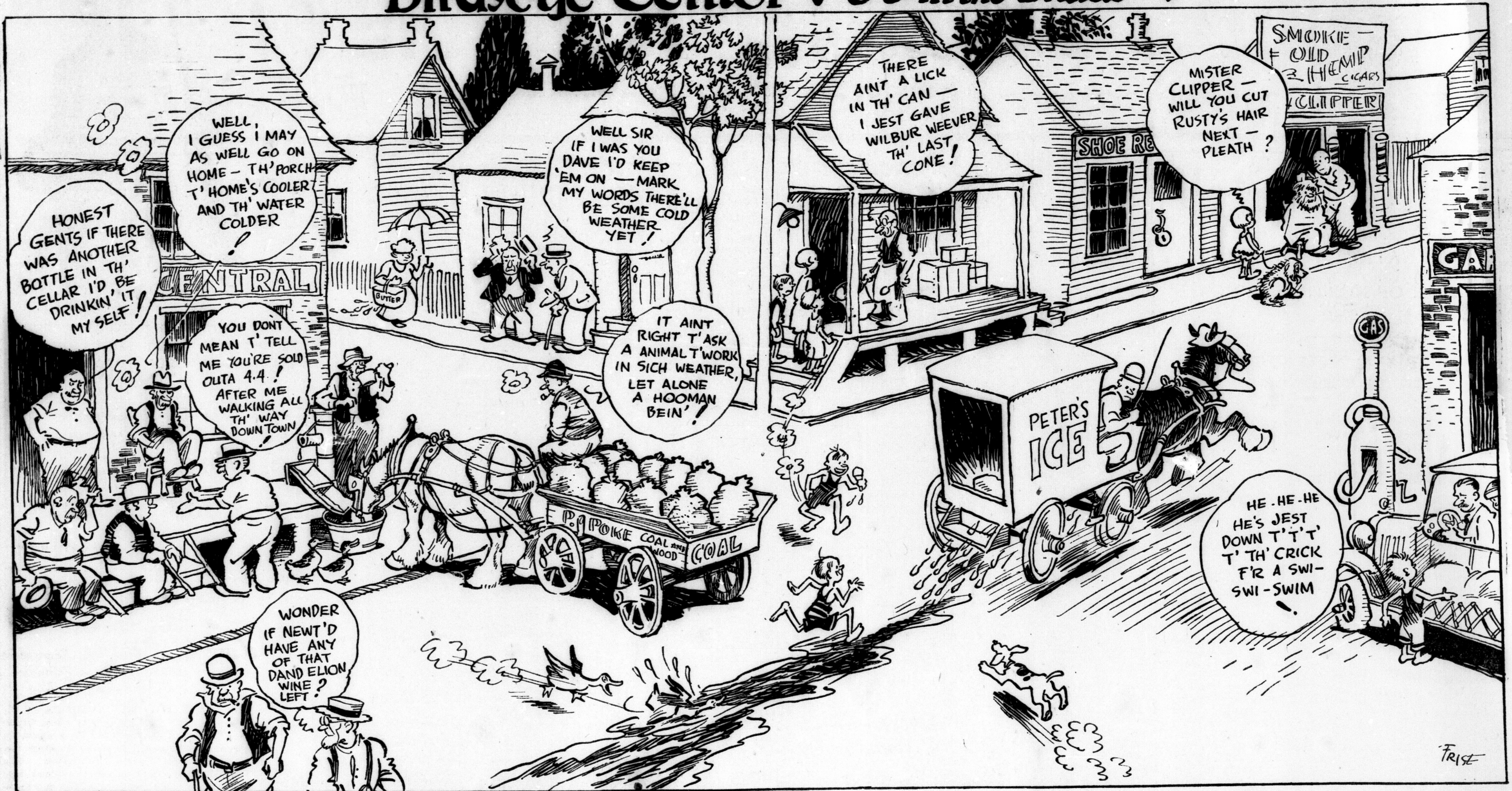


# Birdseye Center ~ 99 in the Shade ~



## JUMPING-PLACE FOR NORTH POLE MAJESTIC UNDER THE MIDNIGHT SUN

Spitzbergen's Giant Yellow and Red Cliffs Capped With Snow and Ice Make Sight of Lifetime — Like Yellowstone Canyon, But More Sombre Are Isles From Which Amundsen Flew

