NOTIFY: Senators Stevens, Gravel; Congressman Don Young

FHR-8-300 (11-78)

**United States Department of the Interior**
**Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCRS use only
received SEP 2 1980
date entered DEC 2 19

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

**historic** Point Barrow Refuge Station (AHRS SITE NO. BAR-012)

**and/or common** Cape Smythe Whaling & Trading Station; Brower's Cafe.

## 2. Location

**street & number** Browersville (No Number) ___ not for publication

**city, town** Barrow ___ vicinity of **congressional district** Alaska at Large

**state** Alaska **code** 02 **county** Barrow-N. Slope Div. **code** 0237

## 3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ___ district | _X_ public | _X_ occupied | ___ agriculture | ___ museum |
| _X_ building(s) | ___ private | ___ unoccupied | _X_ commercial | ___ park |
| ___ structure | ___ both | ___ work in progress | ___ educational | ___ private residence |
| ___ site | **Public Acquisition** | **Accessible** | ___ entertainment | ___ religious |
| ___ object | ___ in process | ___ yes: restricted | ___ government | ___ scientific |
| | ___ being considered | _X_ yes: unrestricted | ___ industrial | ___ transportation |
| | | ___ no | ___ military | _X_ other: Landmark |

## 4. Owner of Property

**name** Thomas P. Brower

**street & number** Browersville (No Number)

**city, town** Barrow ___ vicinity of **state** Alaska 99723

## 5. Location of Legal Description

**courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.** Bureau of Land Management

**street & number** Federal Bldg., 701 C Street

**city, town** Anchorage **state** Alaska 99513

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

**title** National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings. (Snell) 7-26-65 * Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRS) **has this property been determined elegible?** _X_ yes ___ no

**date** November 24, 1972 *_X_ **federal** _X_ **state** ___ **county** ___ **local**

**depository for survey records** Alaska Div. of Parks, 619 Warehouse Dr., Suite 210

**city, town** Anchorage **state** Alaska 99501

# 7. Description

| Condition | | Check one | Check one |
|---|---|---|---|
| ___ excellent | ___ deteriorated | ___ unaltered | _X_ original site |
| _X_ good | ___ ruins | _X_ altered | ___ moved date _____ |
| ___ fair | ___ unexposed | | |

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The original Rescue Station which became the Cape Smythe Whaling and Trading Company building, can be described as a rectangular structure, 30 x 48 feet in exterior dimensions; with rectangular shed-roofed 20-ton coal bunker room attached at the east end of the SE wall. Exterior walls, initially, were of vertical planking; before later application of weatherproofing and sheathing. The Rescue Station-Cape Smythe Whaling and Trading Company building was of one story height with loft of medium angle, providing a sizeable attic in the interior roof area.

The roof appears from photographs to have been a medium gable constructed of planking covered by galvanized metal. The roof line continued unbroken at one side (SE) to accommodate the shed roof over the coal bunker extension.

Based on another Charley Brower photograph of the period, the front end of the structure faced SW (as it does today). In this end-wall was one large center aperture, midway, in which was placed the front door of the building. There was no stoop, initially, but this was later added by the whaling-trading company. This was flanked by two conventially shaped windows, which appeared to have been double hung, with twelve small lights in each frame. The precise configuration of all windows is obscured by the poor quality of old photographs and by reflectance from the windows; or possibly from protective material covering the windows. At the center of the SE wall were three more windows, of slightly different dimensions than those in the front (SW) wall; somewhat less in dimension from top to bottom, but of the same width.

As the building was yet under construction in the earliest known photographs, more precise exterior description is not possible. Using precut lumber brought in by the Bear and Thetis and using whaling ships' carpenters, Captain Michael Healy, however, built the commodious 30' x 48' structure with its 20-ton coal bunker wing. It was sturdily and skillfully built by master ship's carpenters. The interior was, essentially, one large central room, with bunks for fifty men along the walls. It was speedily completed and heavily stocked with adequate provisions for more than a year (Bockstoce).

