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THE VOLCANO LETTER

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KILAUEA REPORT No. 821

WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 19, 1927

Section of Volcanology, U. S. Geological Survey:
T. A. Jaggar, Volcanologist in Charge

Recent visits to Halemaumau show the pit to be quiet. Slides are not so numerous as last week, and steaming changes little. At 10:20 a. m. October 17 there was a small slide at the north corner which made dust, and about 3:30 p. m. October 19, slides occurred at the south corner making a bright red scar visible from the Uwekahuna Observatory. There is fresh yellow sulphur at the base of the southeast talus.

Crack measurements along the east rim of the pit show little movement, but on October 19 small new cracks were seen in the dirt back of the south station.

The seismographs have recorded 18 very feeble local earthquakes during the week ending October 19. A perceptible shock occurred in Kona, local to that place, at 6:01 p. m. on October 16. Tilt has accumulated slightly to the NNW.

ERUPTION OF MAGEIK IN ALASKA

The Seattle "News-Tribune" carries an Associated Press dispatch of the date September 30 stating that Mageik Volcano of the Katmai group erupted explosively "late in August" (1927). The authority quoted is Captain Harry W. Crosby, President of the Crosby Fisheries, who spent the summer aboard his schooner-cannery "Salmon King" in the northeast arm of Uganik Bay on the northwest side of Kodiak Island. Mageik and Martin were two volcanoes seen by Dr. Jaggar to be steaming, looking northwest from Shelikof Strait on May 18, 1927. Both took part in the great Katmai eruptions of 1912. Mageik is forty nautical miles from the middle of Shelikof Strait, and sixty miles from the Crosby anchorage in Uganik Bay.

Thousands of tons of pumice stone and ashes were reported by Crosby as showered over an area 50 miles square. The article quotes him:

"We were about 50 miles off the Alaskan Peninsula in clear weather, when suddenly we noticed a gigantic puff at the top of Mageik. Soon the air was filled with volcano ash, and it began to rain pumice stone. After the explosion, the volcano smoked like a factory chimney. A short distance from the ship we found large quantities of pumice stone, some pieces as big as your fist, floating on the ocean.

"We scooped up a bushel or more of the stones and brought them to Seattle. For five days the eruption continued, and the mountain was still smoking when we left for Seattle.

"Each morning while we were off the Alaskan Peninsula, the decks and rigging of the ship would be covered with the fine powdered volcanic ash, some of it so white that it resembled snow. The first duty of the crew in the mornings would be to sweep the decks clear and to dust off the rigging.

"The eruption followed a period of unusual weather, a great calm with scarcely a breath of air, and a depressing atmosphere. The air was full of white volcanic ash for a week, and thousands of tons of pumice stone fell around us."

No dates or ship's positions appear in this article, but apparently the vessel did not sail until five days after the major explosion. Captain Crosby is a reliable commercial man, navigator and fisherman of many years' experience in Alaskan waters. T.A.J.

ALEUTIAN VOLCANOLOGY

The foregoing account illustrates how much is needed a reliable scientific station for collecting and verifying reports of activity from the forty-five potentially eruptible volcanoes of the Aleutian volcano chain, extending from Mount Spurr to Buldir. When Dr. Jaggar was at Naknek May 24, 1927, the teacher there, who had been to the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes, reported that a trapper in January, 1927, had seen an ash eruption from one of the Katmai hills, and that two trappers were missing who had gone into that region. This is in the same district as Mageik.

Here, then, are two accounts, both incomplete as to hours and dates and places, suggesting that ash and pumice eruptions are being renewed in January and August, 1927, for the Katmai volcanic system.

Bogoslof was found in lava eruptivity when Dr. Jaggar on the "Unalga" visited and made landing on the islet July 6, 1927. This was in the technical sense that a pile of steaming hot lava was slowly heaving itself from the submerged crater above the sea-water. The salt lagoon surrounding the lava heap was warm. Fresh bombs and bomb-pits lay about. The records of mariners for a year past told of explosions in July, August, September, and November, 1926, at Bogoslof.

After this visit came a telegram from Captain Cochrane, commander of the Bering Sea Patrol, dated July 27, saying, "One of Akutan whalers reports Bogoslof active on July 26." The word "active" here certainly means another explosion. Where was the whaler; how far away; what direction was the wind; what was the hour; what happened? Such are the details needed by science.

Now we get Mageik exploding a month later. Fortunately a small sidelight is thrown on this volcanic action of the Katmai group by the new seismograph at Kodiak village. While it was being installed, July 30, at 7:10 a. m. Kodiak Time (ten hours slower than Greenwich), a local earthquake was sharply felt. At 5:52 a. m. August 11 a slight east-west swaying shock was felt and was registered by the seismograph so as to indicate an origin distance of 35 nautical miles; duration of registered motion three and one-half minutes.

Coinciding with "late August" of the reported Mageik eruption, the Kodiak seismogram of 7:18 a. m. August 28 exhibits a feeble local earthquake with preliminary phase indicating a distance of 30 nautical miles; duration of motion about one minute.

Summing up, we have (1) Bogoslof piling lava July 6 and exploding July 26; (2) Earthquakes at Kodiak originating 30 to 40 miles away at intervals of 12 and 16 days after July 30; (3) Explosion of Mageik the end of August and first days of September. Kodiak is 93 nautical miles from Mageik and about 35 miles from Shelikof Strait, where there is probably a northeast-southwest fault. T.A.J.

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