

Records of Bernier's icy voyage

During a recent voyage to the Arctic, crew members of the Canadian Coast Guard icebreaker *D'Iberville* found several historical documents about one of the exploration voyages made in the area by Captain Joseph E. Bernier.

Bernier, who was born in 1852 in l'Islet, Quebec, commanded numerous expeditions in the Arctic between 1904 and 1925, when he took possession of several islands and established surveillance posts, strengthening Canada's sovereignty in the North.

Captain Henri Saint-Pierre and other members of the Coast Guard found, among other items discovered on Melville Island, a clipping from the *Daily Telegraph*, dated June 13, 1908, announcing Captain Bernier's departure for the Arctic. Later, at Point Fife, they found a document which deals with Bernier's claiming some Arctic islands in the name of Canada on July 9, 1909. Finally, a document discovered at Point Hearnen, dated July 14, 1909, gives information about and describes ice conditions at Winter Harbour, in the Northwest Territories.

The remarkably well-preserved documents illustrate the important role played by Captain Bernier in the early exploration of Canada's Arctic waters. Even though Captain Bernier never sailed through the Northwest Passage himself, he looked forward to the day when more powerful icebreakers would succeed where he had failed.

Canada owes him a debt of gratitude for his accomplishments, especially in view of the circumstances and weather conditions he had to face on his journeys.

In order to preserve Captain Bernier's records, the Public Archives will provide acid-free folders for the rare documents.

Old documents are now dipped in chemicals and dried or laminated. However, the process is so expensive (costing approximately \$200 for each book, whose pages must be treated one at a time), that the Archives and U.S. scientist Dr. Richard Smith are testing a method of treating from 12 to 20 books at a time in a specially-constructed chamber. The method, if successful, should save time, money and allow the chemicals to be re-cycled.

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LAST EDITION

ANOTHER NORTHERN CRUISE FOR CAPTAIN BERNIER



Captain Bernier and crew at Winter Harbour on Melville Island, N.W.T., July 1, 1909.

One old boat was seen on the beach but too old for repairs. There is a good deal of barrels of stores and clothing but no inventory was taken 3 barrels was open containing boots and gummie boots where partly destroyed but the gummie were good some were taken by the boat crew, while I was to take soundings at Birdport and where only seen when outlooking at the launch. The bread tank where not open. Some runs east where empty.

P.S. The Steamer Arctic J.E. Bernier is now at Winter Harbour Commander ready to sail as soon as the ice will permit all well. We intend to reach Pondreinet about 1st September. Our records are at Winter Harbour on Parry rock. J.E. Bernier Commander

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