# 8. Significance

| Period | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ___ prehistoric | ___ archeology-prehistoric | ___ community planning | ___ landscape architecture | ___ religion |
| ___ 1400–1499 | ___ archeology-historic | ___ conservation | ___ law | ___ science |
| ___ 1500–1599 | ___ agriculture | ___ economics | ___ literature | ___ sculpture |
| ___ 1600–1699 | ___ architecture | ___ education | ___ military | X social/ humanitarian |
| ___ 1700–1799 | ___ art | ___ engineering | ___ music | ___ theater |
| X 1800–1899 | X commerce | X exploration/settlement | ___ philosophy | ___ transportation |
| ___ 1900– | ___ communications | ___ industry | X politics/government | ___ other (specify) |
| | | ___ invention | | |

**Specific dates** 1889, 1896 **Builder/Architect** U.S. Govt., Revenue Service/Capt. Michael Healy

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Now approaching the century mark, Cape Smythe Whaling and Trading Station is both the oldest--as well as most significant--American-built frame structure standing along the vast reaches of the Arctic Ocean between the Seward Peninsula and Demarcation Point at the Canadian Border--the northernmost outpost of the United States. The building, its management, and related events, played a significant role in commerce, whaling, fur-trading, exploration, and development of the region. After 1896 this building epitomizes the extensive, colorful and important exploits of the redoubtable Charley Brower (and later of his son Tom) in association with about all of the pioneer explorers, whalers, scientists, missionaries, politicians, entrepreneurs and adventurers who visited the region. In fact, and through association, the structure constitutes a microcosm of the infinite span of events and people who contributed to this unique phase of American history.

EARLY HISTORY

Barrow, itself, has played a parallel role in the whaling industry, in exploration and scientific investigation of the Arctic region since Captain Frederick W. Beechey--a British Explorer--discovered this northernmost cape of Alaska, in September 1826. He named it "Point Barrow" in honor of Sir John Barrow, friend and sponsor of many polar expeditions. In 1837 the Hudson's Bay Company sent Thomas Simpson and Peter W. Dease down the MacKenzie River in Canada; and from the mouth of this river they were the first to trace the Arctic coast line of Alaska westward to Point Barrow.

In 1881, as part of the First International Polar Year Observation, Lieutenant Patrick Henry Ray of the U.S. Army Signal Corps erected a meteorological and astronomical observatory at Point Barrow. This station, the first American building in a vast area, was maintained until August, 1883, and Ray's published report yielded data important to science. (The site was nearby the nominated building).

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

# 10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

**Acreage of nominated property** -1

**Quadrangle name** USGS, Barrow(B-4) **Quadrangle scale** 1: 63 360

**UMT References**

| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 0 4 | 5 7 9 6 5 0 | 7 0 1 2 9 5 0 | B | | | |
| C | | | | D | | | |
| E | | | | F | | | |
| G | | | | H | | | |

**Verbal boundary description and justification**

Site of 1881 Signal Corps Observatory then known as village of Browersville at at extreme N.W. corner of Isatkoak Lagoon; Now platted within present city limits of Barrow, described in Barrow and North Slope Borough record books.

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries**

| state | code | county | code |
|---|---|---|---|
| state | code | county | code |

# 11. Form Prepared By

**name/title** Michael S. Kennedy, Staff Historian

**organization** Alaska Div. of Parks (OHA) **date** December 15, 1979

**street & number** 619 Warehouse Dr., Suite 210 **telephone** (907) 274-4676

**city or town** Anchorage **state** Alaska 99501

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

**The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:**

X national ___ state ___ local

**As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.**

**State Historic Preservation Officer signature** Douglas L. Leger

**title** Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer **date** 8-13-80

**For HCRS use only**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for Carol D. Shull

**Keeper of the National Register** **date** 12/2/80

**Attest:** Linda Flint McClelland

**Chief of Registration** **date** 12.2.80

GPO 938 835

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED SEP 2 1980
DATE ENTERED

Point Barrow Refuge Station (AHRS SITE NO. BAR-012)



Contemporary study, since first visited and documented by NPS Historian Charles W. Snell in July 1961; and in 1977 by historian Michael Kennedy, and by archaeologist Douglas Reger in 1979, indicates that considerable alterations to the building were made only during the past three decades. The building in these pioneer years was essentially unaltered, and was well kept up throughout its first 40 years of operation. However, from its construction in 1889 and the first operation as a trading post under Charley Brower, it appears doubtful that any alterations other than good maintenance were made by Brower after he acquired the Rescue Station and its trade name was changed to the "Cape Smythe Whaling and Trading Company." (This was a much more impressive facility than the somewhat ramshackle building that Brower and his associates had first built, nearby, for the same purpose; but which was salvaged and gone before 1890).

At some time (probably between 1920-30) the roof angle was raised 5 degrees in order to accommodate a fuller attic and/or a second floor--recessed second level SW wall. The forward extension of the building--about 15 feet in depth--and of the same width as the original structure, (30 feet)--added approximately 450 square feet to the original gross floor surface of the old Trading Post.

