an attempt to improve relations with the Russians, it was also a way of preserving traditional practices, albeit in a new and redefined indigenous form.

[15]Barbara Boyle Torrey, Slaves of the Harvest, 66.

[16]Thirty nautical leagues translates to 34.52 British and American leagues or 103.6 miles.

[17]Barbara Boyle Torrey, Slaves of the Harvest, 69.

[18]Both Wallachia and Moldavia are part of present-day Rumania.

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Men," as the Natives called them, from giving rum to the indigenous people, but they also wished to prevent the foreign seamen from learning too much about Russian-America's wealth in furs, primarily because the United States' westward expansion alarmed the Russian colony.

Back in Russia, however, the Imperial government inadvertently launched a crusade that would sound the death-knell for its North American colony. In 1853 Tsar Nicholas I sent troops to Wallachia and Moldavia, parts of the Ottoman Empire,[18] to demand the right to protect Christian sites in Jerusalem and Nazareth. The invasion led to the Crimean War. In 1856, when Russia was defeated, the Imperial government found itself heavily in debt, and the already burdensome Russian-American colony became an ever-more-taxing albatross. A year later, it was common knowledge that Russia was seeking a buyer.

Russia did not have to wait very long. As early as 1859, after years of United States' westward expansion mentality and rumors of immense northern fishing grounds, an eager William Seward, Secretary of State started negotiations for the Alaska Purchase. The Civil War stalled the proceedings, but talks resumed shortly after the surrender of the South. Finally, in 1867, after years of heated congressional debate, Seward convinced Congress to purchase Alaska for approximately seven million dollars.[19]

The liquidation of the Russian-American Company attracted great attention among businessmen on the west coast, especially a group from San Francisco called

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[19]Actual sale price was $7, 200,000.00.

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Hutchinson, Kohl & Company. From the Russian-American Company they purchased warehouses, trading posts, and ships across Alaska.[20] Even more importantly, late in 1867, these men negotiated successfully for the little-known Pribilof Island sealing operations. Hutchinson, Kohl intended to manage the Alaska trading posts and harvest seals on the Pribilofs beginning with the 1868 season. One associate, Gustave Niebaum, a Russian-Finnish sea captain who had formerly worked for the Russian-American Company, had built a makeshift hut on the Pribilofs to establish his claim for the sealing season.[21]

Their plans did not proceed as smoothly as they had hoped. Williams, Haven Company of New London and John Parrott of San Francisco, two other concerns with ties to the fur industry contested Hutchinson, Kohl's Pribilof claims. They also established a base of operations on the islands to harvest the seals. After a few confrontations, the three competitors moved their operations to different rookeries. Profits for all three groups were tremendous. To prevent further competition, Hutchinson, Kohl merged with its two rivals to form the Alaska Commercial Company and immediately began to lobby for an exclusive sealing lease from the government.[22]

Congress, concerned about the over-harvest of seals during the 1868 season,

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[20]Molly Lee, "Context and Contact: The History and Activities of the Alaska Commercial Company, 1867-1900," In Graburn, Nelson H.H., Molly Lee, and Jean-Loup Rousselot, Catalogue Raisonné of the Alaska Commercial Company (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996): 24.

[21]Ibid., 25.

[22]Ibid., 27.

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prohibited further hunting until they could work out a lease system for the seal harvest.[23] After a period of intense political maneuvering, the Treasury Department awarded the first twenty–year lease to the Alaska Commercial Company.[24] The terms were advantageous to say the least. For the right to harvest 100,000 three to four year old male seals annually, the Company agreed to pay a rent of $55, 000 per year and a $2.62 ½ tax on each sealskin.[25] It also forced the company to take on certain measures that would protect the welfare of the Native people. The lease agreement made the Pribilofs a federal reservation with access restricted only to those persons with government permission.

When the Americans assumed control over the Pribilofs, the Aleut inhabitants experienced some drastic changes in their way of life. For example, the Alaska Commercial Company forced them to abandon their traditional underground *barabaras* and move into frame houses, not only to improve their quality of life but, according to one of the treasury agents, because the company believed that a lease renewal would be

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[23]The three companies on the islands during the 1868 season harvested 250,000 seals from one island alone.

[24]The lease was extremely profitable for both the company and the U.S. Treasury Department. At the end of the first twenty-year lease, the treasury department received at least $10,000,000.00 from the rental and sealskin fees. This exceeded the amount the United States had originally paid for Alaska by $3,000,000.00. See Molly Lee, "Alaska Commercial Company: The Formative Years," Pacific Northwest Quarterly 89 no. 2 (Spring 1998): 59-64.

[25] The lease, which was non-transferable, prohibited the use of firearms, the harvesting of female seals and pups less than one year old, and forbade the taking of seals in the water near the islands and islets. The seals could only be harvested commercially from June to July and September to October though the Aleuts were permitted young seals for food during the other months.

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easier to obtain if they owned permanent structures on the islands.[26] The small wood houses, however, proved unsuitable for the climate. Heating them, for instance, was difficult on the windy, treeless Pribilofs with Bering Sea gales blasting through the front doors. Also, the small size of the houses crowded the Aleut families much more than the traditional sod-house. Furthermore, tuberculosis, the primary killer among the Aleuts spread more rapidly in the drafty houses.[27]

Such paternalism characterized the Victorian American mind-set, which saw the company's efforts as a form of altruism that would bring the Pribilof Islanders one rung closer to the American perception of civilization. Osgood, Preble and Parker write:

> In the early days the natives were in a state of practical bondage, and were in many respects worse off than slaves. They lived crowded together in semisubterranean huts. . . . Scanty fires of driftwood and blubber, which added greasy smoke to the filth which naturally pervaded their hovels, were their only means of cooking and keeping warm. In winter, crowded together in their squalor. . . they perished or survived as it happened, and when the sealing season came they slaughtered and skinned the seals for their masters until another winter rolled around.[28]

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[26]Treasury Agent reports from the time indicate that the Company providing the Aleuts with houses was not entirely altruistic. This is not surprising considering they were a profit-making concern. In the 1875 logbook, one Assistant Treasury Agent wrote, "These [new frame] houses are all erected in a substantial manner, papered, painted, and . . . adapted to the climate, and the habits of the people. These sixty-four houses here cost the Company about $44,800.00, and as it was an obligation voluntarily assumed by them, it is but justice to state that they are entitled to the gratitude of every Aleut on the island."

Later his superior, George Marsten corrected the record, "The record of Sunday, Oct 24th one page before this got into this book without my seeing it. As I was in charge of the Islands at the time, I wish to say tis (sic.) not true. These houses only cost the Co. about three hundred dollars each and they give nothing; the houses were built to get possession of the land by the Co. Native done much of the work themselves. Geo. Marston."(University of Alaska Archives, Pribilof Island Log Books, March 31, 1872 – May 31, 1887, Roll 1, Microfilm 6, St. Paul Island)

[27]Susan Hackley Johnson, The Pribilof Islands: A Guide to St. Paul, Alaska (St. Paul, Alaska: Tanadgusix Corporation, 1978), 13.

[28]Wilfred H. Osgood, Edward A. Preble and George H. Parker, The Fur Seals and Other Life of the Pribilof Islands, Alaska, in 1914 (Washington: GPO, 1915), 132.

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This quote not only illustrates the Victorian Americans' ethnocentrism, but also the differing mind-sets of the Russians and the Americans about governing indigenous people. Certainly, both groups committed atrocities against the Aleut people, but the Russians were more lenient about traditional practices such as indigenous living arrangements and regarded the semi-subterranean houses as better suited to the climate, while the Americans attempted to eradicate the behaviors that they did not understand to reshape the Aleuts into model Americans.

It was into this company-dominated atmosphere, then, that Henry Wood Elliott stepped when he first set foot on the Pribilof Islands in 1872. While he shared the cultural beliefs and attitudes of his fellow Victorian Americans, his Smithsonian background and field experiences trained him as a documentary field artist. This may have saved him. His images of the Pribilof Aleut people during this transitional time not only provide us with the sole detailed visual record of life on St. Paul and St. George Islands right after the transfer, but also reflect personal impressions and intellectual upbringing.

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Chapter Three

"They are exceedingly polite and civil . . .": People of the Islands

As the ship anchored off the coast of St. Paul Island in April of 1872, Henry Wood Elliott went on deck and waited for the *bidarra* or skin boat that would take him ashore.[1] The twenty-five year old looked steadily ahead through the mist, trying to see the watercraft and wondered if any of the fur seals had returned from their winter migration. After several minutes, a boat materialized out of the morning fog and Elliott boarded. His life would never be the same again.

During Elliott's sojourn on the Pribilofs, he took copious field notes and created hundreds of watercolors. These paintings were largely, though not exclusively, documentary and depicted the fur seals and other marine life, commercial activities of the lessee, Aleut life, and landscape. This time period defined Elliott's future course because his life thereafter became inextricably intertwined with that of the fur seals. His interests, however, did not just extend to the Pribilof Island marine mammals. The resident Aleut people and their way of life also attracted him. Though hired as a treasury agent to oversee the Alaska Commercial Company's management of the fur seal fishery,[2] Elliott's training as an expedition artist gave him the flexibility to begin sketching immediately. This chapter examines Elliott's activities during his first few months on St. Paul and discusses his watercolors of the Pribilof Aleut people and their activities.

Field Artists in the Late Nineteenth Century—A Choice of Media

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[1]The Pribilof Islands have no natural harbors. Supplies had to be lightered ashore.

[2]The term "fishery" applies to the commercial capture of all resources found in open water. This includes fish, marine mammals, crustaceans, and the like.

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As a field artist, Henry Elliott fell heir to a well-developed art tradition of working on-site. Nineteenth-century field artists usually worked in watercolor paints because of the ease of transporting the few materials needed to work in the medium. All that was necessary was water, paint, brushes, paper, and a pencil.[3] By Elliott's day, however, some photographers, such as William Henry Jackson at Yellowstone, had already begun to work in the field, and the question of why Elliott did not employ a camera deserves some explanation. Odd though it may seem, neither the Smithsonian Institution nor the federal government provided Elliott with camera equipment. The simple reason is that photography, while invented in 1839, had not advanced far enough by 1872 to be truly practical for field expeditions. It was neither amateur-friendly nor affordable for most people.

By 1851, photography had progressed to the wet-plate technique. This required that the photographer evenly coat a glass plate with an iodized collodion of silver salts and expose the image while the glass was still wet.[4] Egg white or albumen fixed the silver salts on the plate, preventing them from dissolving and/or floating off.[5] This technique produced a detailed and reproducible negative, and albumen prints became the photographic standard for much of the remainder of the nineteenth-century.

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[3]Most artists, even today, consider watercolor a prelude to an oil (Elliott's day) or acrylic painting on canvas. It is frequently categorized as drawing. Some field artists who are exceptionally skilled with the watercolor medium turn out overworked oil paintings. There is immediacy in watercolor that is often lacking when these artists turn to the canvas. Edward Lear was one of these artists. Henry Elliott may have been. At this point, there is only a rumor of an extant Elliott oil painting.

[4]Robert Hirsh, Seizing the Light: A History of Photography (Boston: McGraw-Hill Co., 2000), 72.

[5]Ibid., 71.

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For a person working in the field at the time, however, this tedious technique was too laborious to be practical. Not only did the photographer have to work swiftly and precisely to keep the glass plate wet for the exposure, but he/she also had to carry enough materials for a field darkroom in addition to the cumbersome camera, tripod, and the heavy glass plates.

A second factor in determining the success or failure of photography in the field was the nature of the land itself.[6] Even if Elliott had had access to a camera, the conditions on the Pribilof Islands would have worked against him.[7] Light was, and still is, an essential element in the creation of a decent negative and it is in short supply on the Pribilofs. During the summer, dense fog overhangs the Bering Sea region and it frequently turns to rain. Sunny summer days with no cloud cover are a rare phenomenon. In winter, fierce gales, the short days, and a snow-covered landscape make photography difficult. Without the proper amount of light or today's professional-grade equipment, photographs of the Pribilofs lack strong contrast, seeming flat and dark. Thus, a nineteenth-century artist armed with a sketchbook had a much better opportunity to show

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[6]This is not to say that photography hadn't been attempted. In June of 1872, H. H. McIntyre of the Alaska Commercial Company tried to take a photo of a bull seal on Reef Rookery. The bull had other ideas, however, and charged McIntyre who had to abandon his equipment to dash for safety. Fortunately, neither McIntyre nor his expensive camera assemblage suffered any harm from the incident. The location of McIntyre's photographs is unknown at this time. (See "Deposition of H.H. McIntyre. Superintendent of the Pribilof Islands." In U.S. Treasury Dep't. Special Agents Division. Seal and Salmon Fisheries and General Resources of Alaska. House Document 92, 55th Congress, 1st Session, Part II. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898. p. 85-87.

[7]Elliott either owned or had access to a box camera by the early 1900s. When he returned to the Pribilofs in 1913, however, he brought his paints along. This seems to indicate that he thought photography unsuitable for the islands. After attempting to take photos on the Pribilofs myself, I have to admit that it is difficult without proper equipment.

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the true nature of the landscape.[8] Given weather, landscape and burdensome equipment, then, to say nothing of Elliott's artistic training, it is easy to grasp why he would have elected to stay with his skill as a watercolorist in his work on the Pribilofs.

Elliott Sets to Work

Like many of his contemporaries, Elliott was a man of diverse interests, who combined his artistic pursuits and scientific training with a conservationist's perspective. It is in the combination of these various pursuits and how he chose to use them in his founding study of the fur seals that determined the course of his publicity campaigns to rescue them from extinction. His lively and curious mind also led him to enlarge his study to include the natural, commercial and human history of the Pribilof Islands.

Elliott's 1872 assignment on the island of St. Paul was a joint commission from the U.S. Treasury Department and the Smithsonian Institution. In 1871, Spencer F. Baird, interested in preparing a study on commercial fish stocks, encouraged Congress to create the United States Fish Commission and thereafter became its first commissioner. With this position, added to his stature as Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian, Baird had amassed enough influence to verbally commission Elliott to study the fur seals in addition to his treasury agent duties.

Once settled on St. Paul, Elliott gave minimal attention to his official appointment as Assistant Treasury Agent, electing to spend his time in the rookeries studying the life and habits of the fur seals. Although the seals had been hunted for their valuable pelts

[8]Personal communication with Kesler Woodward, Professor Emeritus of Art, University of Alaska Fairbanks, January 16, 2001.

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since Russian times, their natural history was unknown. One of the first tasks Elliott set himself to was a fur seal census.[9] While surveying and mapping the islands and the rookeries, Elliott devised a method for conducting a census of the breeding seals. Noting that they appeared to follow a natural law of distribution on the breeding grounds, he estimated that each seal occupied approximately two square feet of surface.[10] By determining a rookery's size in square feet, then, Elliott could estimate the number of seals occupying a particular breeding ground. Using this method in 1872 on St. Paul and in 1873 on St. George, he counted more than three million breeding seals.[11] Elliott had less success with the non-breeding seals that moved around too frequently for him to employ his square-footage census. Even so, he estimated that their numbers were 1,500,000 strong. This estimate brought the total number of Pribilof Island fur seals to almost 4,700,000 animals.[12]

Other Diversions

Despite his preoccupation with the natural history of the islands, Elliott found time to fall in love. After a brief courtship he married Alexandra Melovidova, a young

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[9]It is important to realize that Elliott's census estimate from 1872-1874 was about two million seals too high. The total number of seals at this time is believed to have been around 2,500,000 instead of the 4,700,000 animals Elliott projected. As the herd declined through the years, however, Elliott's estimates became more accurate.

[10]Robert L. Shalkop, Henry Wood Elliott 1846-1930, 11.

[11]Elliott found 3,193,670 breeding seals on the Pribilofs for the 1872-73 seasons and rechecked this figure in 1874.

[12]Henry W. Elliott, The Seal-Islands of Alaska (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1976 [1881]), 62.

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woman of Russian-Native (Creole) ancestry.[13] Aware that Alexandra's Native blood would make it harder for Victorian society and his family to look favorably upon the union, he seems to have felt the need to present his bride as civilized. As he wrote to William Dall, another Smithsonian naturalist:

> . . . as we have a good piano here and Mrs. Bryants (sic.) society I think I [Elliott] shall make quite a woman for any position in life, even though she was born and raised in Alaska; her physique is superb and she is exceedingly quick and ambitious of learning. She is my voucher of no uncertain signature for the Russian language, which I now begin to use quite freely.[14]

Little else is known about Alexandra's activities during this 1872-74 period. In the meantime, Elliott, content with his marriage and with the fascinating kaleidoscope of life on the Pribilofs continued his seal study and treasury agent duties.

The Artist

Unlike many artists whose work shows a steady ascent to a point later in their career, Elliott's artistic abilities reached its peak during his 1872-74 Pribilof visit.[15] Flushed with his artistic output after one month of residence on the islands, he confided

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[13]Sources differ on Alexandra's ethnicity. Margaret Butler, author of The Lakewood Story states that Alexandra's mother was Spanish but offers no ethnicity for her father except to mention that he worked for the Russian governor. Pribilof Island Log Books kept by the Treasury Agents state that her father was a Russian Creole who lived and worked as a storekeeper for the Russian-American Company on St. Paul Island. Robert Shalkop, author of Henry Wood Elliott 1846-1930, who examined the vital statistics of the Alaska Russian Church, states that the family was mostly Russian with Russian-born grandfathers on the paternal side. Alexandra's mother is listed as a Creole (Russian and Native blood). Alexandra and her siblings were born in Sitka. For the purposes of this paper I have followed Shalkop's research.

[14]William H. Dall Papers, RU 7073, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Box 10, Folder 10, Letter from Elliott to Dall, July 22, 1872.

[15]Elliott did not paint for art's sake alone. He seems to have needed a reason, like a commission or expedition, to paint. Since he only painted during very specific times and not continually throughout his career, he does not follow the normal artistic learning curve. While other artists learn and grow, reach a heyday, followed by a decline of sorts, Henry Elliott learns, reaches his 1872 heyday, and stays put. His style and manner of painting remain consistent throughout his life but he does not artistically progress beyond it.

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to Spencer Baird that when he completed his sojourn on the islands he intended to resign his government position to become a full-time artist ". . . for I have already made such progress with the management of color during the past winter that I do not fear entering into competition with the best of our artists."[16]

This confidence suggests an unresolved internal conflict that Elliott battled most of his life. On one hand, he desperately wanted to be a full-time artist or at the least, be recognized for his artistic achievements. On the other, his interest in science, fostered by his years at the Smithsonian and two expeditions, pointed towards a career as a documentary artist. Elliott's watercolors reveal an artist in superb control of his medium, but the detailed captions and landscape markers he wrote on the mounts or backing transform his works into visual documents. Elliott may have truly wanted people to see his works as art, but the effusive, yet detailed, glosses that usually accompanied these pieces effectively derailed this desire.[17]

Elliott was one of the first American artists to work in Alaska and certainly the most prolific. His output during the 1872-74 period was prodigious. Following his first year on the islands, he reportedly shipped two to three hundred paintings and drawings back to Washington, D.C.[18] Exactly why Elliott felt compelled to paint so many pieces is a matter of conjecture. Perhaps he was impelled by the novelty of the Pribilof

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[16]Letter from Elliott to Baird, May 1872, Spencer F. Baird Papers, RU 7002, Smithsonian Institution Archives. Courtesy of Carl Droppers.

[17]This statement is not meant to be an aesthetic judgment but an explanation of Elliott's career choices. Elliott's documentary habits seem to have prevented him from fully entering into an artistic career.

[18]Robert L. Shalkop, Henry Wood Elliott 1846-1930, 5.

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environment and his dream to become a full-time artist. Whatever the reason, Elliott intended his watercolors as informational but apparently thought they had independent value as works of art as well.

Elliott's Images of the Aleuts

Henry Wood Elliott's images of the Aleut people constitute an important, virtually unexamined part of his work, though less well known than his images of fur seals and landscapes. An examination of these paintings offers valuable information about the life of a little-known Alaska Native people during the final quarter of the nineteenth-century.

Several images show the accommodation of the peoples' indigenous life ways to the incursions of western culture. For instance, *Village of Ounalashka* (sic.), (1872) (Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum, 17-212) (Fig. 3.1) depicts the settlement from the inner harbor. The tranquil scene with the Makushin Volcano steaming in the right middle distance shows the Aleuts in the process of acculturating to Euro-American culture. Two *bidarkas*, or kayaks, with fishermen in *kamleikas*, or gut parkas, frame the image on the right while behind them a U.S. government supply ship anchors in the harbor. The church, Alaska Commercial Company warehouses, and other buildings are all clearly delineated but do not seem to obtrude. The Native people continue subsistence fishing despite the flow of imported goods from the ship. They seem to be accommodating their cultural identity to the one represented by the company buildings.

Elliott's depictions of the interior of Aleut dwellings also indicate the blending of western and Native cultures. *The Interior of Luka's Hut*, (1872) (Phoebe Apperson

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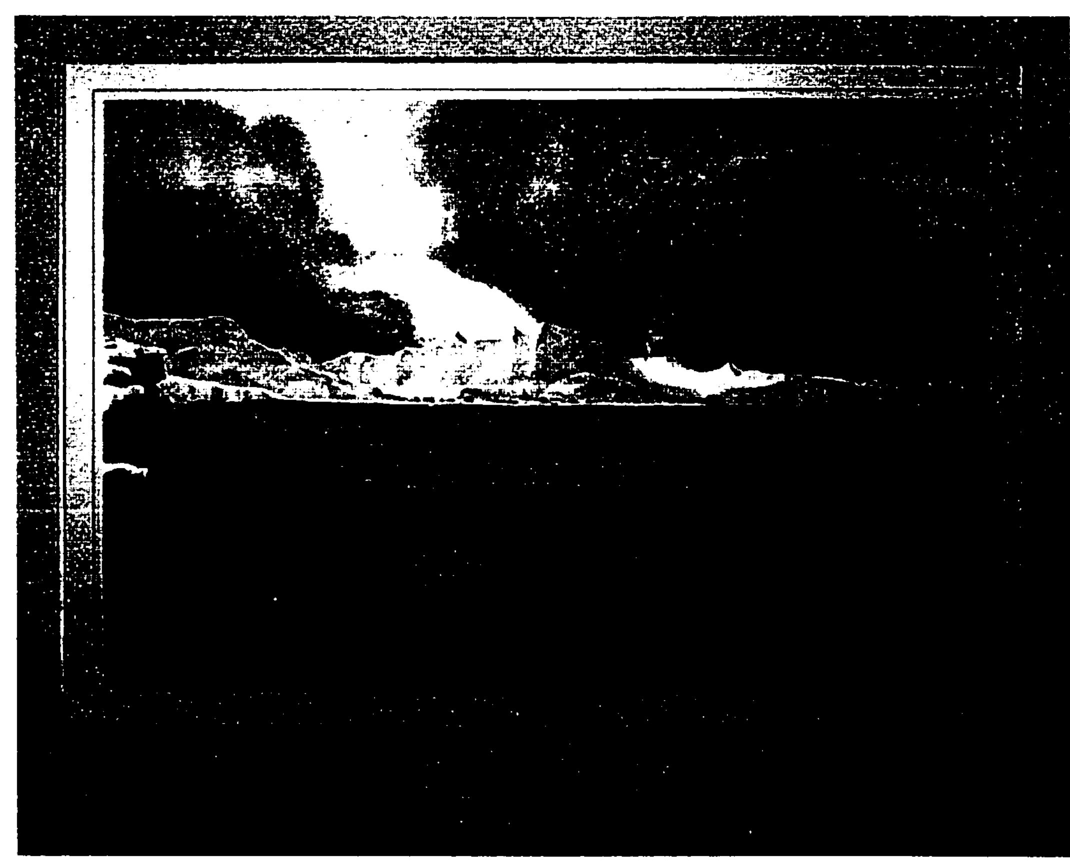

Fig. 3.1. "Village of Ounalashka," 1872. 20 x 26 inches. Watercolor. Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum. 17-212.

