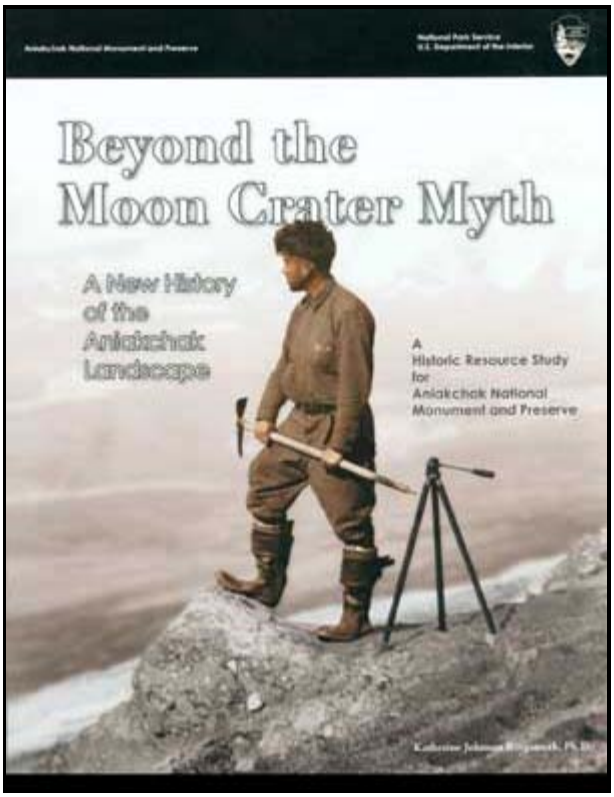
ANIAKCHAK

Beyond the Moon Crater Myth
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape
A Historic Resource Study for Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve



BEYOND THE MOON CRATER MYTH

A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape

A Historic Resource Study for Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

By
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ANIAKCHAK

Beyond the Moon Crater Myth
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape
A Historic Resource Study for Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cover

Cover: The Abandoned Village of Katmai, 1913, by M. Horner, courtesy of NPS. Photograph taken roughly one year after the June 6, 1912 eruption of Novarupta, Katmai National Park and Preserve.

Acknowledgments

Moving Beyond the Moon Crater Myth

Introduction
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape: The Challenge, the Place, and Purpose of Study

Chapter One
Father Hubbard's Geological Wonder World: Perpetuating the "Moon Crater Myth" in Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

Anecdotes from Aniakchak
Reflections on Working in Aniakchak by Tina Neal

Pre-Contact Period (pre-1741)

Chapter Two
The Living World of Aniakchak

Anecdotes from Aniakchak
Archeology in the Park — An Aniakchak Journal by Brian Hoffman

Russian Period (1741-1917)

Chapter Three
1741: A Brave New World Begins

Chapter Four
Russian Orthodoxy: Bridging the Old World with the New

Anecdotes from Aniakchak
A Sense of Place by Patricia Partnow

Early American Period (1867-1930)

Chapter Five
Incorporating Aniakchak: American Fur Traders, Oil Prospectors, and Reindeer Herders

Chapter Six
Aniakchak Ensnared: The Canned Salmon Industry in Ugashik, Chignik, and Aniakchak Bay

Chapter Seven
The Knights of Woeful Countenance: Fox Farmers, Local Trappers, and Clam Canners

Anecdotes from Aniakchak
On the Kanatak Trail by Paul Boskoffsky
Pieces of the Wind by Wendy Erd
Helen Neilsen: Life on a Blue Fox Island as told to Susie Pedersen

Hubbard's Explorations (1930-1932)

Chapter Eight
Exploring the Moon Crater of Alaska: From Foot to Flight

Anecdotes from Aniakchak
Frank Wilson's Account of the 1931 Eruption as told to Father Hubbard

World War II and Cold War Period (1935-1960)

Chapter Nine
From Wilderness Frontier to Wartime Front

Modern Aniakchak (1950s-present)

Chapter Ten
Father Hubbard's Aniakchak Legacy

Anecdotes from Aniakchak
A Dinosaur Discovery in Aniakchak National Monument by Anthony Fiorillo

Conclusion
Aniakchak: A Place People *Do* Know, and Have Known, for a Very Long Time!

Appendix
Historic Properties Summaries and Recommendations

Sources Consulted

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As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has

responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural and cultural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation.

The Cultural Resources Programs of the National Park Service have responsibilities that include stewardship of historic buildings, museum collections, archeological sites, cultural landscapes, oral and written histories, and ethnographic resources.

Our missiong is to identify, evalute and preseve the cultural resources of the park areas and to bring an understanding of these resources to the public. Congress has mandated that we preserve these resources because they are important components of our national and personal identity.



The far side of the Moon. Image courtesy National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

The far side of the Moon. Image courtesy National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

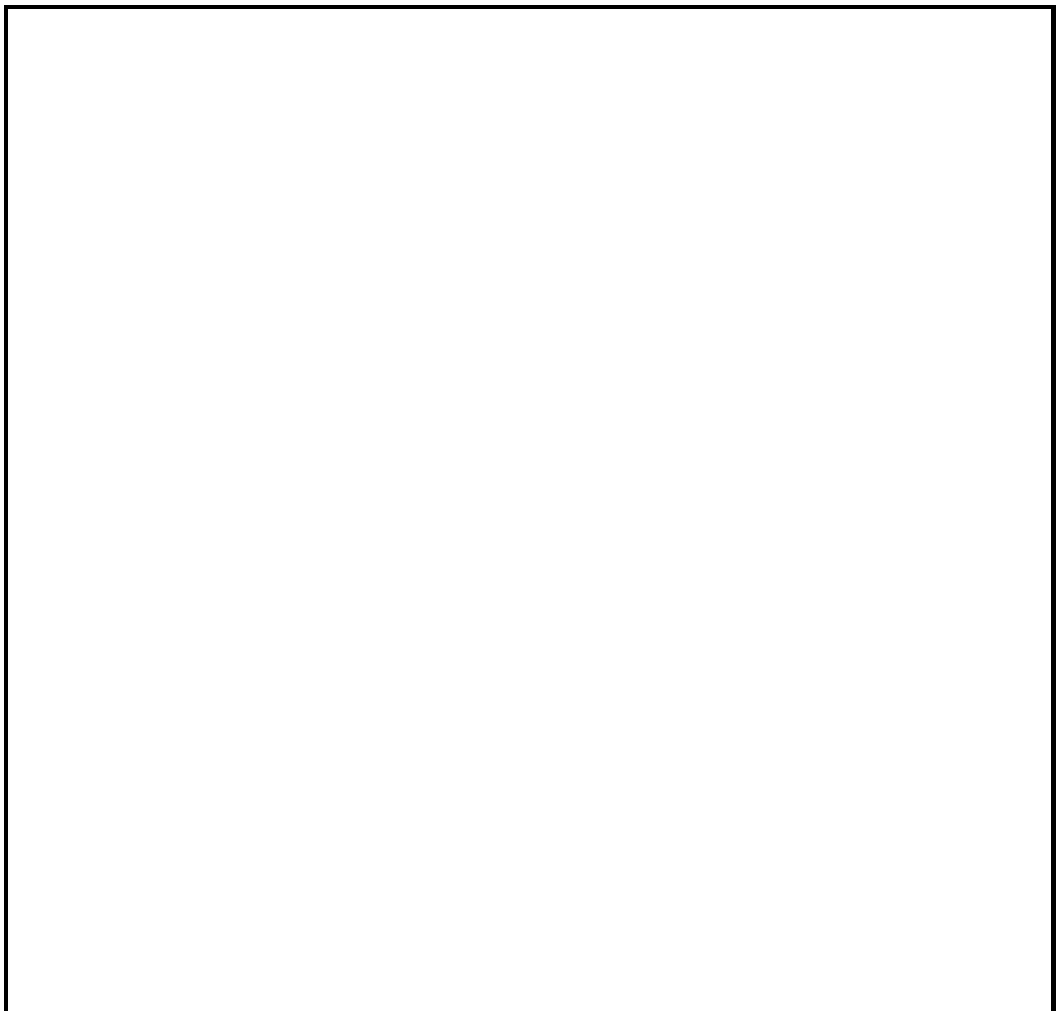
<<< Previous <<< Contents >>> Next >>>

hrs/contents.htm
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"Aniakchiak has so much history, but no story has yet to tie it all together."
Peter Bumpus, Chignik Lagoon resident

This study would not have happened had it not been for the encouragement, support, and assistance of many people. It was during my second year of graduate school at Washington State University (WSU) when I was hired by National Park Service (NPS) to write a historic resource study (HRS) of the Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve (ANIA). The study not only supported me financially during the school year, but the HRS launched my academic study of this region. Much of the research conducted for the HRS also formed the foundation of my doctorial work. Therefore, I thank both the NPS and the history department at WSU, especially my doctorial committee, including Orlan Svingen, Leroy Ashby, and Paul Hirt, for supporting my multi-layered, multi-purpose research and helping me achieve my goal of blending academic accomplishment and public service.





A Chignik Lagoon resident shows off his clam bounty, 2004. Katherine Johnson Ringsmuth, Anchorage, Alaska.

In Anchorage, my circle of supporters consisted of dedicated NPS cultural resource staffers, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) scientists, and university academics. Frank Norris, the senior historian at the NPS regional office in Anchorage, pioneered historical study in the Aniakchak region and provided me guidance, not to mention many sources, throughout the entire project. Frank's careful read of the first draft questioned a few misguided facts and kept my prose clean. Katie Myers, who manages the park collections now held at the Alaska Regional Curatorial Center, helped me locate a number of hard to find sources, including many Hubbard photographs. Barbara Bundy, with her expert knowledge of Adobe Illustrator, not only made some of the maps based on the historical information I provided to her, but was a constant source of support. My officemates, Karen Gaul and Dale Vinson, were always there, acting as sounding boards as I wrote.

Besides my colleagues at NPS, many other professionals and academics contributed to the

HRS. Tina Neal, a USGS geologist, gave numerous interviews and read early versions of chapter one. Tina, and her colleague, Game McGimsey, probably know Aniakchak better than anyone, and both were open with their research, their photograph collections, and shared many stories with me about their fieldwork in the Caldera. Roger Bloggett took time to discuss the history of Kanatak with me, and provided numerous photos of his fieldwork there. Jenn Adleman, another USGS specialist, also read an early draft, and together these geologists helped me to better understand the geological processes at work in our earth. If mistakes exist in this text, they are mine alone.

Emeritus professor of Anthropology at the University of Oregon, Dr. Don Dumond, read an early draft of chapter two. Not only did he spare time to discuss with me archeological interpretations on his way through town to lead an elder hostel group into Katmai National Park and Preserve, but Dr. Dumond made sure my discussion of the ancient cultures of the central Alaska Peninsula was correct, at least as much as current archeological scholarship can tell us. Richard VanderHoek spent numerous hours talking to me about his current theory as to how the catastrophic eruption of the Aniakchak Volcano 3,500 years ago affected both the ecological and the human landscape. Archeologists Brian Hoffman and Ross Smith, who are currently working on site at Aniakchak with a field crew of archeological students from Hamlin University, helped me formulate a current historical interpretation of the region's ancient past. Barbara Sweetland Smith, an expert in Russian-America history, read drafts of chapter three and four. Ever since our first coffee meeting, in which we discussed for hours the "Russian factor," I have become very involved in the history of this era in Alaska history and hope to pursue it in future projects. U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologist Steve Ebbert read and commented on my discussion of fox farms and Elmendorf's historians John Haile Cloe, James Frank and Karlene Leeper provided me with important military documents, photos, and expert advice on Fort Morrow and other military resources in the surrounding area. Likewise, the U.S. Department of the Navy generously provided reproductions of William F. Draper's oil paintings which depict life at war in southwestern Alaska. I also must thank the archivists who assisted in retrieving the numerous photographs in the HRS. They include: Arlene Schmuland, archivist at the University of Alaska Anchorage, Sandra Johnston at the Alaska State Library, and Shelia Conway and Ann McMahon, archivists at Santa Clara University. Molly Logan, who edited the final manuscript, also played a major role in the completion of this five year project.

