Northern Exploration, Boundary Surveys, and Borderlands: Reports, Documents, and Maps from the United States Congressional Serial Set

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Abstract: Significant interdisciplinary scholarship exists concerning the unique economic, social, and political culture of international border and frontier areas. Notable themes of Alaskan and northern Canadian history also include discovery, exploration, and boundary issues. Primary literature concerning these topics is dispersed in many sources. One such source, the United States Congressional Serial Set, has been re-indexed and digitized, allowing online access to the full text documents and high-resolution images of the accompanying maps and illustrative material. This version, covering the years 1817–1980, was searched for citations pertaining to the discovery, exploration, and boundaries of Alaska and northern Canada. Summary level bibliographic records were reviewed for all entries, represented by thirtythree subject and geographic index terms (nineteen northern expeditions as listed under the broad category of "Discovery and Exploration" plus fourteen additional subject and geographic terms selected from the cross-references and related topics presented by the software). Numerical counts and examples of complete citations are provided. Results illustrate the usefulness of the digitized Serial Set, available to patrons of numerous US and Canadian libraries, in researching these topics in a quick and efficient manner. The set also provides additional opportunities for northern research. Many of the explorations and surveys contain historical scientific data and observations that are difficult to extract from modern sources. Viewing northern affairs broadly, the set concerns the entire northern US border areas and their historical, political, military, and diplomatic relations with Canada.

Introduction

Significant interdisciplinary literature exists concerning the unique history, geography, economy, and culture of transboundary areas and interactions. This is represented by individual studies and collected works (Green and Perlman 1985; Evans 2006); an international, multidisciplinary journal

devoted to the exploration of this topic since 1986 (*Journal of Borderlands Studies*); and several high-level symposia and conferences for scholars, policy-makers, and decision makers (Borderlines/Borderlands, 2010; Re-Imagining the Canada-United States Border, 2010). Timely topics include border security, regional economic integration, and collaborative efforts to address a variety of issues such as immigration, economic development, and environmental problems. For example, conservation biologists and others concerned with global biodiversity and habitat protection recognize that national boundaries rarely follow natural biological zones. As such they acknowledge the significance of the greater St. Elias region of Alaska, Yukon Territory, and British Columbia that constitutes the largest contiguous protected area in the world (Mittermeier et al. 2005).

In addition, discovery and exploration of northern waters and interiors were major notable activities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A significant body of literature records and interprets this history including important studies of Alaskan exploration (Sherwood 1965) and northern Canadian exploration (Cooke 1978; Francis 1986; Warkentin 1993). Boundary surveys and related issues can be viewed as logical extensions of discovery and exploration themes. Early explorations often involved reconnaissance and rudimentary mapping. Later explorations often used more refined and technically sophisticated methods. Significant Alaskan / Canadian boundary issues include the conduct of the survey itself (Green 1982) and its political nature and implications (Munro 1970; Penlington 1972). These themes resonate in modified form in many present-day writings. The Canadian author Derek Hayes has written several books including *Historical Atlas of the Arctic* that combine narrative history and reproductions of original exploratory cartography (Hayes 2003).

The primary literature concerning these themes is scattered and emanates from a wide variety of sources including various elements within the US federal government. Many interesting and important historical documents are to be found within the *United States Congressional Serial Set*. The bibliographies of Alaskan exploration and boundary demarcation as well as Canadian Arctic exploration often include *Serial Set* citations. About six years ago, this set was re-indexed, digitized, and marketed with slightly different software and optical reproduction by two companies, Readex and Lexis-Nexis. Up to this point, the set was available only in bound form or microfiche, and few libraries had comprehensive collections. Even the best available printed index lacked extensive cross-referencing or analytical interpretations. This article examines the digitized *Serial Set's* potential to aid and expedite research of these topics.

Serial Set

The *United States Congressional Serial Set* is an extensive collection of publications continuously issued and compiled under the direction of Congress since 1817. Congress is responsible for selecting the constituent publications, which include mostly Congressional but many governmental items of non-Congressional origin. Printing and distribution have been inconsistent over time. But the intention was always to make the material available to the public at large. As such, permanent collections have been maintained by distributing most volumes to public and academic libraries through the US Government Printing Office's depository program. A list of these libraries is provided at the Government Printing Office's website (www.gpo.gov).