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Hearst Museum, 17-233), for example, shows a cozy *barabara*, or a semi-subterranean house. According to Elliott's caption, the two sleeping men await the New Year. Since the clock on the wall indicates that the time is 11:37 p.m., it seems unlikely that they will accomplish this. The interior is furnished with a blend of local and introduced material objects. On the left, a cast-iron stove provides heat and hot water for tea. The two men sit asleep near a table draped with a white cloth. The man on the left wears *tarbosars*, or boots made of sea lion pelt, whereas his shirt and pants are western in style. Candles and a seal-oil lamp illuminate this domestic scene as a little tabby cat watches the sleeping men. We may assume that in this dwelling most of the household implements came from the Russian-American or Alaska Commercial Company store. However, dependence on imported company goods has not completely eradicated the former way of life, as the seal-oil lamp, the tarbosars, and the house itself testify.

Aleutian Boy 'Lok', (1872) (Phoebe Apperson Heart Museum, 17-232) (Fig. 3.2) is a rare full-length portrait. Lok, a young boy dressed entirely in western-style garments, holds a glass and pitcher in the kitchen of what appears to be a company-built frame house. His round face is exquisitely rendered and he has intelligent, bright eyes, a thoughtful expression, and dark hair. Behind the boy is a table laid for a meal. Steam rises from a bowl wrapped in a cloth and there is a plate of what appear to be potatoes. A broom, towel, ladle, a bottle, barrel, and a washbasin complete the inventory. All of the household items appear to be of western manufacture. Thus it seems that Elliott's images show the Pribilof Aleuts in a state of change. Given that the Alaska Commercial Company moved onto the islands in 1870 and Elliott arrived in 1872, the transitional

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Fig. 3.2. “Aleutian Boy ‘Lok,’” 1872. 22 x 16 inches. Watercolor. Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum. 17-232.

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state of Pribilof Island culture seems likely. From barabaras to frame houses, company buildings and baidarkas, the people seem to be in the process of adapting into Euro-American culture.

Elliott's images reveal that the Alaska Commercial Company was not the only outsider interested in construction in 1872. The federal government had also sent materials for a treasury agents' house. *Treasury Agents Dwelling*, (1872) (University of Alaska Museum, UA1995:068:001) (Fig. 3.3) is a pen and ink sketch of a Georgian-style frame house that Elliott and Captain Charles Bryant completed in October of 1872.[19] Both Henry and Alexandra Elliott and Charles and Mrs. Bryant spent the winter of 1872-73 in this house. The house was certainly more imposing than the frame dwellings of the Native people. Since the construction of these houses continued throughout the 1870s, several members of the Native population still lived in barabaras in 1872. In Elliott's drawing, an outline of one of the semi-subterranean structures appears in the right middle ground as a person walks on top of its roof, a characteristic activity in traditional barabara villages.[20]

Images of Sealing

Henry Elliott's fur seals and images of sealing may be better known than some of the previously discussed works. The Pribilof Islanders, however, were the sole labor force in the seal harvest so Aleut people appear in these paintings of commercial

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[19]Letter from Elliott to Baird, May 1873, Spencer F. Baird Collection, RU 7002, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Courtesy of Carl Droppers.

[20]See John Frazier Henry's Early Maritime Artists of the Pacific Northwest Coast (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), p. 1 for an image of Native people standing on top of their barabara by Luka Voronin, a member of the Billings Expedition of 1787-92.

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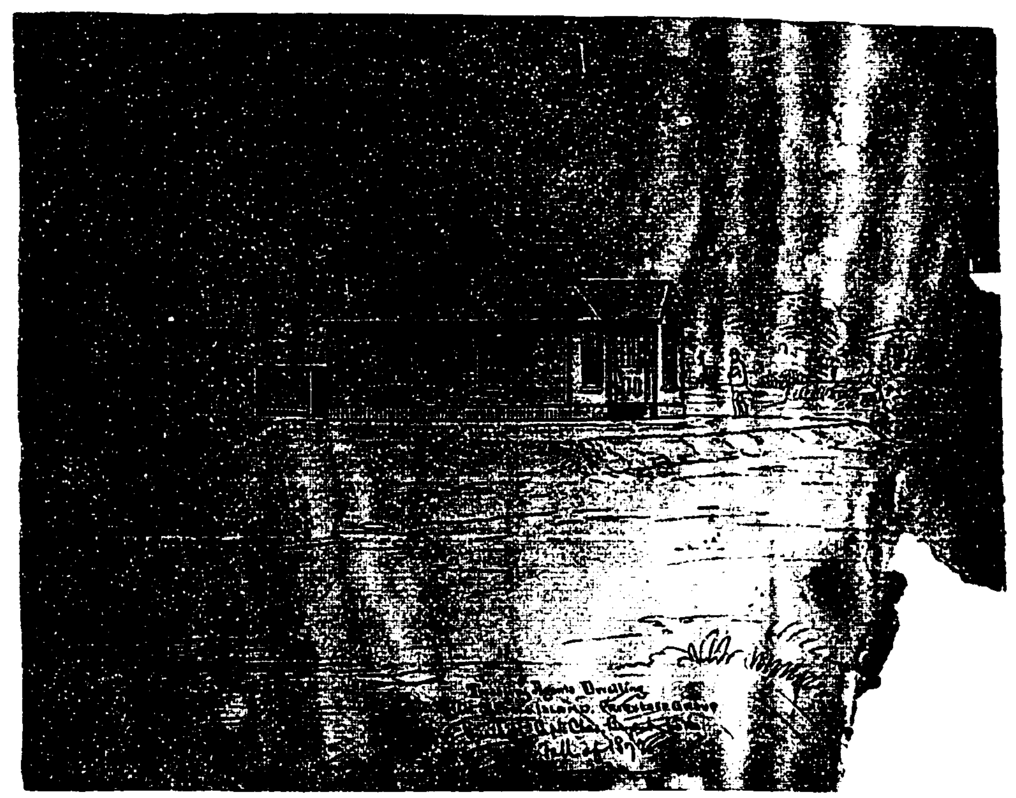

Fig. 3.3. "Treasury Agents Dwelling," 1872. 8.5 x 10 inches. Pen and Ink. University of Alaska Museum. UA1995:068:001

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activities perforce. As an assistant treasury agent, Elliott supervised the seal business and had many opportunities for observing the operations. Not surprisingly, his work documents every aspect of the harvest; the capturing, driving, and slaughter that preceded preparation of the fur seal pelts for shipment to furriers in London or New York. Thus this sub-group of images documents both ethnographic and commercial events.

Capturing Fur Seals, (1872) (Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum, 17-229A) documents the first step in the commercial harvest, which for the men, is to gather a pod of young male or bachelor seals. It shows five men selecting a group of seals. One man stands with his back to the viewer while the other four men, seen at a distance, stand facing the viewer with the water behind them, forcing the seals to move up on the beach and prevent them from escaping into the sea. The lack of figure-to-viewer interaction excludes the observer from participating in the seal capture and creates a sense of detachment from the scene.

Driving Fur Seals (1872) (17-229B) takes up the narrative. After gathering a pod of seals, the men need to maneuver them to the killing grounds. The watercolor shows two men moving a group of bachelor seals by waving their raised arms or swinging sticks. A few skeletons of exhausted seals that died on prior drives litter the landscape. The bones presage the end in store for these animals. But these are not depressing images. Both exude a calm and tranquility that neutralizes the potentially disturbing reality of the paintings.

Below the titles of his works, Elliott often wrote lengthy captions describing the action. In *Starting the Drive*, (1872) (Cleveland Museum of Natural History, FA80), for

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instance, the Aleut drivers round up a pod of seals with long red poles. The exhalations of the animals are visible in the beautiful idyllic landscape. Beneath the title Elliott explains, "This is the method of rounding out 2,500 to 7000 choice holluschickie [anglicized Russian term for bachelor seals] for the days (sic.) killing. These seals are being turned away from the sea, and inland. The surf is not more than 500 feet away from these drivers, and these seals in the foreground."[21] Elliott's detailed notations on the images or on the backings give these works historical value.

Elliott minimized potentially disturbing aspects of the slaughter. This is evident in two works: *Killing Fur Seals. Near the Village of St. Paul's*, (1872) (University of Alaska Museum, UA482-4B) and *The Killing Gang at Work*, (1872) (Phoebe Apperson Heart Museum, 17-228). In the first painting a group of men dispatch a bachelor-seal pod by clubbing the animals over the head with five-foot long hickory clubs. Skinned carcasses litter the ground. Elliott diffuses the disturbing aspects of this image by minimizing or sometimes even eliminating the blood, keeping the peoples' actions and the landscape itself calm and serene, and almost never letting the viewer participate in the action or even have their presence acknowledged. He does this by placing the bloody activity in the middle distance, eschewing detail, maintaining a cool color scheme, and eliminating hard lines through soft handling of the watercolor paints.

In the 1870s, as they had as far back as history records, the Aleut people hunted the sea lion for food and raw materials. Elliott documented these hunts in his watercolors. *Natives Creeping Between a Sea Lion Herd and the Water on the North*

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[21]Henry Wood Elliott Fine Art Collection, "Starting the Drive," 1872, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, FA 80.

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East Point of St. Pauls Island, (1872) (Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum, 17-222) (Fig. 3.4) shows a pod of sea lions resting on a spit of land while five identically dressed men crawl on their stomachs along the beach to ambush them. The hunters frighten the sea lions by gunshot and force them back onto the shore, where other men drive them into a pen as illustrated in *Natives Capturing Sea Lions. Midnight. November 18, 1872*, (17-224). The men kept the animals in enclosures created by thrusting stakes into the ground with rope wound around them, tying pieces of cloth to the top of the poles. This flimsy structure sufficed to keep the enormous animals in one place. When the hunters had captured the desired number, they drove them back to the village.

In *Halt of the Sea Lion Herd preparatory to driving through the Big Lake on the North Side of St. Paul's Island. November 20, 1872* (University of Alaska Museum, UA482-3), two men play cards while sea lions rest in a red-flagged enclosure. Like the fur seals, sea lions overheat easily on an overland drive and must be allowed to cool down periodically. Hunters drove the animals from Northeast Point all the way to the village, a distance of 13.5 miles, using the lakes and ponds along the way to speed the process. The animals were so large that it was easier for the villagers to have the sea lions transport themselves to the killing grounds than it was to carry the carcasses from Northeast Point.

The villagers shot the enormous male sea lions on the killing grounds and speared the smaller sea lion cows. *Spearing the Sea Lion Cows, 'the Death Whorl'*, (1872) (Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum, 17-223) is one of Elliott's more violent images. Elliott writes, ". . . the cows. . . are in turn surrounded by the natives, who, dropping their

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Fig. 3.4. "Natives Creeping Between A Sea Lion Herd and the Water on the North East Point of St. Paul's Island," 1872. 20 x 26 inches. Watercolor. Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum. 17-222.

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rifles, thrust the heavy iron lances into their trembling bodies at a point behind the fore-flippers, touching the heart with a single lunge. It is an unparalleled spectacle, dreadfully cruel and bloody."[22] Two sea lion carcasses lie in the foreground while a group of Aleut men spear a pod of sea lion cows that pile on top of each other in an effort to escape. Two women and a little girl patiently wait to process the bodies. For animals meeting such a violent end, there is remarkably little blood. Elliott painted thin red trickles on some of the cows but not the amount that would actually have resulted from a thrust spear. Both women and the child seem unconcerned which suggest that Elliott deliberately avoided unpleasant events, and minimized them to such an extent that the watercolors often act as dispassionate chronicles.

Elliott's images of the Aleuts, then, are a visual record of the people incorporating the material goods and ideals of Victorian America into their Aleut-Russian way of life. At the same time, however, these paintings and sketches also reflect Elliott's emotional state. By minimizing potentially unpleasant details in his works, he depicts the Pribilofs as a beautiful, idyllic, safe haven despite the seasonal violence. As we shall see, this tendency is even more apparent in his images of the fur seals.

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[22]Henry W. Elliott, "The Sea-Lion Hunt," In Goode, George Brown, ed. U.S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries, The Fisheries and Fishery Industries of the United States (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1887), Section 5, Volume 2, 471.

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Chapter Four

"The Fur Seal Millions."

While the activities of the Aleut people, their material culture, and the commercial business on the Pribilof Islands interested Elliott, they were not his primary focus. That honor goes to the fur seals. Elliott's images of these animals tend to be more artistic than documentary, but not by much. The fur seal paintings and sketches not only record their life history, attitudes, and habits, but also reflect Elliott's emotional identification with them. This chapter will discuss Elliott's images of the fur seals to explore the artist's way of seeing the animal residents of the Pribilof Islands.

The Victorian Perception of Animals

Henry Elliott's fascination for the fur seals was partly personal but also appears to have mirrored a shift in people's general attitudes towards animals during the late nineteenth-century. Understanding this change is fundamental both to understanding Elliott's work and to explaining why his crusade to preserve the seals succeeded.

The fur seals, with their round, plump forms and large eyes lend themselves easily to artistic exploration. Elliott, however, saw something truly beautiful in the fur seals; a sentiment most of his contemporaries did not share. His very modern feelings for the natural world did not reflect those of Victorian America, which regarded animals in a different light.

In 1215, when the Magna Carta was signed, animals fell into two classifications: domestic or wild. Legally, animals that had been tamed, bred, and, more importantly,

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had economic usefulness, were classified as domestic; those remaining were considered wild. Normally, "domestic" applied only to farmyard animals.

Nineteenth-century movements of Euro-Americans from rural to urban areas altered people's views about animals. Whereas people in a rural setting perceived animals as entirely utilitarian, those in urban centers, who were divorced from daily contact with animals, began to conceptualize them as living beings worthy of humane treatment. It is not surprising, then, that some of the first legislation for the kind treatment of domestic animals in the United States was for the much-abused cart horses in the nation's cities.[1] As mechanized vehicles such as trains gradually replaced the need for cart horses, and people in cities became further separated from the animal world, the numbers of Americans who began to keep pets increased.[2] This seems to reflect a shift from a utilitarian perspective to a more emotional attachment about animals.

A tendency to neotenize animals also developed during this time creating ". . .a picture of animals as innocent children: cute and unspoiled, but in need of protection by more rational beings-us."[3] The human preference for animals whose offspring resemble human babies seems to determine the success or failure of conservation efforts.[4] Traits people associate with "loveable" animals are large eyes and soft fur. The fur seals seem perfectly tailored to fit the rubric.

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[1]Lilly-Marlene Russow, "Changing Perceptions of Animals: A Philosophical View," In Perceptions of Animals in American Culture, R. J. Hoage, ed. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 31.

[2]Ibid., 31.

[3]Ibid., 33.

[4]Fiona Sundquist, "Who's Cute, Cuddly and Charismatic?" International Wildlife 22, no. 6 (November 1992), 6.

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In the 1870s, when Elliott embarked upon his study, the majority of people in Victorian America may not have felt much emotional attachment to animals, though some type of movement had begun by the turn of the century. Nathaniel Shaler, a contemporary of Elliott's, wrote in 1895 that legislation for the humane treatment of animals had only just begun to appear. This development, ". . . originated in the recognition of the essential likeness of the minds of the lower animals to our own. But it has been greatly reënforced by the teachings of the naturalists to the effect that all the life of this sphere is akin in its origin and that our subjects are not very far away from our own ancestral line."[5] Shaler continued by pointing out that the movement for the humane protection of domesticated animals began with public opinion.[6] Apparently, wild animals did not benefit from this change and the sympathy probably did not extend to them. Interestingly, Shaler believes seals to be potential candidates for domestication because of their seemingly docile nature. He enthusiastically wrote that since seals consume fish, a trained animal could assist fishermen with their catch.[7]

Since the fur seals behaved like domesticated sheep during a drive, people tended to forget that the animals were wild. Sentiment for the seals seems to have arisen from the apparent "docile" nature of the bachelor seals. For instance, Eliza Scidmore wrote:

> The method of killing [the seals] has nothing heroic or huntsmanlike about it. The natives (sic) start out before dawn, and, running down the shore, get between the sleeping seals and the water, and then drive them, as they would so many

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[5]Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, Domesticated Animals: Their Relation to Man and to His Advancement in Civilization (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895; reprint 1907), 208-9.

[6]Ibid., 210.

[7]Ibid., 245.

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> sheep, to the killing-ground. . . . When the poor, tame things have reached their death-ground, the natives (sic) go round with heavy clubs and kill them with one blow on the head.[8]

Thus, the fur seals inspired considerable sympathy. When the revenue cutter *Rush* stopped in 1889 during its patrol, Isabel Sharpe Shepard witnessed a seal drive on St. George. "It seems so brutal to kill them," she remarked, "they are so harmless, and have such a human look about the eyes."[9]

Thus, Victorian Americans identified with domestic animals or potential candidates for domestication, whereas the wild ones were not elevated. Elliott, however, seems to have enlarged this domesticated category to include the fur seals. His emotional attachment is clear in both his writings and images. For example, Elliott observed:

> The head and eye of the female are exceedingly beautiful; the expression is really attractive, gentle, and intelligent; the large, lustrous, blue-black eyes are humid and soft with the tenderest (sic.) expression, while the small, well formed head is poised as gracefully on her neck as can be well imagined . . .[10]

His reactions to the pup seals are similar:

> [The pups' eye] is exceedingly clear, dark, and liquid, with which, for beauty and amiability, together with real intelligence of expression, those of no other animal that I have ever seen, or have ever read of, can be compared; indeed, there are few eyes in the orbits of men and women which suggest more pleasantly the ancient thought of their being 'windows to the soul.'[11]

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[8]Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore, Alaska: Its Southern Coast and the Sitkan Archipelago (Boston: D. Lothrop and Company, 1885), 310.

[9]Isabel Sharpe Shepard, The Cruise of the U.S. Steamer "Rush" in Behring Sea, Summer of 1889 (San Francisco: Bancroft Company, 1889), 143. Microfiche.

[10]Henry W. Elliott, The Seal-Islands of Alaska (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1976, reprinted from 1881), 35.

[11]Ibid., 41.

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Elliott's emotional attachment is clear, though he probably would not have publicly admitted it. Extending the Victorian attitude to include wild creatures along with the domesticated suggests that Elliott was ahead of his time in environmental sentiment and it is reflected in some of his fur seal images. Although the watercolors from this trip are a visual documentary of fur seal life, they also present the Pribilof Islands as a virtual Eden, swarming with appealing animals, whose numbers stagger the viewer.

The Fur Seal Life Cycle

Since Elliott's images exhibit strong tendencies towards documentation, a discussion of the natural history of the fur seal, and their harvest during the late nineteenth-century will be helpful. In April the animals begin to migrate north to their breeding grounds after having spent the winter at sea. The main herd sets out for the Pribilof Islands while the rest congregate on the Commander Islands, Robben Island, and the Kuriles in the western Bering Sea. The male seals or bulls arrive first, haul up, and while awaiting the females or cows, begin the battle for territory. The bull seals' disputes over breeding real estate are clearly illustrated in Elliott's *The Lords of the Harems*, (1872) (Cleveland Museum of Natural History, FA30).

At the beginning of June, the female seals arrive at the islands, and the bulls compete to entice them to join their harems. They jealously guard the cows from other male seals, trying to prevent their defection. Soon after landing at the rookery, the female gives birth to a single black pup. She will breed again shortly thereafter, since fur seals are bi-uteral. Once the females have arrived and given birth, the seal rookeries are at the

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height of the season. The noise and vitality; the sheer majestic size of the herds is almost incomprehensible. It is ably illustrated in Elliott's 1872-3 images, such as *Seal Rookery*, (1872) (Phoebe Apperson Hearst, 17-234).

Born in June and July, the pups are unable to swim during their first few months of life. The cows spend the majority of the summer feeding and nursing their young. The mother seals leave the pups on the rookeries for several days at a time while they hunt for food. If the female dies, so will the pup, since no other cow will nurse it. Males and females are born in equal numbers, but only one male is needed to mate with approximately thirty females.[12]

Younger male seals or bachelors, the target of the sealing operations because of their prime pelts, pod together at the rear of the rookeries, on the hauling grounds, to avoid the older animals' fierce fighting for breeding territory. Elliott illustrates this seal stratification in *Fur Seal Parade*, (1872), (Cleveland Museum of Natural History, FA11). Toward the middle of September the rookeries break up, the pups learn to swim, and the seals remain in the area, swimming and feeding along the coasts until the migration back south begins in November. By April they begin their northern trek again, completing their annual rounds.

The fur seal harvest opened in July. It got underway when the Pribilof Aleuts drove the bachelor seals from their hauling grounds to the killing field, where the men clubbed them on the head with five-foot long hickory sticks. Other workers stabbed the

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[12]Kurkpatrick Dorsey, The Dawn of Conservation Diplomacy: U.S.-Canadian Wildlife Protection Treaties in the Progressive Era (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1998), 111.

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insensate seals in the heart, and another group of laborers skinned the carcasses for their pelts. The harvesters left the bodies on the killing field to rot because there was no other disposal system.

Workers placed the skins in a salt-ketch, flesh-side down for curing and after two weeks bundled them for shipment. Treasury Agents counted the skins, and Aleut laborers bundled them for shipment to San Francisco where they were again counted, re-salted, re-bundled and barreled before being shipped to the London or New York furriers. The process of dressing a raw skin into a luxury fur was so labor-intensive that the United States preferred to send nine-tenths of the catch to London where labor costs were lower.[13]

Once at the tanneries, hot sand baths and chemical treatments removed the oil from the skins. This step prevented the fur from matting and dulling. A machine then removed the coarse guard hairs from the pelt, revealing the luxuriant under-fur. Six or more coats of dye colored the pelt.[14] The dressed sealskins then re-entered the United States, where furriers purchased them and made them into coats, stoles, wraps, hats, muffs, and trim.

Elliott's art not only provides a visual documentary of the Pribilof Island fur seal life, it also chronicles his adventures on the islands, thereby functioning as a kind of journal. One also senses that if there were a heaven on earth, for Henry Elliott it would

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[13]The remaining one-tenth went to New York for handling. The reason for this is unclear, especially when London had lower labor costs. See Henry W. Elliott, Our Arctic Province (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886), 349.

[14]Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore, Alaska: Its Southern Coast and the Sitkan Archipelago (Boston: D. Lothrop and Company, 1885), 312.

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be on the Pribilof Islands. The plentiful animal life, spectacular landscapes with dramatic colors and weather patterns, as well as the frequent use of God's light or the streamers of sunlight caressing the earth or sea, suggests a northern landscape paradise. This is evident in many of Elliott's early images.