The original Rescue Station (and subsequent Cape Smythe Trading Company) coal bunker was at this time enlarged into a full room, pantry and kitchen--about the time that it became (son) Tom Brower's Cafe . This is of, approximately, 20 feet square dimensions. In the course of raising the angle of the main roof, the original angle of the whaling center appendage became incongruous. This was modified to a flat roof at that time.

Although this venerable landmark, today, bears only abstract resemblance to the original structure--the site and much of the original construction still exists in situ. Facing toward the present-day booming city of Barrow--now the seat of dynamic Eskimo action and the largest borough (North Slope), and potentially the wealthiest in Alaska---it continues to command an impressive, but foreboding tundra vista toward Barrow and the ominous Arctic Ocean to the West and North.

The old rescue and whaling-trading station (now known to later generations, both local and tourists, as Brower's Cafe) is much more than it appears to be. If placed on the National Register and properly marked and interpreted it will inspire, and amaze, future generations with its wealth of rich historical association and its exceptional significance.

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED SEP 2 1980
DATE ENTERED 12

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM



After 1854, American whalers were pushing east of Point Barrow. By 1870 the whalers, and their sturdy ships (chiefly out of San Francisco) were hunting throughout the region in sizeable numbers. They experienced many shipwrecks, great dangers and hardships as a result of the treacherous oceanic ice and weather conditions. As late as 1897-98 the U.S. Revenue Cutter Bear rescued a whaling party, as the industry diminished. (Snell, NPS, 1965)

The first phase of this building's remarkable life and times is told by John Bockstoce in "Arctic Castaway: The Stormy History of the Point Barrow Refuge Station" (The Journal of the National Archives, Fall, 1979):

> Planned hastily, staffed expediently, and closed prematurely, the Point Barrow Refuge Station gave little aid to the whalemen it was built to assist. Sold to a private party after only seven years of operation, the station was abandoned by the government less than a year before a major disaster overtook the Arctic whaling fleet, leaving more than one hundred destitute whalemen to face the Arctic winter. But if the station's brief history was a model of governmental mismanagement and irresolution, it also displayed governmental responsiveness--albeit dilatory--to deteriorating conditions in the (world's most northerly) whaling industry.
>
> Although the Point Barrow Refuge Station was not built until 1889, the first call for assistance to the whalemen had come forty years earlier following discovery of the (Alaska) Arctic whaling grounds. In 1848 Capt. Thomas Welcome Roys sailed north into seas unknown to whalemen, then returned to Hawaii with a full ship and reports of large numbers of bowhead whales, oil-rich and docile, in the icy waters beyond Bering Strait... (saying) "Some provision ought to be made to save the lives of those who go there, should they be cast away."

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED SEP 2 1980
DATE ENTERED 2

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Point Barrow Refuge Station (AHRS SITE NO. BAR-012)



News of Roy's discovery so electrified the whaling industry (then experiencing declining catches on other whaling grounds) that in five years whaleships made nearly seven hundred voyages to Bering Strait; in 1852 alone more than 220 cruised northward during the brief arctic summer. But as Roys had predicted, the waters were treacherous as well as lucrative. While the fleet made record catches, the ice, gales, and shoals took their toll of ships; from 1849 to 1870 thirty-six vessels were lost...

Despite the terrible toll of ships and men, the fishery remained profitable and the owners continued to send their fleets northward. But the urgency of providing supplies for men shipwrecked along the coast--as the British had done thirty years earlier in their search for Sir John Franklin's expedition--was not lost on the whaling merchants. In 1880 they unsuccessfully petitioned the Congress for an appropriation to cache provisions at several points in the western Arctic.

Yet the idea of maintaining a manned refuge station was not considered seriously until the loss of the New Bedford steam whaler North Star on the Alaskan coast. At Point Barrow on July 8, 1882, far in advance of the fleet, "she was ground as fine as matches," according to her engineer, while the crew escaped over the ice to shore. Fortunately for the men, the government had (two years earlier) established a meteorological station near the point where they were sheltered until the fleet reached them later in the month. The meteorological station was closed in 1883. But the Pacific Steam Whaling Company of San Francisco rented it (the year following) to use as a trading post, and as a base for springtime shore whaling at channels in the ice. The government leased the station with the proviso that, should any shipwreckes occur nearby, the company would care for the men until help arrived.