By A. P. COLEMAN

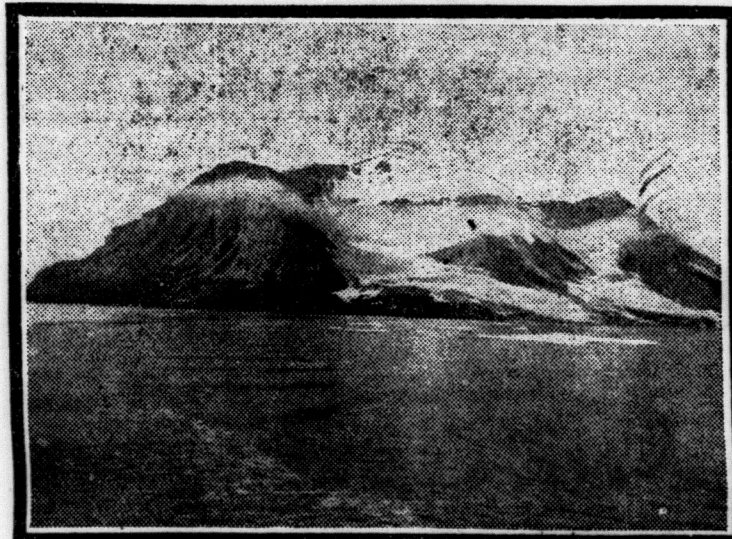
JUST now the eyes of the world are focused on the far north to read the fate of the bold men who hopped off from Spitzbergen to fly to the North Pole. The South Pole, which Amundsen visited with his dog team some years ago, is securely planted on a lofty tableland in the middle of a continent, so that one can be sure where it is. Scott's party following Amundsen reached practically the same spot, though coming from another quarter, so that there can be no doubt of its position.

This is by no means true of the North Pole, which is far out at sea with no landing place except the grey sea itself or an ice-sheet which is perpetually moving with the current and getting away from the pole. It is not an easy spot to find, since the compass does not point toward the pole of the earth, but toward the magnetic pole hundreds of miles away on one of our Arctic islands. No one can ever own the North Pole, the upper end of the earth's axis, since it is many fathoms under water, but Canada owns the North Magnetic Pole, although it has an inconvenient habit of wandering slowly round among those uninhabited islands of ours beyond the Arctic circle.

A flier can never be sure when he reaches the North Pole unless the sun shines. In cloudy weather he has no way of fixing his position, for the compass direction is uncertain and he cannot know the velocity of the air currents through which he is moving.

Spitzbergen, however, is a very solid group of islands, not specially hard to reach in summer, and fifteen years ago I had a chance to visit it with a party of geologists in a Swedish ship, the *Aeolus*, under the direction of Baron de Geer, a distinguished professor of geology in Stockholm.

Our ship took us on board at Narvik, a little Norwegian port within the Arctic circle, passed through the wild Lofoten islands, gave us a glimpse of the gloomy cliffs of Bear Island, and then struck the ice field, and, with it, fog. For two whole days we battled with ice sheets, ice floes, and ice pans of all sorts and sizes without a glimpse of the sun, grinding, scraping and sometimes bumping our enemy and dodging through open leads which presently closed and almost held us prisoners. The farm and the



Entering an ice fiord

Hobby are battling with the same conditions now.