Until recently, the compilation lacked an official title and is frequently referred to by scholars and librarians alike under several unofficial names including "Congressional Serial Set" or simply "The Serial Set." It is so called because of its sequential or serial numbering. The set now exceeds 15,000 volumes. Although the shelf volume can vary from library to library depending on a number of factors, a reasonably complete collection would occupy approximately 2,100 linear feet (about 700 library shelves). (August A. Imholtz, Jr., personal communication). Initially, Congress intended the Serial Set to include all the major public documents of the US government. As a practical matter, from the early 1800s, messages and communications from the president, reports of committee activity, and proceedings of Congress and many of the executive departments were unofficially construed to be public documents. In 1847, Congress passed a vague definition of "public document" and in 1864 narrowed it to those items printed by order of Congress (Imholtz 1999). Even with this restrictive definition, nineteenth century Congresses often included reports and matters from the entire US government without regard to their volume or printing costs (deLong 1996). Although this over exuberance created a lot of superfluous material, it also added to the vigour, richness, and historical value of the Serial Set. Besides being textually voluminous, the set is also a rich source of illustrations, graphics, charts, and maps (Bergen 1986; Seavey 1990).

Most US government publications of the nineteenth century were Congressional and therefore included in the *Serial Set* (Zink 1986). In addition, the publication activity of the government increased dramatically in the latter half of that century reflecting the country's territorial, industrial, and engineering expansion. Many of the historically important exploration surveys, scientific reports, and ethnological reports of that era were published as *Serial Set* volumes. The set's importance for research pertaining to western

history and geography has long been recognized (Ross 1994). Indeed, many researchers who have closely examined the contents and scope of the set view it not only as a repository of Congressional documents, but as a key history of the growth and development of the entire country and possibly the crown jewel of US governmental publication (Quinn 2005).

The set's scope and composition has varied considerably over time, yet its principal components have always been the reports and documents of both houses of Congress. Reports are the official publications of the Congressional committees concerning matters under their jurisdiction including those of an ad hoc or investigatory nature. Documents are less concerned with legislative matters and include annual and special reports submitted to Congress by executive branch departments. The complexities, subtleties, and problematic elements of the Serial Set have been discussed by several authors (deLong 1996; Imholtz 1999; Quinn 2005). Many of these concern the inconsistencies in the inclusion, numbering designation, and ordering of the material; partial redundancy between House and Senate or executive branch material; quality of printing; and discrepancies in binding, issuance, and distribution. There is no truly consistent nationally distributed version of the Serial Set. There can be significant variations in the printing sent to different libraries. In some cases, even the whole reports can be different. Few libraries, including those with federal depository collections, have complete holdings.

The compilation of materials into a unified set reached its zenith near the turn of the twentieth century. Due to several factors including increased costs of binding and the separate publication of almost all executive branch publications, the *Serial Set* declined in both scope and volume around the First World War (deLong 1996). Even so, its continuance is considered important especially for the consolidation of Congressional Reports that are often used for researching legislative history and intent.

Most historians and librarians familiar with the *Serial Set* agree that it has not received the usage justified by its content. At least three published studies estimated *Serial Set* usage in sampled libraries to constitute about 2 percent and possibly even less of the total usage of US government collections (de Long 1996). One key explanation for under-use is that, until recently, the indexing of the *Serial Set* has been inconsistent, confusing, and poor quality. Neither Congress nor the Government Printing Office has issued a single comprehensive index to the set. The traditional generic government indexes and bibliographies such as the *Monthly Catalog of the United States* and the *Checklist of United States Public Documents*, 1789–1909, are incomplete often with cryptic citations and little attempt to analyze *Serial Set* contents (Zinc 1986; Quinn 2005).

Fortunately, indexing of the Serial Set has improved dramatically in the past couple of decades. The Congressional Information Service compiled and published the CIS US Serial Set Index covering the years to 1969 (CIS US Serial Set Index). An independent but related source, the Index and Carto-Bibliography of Maps, 1789–1969 indexes the 50,000 maps (some elaborately designed, others simply sketched) of the Serial Set (Koepp 1995–1997). These two printed indexes occupy seven feet of shelf space and represent the first comprehensive indexing of the set. In addition, two competing companies, Readex and ProQuest, now offer digital versions of the Serial Set from 1789 to recent years with content added on an ongoing basis. Both of these versions rework the indexing into a more comprehensive and usable fashion, and reproduce the full text primary documents. Several authors have written comparative evaluations of these two products (Miller 2005; Norelli 2005; Quinn, Clausen & Meister 2005). Many libraries in the United States and Canada have purchased either digital version. Additional libraries have the printed indexes and at least partial sets in either bound or microfiche format.