Other Animals and Elliott's Working Methods

Fur seals were not the only animals to capture Elliott's attention. For example, many sketches and paintings of walrus and birds came out of a July 4-5, 1872 visit to Walrus Island off the coast of St. Paul. What makes this series remarkable are the extant sketches and color notes that preceded them, now deposited at the Washington State Historical Society. Combined with the finished watercolors, they give an indication of Elliott's working methods.[15]

Walrus Islet, July 4, 1872, (Washington State Historical Society, Henry Wood Elliott Collection, Box 3, Folder 2) (Fig. 4.1) gives rare insight into Elliott's working methods. It is a pencil sketch of walrus bulls resting and sunbathing. Elliott annotated the study with color notes for a future painting. On the rocky ledge at the left he wrote, "dk reddish lava into shelves of blue black."[16] At the top of the paper he penciled, "Each

[15]According to an article written for the January 30, 1875 The American Sportsman (Vol. 5, p. 273-274), Henry Elliott found the walrus repugnant. "It is difficult to conceive," he writes, "of a more clumsy or grossly ugly beast than is a full-grown walrus bull of Bering Sea,--it suggests unwholesomeness. . . , with its hairless, raw, yellowish pimply hide, bloated and distended with oil, so much that. . . the animal. . . has the appearance of death and advanced decay" (p. 273). Elliott's sketches and watercolors of these bulls, however, tell another tale. The corpulent animals sprawled indolently on the flat rocks are exquisitely rendered and are not ugly at all; but are magnificent.

[16]"Walrus Islet, July 4, 1872," Henry W. Elliott Collection, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma, Box 3, Folder 2.

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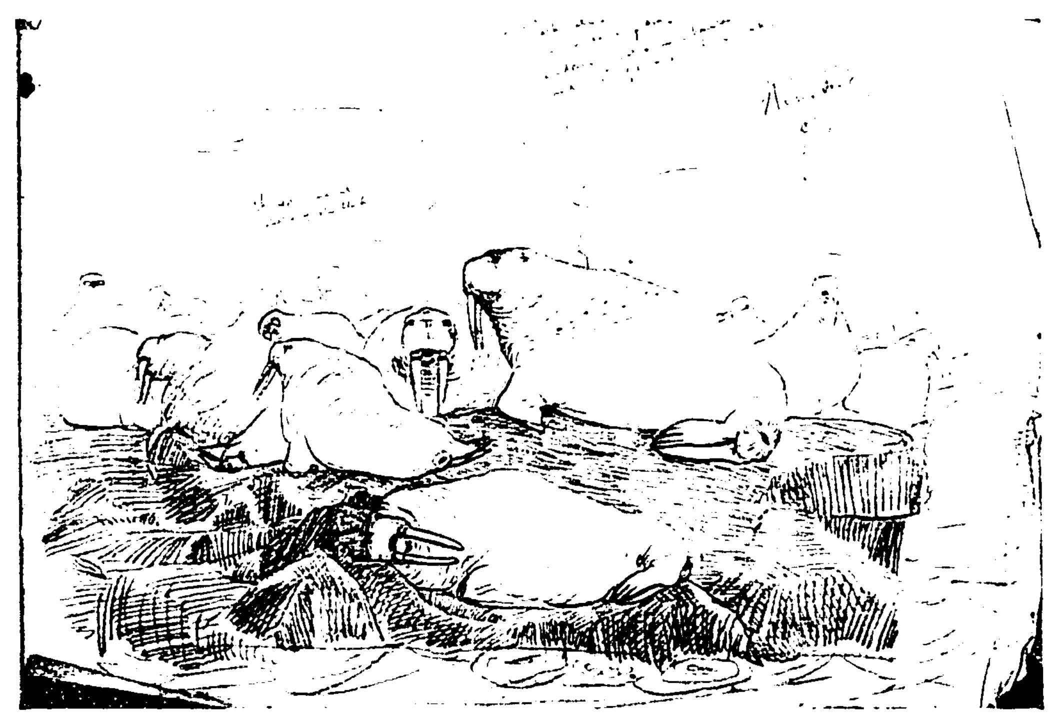

Fig. 4.1. "Walrus Islet, July 4, 1872." Pencil Drawing. Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma. Henry W. Elliott Collection. Box 3. Folder 2.

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walrus shows up like a sack of beans, with a reddish yellow skin-hairless and in strong contrast with the water."[17] This finely executed study, then, indicates that Elliott probably worked with sketches; made notations in watercolor while out in the field; and worked up many of the paintings later.

Herd of Walrus Bulls, (1872) (Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum, 17-225) (Fig. 4.2) one of these finished paintings, features plump, orange-rust colored bulls lolling about on a flat rock. Two people, one of whom might be Elliott, creep along a flat rock outcropping above the walrus to catch a glimpse of some bulls occupying another ledge. Cormorants occupy the highest ledge in the mid-ground and other birds fly about the island. The bulls all have nice white tusks. Later Elliott wrote:

> On this little island [Walrus Island] I have enjoyed a fine opportunity of studying and painting these uncouth animals from life, being able to easily approach to within a slight distance from the flanks of a herd of over five hundred walrus-bulls, which lay closely packed upon a low series of basaltic tables, elevated but little from the surf-wash. I sat upon a small rocky ledge only a few feet above and from four or five heavy bulls, being, however, on the leeward side.[18]

Walrus were not the only animals taking up residence on Walrus Island. This small, flat rock was and still is, one of the largest nesting areas in the world. Bird life abounds in *Sea Bird Rookery*, (1872) (Phoebe Apperson Heart Museum, 17-245). Eggs lie in nests, on rock ledges, and under every rock. In the field of view are white gulls with their eggs in nests on the grass; puffins under a ledge with a single white egg; the guillemot, or murre, which lay a single green egg on a bare rock ledge, and the auk that builds a nest for its white eggs. Far below the birds, near the water's edge, are the walrus

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[17]Ibid.

[18]Henry W. Elliott, "A Report Upon the Condition of Affairs in the Territory of Alaska," In Documents Related to Alaska (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1875), 160.

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Fig. 4.2. “Herd of Walrus Bulls,” 1872. 20 x 26 inches. Watercolor. Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum. 17-225.

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bulls. St. Paul's Polavina hill is visible in the left background. Unlike many of the fur seal images, this scene is alive with activity. The amazing number and variety of animal life on the Pribilof Islands is a theme that pervades the 1872-74 images.

A Northern Paradise

The notion of a landscape paradise pervades many of the watercolors from this period. *Polavina Rookery*, (1872) (Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum, 17-218) (Fig. 4.3) certainly suggests a northern Garden of Eden. Plump fur seal pups, cows, and bulls cover the breeding grounds and Polavina Hill rises green and luxuriant in the left background. Streamers of sunlight caress the bluffs and the green-gray sea. Birds wheel overhead and the young pups scamper about the russet cliffs. This is also one of the few images where Elliott depicts arctic foxes. Lured to the rookeries in search of dead seals to scavenge, the two opportunists hide near a rock. The joyful celebration of life Elliott witnessed as he traversed the rookeries of St. Paul and St. George Islands, coupled with his recent marriage, perhaps led him to see the land as something more than a mere backdrop for fur seals.

Even scenes of the Pribilof Aleut villages suggest Elliott's feelings that the Pribilofs were a paradise on earth. *St. George Village*, (1873) (University of Alaska Museum, UA1995:005:001) shows the town from off shore on an unusually beautiful Pribilof Island day. The sea and sky are calm and blue, birds bob on the water and circle overhead, and the village itself quaintly sits on the bluff. Since the only place for the viewer to stand is the sea, he/she has no place in this depicted world despite St. George's

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Fig. 4.3. "Polavina Rookery," 1872. 12 x 18 inches. Watercolor. Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum. 17-218.

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inviting appearance. The lack of interaction creates a timeless, otherworldly feel to this and many other early images.

Nevertheless, Elliott often paints himself into his watercolors. In several instances it helps communicate to the viewer the scale of the landscape or its subject material. However, many of the works do not require the use of this device, as relative sizes can be easily deduced. The recurrence of these self-portraits, then, might be a kind of ownership mark. Since the viewer is not always invited to enter a scene, the self-portrait may be seen as a device to indicate that the depicted world is one that Elliott may traverse at will but not the viewer. Whatever the reason, in most of these images, the Elliott figure is normally sketching.

Elliott uses his self-portrait device for other purposes too. In *Parade Ground of Fur Seal Pups*, (1872) (University of Alaska Museum, UA482-1) (Fig. 4.4), perhaps one of the most charming works, the Elliott figure stands bemused, holding his sketchbooks at his side while watching a pod of fur seal pups mill about him. Seals are everywhere in this image, behind the young pups, on the cliffs, and off to the right. The teeming life and the suggestion of the noise coming from so many animals staggers the viewer. Through it all, the Elliott figure simply stands and merely watches. That the fur seal could silence the voluble Elliott suggests that to him, they were more than just a luxury fur source.

Later, at another rookery, he wrote:

> Looking at the myriads (sic.) of 'bachelor seals' spread out in their restless hundreds and hundreds of thousands upon this ground, one feels the utter

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Fig. 4.4. "Parade Ground of Fur Seal Pups," 1872. 12 x 18. Watercolor. University of Alaska Museum. UA482-1.

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> impotency (sic.) of verbal description, and reluctantly shuts his note- and sketch-books to gaze upon it with renewed fascination and perfect helplessness. [19]

To summarize, Henry Elliott's fur seal images not only provide a visual record of the animals' life and life cycle, they also suggest some of the innermost thoughts of the artist. As the above quote amply illustrates, Elliott saw the masses of seals as almost sacred. A return visit to his enchanted islands in 1874 would only reinforce Elliott's beliefs and effectively make him the nation's fur seal expert.

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[19]Henry W. Elliott, The Seal Islands of Alaska (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1976; reprint from 1881), 54.

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Chapter Five

The Fur Seal Expert[1]

Henry Wood Elliott's campaign to save the fur seals would not have succeeded without public support. For a person to achieve nationwide recognition in Victorian America, one either had to write or be written about, before word-of-mouth could take over. Through his lavishly illustrated articles and books, Elliott effectively became the nation's fur seal expert. It is the illustrations in these works, however, and not the written polemic, which earned Elliott both fame and notoriety. This chapter examines Elliott's ascent as the fur seal expert and discusses the writings that won him a public following.

After spending a year and seven months on the Pribilofs, Henry Elliott returned to Cleveland in October of 1873 with Alexandra and their infant daughter, Grace. Elliott himself was not destined to stay in one place for long, commuting between Cleveland, Washington, DC, and the Pribilofs, but Alexandra remained in Cleveland for most of her life. In 1874, the United States Treasury Department sent Elliott back to the Bering Sea along with Lieutenant Washburn Maynard to visit the trading posts and Native villages, gather information on the fur seals and its range, and look into rumored reports that sealers from Victoria, British Columbia had encroached on American soil to engage in pelagic or open-ocean sealing. Specifically, Elliott was to study the fur seals while Maynard was to examine and report on the Alaska Commercial Company's compliance with their Pribilof lease agreement, which had aroused controversy since its award

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[1]Parts of this chapter have been previously published in "History Remembers Henry Wood Elliott," Arctic Studies Center Newsletter, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, 8(August 2000): 20-21.

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because of the staggering profits.[2] Each was to submit separate reports. The two visited Unalaska, the Pribilof Islands, St. Matthew Island, St. Lawrence Island, the Diomedes, St. Michael, Cape Romanov, and Nunivak Island.[3]

In 1875, Elliott's A Report Upon the Condition of Affairs in the Territory of Alaska was printed. In it, Elliott indicated that Alaska's only profitable resource was the fur trade, and at that time he was essentially correct. Mineral resources had not yet been exploited and in the nineteenth-century, timber, though abundant, could not be easily transported. Still, Elliott's conclusion incensed the few non-Native Alaska boosters making a living in the Territory.

As far as the fur seals were concerned, Elliott's report found them in fine health and concluded:

> . . . as long as matters are conducted on the Seal Islands as they now are, one hundred thousand male seals, under the age of 5 years and over one, may be safely taken every year without the slightest injury to the regular birth-rate or natural increase, provided the animals are not visited by any plague or pestilence, or any such abnormal cause for their destruction, beyond the control of man, and to which, like any other great body of animal life, they must ever be subject.[4]

Maynard, for his part, agreed with Elliott's conclusions about the fur seals, but recommended that the 1874 maps made by Elliott and himself, and also Elliott's 1872 maps, be enlarged and distributed to future Treasury Agents so that ". . . the fisheries can

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[2]U.S. Treasury Department, "Seal-Fisheries in Alaska," In U.S. Congress, House. Documents Related to Alaska, H.R. Executive Document no. 83, 44th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1875), 122.

[3]A proposed visit to the Commander Islands and the Kuriles had to be postponed because the revenue cutter *Walcott* was unavailable.

[4]Henry W. Elliott, "A Report Upon the Condition of Affairs in the Territory of Alaska," In Documents Related to Alaska (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1875), 87.

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be regulated with comparative certainty, so as to produce the greatest revenue to the Government without injury to the seals."[5] Obviously, Maynard foresaw the potential for damage to the seal herds.

The 1874 Images

Elliott pursued other interests while on the 1874 survey. For the Smithsonian Institution, he made the first artifact collection from St. Lawrence Island.[6] He also painted many watercolors and sketches. For Elliott, each visit to Alaska inspired his artistic and scientific interests. The 1874 images are some of the first created by an American of the islands and trading posts north and east of the Pribilofs.

Like his 1872-73 works, Elliott depicts these weather-variable regions in a calm, serene manner. *The Island of Oonemak* (sic.), (1874) (Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum, 17-231) is an excellent illustration. This image is of the Unimak Pass, a narrow strait separating the North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea. Murres bob in calm waters while the verdant and mountainous landscape of Unimak Island rises in the distance. Through the Strait of Unimak is glimpsed the Bering Sea. This idyllic, serene seascape appears to be brimming with opportunity, but as with Elliott's 1872-73 images is not one that the observer is invited to share.

Elliott did not altogether neglect the Pribilofs on this expedition, however. *Gayorgie* (sic.), (1874) (Cleveland Museum of Natural History, FA16) (Fig. 5.1) is an

[5]U.S. Treasury Department, Special Agents Division, Seal and Salmon Fisheries and General Resources of Alaska, Vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1898), 293.

[6]This may have been the result of another verbal commission from Spencer Baird. The collection consisted of articles such as sleigh-runners, a fish spear, snowshoes, miniature ivory carvings, a fox trap and wooden human figures. Smithsonian Institution Archives, RU 305, Accession Records, 1834-1958, Box 31, #4333-4624.

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Fig. 5.1. "Gayorgie," 1874. 6.5 x 15 inches. Watercolor. Cleveland Museum of Natural History. FA 16.

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idealized scene of fur seals playing among a school of humpback whales off the coast of St. George Island. Later, Elliott added a legend to the painting. Written on yellow notepaper, he pasted it on the front of the backing, where the viewer would be certain to see it. Because it gives such a vivid impression of Elliott's desire for full documentation, it is worth quoting at length:

> This is a view of the east coast of St. George Island between Tolstoi Mees (sic.) and Waterfall Head. The point of view is about five miles distant at sea from Tolstoi. The characteristic bold elevation of the island is well shown. A small indentation at Garden Cove where the bluffs drop down to about 600 feet of sand beach is the only landing. Although small quantities of driftwood lodge in all points of the coast, yet at Garden Cove and under Waterfall Head, the greatest amount is found. Mostly pine and fur sticks which come over from the Kuskokwim and Nushagak Rivers, 250 miles east from here.
>
> Under the cliffs at Tolstoi Mees, Pribilof's sloop *St.George*, went ashore in a thick fog on one June day in 1786. In this manner and on that day was the island first known to savage or civilized men. Waterfall Head has its name from the only cascade which exhibits itself on the north shore. This cascade only endures while the snow is melting in June and July on the high plateau which the head borders. [See pages 18-19, Monograph, Seal Islands of Alaska].[7]

This elaborate legend transforms the watercolor from a lovely artistic rendering of fur seals and whales to a detailed commentary on the flora, fauna, and history of the Pribilof Islands.

Such lengthy written captions, which appear often in Elliott's work, point to a conflict about his intentions that Elliott never seemed to be able to resolve. Elliott wanted his work to be categorized as art, but still have full value as document. Even more than the modesty of the watercolor medium, Elliott's lengthy descriptive captions may well have been his artistic shortcoming.[8] Every time the viewer opens up to the

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[7] "Gayorgie," 1874, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Legend FA16.

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enjoyment of Elliott's images as art, he or she is forced by the presence of the glosses to consider them as documents.

The 1874 images reflect Elliott's ongoing interest in Alaska's Native people and their culture. On this trip, the Native people he met at the various Alaska Commercial Company outposts, as well as villages throughout the eastern Bering Sea region, inspired many images.

Elliott also expressed his views on Alaska's Native people in his best-selling travel book, Our Arctic Province that was based on his 1874 tour. Like many late-nineteenth-century artists, Elliott stereotypes his Native subjects, using them as a pictorial means of drawing attention to a spectacular landscape. He also focuses primarily on the activities and cultural settings of his subjects in an attempt to record a little-known lifestyle.[9] As Elliott explains:

> . . . the thought will always come unbidden and promptly--these savages were created for the wild surrounding of their existence; expressly for it, and they live happily in it: change this order of their life, and at once they disappear, as do the indigenous herbs and game before the cultivation of the soil and the domestication of animals.[10]

Elliott renders his Native figures as generic types; and generally they resemble each other. For instance, Our Arctic Province shows an approach characteristic of the late-nineteenth-century belief in the validity of physical types. Here, Elliott describes his

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[8]This is not an aesthetic judgment. It is put forward as a possible explanation for Elliott not taking up an artistic career.

[9]Robert J. Moore, Native Americans: A Portrait (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1997); Kesler E. Woodward, Spirit of the North: The Art of Eustace Paul Ziegler (Morris Communications Corporation in association with the Anchorage Museum of History and Art, 1997).

[10]Henry W. Elliott, Our Arctic Province (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897 [1886]), 42.

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drawings of the Tlingit Indian groups near Sitka. He states that they all share physical characteristics such as prominent cheekbones, a head larger proportionally to the body, long torsos and short legs. Indeed, everyone seems so much alike that ". . . the margin of distinction up here between the ten or eleven clans, which ethnologists enumerate, is so slight that only a practised (sic.) eye can declare them"[11] For each Native group Elliott lists general features "all" the members of that culture share. For example, *Fishing from Kaiaks*, (sic.) (1872), (National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, MS 7119-7), an image of three Aleut men halibut fishing, illustrates this type casting. All of the fishermen share the same Mongolian-like facial characteristics and so resemble one another that they could be mistaken for triplets.

Elliott also habitually places all his figures, Native or not, back in the middle distance with either their backs or sides to the viewers. When these figures do face forward, they rarely look directly at the viewer but have their eyes cast down, intent on some activity. The halibut fishermen are a fine example. This treatment of the human figure allowed him to minimize his lack of formal art training. Objects in the middle distance do not require as much detail as those near at hand.

Elliott may not have paid much attention to individuals in his work, but he missed little else. In an attempt to record the cultural life of Alaska's Native people, he lavished attention on his subjects' subsistence activities, clothing, dwellings, and the tools needed for everyday living. For instance, his *Fishing from Kaiaks,* (sic.) *Captain's Harbour*, (1872) (National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, MS 7119-13) (Fig.

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[11]Henry W. Elliott, Our Arctic Province (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897 [1886]), 44.

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5.2) shows an Aleutian man cod fishing. The man has his back turned to the viewer as he hauls in his catch and stores it in the front hatch of his kayak. His *kamleika*, or sea lion intestine parka, the detail and shape of the kayak and the oar, the fish, and the rope are all meticulously rendered. The Unalaska coastline with the steaming Makushin Volcano is also richly defined. Once again, Elliott's characteristic absence of figure-to-viewer interaction combines with a spectacular setting to create a timeless, almost spiritual quality.

Thus, the 1874 images are unique in their variety, though not in their range of subject matter. Because the expedition included not just the Pribilof Islands, but also the islands and trading posts north and east of them, Elliott was able to paint a variety of localities, people, land and seascapes. Since there are so few Elliott paintings that are not of the Pribilof Islands and the fur seals, the 1874 works are a welcome contrast.

1876 Pribilof Visit

In September of 1876, Elliott again visited St. Paul and St. George Islands to inspect the seal rookeries, but less is known about this trip than the others. Unlike his earlier visits, he did not come at the behest of the government but paid his own way, landing at the Pribilofs (normally out of bounds to all but federal employees, company employees, and the Aleuts), on the strength of his long familiarity with the people and the place. A Yup'ik Eskimo folk tale and ethnographic notes on the Deer Dance, collected along the Kuskokwim, suggests that he visited other areas of Alaska as well.[12]

[12]Henry Wood Elliott, "A Phonetic and Idiomatic Translation of a Native Kuskokwim Bear Story," National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, MS 1771.

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Fig. 5.2. "Fishing From Kaiaks, Captain's Harbour," 1872. 39 x 40 inches. Photographic Reproduction Mounted on Canvas. National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution. MS 7119-13.

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A few of Elliott's 1876 images were photographically reproduced. *St. Paul's Island, Alaska*, (1876) (Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum, 17-227) shows the seal harvest at the killing grounds. Under the direction of a government agent on the right, the clubbing gang dispatches a pod of seals, while the man in the center skins the carcasses, and another loads the pelts onto a mule-drawn wagon. Behind the loaded cart, a single sealer watches over the rest of the animals. In the background is St. Paul Village with its church and graveyard flanked by neat frame houses and the few remaining barabaras.[13]

Elliott's Written Works

As a result of several popular articles, Henry Elliott returned from his 1874 trip to the Pribilofs with a national reputation as the nation's fur seal expert. People began calling him "Professor Elliott" as a gesture of respect, though he had no academic degree. Between 1874 and 1890 Elliott wrote a number of lavishly illustrated articles, one monograph, and a best-selling travel book. His works covered a variety of topics including the Native people of Alaska, the western United States, fur seals, sea lions, and other marine animals of the Bering Sea region. Through these publications, Elliott became known as an authority on Alaska.

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[13]In 1879, Elliott may have visited Alaska again but the only evidence for this are a few watercolors bearing this date. It is more likely that Elliott did not travel to Alaska and that these works were painted in 1879 from sketches drawn during previous trips. Most of these images are of Alaska Commercial Company trading posts, which suggest that the sketches were probably executed on the 1874 trip.

The book Libby by Betty John (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1987) states that Elliott was on St. Paul briefly during 1879. This book, however, is based on a fragmented diary and is, therefore not reliable. For example, John states that Elliott was the first treasury agent on the Pribilofs but he was only an assistant treasury agent in the third-fourth year of the Pribilof lease. She also describes parts of Elliott's 1874 tour as happening in 1879. I believe that Elliott wasn't in Alaska in 1879 and that the 3 to 5 watercolors with this date were completed in 1879 from 1874 sketches.

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In 1876, Elliott also attracted attention when he participated in an international traveling exhibition on the fisheries. In 1906, Elliott sent some fur seal sketches to aid a taxidermist at the Carnegie Institute in the preparation of a fur seal group for exhibition. He had assisted in the mounting of another such group for the Smithsonian in 1876 that had fallen apart because it had been widely exhibited in Paris, Berlin, London, Bergen and all over the United States.[14] Little else is known about this exhibition.

Soon after 1876 Elliott began work on his best-known book, The Seal-Islands of Alaska. In 1881, published under separate cover as an accompaniment to the 1880 census report, The Seal-Islands of Alaska met with wide public acclaim. Translated into six different languages, the monograph found its way into libraries worldwide. With its description of faraway islands and its illustrations of the fur seals, the Native people, the birds, other marine mammals, and the commercial activities of the Alaska Commercial Company, The Seal-Islands of Alaska became a popular coffee table book.[15]

Alaska, and more specifically the fur seals, was a fertile source for Elliott, but his tunnel vision often led him to make assumptions about the Territory that aroused the ire of non-Native Alaskan boosters. In the 1877 "Ten Years' Acquaintance with Alaska," published in the popular Harper's New Monthly Magazine, Elliott stated:

> [Alaska] is a paradise for the naturalist, a happy hunting ground for the ethnologist, a new and boundless field for the geologist, and the physical phenomena of its climate are something wonderful to contemplate. It is, and will be for years to come, a perfect treasure-trove for these gentlemen; but alas! it bids

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[14]James B. Richardson III, Curator, Section of Anthropology, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Letter from Elliott to W.J. Holland, 12 March 1906.