I especially need to thank historian Kathy Price, who provided key insights into Father Bernard Hubbard and his ultimate aims in Aniakchak. In her graduate work at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Price argues that the Glacier Priest developed his "Hubbard Mystic" while exploring the Aniakchak Crater. Much of Price's research has contributed greatly to this study. I also must thank Orin Seybert, Greg Kingsley, Ace Grietchen, Patricia Partnow, Brian Hoffman, Tina Neal, Brian Hoffman, and Tony Fiorillo, all of whom gave interviews or contributed photos and personal essays about Aniakchak that are dispersed throughout the study in sections entitled: *Anecdotes from Aniakchak.*

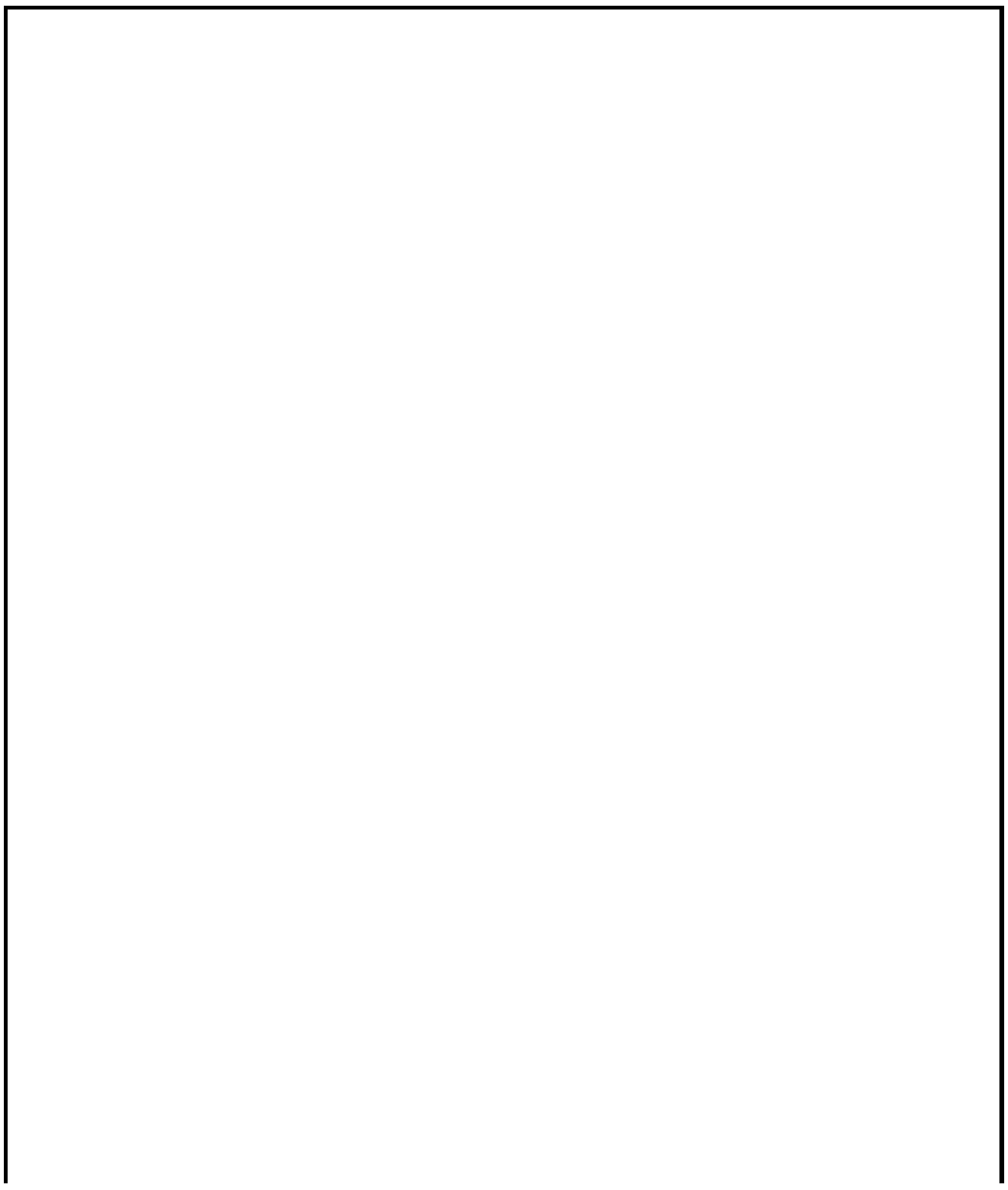
Although numerous professionals helped to polish the final product, those who provided the HRS with its voice are the people who actually call the Aniakchak region their home. A few of those people include: Suzanne Deater, Michael Grunert, Angela Gregorio, Laura Stepanoff, Shanna Stepanoff, Diana Moore, Alec (Teetum) Pederson, Peter Bumpus, Aaron and Michelle Anderson, David, Ian, and Sasha Anderson, Clarence (Bobby) Erickson, Julius Anderson, and the many teachers, administrators and students at the Lake and Peninsula School District. Residents of the villages of Pilot Point, Ugashik, Port Heiden, Chignik Lagoon, Chignik Lake, and Chignik Bay maintain strong ties to the Aniakchak landscape. They continue to hunt, fish, pick berries, dig clams, and raise families in this region.

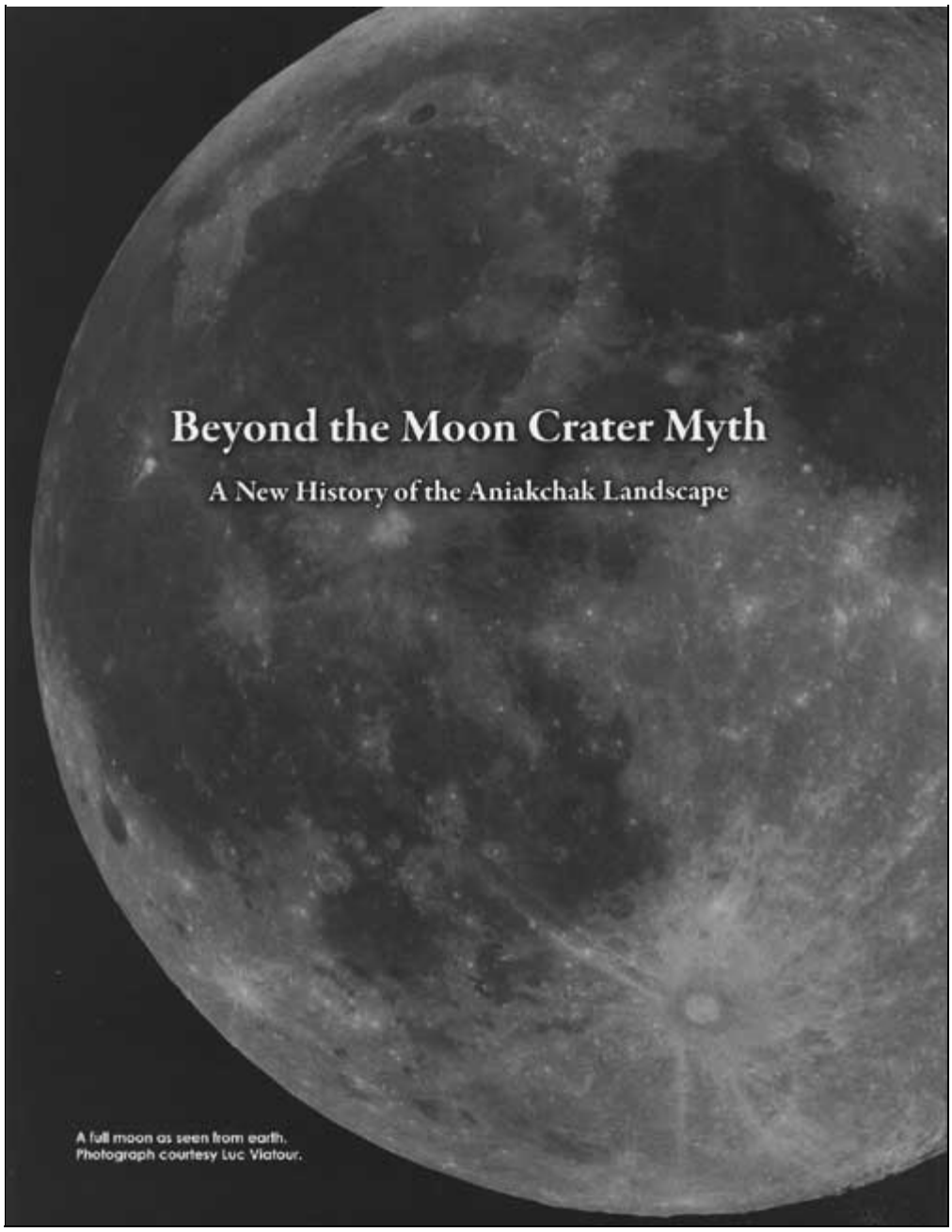
Thus, what I find most significant about writing a new history of this little known part of the

world is that it challenges previous ideas about, and interpretations of, the landscape, and most notably, the people who dwell within it. The new history discussed in *Beyond the Moon Crater Myth* will be applied by land managers, resident leaders, and local communities to help explain what happened on the central Alaska Peninsula. In other words, this work will directly impact the future of this region and hopefully, add meaning for the people who interact with the land and resources, and literally *make* this region's history. As the grandson of an Aniakchak trapper, Peter Bumpus expressed to me, "Aniakchak has so much history, but no story has yet to tie it all together." For the opportunity to tie the story together, I must thank Jeanne Schaaf, chief of Cultural Resources for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, whose program funded this project and gave it creative direction. Jeanne has been my boss and mentor for the last eight years, and I applaud her tireless energy, her dedication to cultural resource preservation and discovery, and her top-notch staff at the Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center in Anchorage, Alaska.

Finally, I must acknowledge my husband, Eric Ringsmuth, who still asked me to marry him while I wrote.

Katherine Johnson Ringsmuth
July 17, 2007





A full moon as seen from earth. Photograph courtesy Luc Viatour.

<<< Previous <<< Contents >>> Next >>>

ANIAKCHAK

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Moving Beyond the Moon Crater Myth

INTRODUCTION
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape:
The Challenge, the Place, and the Purpose of Study

> *It was a stiff night. The moon, immense, round and extraordinarily close, poured its light into the crater, turning everything to pure sliver.*
>
> Father Bernard Hubbard
> "The Moon Craters of Alaska"

THE MOON CRATERS OF ALASKA

In 1930, Alaskan author, Barrett Willoughby, introduced readers of the *Saturday Evening Post* to a place so remote and alien that it could have been on the moon. [1] Though seemingly out of this world, the article, "Moon Craters of Alaska," was not science fiction. It recounted Father Bernard Hubbard's first expedition into what the famed Glacier Priest described as a lunar landscape, rather than an earthly one: "Craters! Volcanoes!" declared Hubbard, "For twenty years I've been plumbing their depths in two hemispheres hoping I might come across one comparable in form, if not quite in size, to those vast craters we see on the moon." [2] Indeed, this place Hubbard called a "geological wonder world," is not found on the earth's satellite. The intracaldera world of Aniakchak is a landscape crafted by at least forty different volcanic eruptions, which have occurred over the last 3,500 years.

The first time Hubbard laid eyes upon Aniakchak, it was like nothing he had ever seen. Entering through a narrow, V-shaped break in the Caldera rim called "The Gates," the explorer immediately realized that he was not looking down *into* a crater, but instead, stood at the bottom of one. "Staring up," recalled Hubbard, "Aniakchak opened before us, stupendous, unbelievable . . ."

> A sun-flooded earth floor of thirty square miles encircled by sold cliffs 3000 feet high. A mountain-walled ring six-and three-fourths miles in diameter, twenty one miles in circumference. So tremendous was it that the mind at first grasped only a chaos of primitive colors—brilliant red, terra cotta, ivory, black, orange and blue. Then details began to grow clear: Painted walls in a wide-swinging area, the rim aglitter with glaciers sharply notched against the sky. Near the center about three miles from us, that mysterious thing the clouds had hidden the day before—Vent Mountain, its slopes ribboned with snow and maroon rising to a height of 2000 feet. It was shaped like a truncated Fujiyama, and had a crater etched in its white peak—a volcano rising inside the ring of Aniakchak.

So unfamiliar and primordial was the world of Aniakchak that, to Hubbard, the only

geological reference he could conjure was the craters on the moon. He believed the Alaskan crater surrounding him was "an exact, though smaller, counterpart of Piecolomini [Crater] in the Altai Mountains on the moon." [3] Even Hubbard's fellow explorer, Dick Douglas, found Aniakchak moon-like. In his book, *In the Land of Thunder Mountain*, which described his exploration into the crater with Hubbard in 1931, Douglas wrote, "It was like a dream of walking on the moon... This wasteland was cold and dead. It was the moon; without warmth to sustain life and without life to sustain." [4] Since the days of his famed explorations, Hubbard often referred to Aniakchak in his later writings, lectures, and films as "the Great Moon Crater of Earth," and thusly cemented a lasting image of Aniakchak as having an alien, mysterious, and lifeless past. [5]

Examination of Hubbard's activities in Aniakchak, especially how he dramatized them, offers historians insights into the larger story of Alaska as the Last Frontier, and how the frontier image relates to the region's national parks. Illustrating this point is a story told by William Regan, one of Hubbard's young companions. When Santa Clara archivist Julie O'Keefe asked the explorer if the expedition had encountered "Eskimos" during an interview in 1981, Regan replied, "Nobody, nobody, nobody around. . .but I'll tell you an amusing story."



Father Hubbard with ice ax examines the 1931 eruption lava blocks, 1931. Bernard Hubbard, S.J, Alaskan Photograph Collection. Photograph courtesy of Santa Clara University Archives. ACK-00-01

"Father was a very dramatic fellow," Regan related. According to him, while exploring the Caldera after the eruption in 1931, the team scaled to the edge of the crater. From that particular standpoint, he recalled, the only thing that the explorers saw was "this black, black [expanse] except for the smoke from the far end." As Regan tells the story, Hubbard at that moment dramatically yelled out, "The abomination of desolation!" Then the priest instructed his fellows to kneel down and say three *Hail Mary's.* "Before we looked at anything that we knew was gonna be dramatic," explained Regan, "We said three *Hail Mary's."* "Hubbard," Regan noted, "made quite a point to us . . . that we were the first white men, or the first non-

natives that had ever been in there." Then, according to Regan, one stormy night, the team took refuge from violent weather in a traditional subterranean native house. He recalled, "The next day we got up and there was an old battered-up phonograph with a fluted horn.... in this old building... There was one record and it was *Danny Mocking and the Kansas City Stompers*. I said, 'Father, maybe we're the second white men up here.'" [6]

The story, though entertaining, contradicts Hubbard's notion that the region surrounding the Aniakchak Caldera was devoid of human activity. Regan's story shows that the region was linked to a not so mysterious past, one that clearly included people. Throughout their explorations of the central portion of the Alaska Peninsula, Hubbard and his team continuously encountered indigenous Alutiit, Euroamerican trappers, fox farmers, and prospectors. They observed and took advantage of a growing presence of the salmon industry and fish trap workers fishing in Aniakchak Bay. But to Hubbard, such a human—and civilized—presence in Aniakchak contradicted his primitive and desolate Moon Crater world and thus, the Glacier Priest continually downplayed Aniakchak's living world.

The Challenge:
Telling Cultural History in a Natural Resource Park

Fifty years after Father Hubbard and his fellow explorers entered the Aniakchak Caldera, the formation and the surrounding landscape was designated Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve (ANIA), a relatively new addition to the National Park system. The park unit was established after President Jimmy Carter signed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, or ANILCA, into law. Often called the most significant land conservation measure in the history of our nation, the statute protected over one hundred million acres of federal lands in Alaska, doubling the size of the country's national park and refuge system and tripling the amount of land designated as wilderness. ANILCA expanded the national park system in Alaska by more than 53,000,000 acres. It increased the acreage of three existing national parks. And, ANILCA created ten new national park units, including Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve.