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED SEP 2 1980
DATE ENTERED

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM



That same year support for a manned station began to swell when Michael A. Healy, captain of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Corwin--a Treasury Department vessel patrolling Alaskan waters--wrote to the general superintendent of the Lifesaving Service to recommend that a lifesaving station be established at Point Barrow...He reinforced these remarks in his annual report to the Secretary of the Treasury by proposing that the station also be used to control the illicit whiskey trade, and added, "there is no more worthy object around which our government can throw a protecting arm than the whalemen frequenting the Arctic and encountering its perils." Shortly thereafter a group of ninety-six men--owners, agents, captains, and officers of the whaling fleet--petitioned the secretary in support of Healy's proposal.

RESCUE STATION PROPOSED

With support for the station growing, Josiah N. Knowles, the managing partner of the Pacific Steam Whaling Company of San Francisco--the business with the largest number of whaleships operating in the Pacific arctic--proposed to the superintendent of the (U.S.) Lifesaving Service that his company build a station, and staff it with six men for $3,000 per year. Knowles estimated that a year's provisions for fifty men, roughly the complement of a steam whaler, would cost $9,000. He added that the company would provide freighting free of charge. It is unlikely that Knowles' offer was made solely because of humanitarian interests; the Pacific Steam Whaling Company had just established their shore station in the old Signal Service building at Point Barrow. Knowles had already led the company in several highly profitable ventures--salmon packing, steam whaling vessels, an oil works; and the potential of enhancing its arctic operations must have crossed his mind.

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED SEP 2 1980
DATE ENTERED

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM



Though there was industry support for the station, it took a crisis to force the government to act on the proposal. On August 2, 1888, about thirty whaleships lay at anchor off the west side of Point Barrow, waiting for the ice pack to open enough to let them cruise into the Beaufort Sea. About six in the evening a southwest breeze sprang up, increasing to gale force within three hours. The fleet moved to the lee side for shelter, some of them anchoring between the point and the two-and-one-half-fathom shoal lying less than a half mile east. By six P.M. (on the third) the gales veered to the west and the wind increased; driving heavy seas into the shallow anchorage. In the midst of screaming wind and flying scud, the bark Eliza, anchored bow and stern, began to labor heavily, finally parted her stern cable and swung down on the schooner Jane Gray. To escape the impending collision the Jane Gray quickly slipped her cable and ran off downwind; the Eliza sideswiped the bark Bounding Billow, carrying away her foreyard... Capt. William Kelley, sensing that his vessel was doomed, steered for the bark Andrew Hicks, a quarter mile away. As he neared the Hicks, the schooner suddenly settled in the water; the crew took to their whaleboats and reached the bark safely.

Meanwhile, the bark Young Phoenix, in the most exposed position far to the west, tried to take in her two anchors and run before the seas...received "the full force of the oncoming seas" until a huge wave lifted her and dashed her down with a terrible shock. The anchor refused to let go and again and again she was dashed on the bottom... As she "floundered about among the breakers," she collided with the bark Triton, smashing its bow boat and head gear; Captain Millard gave up trying to reach shore and headed her before the wind. At 4 a.m. the Young Phoenix was thirty miles east of Point Barrow with her spars gone. The crew abandoned ship and was picked up by the steam bark Beluga.

The barks Fleetwing and Mary and Susan, like the Young Phoenix, were lying on short scope near the point. As the night grew wilder, the pounding seas beat the ships against the sea bottom time and again. The Fleetwing's anchor chains finally broke and she drifted onto the shoal, fully at the mercy of the breakers. By morning, when the storm abated, both vessels were battered wrecks and their crews abandoned them. Ironically, the little schooner Ino survived the gale, only to be lost a few days later... She returned to Point Barrow on the eighth, but there was caught by a sudden squall, quickly driven ashore, and in minutes was reduced to a total loss.

Luckily for the shipwrecked men, both the U.S. Revenue Cutter Bear and the U.S.S. Thetis were nearby when the gale struck. When the Bear arrived in San Francisco with 110 shipwrecked whalemen aboard, the news caused a sensation in the presses of both coasts. The loss to insurers and owners was more than $100,000. Only the fortunate presence of the Bear and the Thetis had prevented a greater tragedy.