Methodology and Discussion

The *Serial Set* is a leading primary source for many aspects of American exploration, natural history surveys, and political history. To examine its potential for northern studies, citation counts and reasonable samples of *Serial Set* reports, documents, and maps pertaining to northern exploration and boundary affairs were obtained by searching the Readex digital version of this set covering 1817–1980. The Rasmuson Library at the University of Alaska Fairbanks purchased perpetual rights to this version and time period, so this could be easily accomplished on-site. The vendor's website (www. readex.com) provides a description of the product, which includes new indexing of subject terms and geographic names as well as high-resolution colour reproductions of the original volumes. A post-1980 module is now available.

The Readex software permits searches of all the *Serial Set* or its subset of maps. "Discovery and Exploration" is one of their seventeen broad subject categories. An expansion of this category provides numerous sub-headings and names of individual explorations, nineteen of which relate to Alaska, Northern Canada, and Arctic areas. Further expansion of the search results provided fourteen additional subject and geographic cross-references and the bibliographic citations. Direct linkage can then be made to either the text or the maps as separate and distinct items.

Appendix A lists the bibliographic citation counts by subject and geographic areas for Congressional reports and documents as well as the maps contained within those volumes. These are the numerical counts resulting from the indicated search term. In order to show the software's range of cross-referencing, no attempt was made to adjust the count for duplicate postings under two or more headings. The summary level bibliographic records were manually reviewed for all subject and geographic categories. Appendix B lists ten examples of Report and Document titles. Appendix C lists ten examples of individual maps contained within the reports and documents, but not necessarily the same ones as listed in Appendix B. In both cases, the present author made selections representing the breadth and depth of the *Serial Set* as well as northern themes.

Mention should be made regarding the unique citation format. The *Serial Set* volumes are numbered and issued chronologically. The software specifies the bibliographic citations including the session and number of Congress plus one of four broad sub-series (House Reports, Senate Reports, House Documents, Senate Documents) or their further sub-divisions (House Executive Documents, Senate Executive Documents, House Miscellaneous Documents, Senate Miscellaneous Documents). Executive Documents are those emanating from the executive branch, and the Miscellaneous Documents include special items from various sources.

Although many of the citations enumerated in Appendix A are minor communiqués between the executive and legislative branch, and there is some duplication between House and Senate materials, these samples show that the *United States Congressional Serial Set* contains many important primary sources and illustrative material pertaining to northern discovery, exploration, and the Alaska-Canada boundary. Particularly significant are the scientific and military expeditions in Alaska and the Northwest Passage area, Klondike Goldrush era documents, and the voluminous proceedings of the Alaskan Boundary Tribunal with atlases showing the boundary proposals and triangulation surveys. Many of these documents are familiar to researchers of northern topics. This sampling draws their attention to the new indices and full-text reproduction of which they may not be familiar.

Three screen captures from the samples help convey the significance of the *Serial Set* and the quality, clarity, and resolution of its digitization. The first is the title page from the *Alaskan Boundary Tribunal* volume noted in Appendix B (figure 1). The second is a copy of a hand-drawn map of the Yukon Delta region with extensive notation of native place names (figure 2). This map has drawn recent attention from linguists and anthropologists. Noted in Appendix C, it is included in the Annual Report of the Department

of the Interior, June 1900. Ironically, the report does not explain or discuss the map. The third example is an illustration from Hall's second Arctic expedition as cited in Appendix B (figure 3).

The digitized version also provides expanded opportunities for northern research both for those who are and are not familiar with the printed *Serial Set*. Two examples help illustrate this potential. The first involves extraction of historical scientific observations, data, and discussions from the numerous exploration surveys and reports. Historical scientific data is often difficult to extract from modern sources. Few scientific indexes include nineteenth or early twentieth century material and specialized sources must often be consulted. The *Serial Set* includes several boundary and coastal surveys with limited natural resource inventories; voluminous reports with illustrations and maps of the seal and fur trade centering on the Pribilof Islands; reports discussing vegetation, extent of forest cover, and glaciers; reports on salmon rivers and fisheries; and various special reports, for example on the introduction of reindeer in Alaska. The annual reports of the Smithsonian Institution, Interior Department, and Geological Survey, many of which are included in the *Serial Set*, are rich sources of northern natural history.