[15]Victorian families often left books of this sort out in the sitting room area where visitors could peruse them. Such volumes served as a social signal that the host family was erudite and had the financial freedom to make such purchases.

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fair, from what we now know, never to be a treasure-trove for the miner or the agriculturist.[16]

If that article irritated some, Elliott's Our Arctic Province incensed even more. In this best-selling travel book, based on his 1874 trip, Elliott devoted three out of fourteen chapters to the Pribilof Islands and the fur seals. They not only take up nearly forty percent of the book (185 pages out of 465), but they have titles that contrast with those devoted to other locales as well. Compare "Wonderful Seal Islands" and "Amphibian Millions" to "Lonely Northern Wastes" and "Features of the Sitkan Region." It is very clear that Henry Elliott singled out the Pribilof Islands, and especially the fur seals for special treatment.

Elliott and Nineteenth-Century Travel Literature

Prior to the publication of Our Arctic Province few travel books had been published on Alaska. An early example of this literary genre is William Dall's 1870 Alaska and Its Resources, which is mostly an account of his findings both during and after the Western Union Telegraph Survey as he completed the scientific work alone following the purchase of Alaska from Russia. The account covers the period from 1866-1868.[17]

Another type of travel book published prior to Our Arctic Province described the tourist areas of southeast Alaska as in Eliza Scidmore's 1885, Alaska: Its Southern Coast and the Sitkan Archipelago. Southeast Alaska had already become a popular tourist

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[16]Henry W. Elliott, "Ten Years' Acquaintance with Alaska: 1867-1877," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 55, no. 330 (November 1877):802.

[17] Elliott created the images for the engraver using Dall's notes and sketches as a guide.

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attraction, and steamship companies promoted Alaska in several ways.[18] For example, the Pacific Coast Steamship Company's brochure for 1900 stated that the Alaskan voyage enriched the traveler's social status. "You will be delighted at having made the journey. You will have lots of stories to tell of your experiences, which will make you the lion of your social gathering and the envy of those who stayed at home or went to the springs."[19]

Our Arctic Province bridges the expedition account and the tourist travel book. It was one of the first books to describe the islands and coastal areas of the Bering Sea and is an expedition report in the sense that it is based on Elliott and Lieutenant Maynard's 1874 investigation. Elliott, however, took some authorial license and altered his itinerary a bit, intimating that he traveled as far as Point Barrow. Certainly, Elliott's illustrations combined with his flowery prose made the book appealing to the armchair tourist.

Despite the criticisms that the book was too heavily focused on the Pribilof Islands and the fur seals, it met with widespread approval both at home and abroad. According to one reviewer in the Chicago Tribune:

> Alaska is almost an unknown land to Americans, as well as to the rest of the world, and Mr. Elliott has supplied a real need by his very complete work upon that portion of the United State's possessions. His descriptions of the country and of its inhabitants are extremely lively and full of interest . . . .His accounts of the seal are the most minute yet made public as to that animal . . . .It is the most striking part of the book.[20]

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[18]For more information on the rise of tourism in southeast Alaska see: Lee, Molly. "Appropriating the Primitive: Turn-of-the-Century Collection and Display of Native Alaskan Art." Arctic Anthropology 28 (1): 6-15; and Norris, Frank. Gawking at the Midnight Sun: the Tourist in Early Alaska Anchorage: Alaska Historical Commission, 1985.

[19]Pacific Coast Steamship Company, Alaska Excursions: Season 1900 (San Francisco: Pacific Coast Steamship Company, 1900), 19.

[20]Smithsonian Institution Archives, RU 31, Office of the Secretary (Samuel P. Langley) Records 1886-1927, Box 24, Folder 16.

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Elliott's illustrations almost always proved more memorable than his writing. For example, the review in the Philadelphia Times is laudatory: 'Although many books have been published in regard to Alaska none give a better account of the country and its people than this volume which Mr. Elliott has enriched with many illustrations from his own pencil.'[21] Praise was also forthcoming in the Edinburg Scotsman:

> Mr. Elliott possesses two qualities that are not always combined in the scientific expert, he is a most keen and practiced observer; and he has the faculty of being able to describe in a vivid and picturesque manner what he has observed . . . .So far as pen and pencil can picture that strange region and life, he has fulfilled his ambition.[22]

Elliott's Our Arctic Province received widespread approval, then, and is regarded today as an Alaskan classic. Furthermore, through the popularity of this book and The Seal-Islands of Alaska, the nation made its acquaintance with Henry Elliott and his fur seal images. The fame that Elliott earned through these two books would be a key factor in the eventual success of his crusade to save the seals.

Activities of the 1880's

During the 1880s Elliott kept quite busy. He was not only writing Our Arctic Province, but also had been appointed as a contributing author and illustrator for the United States Commission of Fish and Fisheries' comprehensive report, The Fisheries and Fishery Industries of the United States. The first section of this five-volume set appeared in 1884 and the remaining four in 1887. Elliott's written work in the publications consists of four articles, two on the fur seals and one each on the sea lion

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[21]Smithsonian Institution Archives, RU 31, Office of the Secretary (Samuel P. Langley) Records 1886-1927, Box 24, Folder 16.

[22]Ibid.

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hunt and sea otter hunting. As was common practice in the nineteenth-century, these essays were nearly identical to sections from The Seal Islands of Alaska and Our Arctic Province.

Undoubtedly, Elliott's greatest contribution to the fisheries' publication was his illustrations. As in most of his work, it is not Elliott's written polemic, but the rich imagery in his art that he is best remembered. Elliott did not carry out any of the official fieldwork for the book but a co-illustrator, Captain J.W. Collins, worked on the coasts of Maine and Delaware and provided material for him. The notation "ad del nat," (drawn from nature), on some of the images appears to indicate that Elliott traveled in an unofficial capacity to Gloucester, Massachusetts and to Kelley Island on Lake Erie to prepare some of his sketches of the fishery industries. Elliott was responsible for almost all of the fur-seal images but also worked on drawings of the cod, menhaden, and other fisheries showing the methods of fishing and the watermen.[23] Out of the 255 plates, Elliott created ninety-one. Forty-seven are his own work, thirty-eight were jointly worked on by Elliott and Captain Collins, two are from a lithograph, two from sketches by J.S. Ryder, and two were the joint work of Elliott and Captain H.C. Chester. Thus, Elliott contributed over one-third of the illustrations, and it can be rightly stated that though he was not the only artist responsible for the totality of images, he was certainly the primary one.

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[23]The term watermen is usually used in the Chesapeake Bay area. It refers to any person who earns their living from the sea in any of the fisheries.

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The nation may have also become acquainted with Elliott's artistic oeuvre through the Alaska Commercial Company's museum in their headquarters on Sansome Street in San Francisco. Little is known about this public display. Since Elliott had presented several of his Pribilof Island images to Hayward Hutchinson, a member of the Board of Directors, it is likely that some of these images were on display.[24]

In addition to his prodigious writings, Elliott had earned respect for his research on the Pribilof Islands, so much so that people like George Davidson of the United States Coast and Geodestic Survey consulted with him regularly on matters relating to Alaska.[25] Between 1877-1888, however, Elliott's only link with the Pribilof Island seal herds was through the Treasury Agents' annual reports, which he undoubtedly read with great interest. These unanimously conveyed the impression that the fur seal herd flourished. Then in 1889, came the first sign that all was not well.

In sum, following Elliott's 1874 visit to the Bering Sea region, his extensive writings illustrated with his luminous watercolors earned him the public's respect as an expert on the fur seals, and on Alaska in general. His work on the islands also won him the admiration of certain government officials. His pessimistic opinions on Alaska's potential for resource development aroused the ire of Alaska boosters, but the vast majority of Americans, who would never visit the territory, read his books and articles

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[24]The objects were apparently a regular hodge-podge of Alaskana. Eliza Scidmore wrote, "Seal life is represented at all ages, and all the birds and fishes and minerals of the country are shown. There are mummies and petrifications, reindeer horns, canoes, albino otter skins, stone-age instruments, costumes and household utensils of the natives (sic), and needles, books, pipes, toys, and oddities carved out of bone and ivory, and decorated in black outlines with sketches of men and animals in profile." See Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore, Alaska: Its Southern Coast and the Sitkan Archipelago (Boston: D. Lothrop and Company, 1885), 304-5.

[25]Letter from Elliott to Davidson, June 13, 1884, George Davidson Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, Box 10, Folder 16.

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enthusiastically. Throughout Elliott's career, however, it was his illustrations, not his writings that attracted notice. Toward middle age, Elliott took heed of this and made his images central to his future lobbying efforts.

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Chapter Six

The Fall of Eden

In the autumn of 1889, the Annual Treasury Agents' Report from the Pribilofs arrived punctually in Washington, D.C. The envelope, though battered from its long trip looked innocent enough. Its contents, however, would not only shock those involved in the United States' Pribilof affairs but also decide Henry Elliott's future life role as the fur seals' most stalwart defender. Inside was the following communiqué from the newly appointed Senior Agent, Charles J. Goff, that read, ". . . the [seals] are annually decreasing . . ."[1]

This statement stunned not only the Treasury Department, but also Elliott, who appeared to have been unaware of the dire situation. In January of that same year, while under oath during congressional hearings about alleged wrongdoings by the Alaska Commercial Company, in conjunction with their sealing lease, Elliott had confidently stated, "The condition of these rookeries . . . in 1873 and 1874 and 1876 was excellent . . . . I have received no evidence, and I have heard no testimony since, that contradicts this statement. They are still in the same good physical condition that they were in then."[2]

With the arrival of the report, however, Elliott's optimism faded and was replaced by a determination to save the animals he so admired. In this chapter I will discuss the pivotal moment when Elliott's career as an environmental crusader began. It was the

[1]Charles J. Goff, "Annual Report for 1889," In U.S. Treasury, Special Agents Division, Seal and Salmon Fisheries and General Resources of Alaska, Vol. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898), 215.

[2]U.S. Congress, House Report no. 3883, Fur-Seal Fisheries of Alaska, January 29, 1889, 50th Congress, 2nd Session, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), 135.

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start of his long crusade to rescue the fur seals from probable extinction and over the next twenty-two years, Elliott found his artistic talents an essential facet of his activism.

The Pelagic Menace

During the 1880s, while Henry Elliott basked in his status as the ranking fur seal expert, increasing numbers of pelagic, or open-ocean, sealers prowled the North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea in search of prey.[3] This type of hunting was not new to the Bering Sea or North Pacific Ocean. Alaska Natives and Northwest Coast Indians had fished for seals along the coasts in this way for centuries. However, their low human population densities, and the limitations of indigenous watercraft kept Native North American pelagic sealing from impacting the size of the fur seal herds.

The situation in the Bering Sea changed dramatically, however, once fur seal pelts commanded a high market price. Schooners, Canadian mainly, began carrying Northwest Coast Indians and their canoes out to the migration routes. With the schooner to carry the necessary supplies, the hunters could venture farther and stay at sea for longer periods. After a time, schooner captains ceased transporting Native sealers and turned to white crews who could be armed with shotguns. However, the new method had disadvantages. A seal struck with a Native harpoon could usually be recovered because the line connected to the harpoon point permitted the hunter to hold onto the animal until it tired. Once a seal was shot, on the other hand, it sank swiftly, requiring that the hunter paddle furiously to recover it, making losses much higher.

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[3]Elliott stated that the Century Dictionary credited him with the term's creation. See U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. Protection of Fur Seals and Sea Otter. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912.

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Pelagic sealing devastated the herds for another reason. The slower-moving pregnant females were often targeted early in the season and nursing females later. By killing the mother seal at this later time, the pelagic hunters extinguished three lives: the mother seal, her pup on land, and the unborn fetus she carried. With fifty to eighty percent of the shot seals unrecoverable and eighty to ninety percent of the catch being female, pelagic sealing was unsustainable.[4] Fur sealskin profits may have soared, but the northern fur seals herds were devastated in the process.

In 1886, the United States had retaliated against the pelagic sealers by dispatching revenue cutters to patrol the Bering Sea and protect the Pribilof herd against these destructive practices. Since the fur seals' breeding grounds were located on a United States' territorial possession, the government claimed ownership of them. Seals in open water had no such protection, however. A swimming seal beyond the three-mile internationally recognized territorial limit belonged to no nation. Therefore the apprehension of sealing vessels in open water hurtled the United States into a controversy with Great Britain and the commonwealth of Canada.

Besides the menace of pelagic sealing, another change was in store for the Pribilof Islands. Early in 1890, the second twenty-year lease for the Pribilof Island seals came up for bid. Despite fierce competition from the Alaska Commercial Company, the government awarded the new lease to another San Franciscan concern, the North American Commercial Company, which had the support of the Harrison Administration.

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[4]Kurkpatrick Dorsey, The Dawn of Conservation Diplomacy: U.S.-Canadian Wildlife Protection Treaties in the Progressive Era. (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1998), 115.

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But this company would not have the free reign that the Alaska Commercial Company had enjoyed. Influential friends in high places could not prevent new lease regulations, made necessary because of pelagic sealing. Unlike the Alaska Commercial Company, whose lease permitted it to harvest 100,000 seals annually for a rental payment of $55,000 and a $2.62 ½ tax per seal skin, the North American Commercial Company was only permitted 60,000 seals per season and had to pay $60,000 in annual rent and a government tax of $9.625 per seal skin.[5] The increased rent and tax helped defray the costs of protecting the fur seals, such as the revenue cutter patrol.

An Artist's Argument: Comparative Watercolor Maps of the Sealing Grounds

Meanwhile, Henry Elliott's life was about to change forever. In January of 1890, while the government collected bids for the new lease, Secretary of the Treasury, William Windom, alarmed by the alleged decline of the fur seals, summoned Elliott to ask his advice.[6] Elliott did not feel qualified to offer an opinion, since his last visit had taken place fourteen years earlier. On Windom's recommendation, then, a special act of Congress on April 5, 1890 appointed Elliott to return to the Pribilofs to report on the state of the fur seal industry and confer with the treasury agents.

When Elliott disembarked at St. Paul in May of that year, he could hardly believe his eyes. According to his report, written after his inspection, "I may as well frankly confess . . . that I was wholly unaware of the extraordinary state of affairs which stared

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[5]Kurkpatrick Dorsey, The Dawn of Conservation Diplomacy, 116.

[6]Letter from Elliott to C.S. Hamlin, 10 December 1894, Charles Sumner Hamlin Collection, Box 1, Folder 2, Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

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me in the face at the moment of my first landing, last May, on the Seal Islands of Alaska."[7] The near-ruin of the rookeries and hauling grounds of both St. Paul and St. George shocked Elliott who felt that the fur seals' extermination was imminent unless the treasury department took prompt action.[8]

Agent Charles J. Goff, who assisted Elliott during this 1890 inspection, echoed his concern. In the 1890 annual treasury agent's report, Goff stated, "I regret that I am compelled to report that the seals are rapidly diminishing in numbers, and to such an alarming extent that to check the decrease will require, in my opinion, the most careful consideration of the Department."[9]

Rather than focusing solely on gathering evidence of the devastation wrought by pelagic sealing as he had been ordered, Elliott also looked into the land operations and wrote a scathing denunciation on both. He may have been incorrect in asserting that the long drives on land destroyed a male seals' reproductive worth, but his essential premise that the harvest needed better management was sound. Elliott attributed the disastrous state of the herds to mismanagement on land and the pelagic extermination of mostly female seals at sea.

The decline of the marketable fur seals stunned Elliott. He found that the bachelor seal population had been so decimated by pelagic and land sealing that the

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[7]Henry W. Elliott, Report on the Condition of the Fur-Seal Fisheries of the Pribylov Islands in 1890 (Paris: Chamerot & Renouard, 1893), a.

[8]Ibid., a.

[9]U.S. Congress, Senate, Executive Doc. no. 49, U.S. Serial Set 2818, "Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury Transmitting Reports Concerning the Condition of the Seal Islands of Alaska," 51st Congress, 2nd Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891), 4.

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North American Commercial Company, the new lessee, took not only the bachelor seals but also females and pups to fill their quota. When Elliott and Goff witnessed this breach of contract, they ordered an end to the killing season then underway. "In 1890, when I was up there," Elliott later wrote, "they were driving these seals so desperately that I had to stop them. On the 20th of July they were killing mother seals 'in milk' under my eye. I had to stop them."[10] With Goff's assistance, Elliott then conducted a census. The almost five million seals he had estimated in 1872-74 had dwindled to about one million in 1890.[11]

To illustrate the ruin, Elliott produced fifteen watercolor maps charting the diminished acreage of the 1890 breeding grounds. These maps, which have not been analyzed previously, are uniquely telling documents of a sort that could only be created by an artist-polemicist. They are a perfect blend of Elliott's artistic ambitions and his equally strong bent as a documenter. Using the population-estimating technique developed in 1872, Elliott created new topographical surveys and triangulations of the rookeries on both islands. Then he waited until the breeding season was at its height in July to map the seals' locations.[12] Once they arrived, he remapped the rookeries and compared them to his 1872-74 versions.

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[10]U.S. Congress, House, Hearings Before the Committee on Expenditures in the Department of Commerce and Labor, House Resolution 73 To Investigate the Fur-Seal Industry of Alaska, 62nd Congress, 1st Session, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912), 921.

[11]Robert L. Shalkop, Henry Wood Elliott 1846-1930: A Retrospective Exhibition (Anchorage: Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum, 1982), 13.

[12]Henry W. Elliott, Report on the Condition of the Fur-Seal Fisheries of the Pribylov Islands in 1890, x.

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What Elliott saw appalled him. *Zapadnie Rookery* (1890) (Henry Wood Elliott Watercolors, Box 1 of 1, Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks), lies on the southwest corner of St. George Island. In 1873, Elliott had estimated that 18,000 breeding seals and pups occupied Zapadnie; in 1874, one year later, he estimated an increase of some 5,000 seals.[13] The position of the breeding animals during the 1873-74 seasons is indicated in a light orange color. The red area represents the position of the breeding seals in 1890. In 1874, the breeding seals and pups totaled 23,000, in 1890 Elliott counted only 1,500 at Zapadnie.[14]

In the interim, the greatest decline of seal life appears to have been among the marketable bachelor seals. In the early census they constituted one-third to one-half of the total seal herd.[15] On Elliott's map, the earlier position of these seals is an enormous pink area in back of, and surrounding, the breeding areas, while small white dots indicate their 1890 location. Since the bachelor seals were constantly in motion, Elliott's distribution census method did not work with them. His maps, however, make the near-ruin of this seal reserve devastatingly clear.

While all five rookeries on St. George had declined by 1890, those on St. Paul, which hosts the majority of the fur seals during the breeding season, revealed catastrophic levels of decimation. According to Elliott:

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[13]Henry W. Elliott, The Seal-Islands of Alaska (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1976). Reprinted from 1881, 59.

[14]Henry W. Elliott, Report on the Condition of the Fur-Seal Fisheries of the Pribylov Islands in 1890, 55.

[15]Jeanne Van Nostrand, "The Seals are About Gone," American Heritage 14 (June 1963): 13.

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> . . . the discrepancy between the area of the hauling-grounds on this island [St. Paul] and number of occupants as presented in 1872, and again in 1890 is something positively startling, -is almost unreal- but the truth easily asserts its strange reality on the accompanying map of these hauling grounds of St. Paul Island: the tint of 1872 seems an almost fabulous expanse when contrasted with the microscopic shade of 1890.[16]

To Elliott, the reserve that most vividly illustrated the decimation of these animals was the Tolstoi Rookery at English Bay on the southeastern coast of St. Paul. On July 10, 1890, both Elliott and Goff plotted *Land Angles of Tolstoi* (1890) (Henry Wood Elliott Watercolors, Box 1 of 1, Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks) (Fig. 6.1). Elliott included his census, which he called his analysis, on the map. Dividing the seal ground of 1890 into areas labeled A through D, he used these letters as survey markers to determine the square footage of the studied area. Some of his notations are still visible. Penciled in faintly near marker A is a measurement of "80 ft." and in between markers B and C, "60 ft." These measurements indicate the depth of the rookery from the shoreline at these locations. In 1872, this rookery had stretched across 450,000 square feet, providing room for 225,000 seals.[17] Through his 1890 calculations, Elliott concluded that the rookery at Tolstoi contained a grand total of 124,800 square feet, enough ground for 62,400 seals.[18]

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[16]Henry W. Elliott, Report on the Condition of the Fur-Seal Fisheries of the Pribylov Islands in 1890, 103-104.

[17]Henry W. Elliott, The Seal-Islands of Alaska, 54.

[18]Pribilof Island Collection, Henry W. Elliott watercolors, Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

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Fig. 6.1. "Land Angles of Tolstoi," 1890. Watercolor. Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks. Henry W. Elliott Watercolors. Box 1.

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The map vividly documents the fur seals' decline from their 1872-74 numbers. Painted in a thin, pink line along the entire western shore and connected to a much larger area of approximately three thousand square feet to the north is the earlier rookery occupied by the breeding seals on July 14,1872. Inside this pink region is an area painted in dark brown that covers mostly shoreline with one small projection of seals pointing inland. This reduced area is the position of the breeding seals on July 10, 1890. Overall, Elliott's figures indicate a loss of seventy-five percent of the breeding seal population.[19]

Elliott's census clearly documented the devastation of the breeding grounds, but his map visually illustrated the catastrophic decline of the marketable bachelor seals. Sand dunes painted buff comprise more than one-half of the landforms on the map. The great hauling grounds of the bachelor seals in 1872, only four small white dots remained in 1890. The large southwestern area of Tolstoi Point is painted in the same buff color as the sand dunes, indicating that the bachelor seals had also abandoned these grounds.

Since Elliott planned that his maps would be used in his official report, he included land details as well as documentation about the rookeries. Topographical detail evident as faint pencil marks, indicate the height of some of the sand dunes. A light blue watercolor line follows the contour of the land to indicate the sea. A fainter blue line, thicker than the first, outlines the darker blue line and perhaps indicates water depth. The southern area and the eastern margin of the map are green-colored and probably indicate grass.

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[19]Henry W. Elliott, The Seal-Islands of Alaska, 36.

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These watercolor maps, then, vividly illustrate the devastating depletion in the Pribilof seal population. Detailed and yet simple, they tell a terrible tale, one that Elliott soon discovered was repeated in all of the Pribilof Island rookeries. In 1872-74 Elliott estimated the marketable seal population on both islands at 1,500,000 seals, in 1890 only 80,000 animals remained. In 1872-74 he placed the breeding seal population at 4,700,000 animals.[20] In 1890 his estimate was just under one million individuals. The rookeries of 1890 bore little resemblance to those he had witnessed in 1872-74. Armed with this awful news, he prepared to return to Washington.

Political Roadblocks

Elliott launched his campaign to save the fur seals in November of 1890 and he quickly discovered that he tread a labyrinthine path. Elliott's document supported the British position that any suspension of pelagic sealing must include ending the land harvest as well. Secretary of State James G. Blaine feared that the report might harm pending negotiations with Great Britain to resolve the pelagic sealing conflict.[21] For this reason, Blaine decided to suppress the report and asked Elliott to withhold it temporarily until the negotiations were over. Elliott agreed.