Without question, the Aniakchak Caldera is the monument's primary natural landmark. Over time, this geological feature has shaped and formed the natural landscape of the central Alaska Peninsula. Measuring thirty square miles in circumference and 2,500 feet in depth, the feature is one of the world's largest dry calderas. It was created 3,500 years ago when the summit of an ancient 7,000-foot mountain collapsed in a single, massive eruption. On a global scale, the eruption would have ranked as one of the largest in recent geological times, surpassing the cataclysmic output of Krakatoa in 1883 and Novarupta in 1912. Still, it is important to keep in mind that the volcano is one of the primary shapers of the region's cultural story, as well.

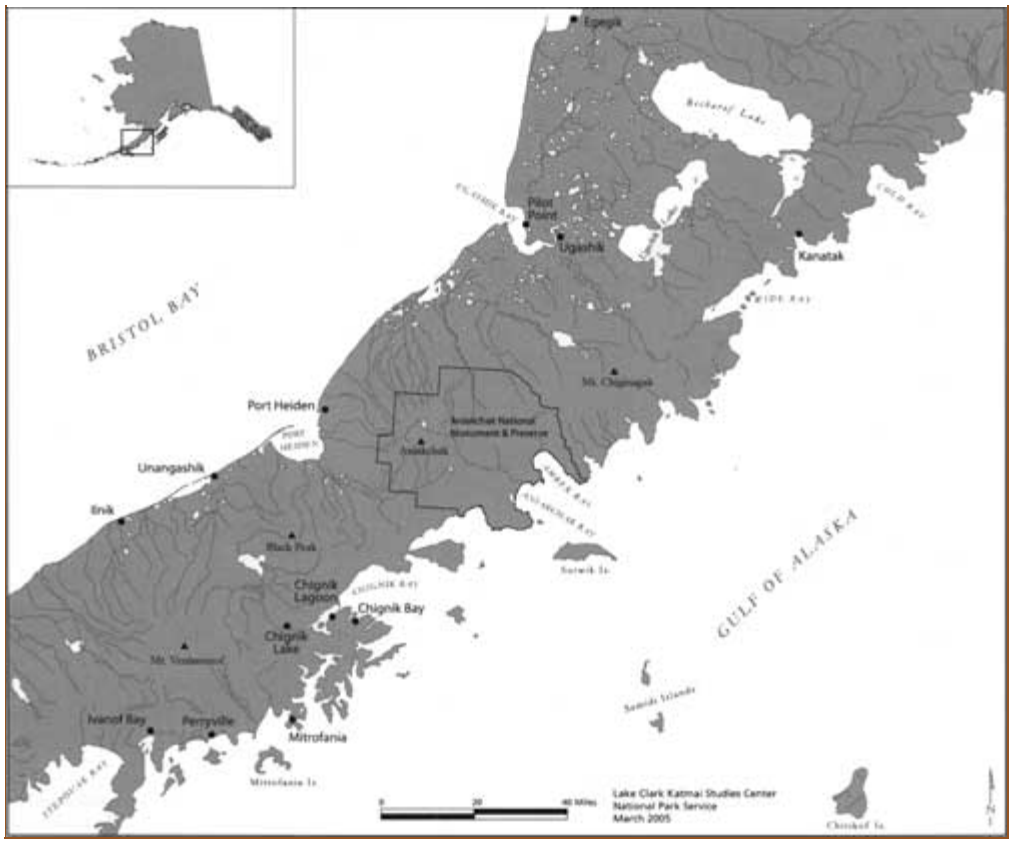




Looking south, southeast along the western shoreline of Aniakchak Bay, 1990. Frank Norris, National Park Service, Anchorage, Alaska.

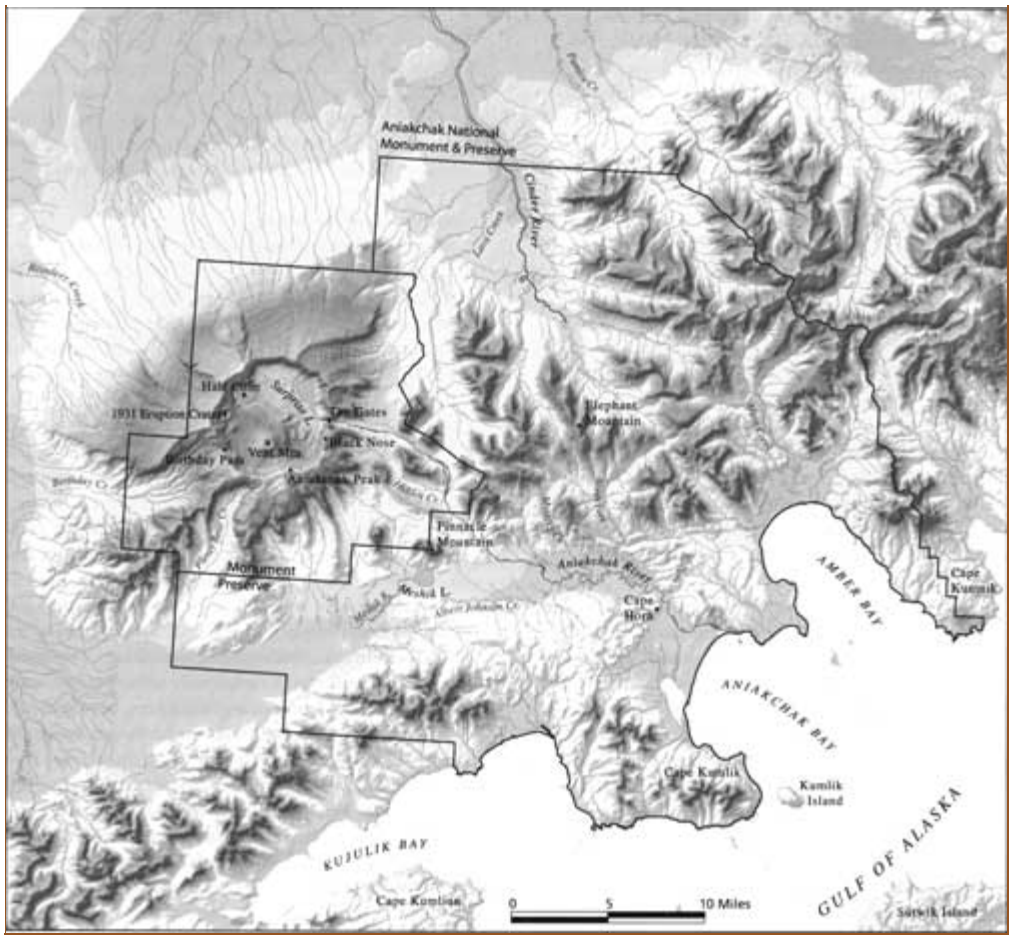
One of the problems in telling the monument's tale from a cultural perspective is that for much of its history, nature had a way of removing people from the peninsula, rather than attracting them. Current theories contend that if human beings lived anywhere on the central Alaska Peninsula at the time of the eruption, hot ash and pyroclastic flows would have wiped them from the earth. Perhaps even more devastating, archeologists tell us that the catastrophic blast created an ecological and cultural dead zone that lasted an estimated 1,000 years. [7] In other words, the eruption discouraged any human or animal life on the central Alaska Peninsula for centuries afterwards. Then, perhaps just when life began to return to the region, the Caldera, created by the 3,500 year old volcanic blast, began to fill with water, creating a large, deep lake in the center of the mountain. About 500 years ago, during a lesser eruption, a portion of the Caldera wall gave way and a massive wave flooded the Aniakchak River valley, washing large boulders and sediment downstream, and, presumably, any human life in its path, too.

In an extraordinary example of recovery and resilience, life again returned to Aniakchak. Clearly, the volcano has drastically altered the natural landscape of this region, but it is how humans responded to catastrophic change and ultimately endured it that is the central theme to Aniakchak's cultural story and makes the history of this place worth telling. For, on this central portion of the Alaska Peninsula, two fundamental processes that are often discussed separately by park service managers and personnel, took place over a period of approximately 3,500 years: volcanic activity and its resultant changes and the movement and interaction of various peoples. As this study will show, the management of the region's natural resources cannot be realized entirely without understanding their connection to people. Natural and cultural histories, in other words, are objectively entangled within the Aniakchak landscape.



The Aniakchak Landscape area of study: Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve settlements and volcanoes. *(click on image for a PDF version)*

The challenge of *Beyond the Moon Crater: A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape,* then, is to explain how various peoples related to nature and how those relationships ultimately shaped Aniakchak's human history. The study puts the Alutiiq people, the Alaska Natives living on the central Alaska Peninsula, and Aniakchak's physical environment, at its center, as it discusses Russian and American expansion from 1741 through the 1980s, when Aniakchak became part of the NPS system. In the span of a little over 200 years, the Alutiit (Alutiit is plural for Alutiiq) transformed from an independent, hunter-fisher-gathering people, into a sedentary, Orthodox Christian, pluralistic, commercial fishing people. Arguably, the Alutiiq culture that emerged in the nineteenth and early twentieth century was a product of interaction with first Russians, and later, Americans. Moreover, although the Alutiiq people endured significant cultural loss during this time, they were able to adapt to both Russian and American systems by blending certain aspects of the foreign cultures with their own. In the end, like the volcanic land on which they lived, the Alutiiq people managed to recover from each phase of expansion. Thus, this study aims to show how interactions between people and Aniakchak's natural world destroyed, as well as created, the cultural story. The result is debatably the most comprehensive history of the central Alaska Peninsula to date.



Prominent geological features within Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve. By B. Bundy. *(click on image for a PDF version)*

The Place:
Aniakchak's Dynamic Landscape

Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve is located across from Kodiak Island, on the central portion of the Alaska Peninsula which juts out from the Alaska mainland, splitting the Bering Sea from the North Pacific Ocean. "Here," wrote Hubbard of Aniakchak, "the Pacific Ocean and the warm Japanese current lie close to the Bering Sea and the cold Arctic current." According to Hubbard, the result of this geographical and oceanic proximity "is that rapidly condensing masses of air at different temperatures are constantly being sucked through the narrow passes of the high mountains, reaching storm intensity very quickly." Because the park unit sits exactly where these two forces of nature collide, Hubbard poetically called Aniakchak "the birthplace of storms." [8]

Volatile weather, however, is not the only foreboding feature of the central Alaska Peninsula. Situated just off Aniakchak's Pacific coastline are many small islands which not only serve as rookeries for the region's fur mammals, but create a navigational maze for watercraft, making the voyage across Shelikof Strait, the watery corridor between the mainland and Kodiak Island, extremely treacherous. [9] Rising from the relentless waves and churning currents of the Pacific are precipitous, jagged cliffs that stand sentry to the steaming and glaciated peaks of the Aleutian Mountain Range. The Aleutians continue down the length of the Alaska Peninsula and then break into the islands of the Aleutian Chain. They are home to some of the world's most active volcanoes. Besides Aniakchak, other live volcanoes that surround the park unit include Veniaminov, Black Peak, Chiginagak, and Peulik. Over the centuries,

various eruptions emanating from these volcanoes, as well as from Aniakchak, have transformed the landscape of the central Alaska Peninsula into a layer-cake of volcanic ash.

From these predominantly glaciated volcanic peaks, the elevation to the west gently gives way to undulating foothills. Three major rivers drain off the flanks of Aniakchak: the Aniakchak River flows from headwaters located inside the Aniakchak Caldera like a shot to the Pacific, while the Meshik and the Cinder rivers take a more serpentine route west toward Bristol Bay. There, for miles, ashen plains created by pyroclastic flows, dominate the land and are, indeed, remnants of a catastrophic past. The desolate ash fields, however, abruptly surrender to a thick carpet of dwarf willows, alders, various grasses, and wildflowers, which have gradually made their way up gentle slopes from the tundra lowlands. The lowlands, pock-marked by hundreds of interconnected ponds and small lakes, meet the murky waters of Bristol Bay, where for centuries, rising and freezing tides have sculpted an ever-changing coastline.

The Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve encompasses only part of what this study calls the Aniakchak Landscape (I also refer to the area of study as the Aniakchak region or the central Alaska Peninsula). This expanse spans an area that is approximately one hundred miles southwest from the Ugashik Lakes to Chignik Lake, and fifty miles across, from the Bering Sea to the Pacific Coast. Today, the region is peppered by six small fishing villages: Ugashik, Pilot Point, Port Heiden, Chignik Lake, Chignik Lagoon, and Chignik Bay. Except for Chignik Lake, village orientation lies primarily toward the two seas, the Bering Sea and the North Pacific, and thus, leaves the undeveloped land of the central peninsula seemingly empty of human activity. The appearance of an exotic and lifeless country formed the genesis of Father Hubbard's interpretation of this region—a cold, empty, and alien moonscape. In the following chapters, this historic resource study will show that a culturally void and ecologically dead Aniakchak was anything but true.

The Purpose of the Study: Looking Beyond Hubbard's Moon Crater Myth

The Aniakchak Historic Resource Study (HRS), *Beyond the Moon Crater: A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape* is far more than a mere catalogue of the park's historical sites and properties. At a minimum, the study serves as a reminder that people, too, live within the Aniakchak Landscape despite the common perception that nothing exists here except a moon crater.

As with most studies of this type, the Aniakchak HRS identifies the park's known historical resources and places those resources into a historic context. The listing of historic properties, summaries and historic preservation recommendations specific to each chapter can be found in the Appendix. The findings presented in this study identify several historic sites, properties, and places and provide new theoretical interpretations on what actually occurred within those places. The re-interpretation of such places not only offers new meaning and significance. It also strongly suggests that additional research should be conducted. Such research is vital, if the knowledge and history of the Aniakchak region is to be preserved and passed on in accordance with the NPS responsibility to cultural resources, as set forth in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. The recommendations following each chronological section are logical extensions of the historical aspects described in this report.