The second example broadens the interpretation of northern affairs and relations. Keeping in mind that the set often reflects Lower 48 political perspectives, "northern" can mean the entire northern US border area and relations with Canada. There are index entries for all thirteen Canadian provinces and territories and the boundary demarcations, military issues such as the Aroostook War and Pig War, and diplomatic matters such as the meetings of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group are reported.

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Appendix A. Citation Count By Category

The first number within the parentheses represents the citation count for Reports and Documents; the second number the citation count for maps.

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Alaska Boundary Convention (1906): (1, 0)
Alaska Boundary Tribunal: (15, 36)
Arctic: (196, 196)
Arctic Ocean: (87, 130)
British Columbia, Canada: (106, 434)
Discovery and Exploration
    Alaskan Aerial Survey Expedition (1926–1929): (2, 0)
    Amundsen-Ellsworth North Pole Flight Expedition (1925): (1, 0)
    Byrd Arctic Expedition (1926): (1, 0)
    Franklin Expedition (1845): (2, 4)
    Hall's Second Arctic Expedition (1864–1869): (1, 18)
    International Polar Expedition to Point Barrow, Alaska (1881–1883): (4, 3)
    MacMillan Arctic Expedition (1925): (1, 0)
    Maud Expedition (1922–1925): (1, 1)
    Peary's North Pole Expedition (1898–1902): (3, 1)
    Peary's North Pole Expedition (1908–1909): (7, 0)
    US Army Expedition from Cook's Inlet (1898–1899): (2, 3)
    US Copper River Exploring Expedition (1884): (1, 0)
    US Copper River Exploring Expedition (1888–1899): (3, 2)
    US Greely Relief Expedition (1883–1884): (22, 8)
    US Grinnell Expedition (1853–1855): (10, 0)
    US Jeannette Expedition (1879–1881): (38, 22)
    US Lady Franklin Bay Expedition (1881–1884): (48, 10)
    US North Pacific Exploring Expedition (1853–1856): (4, 1)
    US North Polar Expedition (1871–1873): (13, 3)
Hay-Herbert Treaty (1903): (11, 0)
Klondike Gold Rush (1896–1899): (11, 2)
Klondike River Valley: (6, 3)
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North Pole: (28, 16)

Northwest Boundary of the US: (67, 37) Northwest Territories, Canada: (7, 50)

Russian America: (68, 60) Yukon River: (59, 282)

Yukon Territory, Canada: (17, 192)

Appendix B. Examples of Congressional Reports and Documents

- Alaskan Boundary Tribunal. Proceedings of the Alaskan Boundary Tribunal, Convened at London, Under the Treaty Between the United States of America and Great Britain, Concluded at Washington January 24, 1903, for the Settlement of Questions Between the Two Countries With Respect to the Boundary Line Between the Territory of Alaska and the British Possessions in North America [Vol. I & II]. 1904. Serial Set Vol. No. 4600 Session Vol. No. 15, 58th Congress, 2nd Session, S. Doc. 162 pt. 1 & 2. 780 p.
- Compilation of Narratives of Explorations in Alaska, April 18, 1900. Reported from the Committee on Military Affairs by Mr. Carter and Ordered to be Printed. 1900. Serial Set Vol. No. 3896 Session Vol. No. 11, 56th Congress, 1st Session, S. Rpt. 1023. 863 p.
- Message from the President of the United States, Transmitting Report on the Boundary Line Between Alaska and British Columbia, March 2, 1889. Read and Referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations and Ordered to be Printed. 1889. Serial Set Vol. No. 2613 Session Vol. No. 4, 50th Congress, 2nd Session, S. Exec. Doc 146. 40 p.
- Narrative of the Second Arctic Expedition Made by Charles F. Hall: His Voyage to Repulse Bay, Sledge Journeys to the Straits of Fury and Hecla and to King William Land, and Residence Among the Eskimos During the Years 1864–'69. Edited Under the Orders of the Hon. Secretary of the Navy, by Prof. J.E. Nourse, U.S.N. US Naval Observatory, 1879. 1879. Serial Set Vol. No. 1830 Session Vol. No. 3, 45th Congress, 3rd Session, S. Exec. Doc. 27, 694 p.
- Proceedings of the "Proteus" Court of Inquiry on the Greely Relief Expedition of 1883. February 13, 1884. Read and Referred to the Committee on Naval Affairs and Ordered to be Printed. 1884. Serial Set Vol. No. 2166 Session Vol. No. 5, 48th Congress, 1st Session, S. Exec. Doc. 100. 575 p.
- Relief of People in the Yukon River Country. Letter from the Secretary of War, Making Report of His Action Under the Act Authorizing Him to Assist in the Relief of People in the Yukon River Country. February 20, 1899. Referred to the Committee on Military Affairs and Ordered to be Printed. 1899. Serial Set Vol. No. 3812 Session Vol. No. 70, 55th Congress, 3rd Session, H. Doc. 244. 123 p.
- Report of a Military Reconnaissance in Alaska, Made in 1883, by Frederick Schwatka, 1st Lieut., 3d Regt. Calvary, US Army. 1884. Serial Set Vol. No. 2261 Session Vol. No. 1, 48th Congress, 1st Session, S. Exec. Doc. 2. 121 p.
- Report of an Expedition to the Copper, Tanana, and Koyukuk Rivers, in the Territory of Alaska, in the Year 1885. "For the Purpose of Obtaining All Information Which Will be Valuable and Important, Especially to the Military Branch of the Government." Made Under the