Rather than proceeding, however, the diplomatic discussions stalled. On April 3, 1891, President Harrison proposed a halt to the Pribilof island seal harvest in exchange for a suspension of Canadian pelagic sealing for one year, pending arbitration with Great Britain. Only eight days later, however, the government issued a secret agreement to the

[20]This figure is believed to be two million too high. It is estimated that there were no more than 2.5 million seals in 1872-74.

[21]James T. Gay, "Harrison, Blaine and Cronyism," Alaska Journal 3 (1973): 16.

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North American Commercial Company, permitting them to take 60,000 seals that season.[22] Apparently, Blaine and Harrison did not believe that the British would agree to the proposal because Canadian pelagic interests so adamantly opposed the closing of the season.[23]

On April 13th, 1891 Elliott learned of the secret permit from a young woman who had overheard the bragging of the North American Commercial Company's attorney.[24] He reacted angrily. On April 22nd, he informed the New York Evening Post, and to The Cleveland Leader and Morning Herald, sent a summary of his 1890 report. On April 25th, the Treasury Department fired Elliott for his actions. In the meantime, on April 20th, much to the surprise of Blaine and Harrison, the British accepted the Harrison proposal. In the resulting scandal the Harrison administration withdrew the North American Commercial Company's secret permit despite their protests, closing the fur seal harvest for one year[25] but permitting the Aleuts to take 7,500 seals as food.[26]

Although government officials had fired Elliott for blowing the whistle, the American public still championed him for his fur seal expertise. According to an editorial in the March 14, 1892 New York Sun, for example, "Mr. Henry W. Elliott of the

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[22]Gerald O. Williams, The Bering Sea Fur Seal Dispute 1885-1911: A Monograph on the Maritime History of Alaska (Eugene, Oregon: Alaska Maritime Publications, 1984), 71.

[23]James T. Gay, "Harrison, Blaine and Cronyism," Alaska Journal 3 (1973): 17.

[24]Letter from Elliott to Hamlin, 10 December 1894, Box 1, Folder 2, Charles Sumner Hamlin Collection, Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

[25]This halt to the land harvest was called the *modus vivendi* and it was renewed in 1892 and 1893.

[26]Robert L. Shalkop, Henry Wood Elliott 1846-1930: A Retrospective Exhibition (Anchorage: Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum, 1982), 14.

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Smithsonian Institution, the man who of all men living knows most about the habits of the Alaskan fur seal, and whose devoted and disinterested study of the question for more than twenty years makes his utterances on the subject authoritative, if not final . . ."[27] The support of the American people would be key in the eventual success of Elliott's campaign.

As for Elliott, his cause had just begun. After the 1891 scandal, he found himself inextricably linked with the fur seals in the minds of the public. His strenuously voiced opinions on fur seal management would resound throughout the halls of Congress for two more decades, though they often fell on deaf ears. The memory of those empty rookeries as compared to the vibrant, bustling celebration of life he had witnessed there on his earlier sojourn spurred him to a single-handed battle on behalf of Alaska's fur seals.

A Nascent Publicity Campaign (1891-1895)

Elliott began his first publicity campaign in 1891 and continued it for sixteen years. The first four years (1891-1895) of maneuvering around political roadblocks gave him first-hand experience in dealing with government officials. It also taught him to survive often-humiliating adversity. His struggle, aimed primarily at politicians, brought the tragic depredations of the Pribilof fur seal herd to life through his artwork. Embarking on what would prove to be his most productive period as a watercolorist, Elliott set to work, using the field notes and sketches he had amassed during his 1890 visit to the Pribilof Islands. These 1891-92 works stand in remarkable contrast to his earlier paintings. In place of the fur seal millions, serene landscapes, and Aleut cameos,

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[27]The New York Sun, 14 March 1892, Clipping, Henry Wood Elliott Collection, Box 1, Unsorted, Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

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Elliott created disturbing images of pelagic sealers and empty rookeries sure to arouse sympathy. *The Pelagic Hunter at Work: Jacta et Alea*, (1890) (Cleveland Museum of Natural History, FA52) (Fig. 6.2) illustrates this change. In the foreground, off the coastline of St. George, two pelagic hunters drag a tired seal into their canoe. Two more canoes and a schooner are off in the left middle ground. The day might be rather pleasant, but the moody sea and the exhausted animal impart an ominous sensation.

If the image conveying the mood were not enough, then Elliott's rather terse caption describing the action underscores it:

> The seal when struck by the spear turns 'and rushes' –it will tow a canoe for several hundred yards with great rapidity: then, out of breath it pauses, the hunter picks up the slack of the line while the steersman paddles ahead. This brings the hunter close to the panting seal, which makes another 'rush,' or dives under the canoe. In either case the hunter draws the line in so as to bring the seal close up under the gunwale –then a short handled club is used on the head so as to instantly stun and even kill: the seal is then hauled into the canoe: it is skinned at once if no other seals are in sight, the carcass thrown overboard.[28]

Elliott's strong documentary tendencies may have cost him a true artistic career, but in his role as a political lobbyist, the words and image enhanced one another and conveyed a much stronger impression to the observer than either element would do on its own.

Elliott not only created new images of pelagic hunters at work, but also returned to his 1872-74, and 1876 field sketches and notes to paint fully realized works.[29] Overall,

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[28] "The Pelagic Hunter at Work: Jacta et Alea," Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Henry Wood Elliott watercolors, FA52.

[29] Elliott's method of dating his works created some confusion for researchers because he put the date of the original sketch on the image instead of the date of completion, a difference of twenty years in some cases. Elliott wrote on the back of some of the images held at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History that the date on the image reflects the original sketch and color note date and does not refer to the day of completion. While many images housed at other museums may have been completed in 1891 or later, the only watercolors for which this method is assured are the sixteen images of series II held by the Carnegie.

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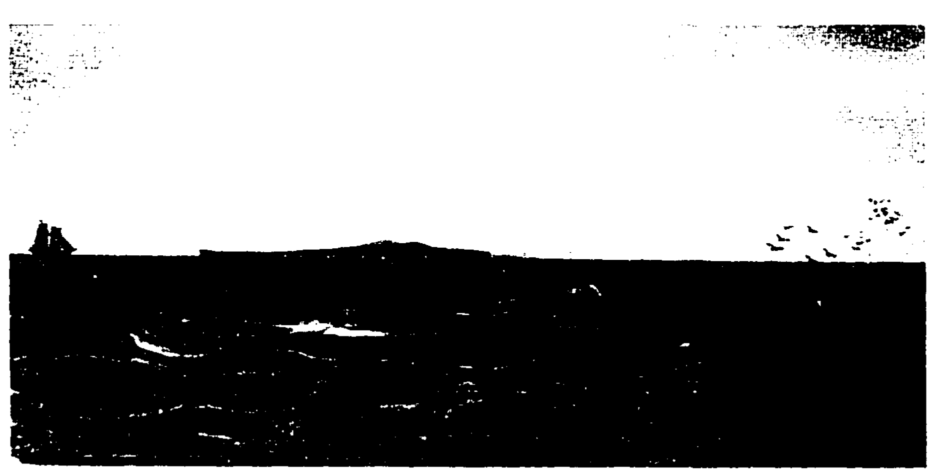

Fig. 6.2. "The Pelagic Hunter at Work: 'Jacta et Alea,'" 1890. 6.75 x 13.75 inches. Watercolor. Cleveland Museum of Natural History. FA 52.

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his 1891-92 watercolors, drawing on his earlier field notes, address the loss that would ensue if both pelagic and land sealing were not outlawed. The 1872-74 images of plentiful seal rookeries, bird rookeries, walrus and Native people illustrated Elliott's northern Garden of Eden; the 1891-92 images of the pelagic sealers and empty rookeries show its destruction. Over the years Elliott would continue to document the diminishing herds.[30]

Arbitration Debacle

After the United States and Great Britain's arbitration in 1893 over sealing rights, Henry Elliott redoubled his efforts to save the animals he so greatly admired. The central issue was whether the United States had the right to claim ownership of the seals beyond the three-mile limit in order to protect them. The American government considered the fur seals, which bred on United States' territory, as a national property. The Canadians and the British, however, insisted that the seals were held in common because they spent most of their lives in international waters.[31] Failing to resolve the matter, the Tribunal of Arbitration began in Paris on February 22, 1893 after two years of preparation.

Elliott, though not involved with the proceedings, still indirectly managed to increase the arbitration's contentiousness. On April 4, 1893 the British government

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James B. Richardson III, Curator, Section of Anthropology, Carnegie Museum of Natural History.

[30] For example on the verso sheet that documents the image of *Novastoshnah Bulls at the Opening of the Season*, (1891) (Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Series II, Acc. 6097, No. 7), Elliott made a chart showing the numbers of breeding bulls and cows he had found on the islands in 1872-74 and compared these figures with statistics gathered in 1905 by government agents. Therefore, the watercolors remained working documents long after their date of realization. James B. Richardson III, Curator, Section of Anthropology, Carnegie Museum of Natural History.

[31] Kurkpatrick Dorsey, The Dawn of Conservation Diplomacy, 105.

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moved to require the Americans to hand over Elliott's still-unpublished 1890 report.[32] The United States protested that making Elliott's report, which recommended closing the mismanaged land harvest, available as evidence would hamper the United States' case. Eventually, however, both sides agreed to admit the report as evidence.[33] The report was printed in Paris, but due to time constraints, Elliott's 1890 maps and illustrations were omitted.

Elliott's popularity with the press and public are made clear by their reaction to this event. While the report's introduction into the arbitration proceedings raised the ire of the American arbiters and Washington, D.C. politicians, the press placed the blame for the fur seals' devastation squarely on the government. For example, The Cleveland Plain-Dealer argued that the prompt release of Elliott's report ". . . might have tended to bring about an early and satisfactory agreement for the joint protection of seal life and consequently of the commercial value of our Alaska property."[34] The support of the press would eventually lead to the success of Elliott's campaign.

Meanwhile at the arbitration, the British dealt handily with the United States. Making liberal use of Elliott's 1890 report, they exposed the dangers of land sealing and argued for the internationally accepted three-mile limit. Not surprisingly, when all was said and done, the arbiters found against the United States. They ordered the Americans

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[32]The deadline for submission of documents had ended on February 3, 1893.

[33]Bering Sea Tribunal of Arbitration, Volume I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1895), 8.

[34]The Cleveland Plain-Dealer, 8 April 1893, Clipping, "The Elliott Seal Report," Reel 1, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Reading Room.

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to pay $470,000 in compensatory damages to the Canadian pelagic sealers for the seizure of their vessels[35] and set regulations to protect the seals. The Paris Award, as it became known, banned firearms, established a sixty-mile buffer zone around the Pribilofs, and mandated a closed season from May 1 to July 31 each year. These regulations were to be re-examined every five years.[36]

The decision pleased no one. Canada, because without firearms or access to the prime seal areas pelagic sealing would be more difficult, the Americans, because a sixty-mile buffer zone was not large enough to protect the feeding female seals. Furthermore, the United States contended, pelagic sealers could still harass the animals as they migrated to and from the islands. Members of the American scientific community predicted that the Tribunal's decision would further damage the herds and they were proved correct. In 1894, the United States estimated that pelagic hunters had taken over 120,000 seals, the highest total ever recorded.[37] Obviously, the Paris Award had solved nothing.

While the United States' government deliberated amendments to the Paris Award, Henry Elliott, frustrated at the ineffectiveness of the Tribunal results in addressing the dwindling fur seals, mulled over his future campaign strategy. Over the course of his crusade, Elliott continually represented himself as an artist. In 1894, for example, Elliott

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[35]The United States would not compensate the Canadian sealers until 1898.

[36]Bering Sea Tribunal of Arbitration, Vol. I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1895), 79-80.

[37]The exact estimation was 121, 143 seals taken pelagically.

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not only worked to preserve the fur seals, but also occupied himself with an art gallery in Cleveland.[38]

Elliott's letters during this period also reveal his self-identification as an artist and more importantly, how he used his watercolors. In 1895, Elliott wrote Charles Sumner Hamlin, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury:

> I take it for granted that you and yours would like to see the accompagning (sic.) water color studies which I made on the Seal Islands in 1872-73.
>
> The rest of my portfolio is at my home in Cleveland, some 100 pictures which I am holding in reserve for our coming Art Gallery there, or I would include them in this package tonight.
>
> These pictures I gave to Professor Baird in 1876, and I have taken them out of their frames so that they can be seen at your home circle—when you have done with them, you can send them at your leisure back to this Institution [Smithsonian].[39]

This establishes that Elliott used his early images as didactic illustrations to acquaint public officials with what the Pribilof Islands had looked like before the disastrous depletion of fur seal life.

Clearly, Henry Elliott's campaign to save the seals had begun in earnest. His 1890 images of desolate seal rookeries and menacing pelagic sealers contrast sharply with his earlier images of seal-filled beaches. And his 1872-74 images became more valuable over time since they were the earliest images of teeming rookeries in their pristine state. They bore witness for all to see how the Pribilof Islands, Elliott's Garden of Eden, had appeared before the depredations had begun.

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[38]The extent of Elliott's involvement with the gallery is unclear. All that is known is that a lack of funds ended his attempt some years later. See Letter from Elliott to Gresham, 9 January 1894, Papers of Walter Quintin Gresham, Reel 1, Library of Congress, Manuscript Reading Room.

[39]Letter from Elliott to Hamlin, 5 January 1895, Box 1, Folder 2, Charles Sumner Hamlin Collection, Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

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At the beginning of his campaign, Elliott, perhaps remembering the influence of Thomas Moran's art on the formation of Yellowstone National Park, targeted government officials more than the general public with his images. Ironically, his staunchest supporters at this time were the American people and the press, while it was the government officials who tried to silence him. As his crusade continued past the turn of the century, however, politicians would come to take Elliott seriously. His watercolors were his most effective weapon in bringing about this change.

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Chapter Seven

The Crusader

Following the 1893 arbitration debacle, Elliott plunged into his campaign to save the fur seals with renewed vigor. Primarily targeting government officials, he actively employed his watercolors as illustrative devices to garner support for the seals. Although the specifics of the encounters are yet to be established, Elliott appears to have carried his portfolio along on a daily basis.[1] On some occasions, government officials asked to see his images. In December of 1899, for instance, John A. Kaplan, Minister to Austria, wrote to Elliott expressing a desire to see some watercolors Elliott had left at the State Department. Additionally, Elliott's supporters in Congress exhibited his watercolors in their offices.[2]

That these visual images had such appeal among government officials reveals not only their own intrinsic worth but also the intent of the artist. Elliott meant his images to be regarded not only as historical and scientific records, but also as art. What he did not seem to realize is that he could not have both. His presentation of these images forced government officials to regard them as documents. The American people, on the other hand, experienced Elliott's images primarily through his written materials and tended to see the watercolors as art. Regardless of his audiences' attitudes towards

[1]For example, Elliott brought his portfolio to an 1892 meeting with Sir Julian Pauncefote, the British Ambassador. (Letter from Pauncefote to Elliott, 10 February 1892, Henry Wood Elliott Collection, Box 2, Unsorted, Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.)

[2]At this time, it is not known if Elliott gave or lent these images or which offices had them on display. The only solid reference I have for these watercolors is a single mention in a letter to one of Elliott's daughters. (See Letter from Hugh Morrison to Marsha Elliott, n.d., Henry Wood Elliott Collection, Box 1, Unsorted, Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.)

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his pictures, they impacted not only their viewers, but also the outcome of the fur seal controversy. This chapter will discuss Henry Elliott's hopes for his watercolors during his crusade to save the seals and the impact these images had on his campaign and audiences.

Unexpected Literary Assistance

Henry Elliott's nascent campaign had not been in vain. Between his efforts and those of the press, other people became involved as well. One of the most famous was Rudyard Kipling, author of "The White Seal."[3] This short story, based on the Pribilof controversy, brought the fur seals into America's nurseries. Appearing in the 1895 The Second Jungle Book, "The White Seal" tells the story of Kotick, a little albino seal, who goes on a long quest for a sanctuary away from the land-based harvesters. Kotick finds a mystical island and convinces the seals to leave the Pribilofs and take up residence there. Although it cannot be ascertained, Kipling probably used Elliott's monograph, The Seal-Islands of Alaska, as a source. The details of the rookeries and the spellings of the place names and seal terms are replicas of Elliott's. For example, Kipling uses the name of Kerick Booterin, one of the Aleut leaders Elliott mentions.[4] He does, however, misstate other facts such as the distances from St. Paul Village to Northeast Point. In reality,

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[3]In 1895 Kipling and his wife Carrie spent six weeks in Washington, D.C. where they met a number of politicians, including Secretary of State John Hay, Theodore Roosevelt, and Lady Pauncefote, wife of the British Ambassador. The Pribilof Island situation, because of the 1893 arbitration, was the subject of much discussion in Washington political circles at the time. Kipling, however, probably learned most about Alaska from W. Hallet Phillips, a Washington lawyer with whom he discussed America's wild places and its Native people. See Charles Carrington, Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work (London: MacMillan & Co., LTD, 1955), 223.

[4]Rudyard Kipling, "The White Seal," In The Jungle Books, Vol. II (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1948 [1895]), 37.

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thirteen miles separate these, but Kipling represents them as only half a mile apart.[5] Ostensibly a children's story, "The White Seal" was also designed to appeal to adults. At the end Kipling appended a poem "Lukannon," a plea to end both pelagic and land sealing (Appendix A).

Rudyard Kipling was not the only writer to publicize the fur seal controversy. Unlike Kipling, David Starr Jordan, who would become Henry Elliott's adversary, only condemns pelagic sealing. In 1897, Jordan published Matka and Kotik, a book for older children. Written to evoke a sense of outrage, this book does not have a happy ending. "And then at last came the sad summer, when the ships of the Pirate Kings found their way into the Icy Sea. It was then that we picked up Matka, with a spearhead in her throat, dead on the shining sands they call Zoltoi, the golden. And Lakutha, her little one, who had been so plump and joyous, grew faint and thin, until she died at last."[6] These authors assisted Elliott's cause by helping stir up public indignation, throwing support behind a campaign to save the fur seals.

The Re-emergence of Elliott's 1890 Report

Following the tremendous pelagic catch of 1894, the United States made several attempts to rescind the unfavorable regulations of the Paris Award.[7] When traditional

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[5]Rudyard Kipling, "The White Seal," In The Jungle Books, Vol. II, 37.

[6]David Starr Jordan, Matka and Kotik: A Tale of the Mist Islands (San Francisco: The Whitaker & Ray Company, 1897), 64-65.

[7]One of the most drastic measures that Elliott supported was an 1894 bill that recommended the extermination of every fur seal the Treasury could capture in order to convert the pelts into cash. Designed to force Great Britain to discuss better measures to protect the seals than those of the Paris Award, the bill passed the House but failed in the Senate. In 1896, this bill was reintroduced and again defeated in the Senate.

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diplomatic methods failed, the Americans looked to science. Since both the United States and Great Britain were bound by the terms of the arbitration settlement until 1898, when it would come up for re-evaluation, both agreed to send a joint team of scientists to the Pribilofs to conduct another investigation. In 1896, President Grover Cleveland named David Starr Jordan to head the American delegation.[8]

Elliott was disappointed. As the fur seal expert, he felt the most qualified. Jordan's approval of a managed land harvest and his credentials as a scientist, however, were more appealing to the Treasury and State departments and he was given the appointment. Whereas Elliott believed that the remedy to the decline of the seal population was to cease sealing altogether, Jordan argued that taking a percentage of the young male seals was permissible because, with the fur seals' harem-like breeding structure, they were reproductively superfluous.[9] These different outlooks turned Elliott and Jordan into bitter rivals.

The fur seal commission's inquiries were inconclusive. While both the British and American teams agreed that the seal herds had declined they disagreed about the cause. Jordan and his team produced a four-volume report concluding that pelagic sealing was the sole cause of the herds' decline, whereas the British placed the blame on natural causes and the land harvest. Therefore, the conclusions reached by the scientists,

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[8]Jordan's associates for the two-year study were Leonhard Stejneger and Frederick Lucas. The British representatives were D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson and G.E.H. Barrett-Hamilton and Ottawa sent James Macoun and Andrew Halkett.

[9]Kurkpatrick Dorsey, The Dawn of Conservation Diplomacy: U.S.-Canadian Wildlife Protection Treaties in the Progressive Era, (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1998), 126.

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far from being independent scientific investigations, were those promulgated by their own respective governments.

In his report, Jordan also annotated and critiqued Elliott's monograph, The Seal-Islands of Alaska, and his 1890 report. Elliott, unaccustomed to having his authority as the fur seal expert challenged, made Jordan his chief adversary. Despite Jordan's unfavorable critique, however, Elliott still found favor with the public. And, thanks to Jordan's need to assess Elliott's written works, the 1890 document was finally printed with all the maps and illustrations that the Paris publication lacked.

The Illustrated 1890 Report

That Elliott wanted to make a case for his point of view with this report is evident in its lavish illustrations. Through earlier campaign experiences, Elliott was aware of the power that images could impart to the written word and loaded the report with pictures accordingly. With the publication of this official work, it is clear that, at this stage in his crusade, Elliott was focused on educating both government officials and the public about the fur seals. As he observed at the time, "I have invoked publicity, for that is the only way you can dislodge that venal and ignorant backroom of officialism (sic.) which is in charge of the fur-seal herd of Alaska . . ."[10]

The effect of the illustrations in the 1890 report is worth considering in some detail. Perhaps the most poignant images are the comparisons, which contrast one painting from 1872 followed immediately by the same view in 1890. *Holluschickie Hauling on the Sands of English Bay, July 18, 1872* (Plate 4, fp. 318) shows the entire

[10]Pacific Fisherman 8 no. 11(November 1904): 15, Office of the Secretary 1907-1924 (Charles D. Walcott) Records, Box 20, Folder 18, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

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sweep of English Bay from the Tolstoi Rookery in the foreground to Zapadnie in the distance. As far as the eye can see, large groups of bachelor seals cover most of the sand beach. Contrast this image with the following plate of eighteen years later. *View Over the Desolate Hauling Grounds of English Bay, Saint Paul Island, July 18, 1890*, (Plate 5, fp. 320) shows an empty beach with scattered seal pods near the water's edge. There are so few that they can be easily counted, while in the first image there are so many seals that it is difficult to guess their numbers. The two men surveying the vacant beach in *View Over the Desolate Hauling Grounds of English Bay* might be Elliott and perhaps Agent Charles Goff. Instead of sketching the seals as the Elliott figure frequently does in the 1872-74 images, many of the 1890 Elliott figures do nothing more than look at the desolate rookeries.

With two hundred twenty-seven pages of written text, forty-eight plates illustrating the decline of the seals, and fifteen maps of the reduced hauling and breeding grounds, Elliott found a near perfect coupling of written text and images to emphasize his points. Throughout this report the reader is completely immersed in the decimation of the animals. Even without reading a single word, one can visualize the decline through the images. Most of them are similar to *Starry Arteel Rookery, Saint George Island, July 20, 1890*, (Plate 17, fp. 362). Here, the viewer looks over an empty hauling ground to a tiny breeding area. These are scenes of desolation and loss. It is interesting to consider what might have happened if the illustrated report had been published in 1891 rather than five years later.

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Meanwhile, throughout the late 1890s, diplomatic negotiations over the fur seal issue continued. Little was accomplished, however, because the United States and Great Britain refused to compromise.[11] While the fur seal discussions stagnated, Henry Elliott's fortunes changed. As the nineteenth-century waned, he found himself in favor at the White House.

