

Kamtschatka, with two little vessels which had been built ; one specially under his own command, the other under the command of his lieutenant, Chirikof. The two vessels shortly became separated, but in the end both captains sighted what is now known to have been the American continent.

Chirikof regained Kamtschatka before winter, but Behring and his ship's company of 70 men or more were less fortunate. The part of the coast seen by Behring was near Mount St. Elias, where his people landed on an island, now known as Kaye Island. Little time was given to exploration, for, having delayed long in searching to the south-eastward of Kamtschatka for a mythical land existing only on the maps of the day, the scarcity of provisions on board his ship began to weigh upon the commander. After taking on board some water, and without even meeting any of the inhabitants, sail was again made for the Asiatic coast. It was already past the middle of July, fogs and storms delayed the navigators, and in endeavoring to make a westerly course they encountered the great southward-bending chain of the Aleutian Islands. Short stoppages were made at several of these Islands, which it is now difficult to identify exactly, but in the end they passed clear of this archipelago and found themselves again steering westward across a trackless sea. The conditions were becoming desperate. Water was scarce and food was issued at reduced rations, while the crew were all more or less afflicted by scurvy. The commander himself had taken to his bed, and it is related that the two men necessary for the helm were led thither by two others scarcely in better condition than themselves.

Land was at length sighted, and it was assumed to be some part of the peninsula of Kamtschatka. All the difficulties of the return appeared to have passed, and for a brief period it was a time of congratulation and general joy. The vessel was already in a deplorable condition, and at a council of the officers it was decided that it would be necessary to land on the shores in sight whatever they might prove to be. The vessel was brought to an anchor, but before the landing could be effected in any regular way, a storm sprang up in which she was cast ashore, and though none of the crew were drowned, several of those already sick succumbed to the effects of the scurvy in the process of landing.