Known historic properties within Aniakchak include Native houses, trapping and hunting cabins, extensive trail networks, commercial fish traps, clam cannery remains, a cannery bunkhouse, a fox farm, and the beginnings of two roads built by the Corps of Engineers during World War II. In addition, Russian outposts, American trade stations, trapper cabins, reindeer corrals, a U.S. Army base, and industrial sites such as an oil boom town and salmon

canneries—all located just beyond park boundaries—are important historical sites that help us to better understand how people's relationship to the natural resources, as well as each other, shaped the history of the Aniakchak region.



The Bristol Bay flats, aerial view of the landscape surrounding Port Heiden/Meshik looking southwest, 1990. Frank Norris, National Park Service, Anchorage, Alaska.

In 1991, Public Law 101-628, Section 1209, directed the NPS to revise the 1987 thematic framework for historic studies to incorporate new approaches to examining and understanding America's past. Themes embrace prehistory to the modern period and a multiplicity of human experiences. They also address issues of national significance, regional, community and other dimensions of place that are relevant. The framework draws upon the work of scholars across disciplines to provide a structure for capturing the complexity and meaning of human experiences and for understanding that past in coherent, integrated ways. The following is a brief list of the historic contexts for the Aniakchak HRS:

- Peopling places
- Nature shapes culture
- Encounters and exchange
- Cultural accommodation
- Americanization and incorporation
- Industrialization and capitalization
- Local economic and social networks
- Scientific exploration
- World War II
- Modern mobility, environmentalism, and park science

The goal of this historical analysis of Aniakchak, then, is to challenge Hubbard's moon crater interpretation, which has been the most popular depiction of the region for the last seventy-five years, with the view that the region is as rich in human history as it is geographically unique. In spite of many of the Glacier Priest's claims, long before he and his collegiate explorers stepped foot into Aniakchak, the region had been inhabited and explored by Alutiiq community members, Russian *promyshlenniki,* Orthodox priests, American trappers, fox

farmers, oil prospectors, USGS surveyors, reindeer herders, and salmon fishermen. Although Hubbard seemed awestruck by the mechanization of the canneries on the peninsula, he continually overlooked the fact that the presence of industrial development in the area contradicted his moon crater interpretation. During his many trips to Aniakchak, the priest fostered prosperous ties with the Alaska salmon industry, and later became one of its major promoters. This did not sir well with local residents, embroiled in a political battle with the Outside capitalists over the legality of fish traps, some of which were operating right in Aniakchak Bay. Furthermore, Hubbard continually reinvented himself and constantly changed his own reasons for coming to Aniakchak. As a Jesuit, Hubbard presented himself in the same tradition as the frontier priests of an earlier era, but he did little missionary work at nearby Native communities, which had converted to Russian Orthodoxy in previous decades. As a scientist, too, Hubbard was inconsistent. Although he claimed that his explorations of Aniakchak were scientific in purpose, as NPS historian Frank Norris points out, "His [Hubbard's] best-selling books, and the articles he contributed to *National Geographic*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and other magazines, contributed little to the scientific literature." [10] Like the first Europeans, who contemplated the wild and lonely shores of America as a New World untouched by history, Hubbard too, presented Aniakchak as a place without a past, at least a cultural one. After a careful read of his numerous works, it becomes quite clear: Hubbard conveyed his personal perspective, a perspective linked to the continent's early pioneers, to advance his own career and popular identity as a modern-day adventurer—the Glacier Priest.

Therefore, this study suggests that the moon-like and lifeless landscape Hubbard described in his books, articles, and films was artificial—an imaginary construct created to feed what historian Kathy Price calls Hubbard's "Glacier Priest persona." [11] It was not in Hubbard's best interest to place Aniakchak in the context of history, and so, as Hubbard proclaimed, history remained "silent on the subject." Because Hubbard and later, the National Park Service, remained mute when it came to the region's cultural history, their silence has had a profound impact on how the outside world views the central Alaska Peninsula today, and how the agency would eventually manage the park unit after 1980. *Beyond the Moon Crater* is the accumulation of independent research and prior studies and writings conducted by NPS personnel, professional historians, and personal memoirs. The result is an interdisciplinary synthesis, which aims to put what was once believed to be an isolated Aniakchak back into the world community, where people, instead of retreating from civilization, encountered the broader world.

In the following chapters, *Beyond the Moon Crater* will take the reader into Hubbard's Geological Wonder World—both the literal place and the world he invented—and then, will look beyond it. The first chapter, *Father Hubbard's Geological Wonder World: Perpetuating the "Moon Crater Myth" in Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve*, discusses why Father Hubbard created the Moon Crater myth, and how the National Park Service adopted and perpetuated this myth when the agency first proposed to make Aniakchak a monument in 1931.

The rest of the chapters proceed in chronological order, beginning with the advent of the Pleistocene era. Throughout the five successive ice ages that occurred during the Pleistocene, the Alaska Peninsula formed the southern boundary of a land bridge that allowed for nothing less than plant species, charismatic magafauna, numerous fish runs, and Asiatic people to migrate to the North American continent. Over centuries, natural forces shaped, and reshaped the Aniakchak landscape. Pleistocene glaciers carved the region's many valleys, rivers and bays, while plate tectonics constructed the volcanic Aleutian Range. As glaciers retreated, migrating plant communities and wildlife adapted to the active landscape. This is the environment that humans first entered about 9,000 years ago.



Father Hubbard and Chisholm high on Vent Mountain, 1931. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., Alaskan Photograph Collection. Photograph courtesy of Santa Clara University Archives. ACK-00-46.

Over the centuries, volcanic ejecta and a massive wave have either covered or swept away clues to Aniakchak's ancient past. Still, despite the calamitous events that continually shape and reshape this part of the world, it does not mean human history remained absent from the mid-region of the Alaska Peninsula. According to Michele Morseth, author of *People of the Volcanoes*, "it is the area outside of the Caldera that has attracted humans for many hundreds of years." [12] Throughout the many centuries on the Alaska Peninsula, ancient hunter-fisher-gatherers devised efficient methods and technology to hunt and fish, but they also had to develop strategies that helped them respond to the dynamic landscape, because in this region of the world, nature had the power to wipe people off the face of the earth, and did, from time to time. [13] Chapter Two titled, *The Living World of Aniakchak*, challenges Hubbard's portrayal of Aniakchak as a lifeless world, for the chapter discusses how natural forces shaped Aniakchak's current physical landscape, and how bands of early people formed a distinctive Alutiiq cultural identity that evolved based on their nomadic activities within its dynamic ecosystem.

The third chapter, *1741: A Brave New World Begins* focuses on the creation of a new social, economic and cultural world on the Alaska Peninsula after 1741. As Russian *promyshlenniki* (plural for *promyshlennik)* crossed two continents on their quest for "soft gold," the three worlds of Europe, Asia, and America collided. During the fur trade, Russians and Alaska Natives interacted along the Aniakchak littoral, exchanging everything from religion to disease. Chapter Four, titled *Russian Orthodoxy: Bridging the Old World with the New,* looks at how exchanges between Russians and the local Alutiit living in the Aniakchak region eventually formed a kind of common ground, a relationship that continued for several decades after the Russian Imperial government sold Russian-America to the United States in 1867. In his books, presentations, and films, Hubbard usually portrayed the descendants of these residents as primitive exotics—if he did at all. What both chapters three and four make clear is that the people the Glacier Priest encountered in 1930 had already experienced nearly two hundred years of cultural encounters and exchanges. They were anything but primitive.

In the years after Russia sold Alaska to the United States in 1867, American fur traders, oil explorers, and even federally subsidized Inupiaq reindeer herders quickly replaced the scant *promyshlenniki* presence along Aniakchak's Pacific coastline. Chapter Five, *Incorporating Aniakchak: Fur Traders, Oil Prospectors and Reindeer Herders,* looks at how American business and the federal government attempted to Americanize Aniakchak. Although these early enterprises eventually failed, they engaged the local community into the larger world of American capitalism. It wasn't until the canned salmon industry moved into the region, however, that Aniakchak became fully incorporated into the modern, industrial world. Chapter Six, *Aniakchak Ensnared: The Canned Salmon Industry in Ugashik, Chignik, and Aniakchak Bay,* examines how the commercial fishing industry successfully facilitated the regional transition that began to mirror a more contemporary American cultural and economic system. Again, this chapter challenges Hubbard's perspective that Aniakchak remained isolated from the "civilized world."

Despite Hubbard's presentation of Aniakchak, when the Glacier Priest visited the region in the 1930s, the cultural landscape was diverse, industrialized, and fully incorporated into the American way of life. The biggest representative of corporate America in Alaska at the time, the canned salmon industry, attracted the largest number of non-Native newcomers to the region, but most came only seasonally and few stayed year round. Some, many of Scandinavian descent, did remain, however. These mostly male newcomers married Alutiiq women and raised families near Aniakchak. These are the "few hardy, tightlipped men" Dick Douglas mentions in *The Land of Thunder Mountains.* Although Hubbard's crew found shelter in their winter trap cabins, the Glacier Priest hardly mentioned their presence. In 1898 a Russian Orthodox priest described these newcomers as *Knights of Woeful Countenance,* hence, the aptly titled Chapter Seven.

After 1930, Hubbard claimed that he and his team of explorers were the first non-Native researchers to visit the Caldera. We now know that this assertion is false. The Russians, and later, the Americans were familiar with the Aniakchak region long before Hubbard. Hubbard does, however, hold claim to at least two historic "firsts." Historians agree Hubbard and pilot Harry Blunt made the first airplane flight down the west side of the Alaska Peninsula in 1931. Then, he and Blunt were the first to fly into the Aniakchak Caldera and make the first, though unsuccessful, attempt to land on Surprise Lake. The following year, Hubbard and pilot Frank Dorbandt did make the historic landing of a floatplane inside the Aniakchak Caldera. Chapter Eight, *Exploring the Moon Crater: from Foot to Flight,* examines Hubbard's three trips to Aniakchak in as many years that bookend the relatively minor eruption of Aniakchak that took place in the spring of 1931.

After 1932, Hubbard looked beyond the central Alaska Peninsula to other Alaskan destinations for adventure, although he continued to make a career describing the Aniakchak

Caldera to interested audiences around the country. By 1941, the American public was not alone in listening to Hubbard. In 1941, with war against Japan threatening Alaska, Hubbard served as an auxiliary chaplain to the Sea Bees on Attu, where he lectured to the officers about his knowledge of southwestern Alaska, especially the Aleutian Islands. Although Hubbard had no direct connection to Aniakchak during the war, the Aleutian Campaign, to which he offered his expert advice, had a significant impact on the central Alaska Peninsula. In the mid-1940s, 5,000 personnel were stationed at Fort Morrow, the U.S. Army base built near the village of Meshik, over a four-year period. As the Aleutian Campaign progressed during the early war years, the Alaska Peninsula returned to its former "bridging" role: connecting military personnel stationed out on the Aleutian Chain with the mainland. Chapter Nine, *From Wilderness Frontier to Wartime Front,* discusses the impact that World War II had on the central Alaska Peninsula, as well as the effect that the Alaska Peninsula environment had on the U.S. military operating there.

The final chapter, *Father Hubbard's Aniakchak Legacy,* examines the Glacier Priest's enduring impact on the central Alaska Peninsula. This chapter suggests that Hubbard's lasting impression was constructed around the Glacier Priest's seemingly contradicting use of frontier imagery coupled with modern technology. His use of the airplane illustrates this point. On one hand, the airplane allowed him to reprise nostalgia for the frontier, and, on the other, it symbolized forward-minded scientific exploration. Without doubt, air travel has impacted the region significantly, for not only did subsistence patterns change with the introduction of the airplane, civilian access to the remote Aniakchak region became much easier after an aviation infrastructure was constructed by the U.S. military during World War II. In the decades after Hubbard's first flight, guided sports hunting, tourism, and scientific exploration have become the most intensive forms of use of Aniakchak's lands and natural resources to date.

What this study hopes to convey to the reader—the visitor to Aniakchak—is that much of what is perceived about Aniakchak merely sits on the surface; to understand this region in its entirety, one must sift through the many layers of the past. The story of Aniakchak, whether one is discussing the land or its people, is catastrophic in nature. But, this is also a story about survival and recovery. Time and time again, both nature and humans recovered from, and eventually adapted to, changes caused by volcanic eruptions, cultural disruptions, and economic displacement. Even though much of the central Alaska Peninsula has been Americanized, the six Alutiiq communities in the Aniakchak region still hold on to much of the past. For example, many people on the peninsula remain Russian Orthodox. In addition, many of the village elders continue to speak their native language. Perhaps most significantly, people continue to travel to customary locations to fish, pick berries, and hunt, making it clear that elements of their traditional relationship with nature have continued to survive in tandem with new life ways introduced to them by the Russians and Americans. As cultural anthropologist Patricia Partnow notes in her study of Alutiiq people living on the Alaska Peninsula, "Out of cataclysm comes new life, not just for a gifted few but for whole villages, the vestiges of a still living culture." [14]

By the time the National Park Service renewed interest in the Aniakchak region in the late 1960s, it is evident that the agency's reliance on Father Hubbard's interpretation of the moon crater was misleading to say the least. In one of his films Hubbard declared Aniakchak was "a place nobody knows!" But, it was a place people knew—still know—and have known for a very long time. The conclusion, *The Place People Do Know,* conveys a message to visitors —that to fully comprehend the history of this region, they must look beyond the insular 'Moon Crater' and view the Aniakchak Landscape from the perspective of outside influences. They must see how those influences changed Aniakchak, while at the same time, linked it to the larger world. Visitors must also view Aniakchak from the perspective of the living world that dwells within the landscape and how it responded to and recovered from significant, and at times, catastrophic change. Only then can visitors begin to appreciate their place in this

landscape, how they, too, shape the region, and ultimately, realize their own role in its history.