An Artist/Polemicist's Mission Statement

In 1900, Elliott's campaign gained fresh momentum when he found a supporter in Secretary of State, John Hay.[12] With diplomatic negotiations between the United States and Great Britain for Canada on the fur seal controversy at a standstill, Elliott began to court President Theodore Roosevelt in hopes of influencing the outcome. Luckily, he found a receptive audience. Roosevelt and Hay consulted Elliott on the sealing issue, but Elliott's responses showed a lack of understanding about the need to be diplomatic.[13]

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[11]For example, in 1897, the United States asked Japan, Russia, and Great Britain to a conference for the enactment of sealing regulations. The British refused to attend so little was accomplished. Also in 1897, alarm at the continuing decline of the seals led the United States to enact a law that prohibited American citizens and their vessels from participating in pelagic sealing. The Canadians represented the majority of pelagic sealers, though, so this law had little beneficial effect for the fur seals. In 1898, Great Britain announced its readiness to discuss revisions to the Paris Award. The British agreed to settle for $500,000 if the United States changed its position on the Alaska boundary issue. By 1898, Canada wanted the boundary extended to Skagway and Dyea so people in the Yukon would have access to the sea. This action would compensate the Canadian's loss of a natural right to fish. The United States refused and negotiations ceased. (Dorsey, The Dawn of Conservation Diplomacy, 129)

[12]Henry Elliott claimed an acquaintance with John Hay prior to 1900 but his propensity to stretch the truth throws this assertion in some doubt. Hay had married a wealthy Cleveland woman but not in 1869 when Elliott stated that Hay had been in town. Appointed by President William McKinley, Hay continued as Secretary of State after McKinley's death under President Theodore Roosevelt.

[13]Elliott offered to go to Ottawa as an unofficial representative and discuss the fur seals. He felt that Canadians really wanted to help the seals but needed assistance from Washington. This was not consistent with the Canadian position at all and his offer was refused. See Kurkpatrick Dorsey, The Dawn of Conservation Diplomacy (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), 136.

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Thanks to John Hay, however, Elliott's images propelled his campaign forward. Elliott and Hay met in late May of 1900 and Hay, after looking through Elliott's watercolors, decided to request a government appropriation for the purchase of thirty-four. Hay wrote, "It is very desireable (sic.) for the purpose of settling the fur seal question that the Govt. possess certain water color drawings and life studies of the Pribylof fur seal herd made in 1872-74 by Henry W. Elliott. . ."[14] This suggests that Hay regarded Elliott's images as potentially valuable resources in ending the controversy. Elliott delivered the watercolors to the State Department, but despite Hay's recommendation, Congress did not appropriate the necessary funds.[15]

The images Elliott delivered to John Hay are unique in the amount of written evidence that accompanies them. Clearly, the artist treated these images as working documents, pasting bits of government reports on the front of the mounts, next to, or below, the image itself, adding detailed legends, and even creating elaborate coversheets. Most of them also have a descriptive legend hand-written on yellow paper and pasted on the front.

The extent of this integration of the visual with the verbal text is unusually elaborated in Elliott's work. For example, *The Grand Parade*, (1872) (Cleveland Museum of Natural History, FA21) (Fig. 7.1) is a luminous watercolor depicting the Reef

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[14]Letter to Hon. W.B. Allison, Chairman Committee of Appropriations, U.S. Senate from John Hay, 28 May 1908, Copy written by Elliott, Henry W. Elliott Collection, Box 1, Unsorted, Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

[15]Letter from Hay to Elliott, 30 June 1900, Henry Wood Elliott Collection, Box 1, Unsorted, Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

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Fig. 7.1. “The Grand Parade,” 1872. 7.25 x 15 inches. Watercolor. Cleveland Museum of Natural History. FA 21.

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and Garbotch Rookeries on St. Paul Island. The summer day is unusually clear for the Pribilofs; the sky overhead is grey and cloudy but there is a ceiling of clear sky beneath it. Birds fly along the coast over a calm sea. The seals in the foreground sit on rocks with their noses in the air. A rather thick seal-breath fog emanating from the thousands of seals in the view is visible in the distance. On the bottom left corner of the mount Elliott pasted part of a government document that describes the abundance of seals in 1872-74 and compares it with the desolation he found in 1890.

Elliott wrote an elaborate legend for this image. Since this is such an integral part of the watercolor's dual role as both art and scientific document, it is worthwhile to quote it in full:[16]

> In strict order, this field of hauling seals should be enveloped in a steaming fog from the hot breath of the moving herds, lest it would not give a fair idea of the real number of these non-breeding hosts which are out upon the ground. It is only upon a cool foggy day that these young seals will haul out in this immense aggregation and on such a day, their breath alone creates a cloud that fairly conceals many of them.
>
> This Reef ground is not more than half a mile from the village and it was such an overwhelming exhibition of that life in 1872 that I named the hauling ground in the mist [in] the distance 'The Grand Parade.' I've shown in the picture every vestige of vegetation was worn entirely off and the ground polished literally by the flippers of the seals. But in 1890 not one seal in a hundred of the 1872 was there and grass and flowers springing up all over the ground. The Reef Point lays right over and under the Parade Pinnacle while Otter Island and Sevitchie Kammen are seven miles and one mile distant respectively. [See page 50-51, Monograph, Seal Islands of Alaska][17]

These highly descriptive legends provide the observer with the documentary evidence for comprehending the enormous decline of seal life. The watercolor, with its depiction of

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[16]Legends for other watercolors will appear as appendices.

[17]"The Grand Parade," FA 21, Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

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the fur seal millions, evokes sympathy while the documentation functions as a detailed gloss.

Elliott also included a map with the watercolor entitled *The 'Grand Parade'-- Reef Saint Paul Id. July 18, 1872* (Cleveland Museum of Natural History, FA 21A) (Fig. 7.2). It is from 1872 and includes the location where Elliott stood when he drew the image.[18] Green areas on the map denote vegetation, red areas are the rookery margins and the black area inside of the red is the seal distribution. The map is pasted on the now-detached coversheet of the watercolor. Therefore, it can be assumed that Elliott intended these images not as art for arts sake alone but as scientific documents supporting his position as well.

Saint George Village, (1876) (Cleveland Museum of Natural History, FA56) is another image enhanced by text. St. George is viewed from the sea; it is not clear where the viewer stands. A steamer is anchored off the shore and a *bidarra* or a skin boat, leaves the landing to meet it. Murres bob in the calm and bright water in the left foreground. From left to right one sees a cemetery, the village with two white buildings, the landing, waterfall and bluffs. A layer of fog lies over the village and spotty patches cover the fields on the right. The sky is grey and overcast but the image is still drenched with light. Like many of his early works, this painting exudes serenity. Elliott added a descriptive legend later (Appendix B). He also created a cover for this watercolor and on its back glued a map of St. George Island, a copy of the one published in The Seal-

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[18]The area he indicates is quite close to where the gate for Reef Rookery is located today.

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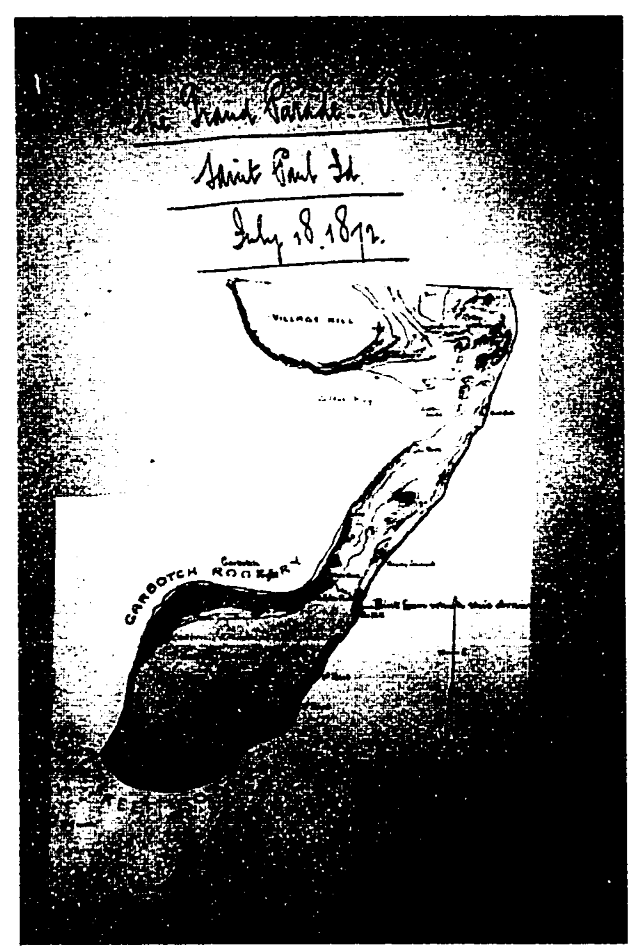

Fig. 7.2. "The 'Grand Parade' —Reef Saint Paul Id. July 18, 1872." Montage. Map for FA 21, Coversheet. Cleveland Museum of Natural History. FA 21A

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Islands of Alaska. He colored in the grasses and areas of fog in the profile view as well as the map of Alaska and included explanatory notes and comments.

Lukannon Bay, (1872) (Cleveland Museum of Natural History, FA34) is another image that Elliott sent to the State Department. On the cover sheet Elliott copied Rudyard Kipling's "Lukannon" poem (see Appendix A). This is a classic Elliott image with seals in the water and on the beach, behind which Polavina Hill rises in the background into a typical grey Pribilof Island sky. Like *The Grand Parade*, Elliott included a legend for this image (Appendix C). Years later he added an unattached bit of cardboard on which he wrote:

> This series of life studies faithfully records the form and location of the immense fur seal herd of Alaska as it existed on the Pribilof Islands during the seasons of 1872-74. It numbered then 4,500,000 fur seals of all classes, but owing to excessive killing by man this enormous number has been reduced to less than 200,000 at the close of the season of 1905. In full view of the swift impending extermination of this wonderful and valuable wildlife, these records of what it has been and might be if properly conserved have a historical and scientific value which is great and unique.[19]

This statement discloses Elliott's intent for his images. They were to be historical and scientific records that also happened to be art. By adding such extensive documentation, Elliott transforms his images into reference texts.

Even Elliott's rival David Starr Jordan saw the value of the images. For example, in the November 1902 edition of Pacific Fisherman Jordan commented on several Elliott illustrations featured in an earlier issue. "I notice the interesting drawings of Mr. Elliott of Tolstoi Rookery in 1872 and 1890. In 1896 and 1897 when we were there that portion

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[19] "Lukannon Bay," FA 34C. Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

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of the rookery which is on the sand was considerably smaller than is shown in Elliott's drawing . . ."[20]

Over the next three years (1901-1903), Elliott relentlessly pressed Hay for a congressional appropriation for some charts he had created as well as for the watercolors. In 1904, Hay asked him to put together a memorandum describing his price for the seventeen fur seal charts and thirty-four watercolors.[21] Additionally, Hay asked Elliott to prepare descriptive texts for the watercolors in case Congress passed an appropriation for their purchase. According to Elliott, this way the images ". . . will illustrate an expert paper on the past condition of the herd. . ."[22]

Elliott had great plans for his watercolors (Appendix D).[23] In his memorandum to John Hay he writes, "I firmly believe that if these watercolor studies were neatly bound up in two albums and laid before the King's Council in London, that every member of that Cabinet would take them up and get deeply interested. . ."[24] Elliott felt that his images could arouse enough official English sentiment in favor of saving the fur seals to override any opposition from the Canadians.[25]

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[20]D.S. Jordan, "Letter to the Editor," Pacific Fisherman 7 no. 11 (November 1902): p. 15, RU 45, Office of the Secretary, 1907-1924 (Charles D. Walcott) Records, Box 20, Folder 18, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

[21]The next day Hay paid Elliott $5000.00 for the 1872-74 fur seal charts but refused the watercolors for the time being.

[22]"An Epitome of the Official Warrant for My Expert Fur-Seal Work," Henry Wood Elliott Collection, Box 12, Folder 80, Archives, Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

[23]See Appendix D to read the memorandum in its entirety.

[24]Letter to John Hay from Elliott, 19 April 1904, Henry Wood Elliott Collection, Box 12, Folder 80, Archives, Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

[25]Ibid.

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In the Hay memorandum, Elliott then proceeds to outline his intentions for the specific functions of his watercolors. Because it is effectively a mission statement, it is worth quoting here in full:

> 1:-These drawings are not articles of evidence: they are objects which arouse interest at first sight for they give form and color to a strange subject, and one that is anomalous and far from reach of human observation.
> 2:-The interest of the observer being aroused by these pictures, then he becomes an investigator: and as an investigator he finds in the charts of the fur seal rookeries the evidence which is wanted that declares the vast aggregate of life which these drawings suggest.
> 3:-Without the suggestion of these drawings, the investigation would never be so readily or willingly made: therefore, the use and value of these realistic drawings becomes apparent.
> 4:-But, without the charts of the fur seal rookeries, the drawings have little or no value, except as pictures: and pictures are not to be regarded as features of evidence: a clever artist can paint seals in, and paint seals out: but these drawings viewed with the authentic records of the rookery surveys or charts, become at once instructive, interesting and valuable.[26]

It is evident that Henry Elliott recognized that a paired visual image and a descriptive text created a more powerful argument than either one could alone. When he states that without the charts the images have little or no value except as pictures, he is not denigrating the value of the pictures as art in general. Elliott obviously thought that art, especially his own, was of the highest consequence. He is only observing that without the charts, the art has little value as evidence. For Elliott, the watercolors were the first step in a campaign to solve the Bering Sea controversy. An interested observer would be more likely to study the topic and perhaps involve themselves in Elliott's efforts. Thus, Elliott intended his images to provide the fuel for his campaign.

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[26]Letter to John Hay from Elliott, 19 April 1904, Henry Wood Elliott Collection, Box 12, Folder 80, Archives, Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

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Elliott's acquaintance with John Hay had another consequence. Before Hay's untimely death in 1905, Elliott had thought of a further plan to resolve the fur seal controversy. The only means left to stop Canadian pelagic sealing was to include them in the control over the land harvest. He proposed giving Canada twenty-five percent of the profits from the Pribilof seal harvest in exchange for an end to pelagic sealing.[27] Elliott also proposed a ten-year rest for the seals so that the herd could regain its health. He called this plan the Hay-Elliott treaty.[28] This basic idea eventually served as the basis for the 1911 North Pacific Fur Seal Treaty.

In 1905, the Hay-Elliott treaty draft found an unreceptive audience in Congress. The State Department refused to adopt it because the treaty would not prevent other nations from taking up pelagic sealing in the future. It is also likely that they thought Canada would not accept the terms of the agreement.[29]

The Second Publicity Campaign Begins

By 1905, the heyday of pelagic sealing was long passed. For the Canadians, sealing had ceased to be profitable not only because of the paucity of animals but also because of Japanese pelagic sealers, who did not have to abide by the restrictions

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[27]Kurkpatrick Dorsey, The Dawn of Conservation Diplomacy.

[28]Hay doesn't seem to have had anything to do with this treaty because he refused to consider a pecuniary agreement after 1903. See Kurkpatrick Dorsey, The Dawn of Conservation Diplomacy, 138.

[29]Canada was still smarting from the conclusion of the Alaska Boundary dispute. Canada had claimed Skagway and Dyea as the boundary line so that the country would have access to the sea from the Yukon River. The United States disagreed and in 1901 President Theodore Roosevelt proposed a tribunal composed of six impartial representatives (three from each side). The boundary was decided in favor of the U.S. when the lord chief justice of England, Lord Alverstone, threw his vote in with the Americans. This deeply embittered Canada and made U.S. negotiations with Canada difficult. (See Naske, Claus-M. and Herman E. Slotnick, Alaska: A History of the 49th State. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994 [1979], p. 87)

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imposed by the Paris award. They raided the American and Russian rookeries with impunity and eventually drove the Canadian sealers out of business. And, as the fur seals declined, the Japanese hunters grew bolder, and began raiding the Pribilof rookeries themselves.

As these events unfolded, Elliott, frustrated at his lack of success thus far, decided he needed assistance. Elliott had appeared frequently in congressional hearings during the 1900s, but his distress at the fur seals' plight and anger at government officials for appearing to do nothing to help the animals did little to help his cause. In 1907, he wrote Professor William T. Hornaday, Director of the New York Zoo and the New York based Camp Fire Club of America,[30] to enlist his aid. Hornaday agreed to become the embittered Elliott's ally on condition that Elliott act in an advisory capacity only and allow Hornaday to launch a publicity campaign designed to play upon the public's sentiments. That Elliott, a man who needed to be the center of attention, agreed to Hornaday's condition is an indication of his desperation.

It is more difficult to trace the active role of Elliott's art during this first phase (1907-1910) of the second publicity campaign. Hornaday's insistences that Elliott act only as an advisor was probably responsible for this sudden halt to most of his prior activities. Elliott, however, did not stop disseminating his images. Two of his watercolors, one from 1872 and another from 1890, appeared on the front cover of the

[30]The Camp Fire Club of America is not to be confused with the Camp Fire Boys and Girls Club. They are not affiliated at all. The Camp Fire Club of America was founded in 1897 and its members were sportsmen dedicated to the preservation of wildlife. They actively promoted the wise use of natural resources.

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October 1909 Pacific Fisherman. It appears that Elliott stayed out of congressional hearings during this time but continued to write articles for popular journals.

This second publicity campaign with Hornaday at the helm started at the right time. The impending 1909 renewal of the North American Commercial Company's sealing lease aroused vehement public protest. As early as 1896, the American people were tired with the waste of government money invested to continue the leasing system, especially the Paris arbitration. For instance, E.G. Dunnell of the New York Times complained that all the money spent to protect the fur seals since 1890 accomplished little more ". . . than that of loss and cruel waste of the very life which it was intended to save."[31]

In 1909, through Hornaday's influence, Elliott gained the support of the New York Camp Fire Club, a sportsmen's organization dedicated to the conservation of wildlife. Through their efforts, public sympathy was aroused for the fur seals in a variety of publications and Elliott's images reached a nationwide audience through them. For instance, in the December 10, 1909 edition of The Evening Star, the Camp Fire Club called on Congress to stop the leasing system and give the seals a ten-year rest to replenish their numbers[32]

Aware of the powerful impact of visual images, Elliott contributed two of his watercolors for the Evening Star article. The illustrations rest side-by-side under the

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[31] The New York Times, 6 February 1896, In U.S. Congress, House, Hearings Before the Committee on Expenditures in the Department of Commerce and Labor, House Resolution 73 To Investigate the Fur-Seal Industry of Alaska, 62nd Congress, 1st Session, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912), 944.

[32] "Club Begins Fight," The Evening Star 10 December 1909, 20.

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heading "Scenes in Seal Country." On the left is *The 'Rookery' and 'Hauling Grounds' of 'Polavina,' July 17, 1872* and on the right *The Desolate Hauling Grounds of the Fur Seal at English Bay, July 18, 1890.* Not surprisingly, the captions under these images focus on the decline of the seals. From the 1872 scene of plenty to the empty, desolate image of 1890, Elliott's pictures graphically illustrated the herds' decimation and gave the Camp Fire Club's message added strength.[33]

Not everyone was thrilled with the Camp Fire Club's appeal to end the leasing system. An editorial in the New York Independent urged the Camp Fire Club to throw its energy behind stopping Japanese pelagic sealing. "If the Camp Fire Club of America by its agitation puts the American people behind the Administration in its efforts to get Japan to stop slaughtering the female seals its efforts will not have been in vain."[34]

Canadians, on the other hand, appeared to approve of Henry Elliott's crusade. The August 1909 issue of Pacific Fisherman included an editorial from the Toronto Globe, "Prof. Elliott is probably the highest authority in the United States on the subject [fur seals] . . . . He is evidently a sincere and courageous man, and has made himself most unpopular with the lessees of the privileges at the Pribilof Islands by his plain speaking with regard to their methods."[35] The editorial also indicated Canadian approval of the 1905 Hay-Elliott treaty draft. "It [the draft] frankly recognized Canada's legitimate

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[33]In 1910, the Camp Fire Club also issued an influential pamphlet entitled "A Square Deal for the Fur Seal." In it, the Club again appealed to Congress to end the leasing system and demanded a ten-year closed land harvest to enable the herd to recover its numbers.

[34]"Saving the Seals," The Independent 69 (4 August 1910): 264.

[35]Henry W. Elliott, "The Depredation of the Seal Rookeries," Pacific Fisherman 7 no. 8 (August 1909): 12.

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concern in the business, something that the lessees have fought against with all the powers they possess in the lobby of Congress. The lessees will only be satisfied with an arrangement that will leave the business wholly in their hands."[36]

Meanwhile Elliott and Hornaday's campaign continued. When the Camp Fire Club learned that the new Secretary of the Department of Commerce and Labor, Charles Nagel, was advertising for bids on a new seal lease, Hornaday requested a hearing at the Senate Committee on the Conservation of National Resources. On February 26, 1910 the committee met and the Chair, Senator Joseph M. Dixon of Montana, firmly supported Hornaday's conviction that the leasing system should be abandoned. The committee members voted to adopt a resolution abolishing the leasing system. An agreement with Nagel placed control of the Pribilof Island affairs with the Department of Commerce and Labor. Dixon, a staunch Elliott supporter, also retrieved the Hay-Elliott Treaty from the State Department where it had languished since 1905, and forwarded it to the Senate.

The ending of the lease system pleased many people and Elliott received his fair share of credit. Senator Theodore Burton wrote, "If it had not been for the efforts of Prof. Elliott there would be no more seals on this earth today, than there is of the buffalo in the United States."[37] Similarly, Dr. William O. Stillman, President of the American Humane Society, sent Elliott a congratulatory message. "I am very glad that you have had success in your long fight in behalf of humanity, . . ."[38]

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[36]Ibid., 12.

[37]Letter from Hon. Theodore Burton to M.A. Foran, 26 April 1910, Henry Wood Elliott Papers, Box 6, Folder 45, Archives, Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

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But Elliott's campaign did not close with the end of the leasing system; he had only won half the battle. The Dixon Bill, enacted on April 12, 1910, passed on the understanding that no land killing was to take place during the 1910 season. The Fur Seal Advisory Board, created by President Taft to examine the possibility of a lease renewal and headed by David Starr Jordan, however, recommended the continued harvest of male seals so that the excess seals would not trample the pups. Secretary Nagel agreed and in May of 1910 ordered the harvest of 12,000 male seals with 2,000 to be retained as a breeding reserve.

Following this announcement, Hornaday lifted Elliott's gag order. Powerless to stop the land harvest of 1910, they plotted their next step. But first, they awaited the outcome of a sealing conference held between the United States, Great Britain for Canada, Japan, and Russia. Elliott had won a battle but his crusade was far from complete.

As is evident, Henry Elliott intended his watercolors to be important historic, scientific, and artistic works. They were calculated as a first step in engaging a viewer's interest so that they became interested investigators, and in turn indignant crusaders fighting for the fur seals. With the assistance of his friend, William Hornaday, Elliott's images became disseminated through the Camp Fire Club's publications and reached a nationwide audience. This publicity and the interest the watercolors, with all their documentary detail, generated in government circles helped lead to the outcry that abolished the Pribilof Island leasing system.

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[38]Letter from William O. Stillman to Elliott, 24 February 1911, Henry Wood Elliott Collection, Box 5, Archives, Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

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Chapter Eight

Victory

On July 24, 1911, following years of stalemated negotiations, the United States, Great Britain, Russia, and Japan agreed to the North Pacific Fur Seal Treaty that ended pelagic sealing and established a system of mutual compensation based on the Pribilof Island harvest.[1] This was exactly the kind of plan Henry Elliott had proposed in 1905. Just why these four nations, especially the United States and Great Britain, finally came together in 1911 after years of half-hearted discussions is unclear. One thing that is, however, is that the public indignation aroused by Henry Elliott, in conjunction with William Hornaday, and the Camp Fire Club of America played a significant role.