But before the season of 1888 was finished, another tragedy occurred. Late in September the fleet moved west, to cruise on the autumn whaling grounds near Herald Island, deep in "the Hole"--a great cleft in the ice-pack--kept open late in the season by a warm water current passing north from the Bering Sea. The whalemen could count on finding bowheads there in numbers--but not without risk--for it was a dangerous cul-de-sac where the combination of calms and prolonged temperatures, below freezing, could put six inches of ice on the sea in twenty-four hours. Equally hazardous were the movements of the ice pack. As the autumn wore on, the pack began its steady advance southward, forming a huge pincer, with one mass reaching down along the coast of the Chukotsk Peninsula, and the other, down the Alaskan side. If these icy jaws closed around the whalers, they would escape only with difficulty and great good luck. In 1879 the New Bedford barks Mount Wollaston and Vigilant had become trapped and were lost with all hands; the bark Helen Mar escaped to tell the tale. The Helen Mar had broken out only by setting all sails in a gale, and forcing her way at a speed of less than one knot through the

thickening slush and ice for forty-eight hours. After reaching open water the crew found all of her protective ice sheathing cut through by abrasion; and in one place all but an eighth of an inch of her planking had been ground away.

The story was repeated September 23, 1888. Capt. Frederick A. Barker, master of the schooner Rosario and a canny veteran of many arctic seasons, sensed the danger and sailed south in company with the steam bark Lucretia only to find the passage closed. The Lucretia, with auxiliary power, was able to ram her way out; the Rosario, unable to escape, returned to warn the rest of the fleet--thirteen vessels. A few days later strong winds forced the pack apart, again allowing them to escape. But when Lucretia reached San Francisco well in advance of the fleet, this apparent tragedy, following the wrecks at Point Barrow, consolidated support for the refuge station...

The Original Structure is Built.

As newspapers throughout the nation carried stories on November 22, 1888, about the perils of the whaling fleet, the New Bedford Board of Trade petitioned the President of the United States, Grover Cleveland, to establish a station. This was followed December 1, by a petition to the Congress from New Bedford's "citizens, merchants, and others." These voices, added to those of San Francisco led by Sen. George Hearst, forced the government into action. Within a week requests went out for advice on locating, staffing, and provisioning of arctic refuge stations. The consensus of the whaling captains was that these should be built near the arctic's most dangerous and frequently traveled areas. Their suggestions included Cape Prince of Wales, East Cape, Point Hope, Cape Lisburne, and Point Barrow, with a cache to be left on Herald Island. But on January 15, 1889, the Commerce Committee of the House of Representatives sent a bill to the floor--which passed--appropriating $15,000 to build and equip only a single station at Point Barrow.

But even before the bill passed, applicants had begun maneuvering to obtain the station's superintendency. Gilbert Bennett Borden, the retired whaling captain eventually chosen for the position, not only stole the march on the other aspirants, but exceeded them in drumming up the greatest number of testimonials... Though Borden had wintered twice in Hudson's Bay as master of the whaling schooner Abbie Bradford, he could not match (other applicants) qualifications. He probably made up for these deficiencies through the help of his principal sponsor and fellow Republican, Weston Howland, New Bedford's Collector of Customs. It is likely that Howland, in support of Borden, not only helped to gather more than one hundred signatures from the New Bedford Board of Trade and Borden's Masonic brothers but also arranged for the backing of several influential Republican politicians. Borden's supporters were successful (he was appointed in May) but they neglected to mention some of the less attractive aspects of his history. In 1883, for instance, as master of the New Bedford bark Hope On, he had been imprisoned briefly and had had his vessel impounded in Talcahuano, Chile; allegedly for marooning a truculent Panamanian sailor off the coast of South America on a desolate stretch of Juan Fernandez Island.

Building the Refuge Station.

The Refuge Station was built in August 1889 near Cape Smyth, eleven miles south of Point Barrow, near the old Signal Service station (then) rented by the Pacific Steam Whaling Company. Precut lumber was brought north on the Revenue Cutter Bear and U.S.S. Thetis and the building (was) set up under the supervision of Capt. Michael Healy, Capt. Charles Stockton, and Lt. David Jarvis; with the assistance of carpenters from many of the whaling vessels. The structure, thirty by forty-eight feet with a twenty-ton coal bunker on one side, had a large central room with bunks for fifty men along the walls, and its storeroom was stocked with provisions that would maintain them for more than a year.

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED SEP 2 1980
DATE ENTERED

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Point Barrow Refuge Station (AHRS SITE NO. BAR-012)



As soon as the building was up, Borden took command. He appointed Frank Gotsche first assistant, and John Cuba, a Japanese, second assistant and steward. Because no shipwrecks occurred during his three-year incumbency, things should have gone smoothly at the station. But for Borden--suspicious, contentious, and dishonest--trouble started immediately.