Today we can understand the central portion of the Alaska Peninsula as a convergence of diverse people—women as well as men. It is a place where Alutiiq shamans, Russian *promyshlenniki*, Orthodox priests, American traders, oil boosters, Inupiaq herders, salmon packers, fox farmers, trophy hunters, infantry men, and park rangers interacted at various points in time. It is also a place where a limited natural force—not an unlimited one—directly shaped history, rather than simply providing a sublime backdrop for the larger frontier saga. This new interpretation refuses to understand nature as either static or as a primitive remnant of the past. On the contrary, it views Aniakchak's natural resources—pyroclastic flows, fur-bearing animals, petroleum pools, foreign reindeer and foxes, massive fish runs, charismatic megafauna, and even metaphorical religious landscapes—and their relationship with people as the context for the region's cultural history. Viewed through the lens of history, then, the story of Aniakchak becomes less romantic, but far more complex, relative, and interesting.

Finally, before reviewing the chapters ahead, I would like to remind readers that although this study attempts to reach beyond the limits of Hubbard's Moon Crater interpretation, avoiding or dismissing Hubbard's contributions to the region, is impossible. Hubbard himself is a fixed and central character in Aniakchak's cultural story. As a geologist and Jesuit, Hubbard melded together the usually polarizing viewpoints of science and religion, which gave him a unique, passionate, and authentic connection to Aniakchak. Although Hubbard shares similar perspectives of the wilderness with America's early Christian settlers—specifically, that wilderness is empty and has no history—the Glacier Priest did not necessarily believe that God's plan was to restore the howling wilderness to paradise by "civilizing" nature. In fact, rather than fear the wilderness, as did the early European colonists, Hubbard embraced it. He sincerely loved the wild landscape of Aniakchak and felt right at home in it. Like any myth, Hubbard's interpretation of the landscape was based on elements of truth.

There is no doubt that Aniakchak is a phenomenally beautiful and scenic place. Geologists working in the field today are as astounded by Aniakchak as Hubbard was. [15] The editors of *Volcanoes of North America* call the Aniakchak Caldera "one of the most spectacular volcanic landforms in the Aleutian arc." [16] When it came to conveying the grandeur of Aniakchak, the Glacier Priest was right on.

Moreover, with an abundance of wildlife and rare plant species dwelling inside the crater walls, the surrounding volcanic landscapes do create the impression that Aniakchak exists as a world within itself. But, unlike Hubbard's singular and static wonder world, *Beyond the Moon Crater* offers many worlds—or many worldviews—that together reconstruct a diverse and multifaceted historical narrative. Just as the numerous layers of volcanic ash indicate a different catastrophic event to the geologist, each overlapping world combines to communicate a long and varied story of Aniakchak's cultural landscape.

By understanding Hubbard in more honest terms, it is the intent of this study to provide the National Park Service with updated information for which the agency may interpret a more complex history of Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve to the public. The days of understanding natural wonders as static remnants of a primitive past are over and replacing such concepts is an interpretation steeped in a cultural parkscape, where the land and people interact and that interaction remains constantly in motion. Thus, it is important to note how today's archeologists, ethnographers, and historians are challenging Hubbard's Moon Crater myth by offering both a more multifaceted and real interpretation of Aniakchak, the geological and cultural wonder world.

NOTES

[1]Barrett Willoughby, "Moon Craters of Alaska" *The Saturday Evening Post*, 48.

[2]Bernard Hubbard, S.J., "A World Inside a Mountain: Aniakchak, the New Volcanic Wonderland of the Alaska Peninsula, Is Explored" *National Geographic Magazine*, September 1931, 319-345.

[3]Willoughby, 48.

[4]Robert Dick Douglas, *In the Land of Thunder Mountain: Adventuring with Father Hubbard Among the Volcanoes of Alaska* (Brewer, Warren and Putnam: New York, 1932), 116.

[5]Bernard Hubbard, S.J., Alaskan Odyssey (London: Robert Hale Limited, 1952), 74.

[6]William Regan, interviewed by Julia O'Keefe, 8 Feb 1985, transcript of tape recording, Hubbard Collection, Michel Orradre Library, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, California Interview, 5-6.

[7]Richard VanderHoek and Rachel Myron, *Cultural Remains From a Catastrophic Landscape: An Archeological Overview and Assessment of Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve,* (Anchorage: National Park Service, 2004) 145; VanderHoek, "Ecological Roadblocks on a Constrained Landscape: The Cultural Effects of Catastrophic Holocene Volcanism on the Alaska Peninsula, Southwest Alaska." Paper presented at the Fifth World Archaeological Congress, (Washington D.C: June 23, 2003), 1.; David Yesner, "Cultural Boundaries and Ecological Frontiers in Coastal Regions: An Example from the Alaska Peninsula," in *The Archaeology of Frontiers and Boundaries* eds., Stanton W. Green and Stephen M. Perlman (New York: Academic Press, 1985), 80.

[8]Bernard Hubbard, S.J., *Cradle of the Storms* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1935), 2-3.

[9]Merry Tuten, *A Preliminary Study of Subsistence Activities on the Pacific Coast of the Proposed Aniakchak Caldera National Monument* (Fairbanks: Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Alaska, 1977), 13.

[10]Frank Norris, *Isolated Paradise, An Administrative History of the Katmai and Aniakchak National Park Units* (Anchorage: The National Park Service, 1996), 424.

[11]Kathy Price, *Adventuring with the "Glacier Priest:" Jesuit Father Bernard R. Hubbard's Alaskan Persona.* Master's Thesis, University of Alaska Fairbanks, December 1999.

[12]Michele Morseth, *Puyulek Pu'irtuq! The People of the Volcanoes: An Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve Ethnographic Overview & Assessment* (Anchorage: National Park Service, 2003), 3.

[13]Richard VanderHoek and Rachel Myron, 145-146.; R.G. McGimsey, C.F. Waytomas, and C.A. Neal, "High Stand and Catastrophic Draining of Interacaldera Surprise Lake, Aniakchak Volcano, Alaska," *Geological Studies in Alaska,* USGS Bulletin 2107, (1993): 65.

[14]Patricia Partnow, *Making History: Alutiiq/Sugpiaq Life on the Alaska Peninsula* (Fairbanks:

University of Alaska Press, 2001), xiii.

[15]Tina Neal and Game McGimsey, Aniakchak Caldera: Working in one of Alaska's most spectacular active volcanoes, *Alaska Geological Society* Newsletter, Volume 23, Number 9, May 1994.

[16]Charles Wood and Jurgen Kienle, *Volcanoes of North America*, Cambridge University Press, 1990, 59.

<<< **Previous** <<< **Contents**>>> **Next** >>>

hrs/intro.htm
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ANIAKCHAK

Beyond the Moon Crater Myth
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape
A Historic Resource Study for Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

Moving Beyond the Moon Crater Myth

CHAPTER ONE

Father Hubbard's Geological Wonder World:

Perpetuating the "Moon Crater Myth" in Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

> *Craters! Volcanoes! For twenty years I've been plumbing their depths in two hemispheres hoping I might come across one comparable in form, if not quite in size, to those vast craters we see on the moon.*
>
> Father Bernard Hubbard, "The Moon Craters of Alaska"

In the *Saturday Evening Post* article, "The Moon Craters of Alaska," author Barrett Willoughby recounts a tale of courage, endurance and adventure as told to her by famed Glacier Priest, Father Bernard Hubbard, S.J., when he and three strapping Santa Clara University football players explored the Aniakchak Caldera, a volcanic feature six miles wide, located on the "knuckle" of the remote, roadless and windswept Alaska Peninsula during the summer of 1930.



Father Hubbard peers over some edge, perhaps into the caldera or from Black Nose, ca. 1930. Bernard Hubbard, S.J. Alaskan Photograph Collection. Photograph courtesy of Santa Clara University Archives. ACK-00-20.

The article begins with Hubbard and his faithful crew descending into what they called a "weird world." There, the explorers endured a raging storm, stood on the edge of an active volcano, and even survived an encounter with a bear that looked "as big as an elephant." While trekking inside the Caldera on a rare sunny day, Hubbard and his crew scaled the flanks of Vent Mountain—"a volcano. . ." Hubbard later told Willoughby, ". . .growing inside a volcano!" From this central altitude, Hubbard could see the enormity of Aniakchak spreading below. "Standing in the sunshine on the brink of one mountain crater, we saw circling us the serrated edge of a larger crater that enclosed a potential national park, the like of which has never been known before." [1] Indeed, Hubbard was correct, for the crater was eventually designated Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve, one of the most isolated and least visited units in the national park system.

By 1930, adventure tales, especially those that took place in the Far North, were a dime a dozen, but Willoughby's "Moon Crater" article was more than a sensationalistic retelling of a geological conquest. Through Hubbard's vivid retelling of his expedition, the article established the Aniakchak Caldera as a unique, alien and lifeless world, void of human history. Almost immediately, Hubbard's interpretation of the "Moon Crater" evolved into a kind of ecological myth. Although cultural evidence on site proved otherwise, those resources for years were ignored. It was Hubbard's lens, not the eyes of those who actually lived in the area, through which the central portion of the Alaska Peninsula was viewed. This was especially true when the National Park Service proposed that it make Aniakchak a monument in 1931. The agency would later perpetuate Hubbard's Moon Crater myth as a way to describe the landscape of the central Alaska Peninsula for the next 50 years.

Making the Moon Crater Myth

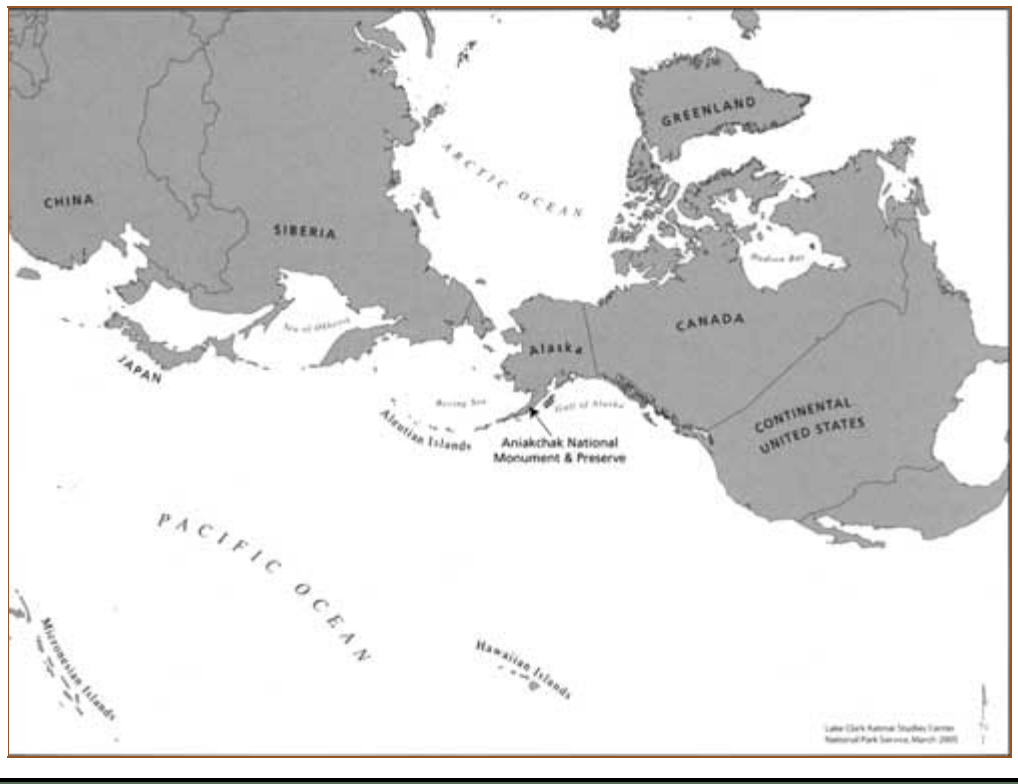
> *The ground at which we stood was hot. The air was hot. Steam rose from the earth at our very feet. Strange sulfur odors filled the air. We were in a land of lifeless, ashen desolation—the land of the Thunder Mountains.*
>
> —Dick Douglas,
> *In the Land of Thunder Mountains*

Father Bernard Hubbard was a professor of geology at Santa Clara University, who traveled to Alaska to document several adventurous expeditions to Aniakchak Caldera during the summers of 1930, 1931, and 1932. [2] Calling himself the "Glacier Priest," he reached an audience of thousands as a talented author, lecturer, photographer, and filmmaker. Those skills provided Hubbard with the unusual means to pursue a career as both a priest and adventurer. At a time when many Americans stood in soup lines, Hubbard succeeded on the lecture circuit mainly because he used his extraordinary talents to make Alaska, specifically Aniakchak, part of his "Glacier Priest" persona, using the natural wonder as a springboard to fame and as a setting for his own adventure drama. [3]

According to biographer Kathy Price, Hubbard skillfully melded his exploring experiences, publicity, and finished presentations into what she calls the "Hubbard mystique," a recognizable product that he could sell to raise funds to sponsor more expeditions to Alaska. [4] Not unlike polar explorers of an earlier century, Hubbard cultivated his so-called mystique by seeking what he considered sublime and exotic places to serve as exciting backdrops to his Glacier Priest persona. [5] From his promotions to his photographs and

films, "Hubbard was not just the man behind the camera ..." observed Price, "... quite regularly, he was the man in front of it." [6] Thus, with the good luck of a timely eruption in 1931, and a public eager for stories of rugged adventure from the Last Frontier, Aniakchak Caldera served Hubbard's larger purpose.