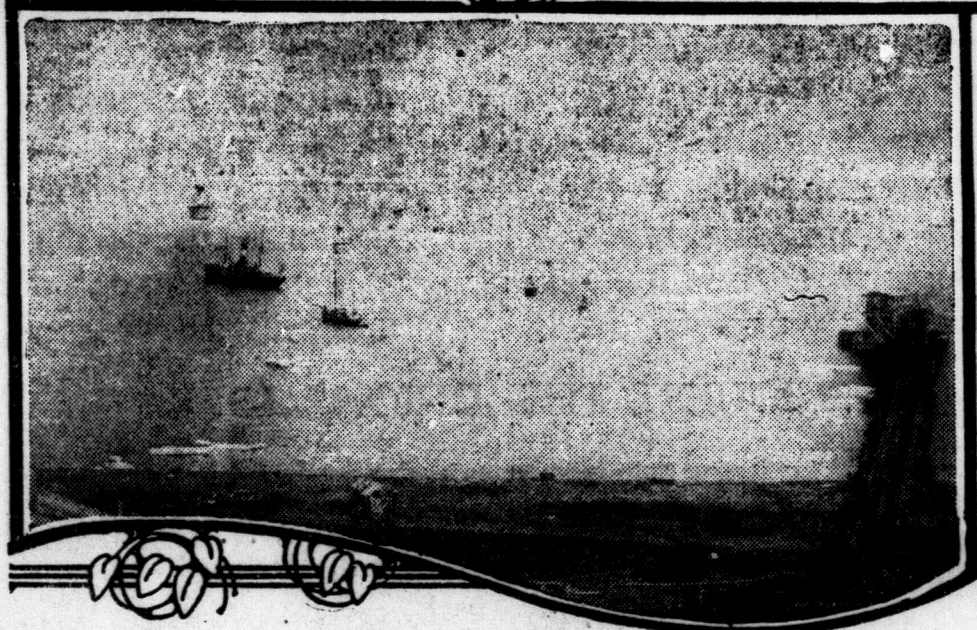
### Birthplace of Icebergs

ON August 2 soundings showed that we were near land. The engines stopped, and though we could see nothing but floating ice cakes below and a pale blue sky above, we heard the waves beating on an invisible shore. At about eleven o'clock at night the fog lifted, almost like a curtain in a theatre, and less than a mile away rose a splendid mountain range with cliffs and snowfields and glaciers, all glowing in soft sunshine, for in summer the sun never sets in that latitude. By midnight we were entering Ice Fiord and were taking pictures of vast cliffs and distant mountains reflected in a smooth, sunlit sea.

The greatest ice caps in the world, outside of Greenland and the antarctic, cover most of the group of islands and send down vast glaciers to the sea, where for miles cliffs of ice rise 150 or 200 feet above the water. Icebergs are all the time being "calved" from these cliffs. A great slab of ice parts from the glacier with a roar, plunges under water and sends dangerous waves to all parts of the fiord. It is better for a small boat not to go too close to the calving ice front for fear of being swamped.

In spite of the icy interior of the great islands, there are in the southwestern parts broad lowlands free from ice in summer; and there, when the soil is good, there is a matted turf of plants and, in the season, many flowers. Even the arctic poppy grows and blooms there; but no plant dares to raise its head above the rest. If it does the penalty is to be beheaded by the winter storms.

Willow and birch, which we expect to grow as great shady trees, are in Spitzbergen not even bushes. They grow as little creeping stems with tiny leaves tangled among the mosses and sedges. I studied one such forest and pulled up complete willows, roots, branches and all, and pressed them in my pocket notebook, which had plenty of room for them.



Coal mine in Advent Bay, Spitzbergen. Upper photograph shows ice floes near Spitzbergen

This low growth of plants looks like a meadow at a little distance off and gives pasture to reindeer, which must lead a hard life in winter. They have been so greatly hunted that few of the deer are left, though we saw tracks of full grown deer and a fawn.

Not long after I had gathered my willow trees we made an excursion to the top of Mt. Norden-skjold, 3,500 feet high, and had a toilsome tramp over perpetual snow and a glacier. On an exposed slope which the wind kept free from snow the rock was crumbling into slabs, and on these slabs were thousands of fossil leaves of many different kinds. They were well preserved and were often larger than one's hand. These leaves were of trees that now live in the central and southern states and make a startling contrast with the trailing willows and arctic birches that

dare not life their heads from the soil at the present day.

### Great Coal Deposits

WHEN plane trees and magnolias flourished on Spitzbergen a few million years ago, and great coal deposits were formed by the rank growths of the swamps, the world's climates must have been very different from the present and Spitzbergen must have had other inhabitants than the reindeer, the white fox and the polar bear.

The coal beds laid down in the luxuriant times of the Cenozoic age were being mined at Advent bay by an American company when we were there, the most northerly mines in the world, within 800 miles of the pole. The coal is of good quality and was shipped to Norway.

It was lucky for us that the mine was there, for our ship ran aground in Billen bay and we had to throw overboard our coal supply to get off at high tide. It was a short journey round into the next bay, where we loaded coal enough to take us back to Norway.