With the threat of pelagic sealing over, half the battle was won, but as long as the land harvest continued, Elliott and Hornaday felt there was still more to do. The most logical line of attack was to promote the halting of the land harvest for a number of years so that the remaining fur seals could regain their numbers through natural increase. Still angered that the government had not prevented the 1910 seal harvest, they bided their time until the outcome of the North Pacific Fur Seal Convention was known before planning their next step. Once again Elliott turned to his artistic renderings when mounting his final campaign. This chapter will examine Elliott's continued integration of art and document in his ultimate surge to the conclusion of his long, twenty-two year effort to save the fur seals.

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[1]In the final agreement, Canada and Japan each received 15% of the American seal skins and 15% of the Russian harvest. The U.S., Canada, and Russia each received 10% of the Japanese catch. The treaty was to be renewed every 15 years. An amendment added later protected the sea otter.

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1911-1912 Ratification Hearings

Elliott bided his time as the North Pacific Fur Seal Treaty's enabling legislation made its way through Congress. Having cleared the House, the bill was forwarded to the Senate, where Elliott's supporters prepared to strike. Senator Gilbert Hitchcock of Nebraska attached an amendment, written by Elliott and Hornaday, which called for a ten-year halt to the Pribilof Island land-based harvest.[2] Immediately, the scientists on the Fur Seal Advisory Board, which had been created in 1909 by President Taft and was headed by Elliott's rival, David Starr Jordan, opposed this amendment. They asserted that the land harvest was beneficial to the herds because it eliminated the surplus male seals that would trample pups and harm female seals if allowed to mature.

As the 1911-1912 ratification hearings progressed, both Elliott's supporters and the government scientists engaged in a vitriolic battle of words. For example, Elliott accused the scientists of out and out dishonesty. "There are three kinds of liars," he wrote, "-liars, d--d liars, and scientific experts."[3] For their part, the scientists went on the offensive, and attempted to discredit Elliott. David Starr Jordan even went so far as to accuse Elliott of being at the head of a pelagic sealers' lobby. "To incorporate a clause establishing in fur-seal bill a close season prohibiting killing of superfluous males would do no good to herd," Jordan wrote, "but would kill treaty. No one knows this better than

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[2]Kurkpatrick Dorsey, The Dawn of Conservation Diplomacy: U.S.-Canadian Wildlife Protection Treaties in the Progressive Era (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1998), 160.

[3]Quoted from T.H. Huxley by Elliott, In "The ensalivation (sic) of Drs. Steineger, Lucas, et.al., by the lessees and the painful aftermath 1911-1912 into Fur Seal Herd of Alaska," Handmade Booklet, Henry Wood Elliott Collection, Box 1, Folder 1, Archives, Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

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the pelagic sealers' lobby, which for 20 years has been led by Henry W. Elliott."[4] The charge was baseless.[5]

The ratification hearings were valuable in that they revealed the main fissure of dispute in the conservation movement: the use of resources. Elliott and his supporters promoted an approach to conservation based on nature taking care of its own. " There is a gulf between fact and fiction as to this business [fur seals]," he wrote, "and there is imperative need that these herds on those islands shall be turned back to the solitude and peace which God Almighty created there in the beginning, which alone can restore that life to what it was, we can not do it . . . ."[6] David Starr Jordan and the other government scientists, on the other hand, felt that humanity had impacted the fur seals to such a degree that they were no longer wild animals but more like domestic livestock requiring management and human care. This fissure is still in evidence in the conservation movement of today.

Annotated Reports and Slanderous Cartoons

Nettled by his scientific opponents, Elliott turned his artistic talents to retaliation. This time, however, it was not to watercolor, but to political cartoons that he turned. In the manner that William Hogarth (1697-1764) and Honoré Daumier (1808-1879) used

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[4]Deadly parallel on D.S. Jordan, Archives, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Henry Wood Elliott Collection, Box 3.

[5]Reporting on Jordan's slander of Elliott, a reporter for the New York Times wrote, "Now, it happens that Mr. Elliott's position regarding the fur seal never was stronger, or more correct, than it is today. Dr. Jordan's reckless assertion . . . will probably aid the cause of the fur seal." (New York Times 14 February 1912, Henry Wood Elliott Collection, Box 1, Unsorted, Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks).

[6]U.S. Congress, Senate, Alaskan Seal Fisheries, Hearings before the Committee on Conservation of National Resources, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), 21.

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caricature and cartoon-like imagery to comment on timely issues, Elliott created hundreds of cartoons (from ca. 1911 to 1926) to ridicule his opponents and promote his own point of view. It is in these previously unexamined works that Henry Elliott achieved a synthesis of art and documentation.

Elliott's working method for creating his cartoons might best be described as montage. From newspapers or magazines he cut out cartoons, such as Maggie and Jiggs, and embellished them with trims, such as nametags, using watercolor paints, ink washes, and ink alone to enhance or add in details. He then added descriptive captions and conversation bubbles to the image. Elliott pasted most of these cartoons into published government documents he had annotated to emphasize his assertions, but sometimes he pasted them on a single sheet of plain paper. These cartoons, combined with Elliott's sardonic and often witty remarks, blend together perfectly. The amusing pictures and acerbic comments on fur seal injustices make these reports instructive yet entertaining.

These simple images were actively employed by Elliott to promote his own ideas and to damage the credibility of his opponents both during hearings to examine the mismanagement of the fur seal industry and thereafter. He created multiple copies of these cartoon-embellished reports by purchasing, or somehow obtaining the number of government documents he needed, along with enough copies of whatever media the cartoon originally came from. Elliott then mass-mailed them to congressmen, reporters, and other influential persons. For example, on one list, found on the inside flap of a homemade front cover to an annotated personal copy of Fur Seals, (a government document put out by the Senate), Elliott lists the names of thirty individuals, who

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received an annotated copy of this report.[7] It appears, then, that his cartoons were widely disseminated.

To spare himself the financial burden of mailing his slanderous cartoons to countless public officials, Elliott often used congressmen's franks.[8] For instance, Elliott sent one of his cartoons to George A. Clark, secretary to David Starr Jordan, who sent it on to Congressman William Gordon. The cartoon shows Clark bumbling on the witness stand and was mailed in one of Gordon's envelopes. Apparently, Gordon was more amused by the correspondence than outraged. Gordon's secretary, F.F. Spetzing, wrote to Elliott, "The above was included with your work 'She Knows Him', (sic) wherein you showed Clark's agility on the witness stand. As requested I have returned the communication: [to Clark]"[9] Spetzing went on to discuss the elections, so there did not appear to be any ill will towards Elliott for using the Congressman's envelopes.

An example of one of these annotated documents, House Resolution 73 To Investigate the Fur-Seal Industry of Alaska, is now in the collection of Rasmuson Library at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.[10] Elliott prepared this particular report for a

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[7]U.S. Senate, Committee on Commerce, Fur Seals, Hearings on S. 373, 67th Congress, 2nd & 4th Sessions (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1923), In Henry Wood Elliott Papers, Box 2, Unsorted, Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

[8]Elliott had some other questionable behaviors. In addition to using congressmen's franks for mass-mailings, Elliott also sent anonymous letters to people he didn't like or who didn't share his opinions, and he continued to send letters with the Smithsonian Institution as the return address years after his affiliation with that institution had ceased. This may have given him more regard with the public than he may have had otherwise.

[9]Letter from G.A. Clark to William Gordon, 11 October 1916, Henry Wood Elliott Papers, Box 2, Unsorted, Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

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D.F.H. Baker on December 7, 1917. He added "official fur seal 'science' on parade" to the title. The document concerns the illegal killing of seals less than two years of age.

Elliott annotated most government documents in a similar fashion. Using red or black ink, he underscored important details and sometimes drew a little hand with the fingertip resting at an important line followed by an exclamation point. For example, in House Resolution No. 73 To Investigate the Fur-Seal Industry of Alaska, Elliott underscored, "In the clear light of the above facts of official record and sworn testimony your committee will find that 7,733 yearling skins were taken during the season of 1910 by the agent of the Department of Commerce and Labor, Mr. Lembkey, in violation of the law and regulations . . ."[11]

Cartoons often, but not always, embellished these annotated government reports. One example from House Resolution No. 73 To Investigate the Fur-Seal Industry of Alaska is a newspaper cartoon of two men deep in conversation (p. 918) (Fig. 8.1). Elliott painted the background in a grey wash leaving room for a conversation bubble. He colored the hair, coat and tails, and the spats of the figures with black ink. Across the chest of the left figure in a sash-like manner Elliott wrote "Jordan." The other figure has placed his hat and cane on the floor. On the top of his hat crown is the name "Nagel." Charles Nagel, Secretary of the Department of Commerce and Labor, asks Jordan "Now what can I say?" This refers to Elliott's charge that Nagel violated the law by using the

[10]Regrettably this document has been rebound at least once and the pages were cut to fit the document in its new binding. Some of Elliott's comments were cut off or into during this process.

[11]U.S. Congress, House, Hearings Before the Committee on Expenditures in the Department of Commerce and Labor, House Resolution No. 73 To Investigate the Fur-Seal Industry of Alaska, 62nd Congress, 1st Session, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912), 906.

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Fig. 8.1. Cartoon of David Starr Jordan and Charles Nagel. 1917. 3 x 2.5 inches. Montage in Annotated Government Document. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks. In U.S. Congress. House. Hearings Before the Committee on Expenditures in the Department of Commerce and Labor. House Resolution No. 73 To Investigate the Fur-Seal Industry of Alaska. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912. P. 918

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testimony of "scientific experts" when he ordered the 1910 land harvest.[12] A smaller cartoon on the next page features an indignant gentleman with a top hat and a cane (p. 919) (Fig. 8.2). Elliott painted his face in flesh tones and added red to the flower in his lapel and to the border of the garment he carries. The figure states, "'[Scientific] Experts?' Ugh!"[13], obviously reflecting Elliott's opinion of the scientists in the opposing camp.

At other times Elliott annotated newspaper clippings and pasted them on a single sheet of paper. Like his illustrated reports, these were mass-mailed to congressmen and others involved in the fur seal controversy. "Marooned" shows a man sitting on a rock surrounded by a choppy sea. A Theodore Roosevelt figure rows away from the rock. On the man's cuff is a label with the name "Jordan" on it and the rock he sits on is called "The Desolate Isle of St. Paul Ruined by Scientific Butchers." At the bottom of the image is a hickory club Elliott drew labeled "Elkins Seal Club." Pasted on the cartoon above the club on the right is a newspaper clipping announcing Jordan's proposed resignation from Stanford University.[14] To the left of the clipping Elliott wrote his own caption, "He Can't Get Away From This!" Theodore Roosevelt from the rowboat labeled

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[12]U.S. Congress, House, Hearings Before the Committee on Expenditures in the Department of Commerce and Labor, <u>House Resolution No. 73 To Investigate the Fur-Seal Industry of Alaska</u>, 62nd Congress, 1st Session, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912), 918.

[13]Ibid., 919.

[14]David Starr Jordan was President of Stanford University at the same time he worked on the fur seal controversy.

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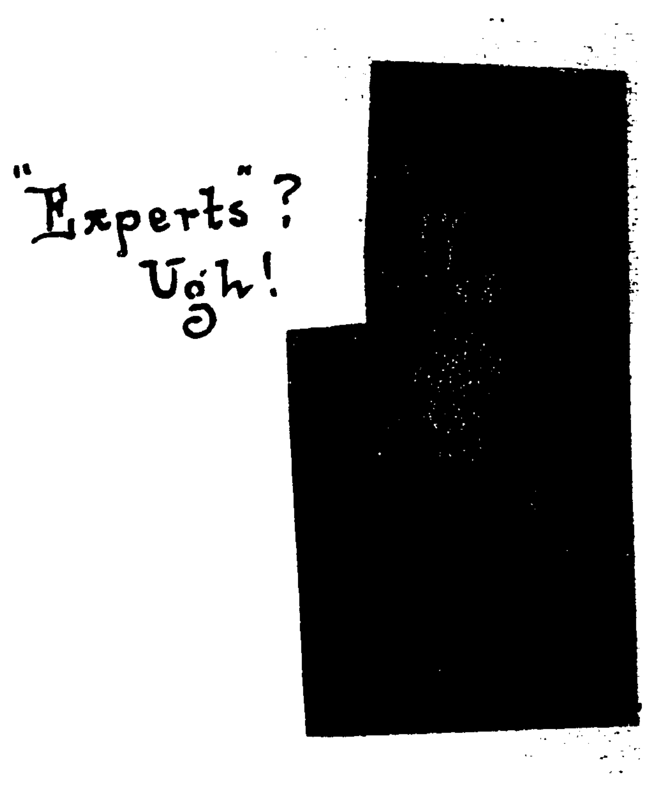

Fig. 8.2. Cartoon. " 'Experts?' Ugh!" 1917. .75 x 1.75 inches. Montage in Annotated Government Document. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks. In U.S. Congress. House. Hearings Before the Committee on Expenditures in the Department of Commerce and Labor. House Resolution No. 73 To Investigate the Fur-Seal Industry of Alaska. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912. P. 919.

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"Rothermel Report" shouts, "Stay there, now and sweat for your butchers! Jordan is a hard road to trabbel! (sic.)."[15]

Elliott's mass-mailings of these documents show his use of his artistic talents in the service of political ends. They were a vehicle for disseminating his opinions among many influential people and gave him the chance to vent his anger towards his opponents. Except for the individuals targeted in these reports, most of the recipients seem to have enjoyed them. By ridiculing his rivals in this manner, Elliott may have succeeded in planting an element of discredit and mistrust towards them in his audience.

The Salvation of the Fur Seals

Influenced by a change in the perception of animals and political climate, many congressmen began to take up Elliott's cause. David Starr Jordan and his band of scientists' assertion that continuing the land harvest would conserve the fur seals seemed illogical, both to government officials and the public, especially when only 140,000 seals remained.[16] Although it is not entirely clear just what caused this change in political climate, it is certain that Elliott and Hornaday's efforts to arouse public indignation had been effective. During the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, the American public had been gradually moving from a perception of animals as mere tools, to one of compassion. By playing on this new sentiment, Elliott found many supporters. He had

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[15]Henry Wood Elliott Collection, Box 1, Folder 3, Archives, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma.

[16]Actual estimation was 133,000 seals left in 1911. U.S. Congress, House, Hearings Before the Committee on Expenditures in the Department of Commerce and Labor, House Resolution No. 73 To Investigate the Fur-Seal Industry of Alaska, 62nd Congress, 1st Session, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912), 935.

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also written and created so many illustrated works on the fur seal controversy that for many people it took on the character of a magazine serial. In 1912, for example, N.C. Cotabish, a friend of the Elliott family, cabled him, "I have received from time to time your pamphlets on the Fur Seal Industry, and I want to say that I have been very much interested in your fight. The whole proposition reads like a novel."[17] Whatever the cause of the shifting attitude, on August 15, 1912, Congress voted to halt the Pribilof Island land harvest for five years so that the fur seal population would have time to increase. Following this decision, the North Pacific Fur Seal Treaty's enabling legislation passed through the Senate with no more delays. Twenty-two years after he had launched his crusade, Henry Wood Elliott had finally saved the fur seals.

Elliott's watercolors now re-emerged as jubilant indicators of his successful fight. For instance, on September 1, 1912, The New York Times, a staunch Elliott supporter, ran a large article that featured a full-length portrait of Elliott flanked by two of his watercolors. The image on the left is an 1872 painting of a rookery swarming with seals, while the other is an 1890 work of an empty beach.[18] The article, a searing condemnation of government officials, government scientists, and the fur-buying public begins, "You can't kill any seals for five years to come, no matter how bloodthirsty you may be or however much you may want to sell the skins of mother seals and their infants

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[17]Cable from Cotabish to Elliott, 4 May 1912, Henry Wood Elliott Collection, Box 1, Unsorted, Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

[18]The article maintains that these images are of the same rookery but this is not the case at all. The public, however, would probably not realize this.

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to ladies in the London and New York markets."[19] The Times then goes on to praise Elliott:

> Elliott never had an axe to grind. He has no commercial interest one way or the other. . . . he went [to the Pribilofs] with an unbiased mind and a clear head. He is a draughtsman, and he made the picture of the seal herds which is printed on this page of THE NEW YORK TIMES [caps. in original], without any idea that within twenty years commercial interests would have brought about a wholesale massacre of the thriving families he there depicted.[20]

Therefore, some of Elliott's paintings broadcasted his triumph across the nation.

Final Pribilof Island Visit -1913

Elliott may have been euphoric over his victory, but he was still furious over the prior mismanagement of the fur seal industry. He pressed charges against the government and scientific officials he held culpable. The subsequent hearings that took place from 1913 to 1914, were just as mean-spirited as the 1911 to 1912 ratifications of the fur seal treaty. The later ones concluded with no resolution though they did serve to heighten fierce levels of animosity between the scientists and Elliott's supporters. This hostility was to persist for years to come.

In 1913, while the hearings were underway, the House Committee on Expenditures in the Department of Commerce and Labor sent Henry Elliott back to the Pribilof Islands on a fact-finding mission. Even though Elliott could hardly be called unbiased, he set out once again, armed with his watercolor paints and accompanied by

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[19]The New York Times, 1 September 1912, "No More Slaughtering of Seals for Five Years," p. 10, Section 5.

[20]Ibid.

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Andrew Gallagher, who acted as stenographer. It would be his final visit to the Seal Islands.

As he had done on previous visits, Elliott created many watercolor studies. But on this 1913 trip, instead of focusing almost exclusively on the Pribilofs, Elliott also sketched the Alaska land and seascapes he encountered. These still, luminous images suggest that, at age sixty-six, Elliott may have sensed that this would be his final visit. The menace of pelagic sealing gone, he returned to his earlier vision of Alaska as a northern Eden.

Otter and St. Paul Islands, (1913) (University of Alaska Museum, UA1995:006:001) is an example of one of these serene seascapes. The sea is grey and quiet while the sky clears. Occupying the middle ground, Otter Island on the left and St. Paul on the right are a vivid green. In the left middle ground, a steamship chased by sea birds, approaches the islands. With the land harvest suspended for five years and pelagic sealing a thing of the past, this painting reflects Elliott's emotive state. Once again, the work, viewed from the vantage point of the sea itself, offers no place for the viewer to stand. In this way, Elliott seems to create a world for his exclusive use. A theme in many of these seascapes is birds chasing steamships. Elliott explained, ". . . the relief and companionable satisfaction afforded by these feathered wanderers is not easy to define in adequate terms. It does not matter to these tireless sea waifs whether the skies are bright or stormy, for in sunshine and in rain, in calm or in tempest, they never forsake the vessel until the engines slow down in the quiet waters of the desired port."[21]

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[21]Henry W. Elliott, "A Few Sea-Birds," Harper's Weekly 58 (March 1879): 498.

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Unimak Island: Alaska, (1913) (University of Alaska Museum, UA1995:014:001) (Fig. 8.3) is also characterized by tranquility. In the middle ground near an island with two mountains rising in the mist, the customary sea birds chase a steamboat billowing black smoke. Wreathed in fog, the Shishaldin Volcano on the left is almost a perfect cone. Issanofsky Peak on the right is more granite colored than the nearly white volcano. As in many of these images, the vantage point leaves the viewer with no place to stand. This device allows Elliott to create an unattainable paradise. The 1913 images may well represent his idea of a heaven on earth and while he is willing to show this beautiful, idyllic world to other people, he does not wish to share it completely. Therefore, these 1913 images may well represent Elliott's farewell to Alaska's Pribilof Islands.

After the Crusade (1913-1930)

Henry Elliott continued his dogged vigilance on matters relating to the fur seals long after his successful campaign had saved them. In 1915, two years before the United States' land harvest was to resume, Funsten and Brothers, a St. Louis furrier, was awarded a contract from the Bureau of Fisheries to dress and auction the Pribilof Island sealskins.[22] The monopoly angered Elliott, who, as always, considered the fur seals a resource belonging to the American people, not a profit-making corporation.[23] His disgust launched a flurry of cartoon-embellished annotated reports protesting this action. Once again, when Elliott wished to express a controversial opinion, he almost always

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[22]The Fouke Fur Company, also of St. Louis, was Funsten and Brothers' successor.

[23]Robert L. Shalkop, Henry Wood Elliott 1846-1930: A Retrospective Exhibition (Anchorage: Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum, 1982), 15.

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Fig. 8.3. "Unimak Island," 1913. 10.5 x 14.5 inches Watercolor. University of Alaska Museum. UA1995:014:001.

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turned to his artistic talents. His art was his spokesperson. In 1926, the Senate proposed a bill for the selling of the dressed furs on the open market.[24] At age eighty, Elliott descended again upon Congress to support the legislation. Although he was as keen and quick-witted as ever, recent elections had changed the congressional climate, and he lost this particular battle.[25]

When not involved in continuing fur seal business, Henry Elliott dabbled in a variety of pursuits. For example, in 1915 he worked as an advisor on documents relating to Russian America for the Delegate to Alaska, Hon. James Wickersham's Bibliography of Alaskan Literature. Elliott also continued to paint but not to his former extent. It could be that he had trouble finding subject material that interested him. After a lifetime of devoted artistic/documentary studies, it may have been difficult for Elliott to paint for arts sake alone.

In 1922 Elliott forged ties with the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. When a Cleveland bank discovered an inactive 1893 account opened by the Kirtland Society of Natural History, Harold T. Clark, Secretary of the newly founded Cleveland Museum of Natural History, tried to lay claim. He located Henry Elliott, who was the only original member of the Kirtland Society alive at the time. Elliott signed over his power of attorney and the Museum received some natural history specimens and a small sum of money.[26] In December of 1922, the museum announced an exhibition of sixteen Elliott

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[24]Ibid., 15.

[25]Margaret Manor Butler, The Lakewood Story (New York: Stratford House, 1949), 105.

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watercolors.[27] John M. Henderson, whom Elliott credited with assistance during the controversy, had donated thirty-seven watercolor paintings to the museum that he had purchased earlier from Elliott. In a letter to Clark, Elliott wrote, ". . . I am happy in the knowledge of what Mr. Henderson has done with those pictures of mine, which he owned, and the pecuniary aid which he gave me for them, enabled me to continue that fight which I was then engaged in here, to save the fur seal herd of Alaska, and win out."[28] In 1926 Elliott donated a large collection of papers to the museum archives.[29]

In 1926, after his failure to defeat the fur-dressing and marketing monopoly in Congress, Elliott moved to Seattle to live with his son John.[30] It is only at this point that he seems to paint just for amusement. As he approached the end of his life, his need for documentary detail seems to have diminished. Elliott's final images are not of the Pribilofs, but retain many of the same qualities. For instance, a series of tiny images (4.5" by 6") at the University of Alaska Museum called *Chips of the Old Block* are quaint and perhaps a bit satirical, appearing as personal jokes. Some are social commentaries like *Social Chips*, (ca. 1924-1930) (University of Alaska Museum, UA1995:054:005)

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[26]Cleveland Plain-Dealer, 2 February 1927, Clipping, Archives, Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

[27]Clipping, Henry Wood Elliott, Box 2, Unsorted, Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

[28]Letter from Elliott to Harold T. Clark, 15 February 1923, Henry Wood Elliott, Box 1, Unsorted, Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

[29]Letter from Elliott to Clark, 10 March 1926, William E. Scheele Files, Archives, Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

[30]Elliott's constant presence in Washington must have put a strain on his marriage. Alexandra stayed in Cleveland during the crusade to take care of their ten children. Elliott returned in the summers to do some fruit growing, etc., but he left for Washington in the autumns. At the end of their lives, Elliott lived with their son John in Seattle, but Alexandra lived with their daughter, Grace in California.