Published in *The Saturday Evening Post* on December 13, 1930, the riveting "Moon Craters" article not only catapulted Father Hubbard into the national limelight, but captured the imagination of a Depression-struck country trying to do as Father Hubbard had done—endure all hardships and stare down fear, even if it meant taking one's chances inside an active volcano. Down-on-their-luck Americans were not the only readers intrigued by Hubbard's exploits in Aniakchak. The December issue had also reached Horace Albright, the Director of the National Park Service. Within a week after reading the article, the director sent a memorandum ordering his NPS staff to "make a special file of these "Moon Craters of Alaska"... "This is a very remarkable story that Father Hubbard tells in his article" noted Albright, "and I think we ought to keep these areas in mind as possible additions to the national parks or monuments some time in the future." [7] Enthusiastic about a new possible addition, one assistant saw no reason to wait. "Isn't now the time to get them reserved [as national monuments], to prevent hunting and thus to preserve the wonderful wild life as best we can?" [8]



Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve is centrally located in the North Pacific. By B. Bundy. *(click on image for a PDF version)*

In 1930, the National Park Service believed that its primary goal was to manage national parks as idyllic landscapes, highlighted by mountains, canyons, abundant wildlife, and fantastic natural phenomena. The purpose of such management was to celebrate America's geography of vast open spaces. This romantic nationalism towards public perceptions of the NPS perpetuated the notion that parks were virgin land. Such notions created what Richard West Sellars describes as a "From the New World" fantasy. [9] According to Sellars, this fantasy or illusion was driven by what he called "facade management," where park rangers protected and enhanced scenic nature while, at the same time, they ignored perceptions of the

landscape held by Native American and other local residents. Likewise, Ted Catton argues in *Inhabited Wilderness*, that the NPS concept of nature during the 1930s was an intricate interplay of all living things in the absence of civilized human kind. [10] These early ideas of nature preservation served as the foundation to the Leopold Report, a threshold document that articulated NPS management of nature between 1963 and the early 1980s, and most certainly underscored the perpetuation of Hubbard's Moon Crater myth in later years on the central peninsula. [11]



Lecture Flyer, ca. 1932. Courtesy of Kathy Price, Fairbanks, Alaska.

In the context of façade management, the geological wonders of Hubbard's Alaskan moon crater seemed to fit the NPS criteria for a national park perfectly. For the "Moon Craters" article described the Aniakchak landscape as maintaining three distinct features: 1) it was unique or exotic, 2) mysterious, and 3) most significantly, void of human kind. To Hubbard, Aniakchak was "a region of Plutonic activity which for mystery, fascination, and weird beauty has no equal in any other part of the world." [12] The priest fondly called Aniakchak a "geological wonder world" and according to one of his films, it was "a place nobody knows." [13] Dick Douglas, who accompanied Hubbard into Aniakchak in 1931, described the region as "the land where storms are bred, a land of mysteries and dangers." [14] After

spending many nights listening to the winds blow off the Bering Sea from inside his tent, Douglas could only borrow words from the poet Lord Alfred Tennyson to describe the lonely landscape:

> *A cry that shivered to the tingling stars,*
> *And, as it were one voice, an agony*
> *Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills*
> *All night in a waste land, where no one comes,*
> *Or hath come, since the making of the world.*

Apparently, the National Park Service agreed with Hubbard's claims. Aniakchak had potential to become a national park. When the volcano roared back to life in the spring of 1931, officials seemed even more intrigued about the events occurring on the remote Alaska Peninsula. That November, the agency invited Father Hubbard to give a lecture on the volcano at the Interior Department in Washington D.C. [15] Albright wanted to hear firsthand what the Glacier Priest had to say about Aniakchak.

Instead of discussing the Aniakchak region in terms of sound science, Hubbard, who never kept a journal and conducted very few field experiments, crafted his lectures based on a myth he invented to entice the media and entertain popular audiences. Rather than dismissing the Glacier Priest as sensationalistic and self-serving, the NPS adopted his vision of Aniakchak because, quite frankly, Hubbard's Moon Crater myth fit nicely with their own agenda—to preserve unique and fantastic natural features, which were presumably unaltered and untouched by man.

The Glacier Priest and the Last Frontier

> *When you've lived in the north, come in to find your camp torn up by bears and had to eat your dogs when you ran out of food, you don't mind a little thing like a lecture tour.*
>
> —Father Bernard Hubbard, the Glacier Priest

As one of "the highest paid lecturers in the world," Hubbard made a career crisscrossing the Lower 48, spell-binding audiences with tales of his rugged adventures on the exotic Alaska Peninsula. [16] After attending one of Hubbard's lectures, an admiring fan wrote:

> I want to sincerely thank you for the most enjoyable entertainment of my life. I was on the edge of my seat during your whole wonderful talk. In my opinion you are the foremost speaker in the country today, and my enthusiasm knows no bounds regarding your performance." [17]

Apparently, the man was so inspired by Hubbard's Aniakchak adventures that he planned to move his family to Fairbanks. This was surely the type of inspired performance that Hubbard gave to NPS staffers on that November day.

Besides lectures, Hubbard wrote numerous books and articles, and made several films. His works collectively constructed an image of Aniakchak that offered a remote and dangerous geographical backdrop for thrills, risk, melodrama, camaraderie, and wonder, especially God's omnipotence in nature. [18] According to Price, Hubbard excelled at producing visual imagery, verbally in his books and lectures and artistically in his photos and films. [19]





Father Hubbard says Mass at camp on the north shore of Surprise Lake. Steaming Half Cone and the 1931 cone behind Vulcan Dome are also visible, 1932. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., Alaskan Photograph Collection. Photograph courtesy of Santa Clara University Archives. ACK-32-276.

The Glacier Priest modeled much of his rhetoric on the writings of Jack London, the most famous writer of the Far North, whose stories made the "killing cold" and encounters with wild animals synonymous with the Alaskan frontier. [20] Hubbard also followed news stories about the polar explorers, Lincoln Ellsworth, Roald Amundsen, Richard Byrd and Hubert Wilkins. He paid special attention to the symbiotic relationship between the media and those explorers. "From the very start," notes Price, "Hubbard understood the basic methods of creating, packaging, and flavoring news." Moreover, the Jesuit historic tradition of exploring unknown regions also shaped Hubbard's vision and was a practice with which he deeply identified. When first offered a membership into New York's famed Explorers' Club, Hubbard declined, replying that he was already a member of "a far older Explorers' Club, the Jesuit Order." [21] Whether Hubbard was driving a dog team across the Yukon or celebrating Mass deep inside the Aniakchak crater, he always underscored the "Hubbard Mystique" and ultimately his Moon Crater myth was the image of the Frontier. As Price notes, "Rugged and exotic sites were important backdrops while conquests, exploration, danger and difficulty provided the story." [22]

The fact that Hubbard chose Alaska to play out his frontier drama is hardly surprising. In 1895, when Hubbard was a young boy, he loved to explore the coastal mountains near Santa Cruz where his family maintained a ranch. Two years later, the American public began to notice Alaska when nuggets discovered on the Klondike River instigated a gold rush to the Far North. A young Bernard, filled with familiar images of the romantic California forty-niners, undoubtedly idealized the heroic gold prospectors and became suddenly aware of an Alaskan frontier. Later, while studying at Santa Clara College, Hubbard, like nearly every student of the Progressive era, was likely introduced to the teachings of historian Frederick Jackson Turner, who argued that the dramatic struggle with nature on the western frontier created a distinctive American character of individualism and self-reliance. Popular writers of the era quickly linked America's new golden territory to the conquest saga, and Alaska not

only captured the attention of the young geology professor, but the Far North entered the national imagination as the final chapter in the story of the American West, the last frontier. [23]

From an early age Bernard Hubbard, a life-long Californian, viewed himself as a player in the national saga of the American frontier. "My childhood days in Santa Cruz were happy ones," wrote Hubbard in his memoir. "We even went to the country for a month's vacation each year. . .we went by stage coach, a cloud of dust along a one-rut dirt road. And what a wonderful adventure that ride was!" [24]

For Hubbard, as with Frederick Jackson Turner, the frontier saga was characterized by a struggle with a demanding, threatening, and frequently beautiful, but usually unknown natural foe. While studying theology in Innsbruck, Austria, Hubbard began to craft his frontier image in the mountainous landscape of the glacier-strewn Alps. As Hubbard tells the story, it was the Tyrolean villagers who gave him the nickname *der Gletscherpfarrer*—The Glacier Priest—for they noticed that the young theologian spent more time conquering glaciers than he did in Church. [25] After returning to the States, a friend at the United States Geological Survey (USGS) alerted Hubbard to a geological formation named Aniakchak, that agency surveyors had discovered in Alaska in 1922. By then, Hubbard, who was making a living speaking to large, mostly non-academic audiences, had learned to communicate the immediacy, awe, and thrill of conquering rugged, remote places. After hearing about this new natural wonder, Hubbard later wrote his religious superior that he was sure Aniakchak would be his "magnum opus and crowning effort." [26]

In his first book on Alaska, *Mush, You Malamutes!* Hubbard provided a first-hand account of his expedition into Aniakchak in his carefully named chapters "Flying the Moon Craters of Alaska" and "Aniakchak Explodes." In "Moon Craters" Hubbard, along with Harry Blunt, chief pilot of the Pacific International Airways, and Al Monson, his co-pilot, attempt to land an airplane in the crater just a few weeks after Aniakchak erupted on May 1, 1931. At first sight of Aniakchak, Hubbard described the crater as "the most terrible prelude of hell I could ever imagine." As Hubbard tells the story, when the craft was directly over the crater, the airplane's engine "refused to respond" and became caught in a down draft, with its nose pointed straight down. As the plane and its passengers were being sucked toward the erupting mass of hot gasses, "Blunt dove the plane straight down and with the speed of the dive righted the plane and roared away back into the Aniakchak Canyon through a huge rift in the volcano walls called The Gates." [27]

After his near-death experience, Hubbard wrote that he had escaped danger because prior to his departure from the Yukon River village of Holy Cross en route for Aniakchak, Hubbard had scribbled on a piece of paper the message, "Pray for the safety and success of our flight to the Moon Craters," and signed it "The Glacier Priest." Flinging the paper out the window of the airplane, Hubbard observed a young Yup'ik girl he knew as Verna pick it up. "When all is said and done," explained Hubbard, "I have my own idea of how we escaped danger on this occasion:"

> Six weeks later when the exploration of Aniakchak was completed on foot I flew back to Holy Cross after one more ineffectual attempt to land inside the crater. Stealing alone into the quiet and peace of the beautiful Mission Chapel, after a few minutes spent in prayer of thanksgiving, I knelt a moment before the Blessed Virgin's altar. A bit of paper in the hand of the statue excited my curiosity. It looked familiar. I reached up and took it and tears came unbidden to my eyes as I read it. It was the note I had dropped from the plane that little Esquimo Verna, of Napararemiut, had found and with the faith that moves mountains, even erupting ones, had confided to the care of the Mother of God and Queen of

Angels.

Little Verna may or may not have been Hubbard's guardian angel in the Moon Crater, but the story proved Hubbard's ability to expertly spin a good tale—a tale laced with danger, drama and divine intervention.

Still, the Moon Crater was more than just a backdrop for his rugged adventures. Hubbard probably truly believed that his guardian angel watched over him while he either trekked or flew into an active volcano. To Hubbard, places like Aniakchak may have been a source for riveting storytelling, but the crater was also a source of deep spirituality. From Hubbard's viewpoint, such a natural wonder was clear evidence of God's plan. On the summer evening that inspired the "Moon Craters" article, while the men of the expedition sank into slumber at their campsite, Hubbard, so excited by "the events of the afternoon and the promises of the morrow couldn't sleep and decided to see what the crater was doing in the starlight." [28] Within the Caldera walls stood Aniakchak's volcanic landforms and accretions washed in moonlight. "Looking up at the moon high in the silvered blue," recalled Hubbard, "I had one of those wondrous moments of translation that come sometimes to one in the wilderness." [29]

It may seem as though Hubbard's two visions of Aniakchak—a place to conquer and a place to worship—were contradictory. In fact, they reflect two competing views that merged and eventually formed the Alaskan frontier image. In that paradoxical synthesis, Alaska is both that place where rugged individualism triumphed over the harsh environment and is the epitome of nature undefiled. Hubbard's Moon Crater myth contained both viewpoints.

And, like the "sourdough" that fittingly took his place at the center of the Alaska saga, Hubbard took central stage in Aniakchak's Moon Crater myth. The melding of rugged individualism and incredible scenic beauty translated into a very powerful and comprehensive image of man and his relationship to the natural world. Indeed, it is this image that first caught the attention of the National Park Service.

Scholars who have written about the NPS, like Theodore Catton and Richard Sellars, agree that in the goal of preserving remnants of the wild landscapes of the frontier, the parks were from the beginning a part of the romantic western lore. From patrolling the remote backcountry to living in primitive, wood-heated log cabins, for many park rangers, working in the parks seemed a kind of lingering frontier experience. [30] As Catton points out, "Alaska's mythic identity as the nation's last frontier had an enormous bearing on the original conception of Alaska's first national park." [31] And without a doubt, it greatly shaped the making of Alaska's other national parks a half-century later.

While Hubbard neither discovered the crater nor was the first to describe it, it is his view of Aniakchak that promoted the region and put the remote volcano on the map. As National Park Service historian Frank Norris notes, "The [Aniakchak] eruption would doubtless have slipped into ignominy had it not been for the efforts of Father Bernard R. Hubbard." [32]

Thus, the message Hubbard relayed to Director Albright and his NPS staff was that Aniakchak was a land without equal. Exploring the Caldera was "not unlike invading the domains of Jupiter, Pluto and Neptune." [33] When the party stood at the edge of the crater, they saw "a land of lifeless, ashen desolation." [34] Aniakchak was a "moon crater" here on earth. Although Hubbard's saga included danger, difficult conditions in a remote landscape, and adventure in, what the Glacier Priest commonly referred to as, "the name of science," it contained little information as to what actually happened in the region. If Albright asked the Glacier Priest to shed light on Aniakchak's past, the so-called Alaska expert would have replied as he always did to that question, "No one knows, for history is silent on the subject."