- Direction of General Nelson A. Miles, Commanding the Department of the Columbia. By Lieut. Henry T. Allen, Second United States Calvary. 1887. Serial Set Vol. No. 2449 Session Vol. No. 2, 49th Congress, 2nd Session, S. Exec. Doc. 125. 172 p.
- Report of the International Polar Expedition to Point Barrow, Alaska, in Response to the Resolution of the House of Representatives of December 11, 1884. 1884. Serial Set Vol. No. 2298 Session Vol. No. 23, 48th Congress, 2nd Session, H. Exec. Doc. 44. 695 p.
- Treaty with Russia. (To Accompany Bill H.R. No. 1096.) May 18, 1868. Ordered to be Printed. 1868. Serial Set Vol. No. 1357 Session Vol. No. 1, 40th Congress, 2nd Session, H. Rpt. 37. 65 p.

Appendix C. Examples of Maps Contained Within Congressional Reports and Documents

- Arctic Sea. The Discoveries North of Smith Sound by the US Ship Polaris, Under Command of C.F. Hall, 1871–1873. From Observations at the Observatory at Thank God Harbor. 1873. Serial Set Vol. No. 1600 Session Vol. No. 3, 43rd Congress, 1st Session, H. Exec. Doc 1 pt. 3 & 4.
- Copper and Chittyna Rivers, Alaska. From Explorations of Party Commanded by Lieut. H. T. Allen, 2d. US Cavalry. Drawn by Lieut. Allen and Messrs. J.H. Colwell and Paul Eaton, in the Adjutant General's Office, Washington D.C. [2]. 1887. Serial Set Vol. No. 2449 Session Vol. No. 2, 49th Congress, 2nd Session, S. Exec. Doc. 125.
- Copy of a Map Made by an Indian. [Yukon Delta]. [1900]. Serial Set No. 4104, Session Vol. No. 30, 56th Congress, 2nd Session, H. Doc. 5, pt. 3.2
- Forty Mile District, Showing Boundary Line [Alaska]. [1898]. Serial Set Vol. No. 3678 Session Vol. No. 50, 55th Congress, 2nd Session, H. Doc 206.
- *Klondike Mining District, Northwest Territory.* [*Canada*]. [1898]. Serial Set Vol. No. 3784 Session Vol. No. 42, 55th Congress, 3rd Session, H. Doc. 47.
- Map Showing Drift, Travel, and Exploration of the Lady Franklin Bay Expedition, Lieut. A.W. Greely, Commanding from Besetment, August 26, 1883, Until Rescued, June 22, 1884. [1883]. Serial Set Vol. 2427 Session Vol. No. 22, 49th Congress, 1st Session, H. Misc. Doc. 393 pt. 1.
- Map Showing Award of Alaska Boundary Tribunal. October 20, 1903 [A. tk 1101]. 1903. Serial Set Vol. No. 4627 Session Vol. No. 1, 58th Congress, 2nd Session, H. Doc. 1.
- [Map Showing the Stickeen [i.e., Stikine] River and the Boundary between Alaska and British Columbia]. 1879. Serial Set Vol. No. 1831 Session Vol. No. 4, 45th Congress, 3rd Session, S. Exec. Doc. 59.
- No. 16. Dawson's Canadian Map, 1887, Showing Conventional Lines Proposed by Canada. 1887 Serial Set No. 2613, Session Vol. No. 4, 50th Congress, 2nd Session, S. Exec. Doc. 146.
- Sketch of N.E. Coast of Fox Channel by the Innuit Oong-er-luk, Drawn May 23rd, 1868. 1868. Serial Set Vol. No. 1830 Session Vol. No. 3, 45th Congress, 3rd Session, S. Exec. Doc. 27.