Before leaving San Francisco he had become a business partner with Capt. James McKenna, a whaling merchant and whiskey trader, and received from him dry goods to barter with the Eskimos for furs and baleen (whalebone). Borden began his enterprise at once--though it was in violation of the station's regulations--and quickly annoyed the local whalers and traders, none of whom had the benefit of governmental subsistence... Borden, as he was to do often in the next three years, tried to discredit his accusers, charging that Woolfe had been trading alcohol to the Eskimos--an unlikely act, judging from what is known of Woolfe, and one in violation of both federal law and company policy--and asked for authority to control the traffic. Borden's relations with Charles Brower, (then) manager of the Cape Smyth Whaling Company, were no better, for Borden, who also planned to outfit a shore whaling crew from the station, "was a mean old skin." Borden... in the summer of 1890 became enmeshed in a tangled web of relationships... To Borden's surprise and anger he learned that Captain Healy had appointed Leander Stevenson, a missionary school teacher, as an assistant keeper of the station and that Stevenson would conduct classes there for the Eskimos until a school could be built. Stevenson had been dispatched by, and was under the protection of, Sheldon Jackson, the politically powerful Presbyterian minister who was General Agent Of Education for Alaska...

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED SEP 2 1980
DATE ENTERED

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Point Barrow Refuge Station (AHRS SITE NO. BAR-012)



On September 16, 1890, the second link in the chain was forged when the little twenty-eight-ton whaling schooner Silver Wave dropped anchor off the refuge station. Carrying only a crew of eight, the Silver Wave had been outfitted in San Francisco by Capt. James McKenna, Borden's trading partner, for a three-year whaling and trading cruise to the newly discovered whaling grounds off the Mackenzie River delta in Canada... McKenna gave command of the schooner to Peter Bayne, a Nova Scotian, who may have lacked Captain's papers but was a veteran of several years' whaling in both Hudson's Bay and in the western Arctic as well as of two years' shore whaling at Point Hope. McKenna planned to rendezvous with the Silver Wave at Herschel Island, near the delta, and land her winter provisions from his own whaling schooner, the Bonanza. The Silver Wave reached the island, but the Bonanza did not; consequently Bayne took the schooner back to Point Barrow with the crew in "a "rather mutinous state." There they received a letter from McKenna ordering the vessel back to San Francisco because he was unable to supply them with winter provisions. The crew refused to make the three-thousand-mile voyage to San Francisco, claiming that the fifty-five-foot schooner was too small for the stormy autumn seas of the north Pacific. Bayne accordingly arranged for an assessment of the Silver Wave's seaworthiness; it was conducted by Borden, his assistant Frank Gotsche, and John W. Kelly, the new manager of the Pacific Steam Whaling Company's station. They found the vessel was sound but was not designed for the heavy weather that she would meet on the autumn voyage to San Francisco, and they recommended instead that she be put into winter quarters at Wainwright Inlet, a safe but shallow harbor about one hundred miles southwest of Point Barrow.

Bayne himself did not arrive at the refuge station until November 20. In the meantime he had secured the ship for the winter and probably realized the increasing likelihood that she would survive because the sea ice had solidified, protecting her behind the massive pressure ridges that form along the Sea Horse shoals.

One can only speculate as to when the idea emerged to declare the Silver Wave a loss and to purchase her at auction, but during the time that Bayne remained with the schooner, he and Borden exchanged several letters via the Eskimos who frequently traveled along that part of the coast. And, when Bayne arrived at the station November 20, "in a destitute condition," according to Borden, the two immediately began a series of confidential conferences in Borden's quarters. Bayne visited John W. Kelly on the twenty-first, asking him to buy the schooner and to outfit him in the spring for shore whaling. Kelly saw through the plan and refused to have anything to do with the sale. Bayne, having failed in this attempt, told Kelly the following day that Borden himself planned to buy the vessel. That same evening Borden posted a notice at the refuge station, stating that the schooner would be auctioned December 10, and signed the document "G.B. Borden, auctioneer." Borden, having concluded the sale of the parcels, said:

"Now we will lump the whole thing and sell it to the highest bidder. How much am I offered for this new vessel, only two years old?" Frank Gotsche bid $50.00. "Fifty dollars I'm offered for this schooner now being sold for the benefit of the underwriters," cried Captain Borden. "Will anyone raise it?" No one responded. He then called Captain Bayne into another room and held a consultation with him. In a few minutes they came out and Captain Borden bid $100.00 for the schooner and outfit. No one raised it and he knocked the schooner down to himself...