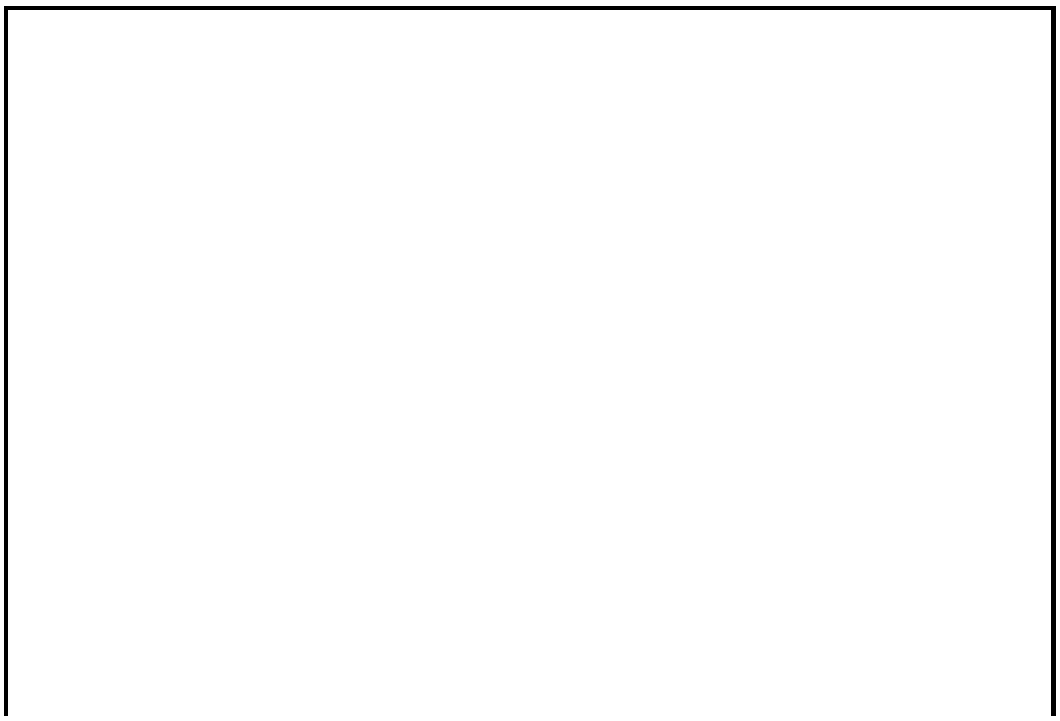
[35]

Perpetuating the Moon Crater Myth

> *A national park should represent a vignette of primitive America.... Yet if the goal cannot be fully achieved it can be approached. A reasonable illusion of primitive America could be recreated, using the utmost in skill, judgment and ecologic sensitivity. This in our opinion should be the objective of every national park and monument.*
>
> —A. Starker Leopold, et al.
> "Wildlife Management in the National Parks"

It turned out the National Park Service failed to make Aniakchak a park unit in 1931. Inclusion into the park system would take another fifty years. With little investigation of the region's natural and cultural resources during the interim, Hubbard's interpretation of Aniakchak as an exotic, mysterious and uninhabited place consequently stuck. Initially, Albright had hoped to prepare a monument proclamation for President Herbert Hoover to sign. But after park plans were distributed throughout the Department of Interior earlier that year, the Aniakchak proposal first met resistance from the USGS, because of the area's potential for oil development. [36]

The most significant resistance to the Aniakchak proposal, however, came from inside NPS. Opposition came in the form of two competing monument proposals, both of which were designed to protect wildlife populations. On one side, the conservation community was lobbying for a national monument on Chichagof Island in order to protect its brown bear population. On the other side, Katmai National Monument was being considered for expansion. Then, sometime in early April 1931, NPS officials decided to expand Katmai National Monument. Officials reasoned that expanding Katmai gave the agency the opportunity to protect a well-known population of bears that had been increasingly threatened by trophy hunters and sport fishermen. In contrast, Aniakchak's resources—despite Father Hubbard's Washington lecture—were not particularly well known. Furthermore, NPS officials felt that because the site was so remote, the area's geological and biological resources were not in danger. [37]





Father Hubbard talked about Aniakchak as being a violent moon crater, but also highlighted the crater's natural beauty as illustrated in this photograph that depicts Black Nose reflected in Surprise Lake, 1932. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., Alaskan Photograph Collection. Photograph courtesy of Santa Clara University Archives. ACK-00-198.

Thus, on April 24, 1931, President Hoover signed a presidential proclamation expanding Katmai National Monument. By 1932, the agency had discarded both the Aniakchak and Chichagof proposals. The matter of an Aniakchak National Monument was dropped and the NPS did not consider it again until the 1960s. From Director Albright's point of view, Aniakchak was positioned about as far away from Washington D.C. as a place could be and still remain on the North American continent. The decision to manage one larger monument on the Alaska Peninsula rather than take on the logistical headache of managing two smaller monuments made sense. Without direct attention from federal researchers and administrators, information about Aniakchak floundered somewhere between fact and fiction. Thus, the alien Moon Crater of Earth remained on the fringe of America's national parks, literally on the frontier of the NPS system.

* * *

In the mid-1960s, when NPS officials returned their attention to Aniakchak, experts still knew virtually nothing about the central Alaska Peninsula. Some NPS staff may have been aware of the data Albright had collected relative to the 1931 proposal, but "beyond that," reasoned Norris in *The Administrative History of Aniakchak*, "information was probably limited to that written by Father Hubbard and by U.S. Geological Survey personnel." [38] So when political pressure brought about by the growing environmental movement forced a shift in the NPS management of natural resources, Hubbard's Moon Crater myth was adopted as the impetus for the new proposal. Accordingly, the NPS perpetuation of the Moon Crater myth reflected the broader revitalization of the agency's ecological purpose.

In the decades after the 1930s, National Park Service managers had focused their attention on recreational tourism rather than on a more scientific approach to preserving nature. Then, in 1963, just as Mission 66—the apex of a half-century of recreation tourism management—was

approaching conclusion, experts from outside the agency published a landmark document called the Leopold Report, which stressed the preservation of ecological integrity in parks. [39] In the climate of activist environmentalism, outside groups with enormous political clout directly influenced a shift in the NPS management philosophy. The new philosophy, which was based upon the broad-ranging conclusions of the Leopold Report, emphasized policies that more closely resembled those fostered by wildlife biologists of the 1930s than any time in the years that followed.



The violent moon crater comes alive. Hubbard and one of his companions investigate what is probably Slag Heap located in the 1931 tephra mantle, ca. 1931. Bernard Hubbard, S.J. Alaskan Photograph Collection. Photograph courtesy of Santa Clara University Archives. ACK-00-196.

The Leopold Report stated that the purpose of NPS management should be to make each national park "represent a vignette of primitive America." [40] The goal, then, was to manage natural wonders like the Aniakchak Caldera in their natural state so that parks could "be maintained . . . as nearly as possible in the condition that prevailed when the area was first visited by the white men." [41] Although Congress passed the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in 1966 and directed the National Park Service to manage and consider the impacts of actions on "historic properties," most NPS managers at the time believed this meant impacts on properties such as nationally and architecturally historic buildings, well-known archeological sites, and historic battlefields. There was no reason to think that such properties would be found in what was perceived as pristine wilderness. Far off places like Aniakchak were sought for inclusion into the park system for their impressive natural wonders.

In the 1960s, then, when landmark preservation legislation was implemented, it was the Leopold Report, not NHPA that influenced how individual personnel, from the superintendents down to the park rangers, perceived their role in managing park resources. In his book *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, historian Richard Sellars notes that "the Leopold Report became a kind of call to arms for the Park Service . . . that the Service should preserve or create the mood of wild America." Although the Leopold Report reflected a relatively sophisticated understanding of ecosystems and the complex interrelatedness of nature, contemporary historians point out that the Leopold Report directed managers to maintain a landscape of a pioneer past, and consequently, reinforced rather than replaced the frontier myth as it related to national parks. As Sellar states, "this New World imagery suggested a kind of wilderness pastoral." [42] To preserve nature, the primary goal was to insulate delicate ecological relationships from human disturbances rather than to understand how humans fit into those relationships—that goal would come 30 years later. [43]

With political momentum initiated by the combined efforts of the 1964 Wilderness Act and the Leopold Report, George B. Hartzog, Jr., who became NPS director in January 1964, saw an opportunity to secure the protection of "surviving landmarks of our natural heritage." Hartzog recognized, however, that if any significant park system growth were to occur, that growth would have to be in Alaska. That November, the director appointed an Alaska Task Force to prepare an analysis of the "best remaining possibilities for the Service in Alaska." The report that emerged from that effort, called *Operation Great Land*, evaluated thirty-nine zones and sites across the state that contained recreational, natural, or historic value. One of those areas was the Aniakchak Crater Zone. [44] Meanwhile, in a similar report on Alaska lands, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologist, Roger Allin, recommended that NPS officials pay "early attention" to the Service's new National Natural Landmark (NNL) program. [45]

One year before the Leopold Report was published, the Secretary of the Interior created the National Natural Landmark program to identity and encourage the preservation of areas with unique and significant natural value. Researchers for the National Natural Landmark program determined that Aniakchak Crater was fully eligible as a national natural landmark. Consultants hired to assess the Caldera found that "from no viewpoint is Aniakchak unimpressive." [46] Federal status not only acknowledged the goals set forth for Aniakchak in 1931 but in the spirit (or perhaps even the pressure) of the Leopold Report, NPS adopted Hubbard's Moon Crater Myth: that Aniakchak is sublime, mysterious and void of people. For example, in the evaluation report for the National Natural Landmark, author Ellis Taylor described the crater in convincing Hubbard fashion:

> Aniakchak, the real estate agent would say, has everything. Scientific importance, popular appeal, dramatic, heroic proportions, a mysterious past and an unpredictable, possibly spectacular geologic future, even hot and cold running water. [47]

Taylor not only advanced Hubbard's Moon Crater myth in the NNL report, but when describing Aniakchak's natural values, the researcher applied the principles of the Leopold Report perfectly: "To the visual features must be added the sense of violation..." wrote Taylor, "...as though one walked in a primeval Eden, where the animals were tame and unafraid, and where the silence, over the great barren ash plains, seemed weighty with meaning dimly understood." [48]

* * *

The crowning achievement in the growth of Park Service activities during the Leopold era came with the extensive planning for new parks in Alaska as mandated by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). On December 18, 1971, President Nixon signed ANCSA into law, which set into motion nine years of activity regarding the disposition of Alaska's federally managed lands. [49] According to ANCSA, any lands proposed for one of the four federal conservation systems—the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, and the National Park Service—had to be withdrawn within nine months and Interior Department officials recognized that a preliminary land withdrawal needed to be made within ninety days. "Based on those deadlines," observes Norris, "the NPS had no time to waste in beginning its planning effort." [50] Immediately, a thirty-five-member Alaska Task Force was created to compile available information about the proposed park units. Team 4, which was organized to produce reports for not only the Aniakchak proposal, but Katmai, and Lake Clark proposals, too, was faced with the dilemma of lack of time and data. NPS, therefore, paid little attention to Aniakchak. As late as 1971, Department of Interior personnel were still considering a "Proposed Aniakchak National Wildlife Refuge" that would be managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. [51] When the agency did finally begin to consider Aniakchak's inclusion into the park system, much of their information came from books authored by Father Hubbard. [52]

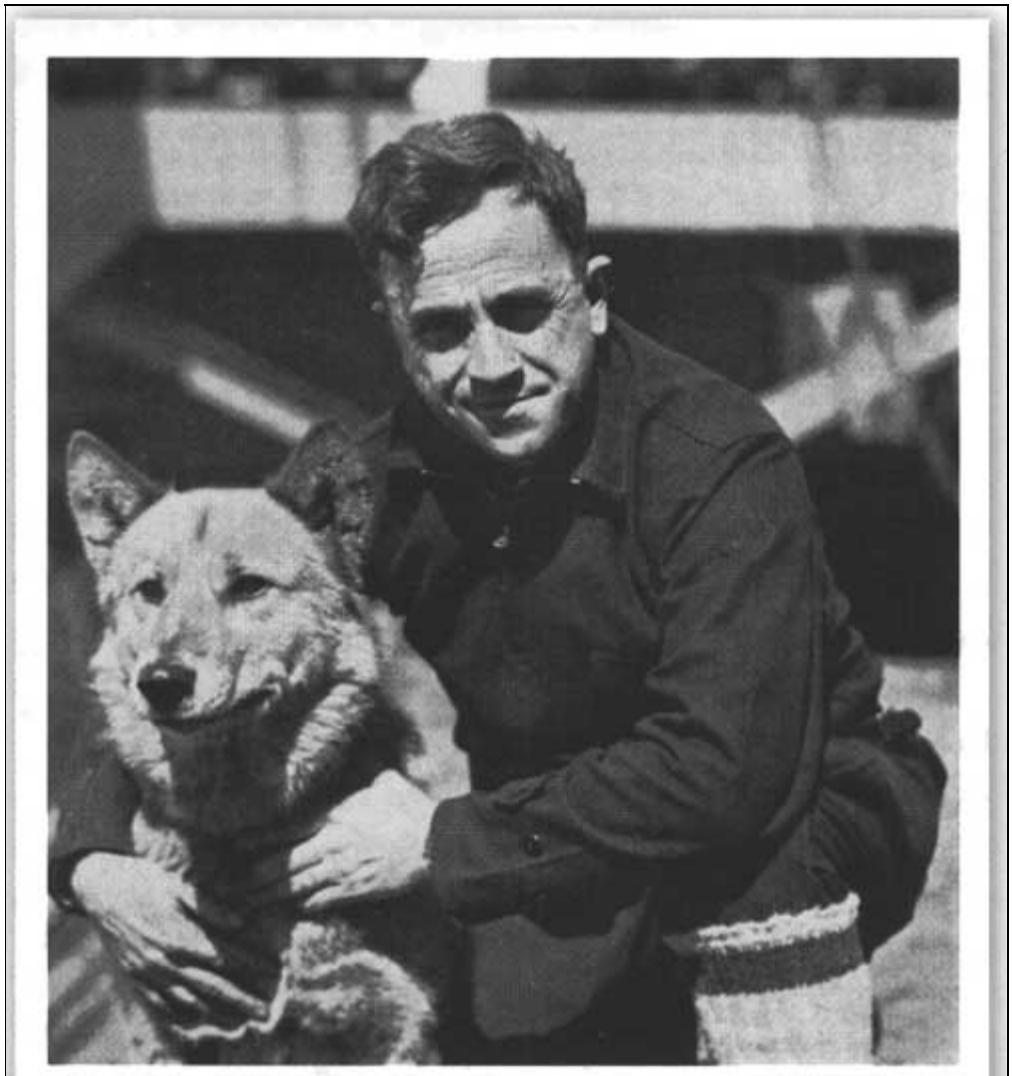
Tight congressional and departmental deadlines, along with intense surveillance from both environmental and private interests groups, added to the pressure and created a kind of chaotic atmosphere in federal circles during the early 1970s. ANCSA decreed that by December 18, 1973, the Secretary of the Interior had to issue a full legislative recommendation on which Alaska lands would be considered for the four conservation systems. Between March 1972 and June 1973, Alaska Task Force personnel were asked to supply sufficient resource information for a preliminary draft environmental statement and master plan.