ALASKAN BOUNDARY TRIBUNAL.

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

ALASKAN BOUNDARY TRIBUNAL,

CONVENED AT LONDON.

UNDER THE TREATY BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND GREAT BRITAIN, CONCLUDED AT WASHINGTON, JANUARY 24, 1903, FOR THE SETTLEMENT OF QUESTIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES WITH RESPECT TO THE BOUNDARY LINE BETWEEN THE TERRITORY OF ALASKA AND THE BRITISH POSSESSIONS IN NORTH AMERICA.

08,136

Vol. I.

WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.
1904.

Figure I Alaskan Boundary Tribunal. Proceedings of the Alaskan Boundary Tribunal. [Vol. 1 & II]. 1904. Serial Set Vol. No. 4600 Session Vol. No. 15, 58th Congress, 2nd Session, S. Doc. 162 pt. 1 & 2.780 p. Screen capture reproduced with approval from the US Congressional Serial Set 1817–1980, digital edition produced by Readex, a division of Newsbank, Inc.

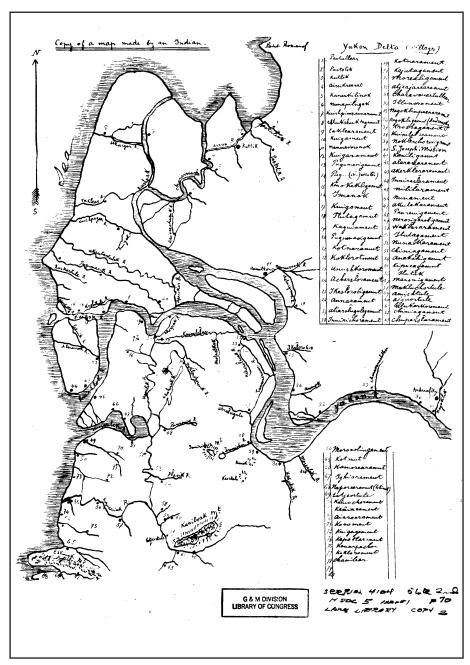
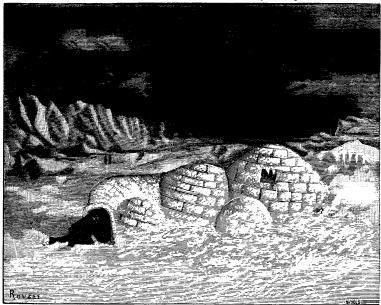
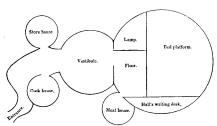


Figure 2. Copy of a Map Made by an Indian. [Yukon Delta]. [1900]. Serial Set No. 4104, Session Vol. No. 30, 56th Congress, 2nd Session, H. Doc. 5, pt. 3.2. Screen capture reproduced with approval from the US Congressional Serial Set 1817–1980, digital edition produced by Readex, a division of Newsbank, Inc.

The comforts within such buildings are of necessity very limited. It is a matter of surprise that during the very many tedious Arctic



HALL'S IGLOO AT NOO-WOOK.



GROUND PLAN OF THE IGLOO.

hours spent within them by Hall he could bear with fortitude their worst evils; and could, at the same time, write his notes with such

Figure 3. Narrative of the Second Arctic Expedition Made by Charles F. Hall: His Voyage to Repulse Bay, Sledge Journeys to the Straits of Fury and Hecla and to King William Land, and Residence Among the Eskimos During the Years 1864–'69. Edited Under the Orders of the Hon. Secretary of the Navy, by Prof. J.E. Nourse, U.S.N. U.S. Naval Observatory, 1879. 1879. Serial Set Vol. No. 1830 Session Vol. No. 3, 45th Congress, 3rd Session, S. Exec. Doc. 27. 694 p. Screen capture reproduced with approval from the US Congressional Serial Set 1817–1980, digital edition produced by Readex, a division of Newsbank, Inc.