Ice fiord runs far inland and sends off bays in all directions, almost all of them ending in a wall of glacier where the ice cap sends a tongue down to salt water; and on each side of these narrow inlets rise great cliffs built of layer after layer of rock colored yellow or orange or red, like the canyon of the Yellowstone but more sombre, and capped by fields of snow. To see these majestic walls and temples glow under the slanting rays of the midnight sun is one of the joys of a lifetime. In winter, when the sun does not shine for months, the full moon must light up these strange landscapes in terrifying ways as if belonging to another world; but it is seldom that some belated or shipwrecked party of explorers, hibernating through the months of cold and darkness, gets a chance to see the display.

In summer the cliffs are all alive with seabirds laying their eggs and hatching their young on narrow ledges hundreds of feet above the water. These dizzy homes seem quite satisfactory and in the mild sunshine neighbors converse with pleasant voices in bird language, now and then launching into the air and diving into the sea to get a fresh fish for dinner or supper. At Advent bay I climbed to the top of the cliffs, 1,500 feet above the sea, and looked down on the household arrangements of the auks and the puffins. The nearest of them, only ten or fifteen feet away, looked up at me with bright eyes but did not seem much disturbed. They did not look on a human being as an enemy.

We had brilliant weather for our explorations in Spitzbergen, but when we left Ice fiord and turned south the sky became cloudy, wisps of fog floated over the water and the *Aeolus* pushed her way once more through floating ice and my sleep was disturbed that night by bumping and crashing into small floes. Fortunately there was good daylight throughout the twenty-four hours so that the safest way could be picked between the drifting ice fields.

Three or four days later we landed at Dron-

theim and had the strange contrast of dusty roads, green fields and clumps of forest around this thriving little Norwegian city just south of the Arctic circle.

### Going Abroad to School

From the Yorkshire Weekly Post

It has long been the practice of middle-class families in England and France to exchange offspring for a year or two in order that two educations can be completed abroad without high costs. Similar exchanges between English and dominion families would be a little more difficult and a little more costly, but with government aid they could be arranged. A year or two years spent in this way would be quite as valuable to many youths as a university training, and by no means so expensive to their parents.

### Cooling Off the Home

From the Woodstock Sentinel-Review

Artificial heating is so old that one can scarcely think of a time when it was not. Artificial cooling is a thing of yesterday. It takes time to catch up with new discoveries and inventions; but the time will come, no doubt, when cooling processes will be provided for in every modern home.

## Current It and Wisdom

Sparkling Paragraphs from the Columns of Our Clever Contemporaries

Those French cabinets never get to be antiquities.—Schenectady Union-Star.

In these United States it appears to make little difference whether your sin, if it is murder, finds you out or not.—Buffalo Courier.

No, sir-ee, a fishing sign isn't always a sign of fish.—Dundalk Herald.

Bathing suits will show that winter left soot of us in bad shape.—Allston Herald.

Churchmen have noted the interesting truth that it is easier to merge dollars than dogmas.—Ottawa Journal.

June weddings are popular because June is the most remote month from the coal bill.—St. Catharines Standard.

I hereby publicly give and convey all my interests, right, and titles in respect of the M'Kenna duties to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.—Mr. M'Kenna.

Isn't it strange how your job bores you and how many others would be tickled pink to have it?—Soo Star.

One way to have less crime news would be to do more spanking.—Stratford Beacon Herald.

Those who are skeptical about the value of polar exploration should consider that it promotes relief expeditions.—Hamilton Herald.

Count your fingers after shaking hands with an insurance man.—Allston Herald.

If people paid as they go a good many of them wouldn't go.—Indianapolis News.

Europe's history of the last few years proves that the quickest way to tame a radical is to elect him to office.—Montreal Herald.

When a man says he knew you would be reasonable he means he knew you would be a sucker.—Ex.

I am young enough to remember what I was like when I was a middle-aged man.—Lord Balfour.

There is at most times enough liberty in England to make revolution unlikely, and enough law and order to make fascism seem undesirable even to the naturally Conservative.—Mr. Robert Lynd.

Some people are so busy praying for more that they have no time to return thanks for what they have received.—Boston Transcript.

It's only two steps longer by the sidewalk. Yet many of us persist in tramping down somebody's doorstep.—Waterford Star.