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED SEP 2 1980
DATE ENTERED

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Point Barrow Refuge Station (AHRS SITE NO. BAR-012)



The auction completed, Borden quickly engaged Bayne to be caretaker of the Silver Wave and sent him back to the schooner with provisions, since he planned to use her as a base for shore whaling in the spring. But the residents of Point Barrow immediately declared the sale to be a fraud, anticipating that Borden would use the refuge station's supplies to provision the schooner and his whaling crew. In an attempt to deflect this criticism, Borden claimed that he had outfitted Bayne with "personal stores," but it is unlikely that he had had sufficient supplies of his own on hand to provision the schooner for the winter...

To Leander Stevenson and to Frank Gotsche, who witnessed the events at close quarters, this was merely a ruse to enable Bayne to receive... government stores. Stevenson protested to Borden on December 25 and again on January 4, stating that if Bayne were to receive the station's supplies--a possibility only if he were destitute--he must live at the station, but he had forfeited the right to live at the station when he voluntarily left Barrow to be caretaker aboard the Silver Wave. Gotsche added that he could not in good conscience send supplies to Bayne. This challenge to his authority enraged Borden. On December 25 he entered Stevenson's room at the back of the station and told him that if Bayne should arrive at the station, then he would have to close the school. Stevenson objected, saying that Bayne's presence would not be ground for closing the school, since the building would hardly be crowded. Borden replied that it was up to him to decide whether the station would be too crowded for classes to continue... Stevenson stated that it would be unlawful to supply government provisions to Bayne, (and) Borden replied, "There is no law in Alaska," and "I don't care a damn for regulations. I am superintendent and you can take your appointment and wipe your backside with it"....

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED SEP 2 1980
DATE ENTERED

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Point Barrow Refuge Station (AHRS SITE NO. BAR-012)



Borden's response was to write the Secretary of the Treasury, listing seven reasons why Stevenson should be fired, and claiming that by acting insubordinately he had "alienated the allegiance of the other assistants from their duties to the Superintendent"... On January 4 he changed the defense of his actions somewhat, claiming that if Bayne were to have the Silver Wave for the station, "thousands of dollars worth of property would be exposed to plunder and the vessel burnt" by natives... On the following day he abandoned this argument and wrote to Bayne, asking him to come to the station for his subsistence...Correspondence continued between Bayne and Borden throughout the winter and spring. Bayne persisted in asking for government supplies but stubbornly refused to leave the schooner. Borden carefully noted in all the records that he was sending personal supplies to the vessel... The summer of 1891 was one of exceptionally bad ice conditions. The pack never retreated far from the coast north of Point Belcher, and early in August there was only a narrow channel of open water along the shore from there to Point Barrow. When it became likely that the Bear would not reach the Point, Borden--suspecting the worst and hearing that Healy disapproved of his actions--wrote to the Secretary of the Treasury, setting out his case for helping Bayne. He had already written to the Secretary in April, to notify him of the sale of the Silver Wave, but in that letter had neglected to mention that he had bought the vessel himself.

Meanwhile, Bayne,...unable to free the vessel from the sandbar had gone south from the Sea Horse Islands in a whaleboat to meet the whaling fleet. Somewhere near Icy Cape he sold the schooner for $300 to Capt. Albert C. Sherman. When Sherman and Bayne returned north they found the Silver Wave swinging at anchor, having worked herself off the strand, and Bayne moved her to winter quarters in a lagoon near Icy Cape.

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED SEP 2 1980
DATE ENTERED

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM



The resale of the Silver Wave and her repositioning apparently ended the association between Borden and Bayne, but Stevenson's presence at the station and the prospect of Healy's return in 1892 must have weighed heavily on Borden's mind... On October 1, without authority, he suspended Stevenson as Assistant Superintendent and wrote the Secretary of the Treasury, justifying his action on grounds of insubordination, claiming that a "powerful conspiracy" existed between Stevenson, Healy, and the Pacific Steam Whaling Company to have him fired. Trying to discredit this group, he delivered some improbable charges: He accused Healy of smuggling two boxes of untaxed tobacco to Antonio Bettencourt ("Antone Bett"), a shore whaler and trader at Point Barrow; and he claimed "by reliable authority" that Josiah Knowles, the managing partner of the Pacific Steam Whaling Company, had sold twelve barrels of molasses (for distilling alcohol) to Dr. John Driggs, the Episcopal missionary physician at Point Hope, 350 miles southwest of Point Barrow!