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which seems to be a statement on gossiping. This vignette shows two women taking a break from their chores to chat at a back fence. A small cat listens to them intently. Elliott also appears to poke fun at himself with these images. *Known by His Chips*, (ca. 1924-1930) (University of Alaska Museum, UA1995:054:007) (Fig. 8.4) is a possible self-portrait of a gentleman at his desk surrounded by books, newspapers and maps. This image could be a reflection of Elliott's work area as many of his activities, like preparing annotated government reports and clipping cartoons, are untidy.

Elliott also found inspiration in Mt. Rainier and made numerous paintings. An example of one of these images is *Mount Rainier*, (Cleveland Museum of Natural History, FA39). The mountain rises in the center middle ground from a body of water bordered by spruce trees. Other peaks are visible in the far left distance. Two birds fly over the water in the right middle ground. They look very like some of Elliott's Pribilof birds. The sun is not visible in the image but the picture is light-filled and peaceful.

Henry Wood Elliott died of a heart attack on May 25, 1930 attended by three of his children. As he had wanted, Elliott's ashes were scattered over Mt. Rainier, the inspiration of his last years.[31] There is an old adage to the effect that one never knows who their true friends are until death. The obituaries and letters the family received from Elliott's many supporters were not only a testament to a life lived well but also showed how closely connected the public associated him with his watercolors and/or the fur seals (Appendix E). A reporter for the New York Times wrote, "He made sketches of scenes

[31]Robert Shalkop, Henry Wood Elliott 1846-1930: A Retrospective Exhibition (Anchorage: Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum, 1982), 15. From Letter from John S. Elliott to Harold T. Clark, collection of Cleveland Museum of Natural History Archives.

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Fig. 8.4. "Known by His Chips," ca. 1924-1930. 4.75 x 4 inches. Watercolor. University of Alaska Museum. UA1995:054:007.

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on the islands which proved persuasive evidence of the need of stopping the seal butchery, the pictures of the hordes of the early '70s changing to almost barren beaches in 1890."[32] To the public, then, Elliott's images were indeed an essential facet of his successful crusade to save the fur seals.

Henry Elliott's art, then, played an important role in the final part of his long campaign. His cartoon-embellished annotated reports lampooned his opponents and perhaps harmed their reputations. His mass mailing of these documents ensured that they would have a wide audience of influential people. Eventually a change in political climate led Congress to adopt a five-year closed fur seal harvest so that the animals could recover their strength. After twenty-two years, Henry Elliott had finally succeeded. And at his death in 1930, he left behind a rich legacy for the future.

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[32]New York Times, 27 May 1930, "H.W. Elliott Dead; Fur Seal Authority," p. 29, col. 5.

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Chapter Nine

Henry Wood Elliott's Legacy

Henry Wood Elliott left a rich legacy. He made important contributions not only to northern art but also to the nascent conservation movement. His battle for the fur seals defined the main problem halting the progress of this interest group today. The question of whether to exploit the natural world for economic gain or to leave it in a pristine state was, and still is, the major source of contention between conservationists and America's dependence on these renewable and nonrenewable resources. Inspired by Elliott's successful fight, other early conservationists often asked him for advice as they battled their way through Congress. For example, in 1913, Robert Underwood Johnson, fighting for the Hetch Hetchy Valley in California wrote Elliott to inquire about the Senate's attitude.[1] Clearly, Henry Elliott's success in saving the fur seals made him a popular advisor for other aspiring conservationists.

Elliott's watercolors are also an important gift to twenty-first century America. After 129 years, they are a reminder of how swiftly humanity can impact a population and how one person's efforts can make a difference. In these images, we can catch a rare glimpse of Alaska and some of its people right after the transfer of the territory from Russia to the United States. We can visualize the fantastic splendor of a teeming fur seal rookery and be reminded of our need to protect the natural world. And for the people of

[1]The Hetch Hetchy valley was selected as a reservoir site for San Francisco although other sites were more cost effective. Robert Underwood and John Muir launched an unsuccessful campaign to save the beautiful valley.

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the Pribilof Islands today, Elliott's works have an important role as historical and cultural records.

In 1999, preliminary fieldwork on the Pribilof Islands of St. Paul and St. George suggest that Elliott's paintings are important cultural icons for the Pribilof Aleuts.[2] Although some of the informants did not know that Henry Elliott had been an artist or a former island treasury agent, all felt a personal connection to the paintings that led them to recall significant events from their own lives. For example, the informants remembered stories told by grandparents, past fur seal harvests, the internment at Funter Bay during World War II, playing baseball with the boys after church, and island history. They also felt that Elliott's portrayals of the Pribilof landscapes, the Aleut people, and the fur seal rookeries were accurate and could identify the places he painted. Therefore, Elliott's images served as personal memory triggers for the Pribilof Island elders and were perceived as accurate representations of life on the islands during the late nineteenth-early twentieth-centuries.

Henry Wood Elliott's watercolors, then, were an important facet in his campaign to save the fur seals, provide an exceptional cultural record of the Pribilof Aleut people, and reveal Elliott's thwarted aspirations to be an artist. Elliott's art helped save the fur seals from probable extinction by arousing public interest in an animal that most people

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[2]Interviews were held with: Andronik and Elekonida (Ella) Kashevarof of St. George, Julia Kashevarof, originally from St. George but now residing at Senior Center on St. Paul, Victor Malavansky of St. George, Ludmilla (Ludy) Mandregan of St. Paul, Marva Melovidov of St. Paul, and George Rukovishnikoff of St. Paul. Each informant received a packet of color photocopies of Elliott's ethnographic watercolors and was asked to comment on the works. The images fueled the conversation and led to some wonderful recollections and stories. At the close of the interviews, each individual signed a release form.

Tapes and transcripts are held at the Archives of the Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

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would never see. As his mission statement indicated, Elliott intended the images to stimulate sentiment for the seals that would lead the observer to investigate the subject material and perhaps join Elliott's fight. Eventually, his relentless impassioned rhetoric, a change in public opinion about wild animals, and his images launched a public outcry that terminated the Pribilof Island leasing system, probably stimulated the North Pacific Fur Seal Treaty, and halted the United States' land harvest for five years, long enough to allow the fur seals to replenish their numbers and survive into the present.

But Elliott's images also safeguard the past of the Pribilof Aleut people by documenting a way of life that is no longer practiced. Created only a few years after the purchase of Alaska from the Russians, these paintings show the people in a time of transition as they accommodated their former Aleut-Russian culture into nineteenth-century American society. Elliott's ethnographic watercolors and drawings, then, are of historic and cultural value for the Pribilof Aleuts (Appendix F).[3]

Henry Elliott aspired to be an artist and to be regarded as such. His skillful handling of the watercolor paints, the play in the water and sky, the luminous atmospheres, and especially the striking variations on a very limited subject all attest to Elliott's artistic mastery of his medium. But his expedition background inculcated in him a desire for documentation. With all the landscape markers, snippets of government documents, and descriptive captions that Elliott added to his images, it is extremely difficult to regard these watercolors as anything but a visual record. This was his artistic

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[3]See Appendix F for a brief discussion of the Pribilof Islands today.

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failing. In his effort to save the fur seals, however, these visual documents aroused interest in the animals in a way that pages of dry writing could not.

Above all else, Henry Wood Elliott's watercolors speak eloquently of his admiration and sense of wonder for the Alaska fur seals and their environment. It is his love for these animals that shines through his images. This sentiment encouraged him to create his watercolors, launch, and more importantly, tenaciously continue a tempestuous, yet successful twenty-two year campaign that would save the fur seals and inspire the nascent conservation movement. The fur seals of the Pribilof Islands today are Elliott's greatest legacy to us.

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Appendices

Appendix A
"Lukannon"
From Rudyard Kipling's "The White Seal."

This is the great deep-sea song that all the St. Paul seals sing when they are heading back to their beaches in the summer. It is a sort of very sad seal National Anthem.

I met my mates in the morning (and oh, but I am old!)
Where roaring on the ledges the summer ground-swell rolled;
I heard them lift the chorus that drowned the breakers' song—
The Beaches of Lukannon—two million voices strong!

The song of pleasant stations beside the salt lagoons,
The song of blowing squadrons that shuffled down the dunes,
The song of midnight dances that churned the sea to flame—
The Beaches of Lukannon—before the sealers came!

I met my mates in the morning (I'll never meet them more!)
They came and went in legions that darkened all the shore.
And through the foam-flecked offing as far as voice could reach
We hailed the landing-parties and we sang them up the beach.

The Beaches of Lukannon—the winter-wheat so tall—
The dripping, crinkled lichens, and the sea-fog drenching all!
The platforms of our playground, all shining smooth and worn!
The Beaches of Lukannon—the home where we were born!

I meet my mates in the morning, a broken, scattered band.
Men shoot us in the water and club us on the land;

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Men drive us to the Salt House like silly sheep and
tame,
And still we sing Lukannon—before the sealers came.

Wheel down, wheel down to southward! Oh
Gooverooska[1] go!
And tell the Deep-Sea Viceroys the story of our woe;
Ere, empty as the shark's egg the tempest flings ashore,
The Beaches of Lukannon shall no their sons no
more![2]

Appendix B
Legend for *Saint George Village* (1876) (Cleveland Museum of Natural History, FA 56)

This view is from the only landing which is made on this island. The steamer can come in here when southerly and southwest winds blow and cannot make a berth when west to northeast and east to northeast winds prevail. She anchors in nine fathoms, one quarter mile from the shore. The village perches on the crown of a hill which is 125 feet above the sea, with the warehouse and salt house at the foot and just above the landing: The killing grounds are on the slopes of this hill to the left, and at the base of the adjacent hill a 'Cemetery Ridge.'

On this day, June 7, 1876 there are 24 native cottages, 1 new native church with 120 souls: a schoolhouse, a general residence and office building for the lessees, and their store and warehouses, and the Treasury Agent's building: nearly all of these are in this view. The ridge in the background, rising into the highest point on the island, Aleukeyak Hill '930 ft.' and the foothills as they drop to the sea are rough volcanic slips in which myriads (sic.) of small waterfowl and auks 'simokinesis' breed during the summer, all covered with luxuriant growths of lichens, mosses, and sphagnum: A small waterfowl 'Coleris,' and millions of aeries, 'luvia,' inch gulls and terns, fulmars and cormorants breed on the sea walls of this island. [See page 20-21, Monograph, Seal Islands of Alaska][3]

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[1]Gooverooska is anglicized Russian for a Kittiwake.

[2]Rudyard Kipling, "The White Seal," In The Jungle Book, Vol. II (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1948 [1895]), 52.

[3]Legend "Saint George Village," 1876, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, FA56.

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Appendix C

Legend for *Lukannon Bay* (1872) (Cleveland Museum of Natural History, FA 34)

This picture gives an accurate exhibition of the hauling of the holluschickie in 1872, over the entire extent of the sand beach coast of St. Paul's Island on the east and south sides and over sixteen miles of it. This particular field of view shows only about three miles of it. This particular field of view shows only about three miles of this sand dune coast beach, but it is fairly typical of the entire sweep of it. During the gales of October, when they sweep in from the northeast the surf beats up to the feet of the dunes. Whole [indecipherable] of algae lie upon the sands commingled with other uprooted forms of [indecipherable] and vegetable sea life. There was never a cool, foggy day during the season of 1872-74 when seals did not haul out on these sand beach stretches of St. Paul, in the method and number shown in this picture.

In 1890 when I traversed this ground, I did not find one seal out here where I saw a hundred in 1872. But the sand dunes and the beaches were unchanged and their physical forms and boundaries. [See page 53, Monograph, Seal Islands of Alaska]. The grass which caps and holds these sand dunes against the winds and sea, (rush in elymius?), its roots go down 15 or 20 feet into the sands and bind them into hillocks firmly.[4]

Appendix D

Henry Elliott's Memorandum to John Hay: April 19, 1904

I hope that I gave no idea to you [Hay] this morning of being importunate about those water color drawings, because your point was well taken in the premises, and is right: Senator Nelson tells me this afternoon that he will have a specific appropriation made at once for them, and have it provided for in the pending deficiency bill: both Senators Foraker and Dillingham are out of the city today and will not return until tomorrow evening, but I will write to them about it from Cleveland.

My main hope for favorable action in the pending negotiations is in arousing the active interest of the English authorities in London where it is reflected by Sir Mortimer from Washington.

I firmly believe that if these watercolor studies were neatly bound up in two albums and laid before the King's Council in London, that every member of that Cabinet would take them up and get deeply interested, just as Sir Mortimer became interested here when I laid them before him: then when so interested the English mind wants proof of the facts outlined in the drawings: he will find that in the charts.

The friends and associates of the Council in the British Museum and the zoological Garden of London will all in turn see these pictures of that immense

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[4] "Lukannon Bay," FA 34, Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

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aggregate of highly organized life, and their interest and sympathy will be moved in turn.

Sentiment of this kind aroused in high official places can not fail to help the cause and override the opposition in Canada. If I did not sincerely and earnestly believe in this procedure, I would not venture to press it upon it even by suggestion, as I do here.

How this shall be done diplomatically and when it shall be done if done at all, is something I know nothing about, and I have sense enough to make this confession of ignorance.

With reference to the visit of Sir Mortimer to the seal islands and to which I referred this morning, I do hope some way will be found by which he can be invited to go up there this summer. The trip and inspection will stir him to positive action when he returns, I am sure.

A Memorandum: relative to the use and purpose of the water color drawings of the fur seal rookeries of the Pribilov Islands, made in 1872:1873 –by Henry W. Elliott.

:-These drawings are not articles of evidence: they are objects which arouse interest at first sight for they give form and color to a strange subject, and one that is anomalous and far from reach of human observation.

2:-The interest of the observer being aroused by these pictures, then he becomes an investigator: and as an investigator he finds in the charts of the fur seal rookeries the evidence which is wanted that declares the vast aggregate of life which these drawings suggest.

3: Without the suggestion of these drawings, the investigation would never be so readily or willingly made: therefore, the use and value of these realistic drawings becomes apparent.

4:-But, without the charts of the fur seal rookeries, the drawings have little or no value, except as pictures: and pictures are not to be regarded as features of evidence: a clever artist can paint seals in, and paint seals out: but these drawings viewed with the authentic records of the rookery surveys or charts, become at once instructive, interesting and valuable. [5]

Appendix E
Henry Elliott's Obituary Notices and Letters of Condolence

His name will be long identified with the treaty of 1911 between Great Britain, Japan, Russia, and the United States, for the prevention of pelagic sealing in the North Pacific. In later years he became a thorn in the side of officials of the

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[5]Letter to John Hay, 19 April 1904, Henry Wood Elliott Collection, Box 12, Folder 80, Archives, Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

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Bureau of Fisheries charged with the administration of the treaty, who regarded him as somewhat of a crank. (New York Times, 28 May 1930)[6]

I am profoundly grieved by the passing of my dear old friend Henry Word (sic.) Elliott. No other man can take his place in my memory. We saw eye to eye and we fought for conservation shoulder to shoulder. But for him and his dauntless courage our fur seal industry would have been utterly annihilated fifteen years ago. Our nation owes him a debt that I fear never will be discharged. (punctuation added by author; original in capital letters) (Western Union Telegram from Hornaday to John S. Elliott)[7]

"By the year 2000 Mr. Elliott's great-great-grandchildren may receive for him 'the thanks of Congress!' But I doubt it!"[8] (William T. Hornaday, Thirty Years War for Wildlife).

Henry Wood Elliott associated his life and thought with those who view this earth as something more than a thing to be despoiled.

Mr. Hornaday . . . does well to remind the American people of their debt to the latter's clear vision. (Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 31 May 1930).[9]

I have never known a more industrious nor a more clear headed man than your father. He gave up many years of his life to the protection of our valuable seal herd . . . . I do not think he ever received any compensation from any source for his disinterested public services rendered here at the seat of government. (Hon. Henry T. Rainey of Illinois)[10]

The people of our country should stand at attention tomorrow and salute the memory of Henry Wood Elliott. It was he who saved the fur seal industry from being utterly annihilated fifteen years ago. All other assistance was merely

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[6]New York Times, 28 May 1930, "Fur Seals of the Pacific," p. 24, col. 4.

[7]Western Union Telegram from Hornaday to John S. Elliott, 27 May 1930, Henry Wood Elliott Collection, Box 1, Unsorted, Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

[8]William T. Hornaday, Thirty Years War for Wild Life (Stamford, Connecticut: Permanent Wild Life Protection Fund, 1931), 181.

[9]Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 31 May 1930, Clipping, Henry Wood Elliott Collection, Box 1, Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

[10]Letter from Hon. Henry T. Rainey, Illinois to John S. Elliott, 14 June 1930, Henry Wood Elliott Collection, Box 1, Unsorted, Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

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incidental. Today the Alaskan fur seals must number nearly one million, and the total is spoken of as our billion-dollar herd. (William T. Hornaday, 1930)[11]

Appendix F
The Pribilof Islands

The Pribilof Island landscape today is much the same as it appeared to Henry Wood Elliott but the communities themselves have changed. During World War II, all the residents of St. Paul and St. George were evacuated to Funter Bay, near Juneau. From 1942-1944 they lived in deserted salmon canneries where disease and a lack of adequate supplies made life miserable.[12] This experience, however, opened new doors for the Pribilovians. From education beyond the age of sixteen to wage jobs, the Pribilof people discovered what the off-island world offered and, more importantly, found their own voice.

Following the internment, the islands' infrastructure altered dramatically. In 1948, the Pribilof Islands became a voting precinct and in 1959, part of the State of Alaska. In 1966, the Pribilovians joined the Alaska Federation of Natives to fight for land claims.[13] In 1971, Congress passed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act that gave forty million acres of land to Alaska's Native people and nearly a billion dollars to regional corporations.[14] The Pribilovians claimed their islands with the exception of the

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[11]William T. Hornaday, "The Late Henry Wood Elliott," New York Times, 28 May 1930, sec 1, p. 24, col. 7.

[12]Robert Shalkop, Henry Wood Elliott 1846-1930: A Retrospective Exhibition (Anchorage: Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum, 1982), 18.

[13]Ibid., 19.

[14]Ibid, 19.

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federally managed fur seal rookeries, became members of the Aleut corporation, and each island formed its own village corporation. In 1972, St. Paul became a second-class city.

The fur seal herd now numbers approximately one million animals but the commercial harvest has ended. The North Pacific Fur Seal Treaty of 1911 remained in place until 1941 when Japan terminated its participation. The United States and Canada protected the herds under a provisional agreement until 1957 when a new convention, similar to the 1911 agreement, was signed between Canada, Japan, the United States, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. In 1970, management of the fur seals passed to the National Marine Fisheries Service of the Department of Commerce. By the 1980s, public sentiment led the fur markets to near collapse and in 1984 the United States did not renew the 1957 Interim Convention on Conservation of North Pacific Fur Seals. Since 1984, only a subsistence harvest, under the management of the National Marine Fisheries Service, has taken place on the Pribilofs.

Today, the Pribilofs are a popular eco-tourist destination. Tourists eager to see the fur seals and the bird rookeries contribute to the economy on both islands. But unemployment is still a major problem for the islanders. With the commercial harvest gone, it has been difficult to find a new economic base. The Aleuts, however, are hopeful that the current island situation will improve and, at present, look to tourism as a potential economic base. Both St. Paul, with the majority of the fur seal population, and St. George, with the huge bird rookeries are attractive tourist destinations. In 1999, the people of St. George were busy restoring their former seal-processing plant into a

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summer museum and cultural center. Perhaps this ambitious project will give the island economy the base it needs.

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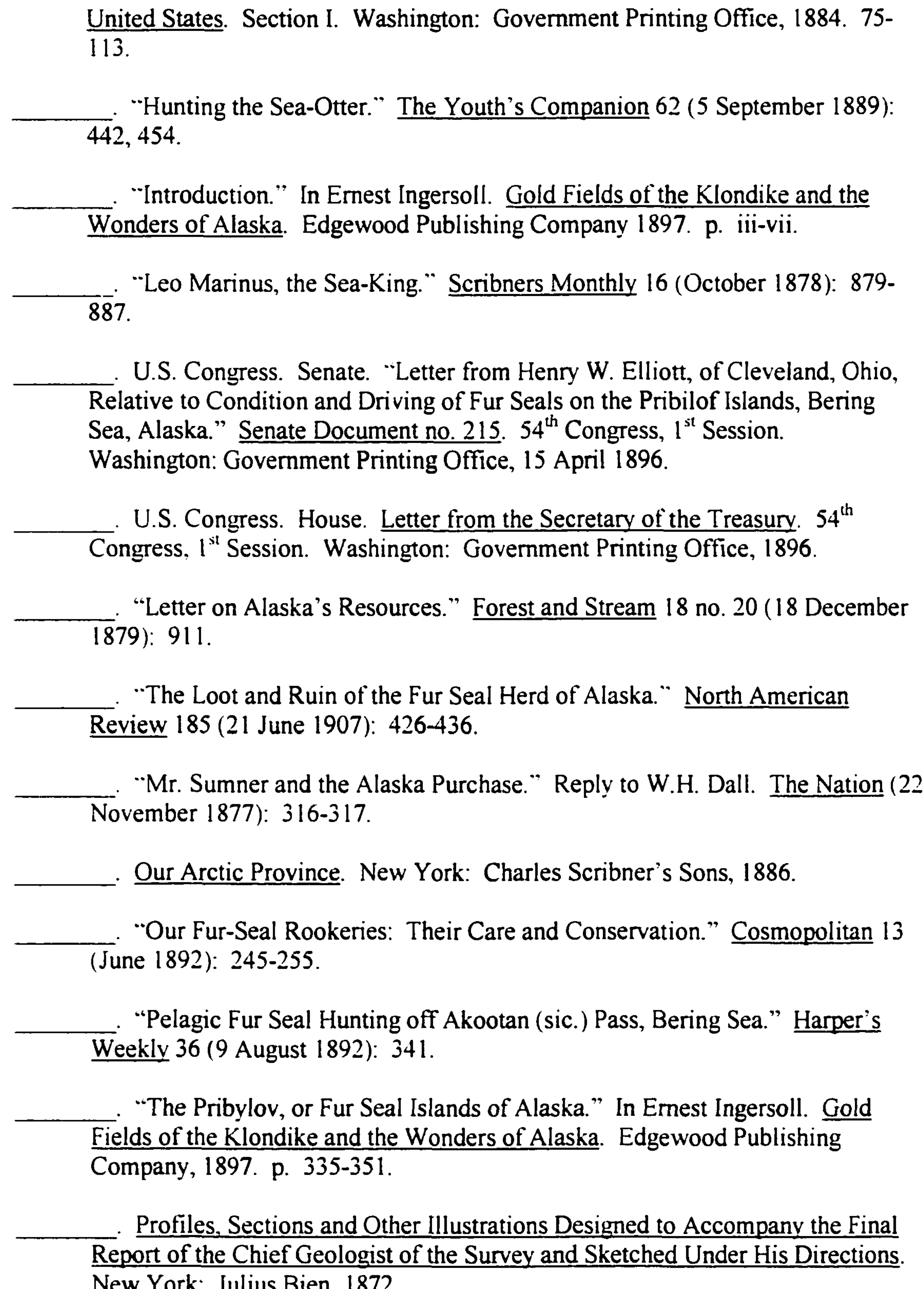

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