

Obituaries

James Louis Giddings (1909-1964)

In the tragic death of Dr. J. L. Giddings on December 9, 1964 from a heart attack following an automobile accident, Arctic archaeology has lost one of its ablest, most brilliant and most productive workers. Born in Caldwell, Texas, April 10, 1909, Louis Giddings studied at Rice University, received his B.S. degree at the University of Alaska in 1932, M.A. at the University of Arizona, 1941, and Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania in 1951. From 1932 to 1937 he worked as an engineer for the U.S. Smelting and Refining Company. From 1938 to 1950 he was on the staff of the University of Alaska, progressing from Research Associate to Associate Professor of Anthropology. Between 1943 and 1946, however, he was on active duty as a Navy Lieutenant in the Pacific Area. In 1950 he became Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Assistant Curator of the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania. In 1956 he was appointed Associate Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Haffenreffer Museum, Brown University, becoming Professor in 1959.

Louis Giddings was one of the first Associates of the Arctic Institute elected to Fellowship, and he received one of the Institute's first research grants. The Arctic Institute may well take pride in the fact that it was able to support Giddings' 1948 and 1949 excavations at Cape Denbigh, Alaska, which opened entirely new vistas in Arctic archaeology, and that it contributed to the support of his later and equally important work on the Arctic coast.

An expert in dendrochronology, Giddings was the first to apply this technique in the Arctic. Working with samples from living trees and driftwood from old Eskimo village sites on the Kobuk, he established a tree-ring chronology for the last 1,000 years of Eskimo culture. Giddings' work at Cape Denbigh was in the opposite direction — it uncovered the roots of Eskimo culture. His 4,500 to 5,000 year old Denbigh Flint Complex was unlike anything previously known in the Arctic. It was a microlithic assemblage with close affinities with the Old World Mesolithic, and it represented a stage of culture that developed into Eskimo. Giddings' later work around Kotzebue Sound and at Onion Portage in the interior produced equally spectacular results. At Cape Krusenstern a long succession of old beach ridges revealed a remarkable record of human occupation extending from the present back to at least 4,000 B.C. The 114 beaches contained materials of the Denbigh Flint complex and of 11 other culture stages. Three of these were new, the Old Whaling culture, 1,000 years later than Denbigh, and Palisades I and II, 1,000 or more years older. The deep, stratified Onion Portage site on the middle Kobuk, discovered by Giddings in 1961, is without doubt the most important archaeological site within the Arctic. Covering some 20 acres and reaching a depth of 18 feet, it has over 30 distinct occupation levels containing in vertical sequence the hearths and artifacts of most of the cultures represented on the Krusenstern beaches, as well as others known heretofore only from undated, unstratified surface sites in the interior.

Giddings has described his work at these and many other Arctic sites in more than 50 papers and monographs, the last of which, his monumental work, *The Archeology of Cape Denbigh*, was published by Brown University only a few months before his death.

Louis Giddings is survived by his wife, the former Ruth Elizabeth Warner, and their three children, Louis Jr., Ann, and Russell. To those who cherished the friendship of this remarkably intelligent, vital and warm-hearted man, his untimely death still seems unreal. He will be sorely missed, but he has left his mark large and clear in that field of Arctic research in which he was the dominant figure.

HENRY B. COLLINS

Henry Asbjorn Larsen (1899-1964)

Henry Asbjørn Larsen, retired Superintendent of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, died in Vancouver, B.C., on 29 October 1964, after a brief illness. He was buried in the R.C.M.P. cemetery at Regina, Saskatchewan.

Superintendent Larsen was born on 30 September 1899 at Fredrikstad on the east coast of Oslo Fjord in Norway, not far from the birth place of Roald Amundsen, the first to bring a ship through the Northwest Passage, and the leader of the first expedition to reach the South Pole. It is uncertain if Larsen ever knew Amundsen personally, but when he was an adolescent the tradition of Norwegian arctic exploration was at its height and the brilliant exploits of Nansen, Sverdrup and Amundsen undoubtedly fired his imagination and inspired a strong desire to follow the sea in search of arctic adventure and exploration.

It is not surprising, therefore, that young Henry should choose to do his compulsory military service in the Norwegian Navy. Later he learnt practical seamanship in merchant ships and entered navigation school from which he graduated with a mate's certificate. After some years spent in Norwegian ships, including a stint as Chief Officer in a trans-atlantic liner, he was at last to realize his cherished ambition for arctic service when offered the berth as navigator in the veteran arctic trading schooner *Old Maid* of Seattle, bound for the Western Canadian Arctic. The arctic experience gained during two voyages in the *Old Maid* qualified Larsen for command of the R.C.M.P. patrol vessel *St. Roch*, specially designed for arctic navigation, built and commissioned in Vancouver, in 1928. In April of that year Larsen had joined the Force as a Constable; he was promoted to Corporal on April 1, 1929, six months later was made a Sergeant and on November 1, 1942 a Staff Sergeant.

Between 1928 and 1939 the *St. Roch* with Larsen in command spent 12 summers and 7 winters patrolling the Western Canadian Arctic, supplying northern detachments and, in general, serving as a floating detachment; but the two voyages for which the *St. Roch* and its captain became famous were the west to east trip through the Northwest Passage in 1940-42 and the east to west return passage, completed in one season, in 1942. On the first Larsen followed Amundsen's route in the *Gjøa*, 1903-06 but on the return voyage he sailed the *St. Roch* through Lancaster and Viscount Wellington Sounds and south through Prince of Wales Strait to Beaufort Sea, the first ship to have completed this passage.

The official report of the two historic voyages is recorded in a R.C.M.P. "Blue Book" published in 1945. To those familiar with arctic exploration and its long history of privation, hunger and cold, the terse daily entries copied from the *St. Roch's* log seem as undramatic and commonplace as if each voyage had been entirely routine.