No conspiracy existed against Borden, but his meddlesome, combative ways had gained him powerful enemies. On February 29, 1892, the Pacific Steam Whaling Company, the Wright, Bowne Company, and James McKenna--whaling merchants representing most of the vessels operating in the Arctic Ocean--petitioned the Secretary of the Treasury to oust Borden... During that winter the Secretary...also heard complaints...from Healy and Sheldon Jackson. He decided to fire Borden sometime in the spring. Borden learned of his decision July 29, 1892, when Lt. David Jarvis arrived at the station on the steam bark Thrasher. Three weeks later Jarvis arrested Bayne aboard the Rosario and, pending Healy's investigation, confiscated the 1,300 pounds of baleen from Bayne's 1891 shore whaling operation. Healy reached Point Barrow aboard the Bear in mid-August and immediately heard testimony... He reported to the Secretary of the Treasury that Borden had allowed the building to deteriorate, had left the stores in disorder, and kept poor records of the expended provisions, and that he seemed to have "mixed himself more into other people's business than his own and to have made reckless and indiscriminate charges against everyone about him without being mindful of the property under his charge or his own respect for the law...He used his every endeavor to convert the place into a whaling and trading place of his own." Healy, though clearly irritated by this vio-

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED SEP 2 1980
DATE ENTERED

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Point Barrow Refuge Station (AHRS SITE NO. BAR-012)



lation of trust, was content to return the schooner to McKenna, concluding that "the whole affair was not worth the time it took to investigate it."

The Bear then returned to Icy Cape, where the Silver Wave was found--sound but stripped of her sails and running rigging... (and was dispatched) to Port Clarence,...(as) winter quarters under an Eskimo caretaker.

Healy appointed Leander Stevenson as interim Superintentendent and the following year installed another old whaleman, Capt. Edward Akin of New Bedford. The station ran smoothly under both Stevenson and Akin, punctuated only by the loss of the bark Reindeer and the need to maintain some of her crew for a few days in August 1894. Perhaps it was Borden's chaotic tenure, followed by three uneventful years, that caused the station's supporters to lose interest. Discussion about whether to close it down entirely likely began in 1895. In January 1896 Calvin Leighton Hooper, the Revenue Cutter Service's superintendent of construction and repair, wrote the Secretary of the Treasury, stating that the refuge station was a useless expense and citing Healy's opinion that it should be closed and the whaling stations allowed to care for any wrecked crews... In March 1896, the government asked for bids of the station and its stores... the Pacific Steam Whaling Company bid $4,059.86 (exceeding by a thousand dollars the offer of the H. Liebes Company, furrier in partnership with the Cape Smythe Whaling Company). Knowles's bid was accepted in April, but payment was not required until the bidder had had time to assess the condition of the station. In December Knowles wrote to Calvin Leighton Hooper to report that sixty-eight barrels of pork were found to have spoiled. Thus the company ultimately paid only $3,013.51 for the station and its contents, though the stores alone had been valued at $8,373.74 in June 1895.

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED SEP 2 1980
DATE ENTERED

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Point Barrow Refuge Station (AHRS SITE NO. BAR-012)



On December 29, 1896, the deed was transferred to the Pacific Steam Whaling Company, ending the government's administration of the refuge station. Opened too late, closed too soon, with its history of rancorous mismanagement and a government expenditure of nearly $40,000, it passed into private hands. Less than two years later the whaling disaster of 1897 occurred, in which four ships were crushed by the ice, four others icebound for the winter, and more than one hundred men were forced to seek shelter for eleven months at Point Barrow.

Knowles died shortly after the company took control of the station, and the partners soon decided to abandon their shore whaling operations. In the spring of 1897, the building was rented to Edward Avery McIlhenny, a twenty-four year old naturalist who spent the winter there making ornithological collections. It was largely due to him and to Charles Brower, manager of the renamed Cape Smyth Whaling and Trading Company, that the shipwrecked whalemen survived the winter in reasonable comfort.

A year later the Pacific Steam Whaling Company sold the station to the Cape Smyth Whaling and Trading Company. Today the station remains under (2nd generation) ownership and stands, slightly altered, as Brower's Restaurant--Arctic Alaska's oldest frame building--(at the site) where it was built in 1889. (end, Bockstoce)

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED [illegible] 1980
DATE ENTERED

Point Barrow Refuge Station (AHRS SITE NO. BAR-012)

**CONTINUATION SHEET** ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1 of 1


Brower, Charles D., FIFTY YEARS BELOW ZERO, DODD, MEAD & CO., N.Y. 1942

Bockstoce, John, "ARCTIC CASTAWAY: The Stormy History of the Point Barrow Refuge Station", Prologue: The Journal of the National Archives, Washington, D.C., Fall 1979.

Brower, Charles, "The Northernmost American: An Autobiography Typescript, NARL, Barrow, Ak.