Again, agency language and overall interpretation of the Caldera and surrounding landscape echoed Hubbard's moon crater myth. For example, agency researchers claimed that the "Aniakchak Caldera is a raw and rugged volcanic feature laying in a landscape that is, because of its remoteness, little affected by human occupancy." They also noted that "many visitors are impressed by the crater's sense of mystery and speak of their own insignificance when compared to this great volcanic feature." [53] M. Woodbridge Williams, chief photographer for the Alaska Task Force at the time, in articles for *The Explorers Journal* and *National Parks and Conservation Magazine* made no effort to harness his personal feeling towards the area; he referred to Aniakchak as a "kingdom of Genesis." [54] These phrases inspired an ethnocentric understanding of the area: that Aniakchak represented a primitive America and claimed an untouched, unknown—even Biblical—past.

Still, in spite of Hubbard's overly used rhetoric, the NPS did not remain stagnant when it came to research, for, during the decade, the agency did what it could to gather new information about the proposed unit. Most studies, however, emphasized natural rather than cultural resources. For example, in 1977, NPS deferred to the USGS to complete the first of several agency-sponsored geological studies of the Aniakchak Caldera. Other areas of

research contained plant succession studies. Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) sponsored a bear migration study that was conducted from 1970 through 1975. Except for Merry Tuten's study on local hunting patterns conducted between 1975 and 1977, which contained preliminary data for future subsistence and ethnographic studies, no surveys of the area's cultural resources were conducted in the post-ANCSA planning period.

In 1980, fifty years after Hubbard ascended Vent Mountain and predicted that Aniakchak Caldera "enclosed a potential national park," the federal government made the Glacier Priest's prediction a reality when Congress passed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), the legislative culmination of ANCSA. Two years before, in December 1978, President Jimmy Carter had made the Caldera the centerpiece of Aniakchak National Monument when he proclaimed the area a unit of the National Park Service system. Carter's action was sanctioned two years later, when Congress designated the Monument and Preserve by section 201(1) of ANILCA on December 2, 1980.



FATHER HUBBARD AND HIS DOG, KATMAI

Bernard R. Hubbard S.J.

Autographed photograph of Father Hubbard and his trusted dog, Katmai. Courtesy of Katherine Johnson Ringsmuth, Anchorage, AK. Published in *Cradle of the Storms* by the Dodd, Mead & Company, 1935.

With the establishment of the Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve, Hubbard's moon crater myth continued to influence park researchers. As late as 1987, park historians still described the area within the historical context of Father Hubbard. [55] Aniakchak continued to be treated as a sublime backdrop to commemorate the Glacier Priest's historic "firsts." Like Hubbard, resource practitioners seemingly ignored all human activity that contradicted their concept of wilderness, unless, of course, that activity included a terrorizing flight into an erupting volcano.

The National Park Service contributed to this problematic interpretation by continuing to manage the Aniakchak unit as a frontier. According to park officials, "the purpose of Aniakchak National Monument and Aniakchak National Preserve is to protect and interpret for the benefit, inspiration, and education of present and future generation of the world's largest dry calderas, the Aniakchak River and the scenic, and scientific and biological values associated therewith." [56] In keeping with the Leopold philosophy, Aniakchak was to be managed for its natural wonders, not its cultural resources.

Although the operations plan was only meant to be temporary, the National Park Service decided to "manage Aniakchak as a unit of Katmai National Park, under the supervision of the Alaska area office." [57] In a decision that has lasted to this day, it was determined that Katmai National Park and Preserve's offices in King Salmon would directly manage the monument, making the residing superintendent the manager of both the Katmai and the Aniakchak NPS units. Despite plans the agency had laid out during the mid-1970s, managers made no attempt to establish a headquarters facility at Port Heiden. [58] Similarly, no trails, campgrounds, or ranger stations were constructed within Aniakchak boundaries. Because staff attention quickly turned to the far more popular Katmai unit, management objectives in Aniakchak fell to the wayside. No NPS personnel, in fact, visited Aniakchak for more than one and a half years after President Carter signed ANILCA into law. [59]

When Park Service staff in King Salmon did attempt to establish a presence in Aniakchak, it was inconsistent at best. In 1982 a seasonal ranger was hired to conduct patrols in Aniakchak, but according to the superintendent's annual report, "the logistics were terrible, weather worse, and it was all compounded by a complete lack of radio communication." [60] In the summers of 1983 and 1984, NPS did station two rangers at Aniakchak Bay in an old bunkhouse, built by commercial fish packers to house fish trap workers in the early decades of the twentieth century. Then, in 1986, NPS hired a resource management specialist to focus on Aniakchak issues. Working from the King Salmon administrative office, this was the only full-time staff person assigned to the Aniakchak unit. That year the general management plan, which called for two seasonal rangers to staff Aniakchak, was approved. Despite the mandate, rangers visited the unit only infrequently over the next two decades. Aniakchak lacked an NPS presence from 1985 through 1987 and only in 1988 and again in 1991 were rangers present for an entire season. [61]

Moreover, rangers, who were dropped off for the duration of the season, experienced a kind of frontier isolationism. Separated, rangers maintained very little contact and support from headquarters. Such isolation made it impossible to enforce illegal activities that took place inside the park unit. Although rangers established agency presence, recorded observations of the area's natural and cultural resources, and apprised park management about human use levels, except for brief visits, no NPS rangers have been stationed at Aniakchak since.

* * *

Even today, Hubbard's story and persona resonates with park management and visitors alike. With only 154 recreational visits made to the Aniakchak Caldera reported in all of 2003, it is easy to understand that visitors to the crater might feel as though they have entered a large and lonely universe. In an *Anchorage Daily News* article printed in 2005, the headlines declared: "Aniakchak: National Monument provides extreme solitude, adventure." [62] One rare hiker who was interviewed by a local newspaper described the area as "magical." Another noted, "Spectacular is the best word to explain much of the monument." Similar to sentiments made by Hubbard and his companions over seventy years ago, both visitors agreed: "In the week there [Aniakchak Caldera], it was remarkably quiet and isolated." [63]

Like the rangers who shared parallel experiences, this kind of frontier isolationism is heightened as the NPS continues to maintain a transient presence in the area. Not so unlike the New World must have seemed to the European explorers, Aniakchak remains one of the least visited and one of the most expensive spots on the North American continent to access. Still, as more people discover Aniakchak, little by little, Hubbard's Moon Crater myth is being dismantled. Some interviewed visitors advised, "The [Park Service] web site on Aniakchak makes it sound like you're going to the end of the earth." But as one of the adventure seekers was quick to point out, "For the people with the right skill, access to the monument is unbelievably easy and attractive." [64]

* * *

In many ways, it is easy to understand why Hubbard was so appealing. He was exactly the kind of companion you would want on a camping trip into the Aniakchak Crater, for he was passionate, optimistic and fun. "The fascinating thing about him," recalled Bill Regan about his friend years later, "was that he was just such a tough old mountain goat." [65] For his companions, as well as for those who read his works years later, Hubbard personified our need for wonder, our excitement for mysteries, and our desire for heroes. He brilliantly played upon our need to believe that blank spaces still existed on our blue and green spinning sphere. Perhaps he understood that sometimes fiction fills our societal needs as significantly as fact. There is no doubt that Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve is a wonder world. It is truly a national treasure. The National Park Service, in its attempt to include, preserve, and, ultimately, to protect Aniakchak in its natural state, was certainly doing its best to fulfill its mission to promote and regulate the use of the park so that Hubbard's geological wonder world would be left unimpaired for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of future generations.

Still, Aniakchak was not terra incognita. Hubbard witnessed first-hand commercial trap fishing in Aniakchak Bay, he stayed in cabins built by families who trapped throughout Aniakchak, and even investigated several Native subterranean houses, clear evidence that Aniakchak was anything but a lifeless moon crater. Indeed, Aniakchak remains a place of wonder, inspiration, and yes, solitude. But, when our myths ignore the exploitation of the environment or the marginalization of people, then we cannot allow history to remain silent.

Father Bernard R. Hubbard never lived to see his beloved Geological Wonder World made into a national monument. He died at age 73 in Santa Clara on May 28, 1962, following complications arising from his fifth stroke. Recognizing Hubbard's passing, *Newsweek* wrote:

> Died: The Rev. Bernard Rosencrantz Hubbard, 73, the Glacier Priest, a tireless Jesuit who led 32 expeditions to Alaska and once listed the requisites of an explorer as "a strong back, a strong stomach, a dumb head, and a guardian angel." [66]

Hubbard may have been strong, but he certainly was not dumb, and if he did have a guardian angel, then it flew with Hubbard into the prelude of hell. [67] Indeed, it is a story the Glacier Priest surely told at the Pearly Gates—where he undoubtedly packed them in up there, too.

NOTES

[1]Willoughby, "The Moon Craters of Alaska," 53.

[2]Price, *Adventuring with the "Glacier Priest,"* iii.

[3]Ibid., 7.

[4]Ibid., 4.

[5]Beau Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 12.

[6]Price, 33.

[7]Horace Albright, Memorandum for Mr. Crammerer, Mr. Demaray and Fr. Brooks, December 23, 1930 in "Aniakchak, Alaska" folder, in Box 658, File 0-35, Entry 7, RG 79, NARA DC.

[8]Norris, *Isolated Paradise*, 426.

[9]Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), xii.

[10]Theodore Catton, *Inhabited Wilderness: Indians, Eskimos and National Parks in Alaska* (Albuquerque: University New Mexico, 1997), 68.

[11]A. Starker Leopold et al., "Wildlife Management in the National Parks," The Living Wilderness, Spring-Summer, 1963, 13. Although the so-called Leopold Report was published by the NPS in 1963, its idea was not new. According to Ted Catton, Dr. Joseph Grinnell had stated it in nearly so many words in 1916 and by a team of NPS biologists in 1931. Catton, 68.

[12]Willoughby, "Summer in the Moon Craters of Alaska," *Alaskans All* (1939), 43.

[13]Bernard Hubbard, S.J., "A World Inside a Mountain: Aniakchak, the New Volcanic Wonderland of the Alaska Peninsula, is Explored" *National Geographic,*September, (1931); Beverly Jones, Director, "Alaska's Silver Millions" (American Can Company, circa 1935).

[14]Dick Douglas, *In the Land of the Thunder Mountains: Adventuring with Father Hubbard Among the Volcanoes of Alaska* (New York: Brewer, Warren and Putnam, 1932), 4-5.

[15]Price, 42; In a memorandum to director Albright, Wallace R. Atwood, evaluates the pros and cons of making a "Crater National Monument in Alaska." Atwood cites Father Hubbard, which he calls an "enthusiastic scientist" as one of the individuals with whom he counseled while writing the report. The memorandum is dated January 21, 1931. In "Aniakchak, Alaska" folder in Box 658, File 0-35, Entry 7, RG 79, NARA, DC.

[16]"Hubbard, Bernard," *Current Biography* (1943), 320-323.

[17]Price, 62.

[18]*Mush, You Malamutes!* (New York: American Press, 1932); *Cradle of the Storms* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1935); "A World Inside a Mountain: Aniakchak, the New Volcanic Wonderland of the Alaska Peninsula, Is Explored," *National Geographic* (Sept, 1931): 319-345; "Aniakchak, the Moon Crater Explodes" *Saturday Evening Post* (Jan, 1932): 6-7; "Exploring the Alaskan 'Moon Craters'" *New York Times Magazine,* October 12, 1930, 8-10, 23; Beverly Jones, Director "Alaska's Silver Millions" (American Can Company, circa, 1935); Truman Talley, Producer, Aniakchak (Fox Films Corp, 1933).

[19]Price, 4.

[20]In the chapter titled, "New Preparations" Hubbard compares the dogs he brings to Alaska to those in Jack London's *Call of the Wild.* Hubbard, *Cradle of the Storms,* 80.

[21]Price, 32.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Stephen Haycox, *Frigid Embrace: Politics, Economics and Environment in Alaska* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2002), 4-5.

[24]Bernard Hubbard, S.J., *From Sea to the Mountains,* autobiographical manuscript (Hubbard Collection, Michel Orradre Library, Santa Clara, University).

[25]Price, 5.

[26]Ibid., 38.

[27]Bernard Hubbard, S.J., *Mush, You Malamutes!* (New York: The American Press, 1932), 49-50.

[28]Willoughby, "Moon Craters," 49.

[29]Ibid., 49.

[30]Sellars, 1-2.

[31]Catton, 90.

[32]Norris, 424.

[33]Willoughby, 10.

[34]Douglas, 1.

[35]Willoughby, *Alaskan's All,* 44.

[36]Norris, 429.

[37]Ibid., 430-431.

[38]Ibid., 442.

[39]Sellars, 207, 214. Other historians who have challenged the notion of managing "wilderness" in national parks are William Cronon in "The Riddle of the Apostle Islands: How do you manage a wilderness full of human stories?" and Roderick Nash in "The American Invention of National Parks."

[40]A. Starker Leopold et al., "Wildlife Management in the National Parks," The Living Wilderness, Spring-Summer, 1963, 13.

Although the so-called Leopold Report was published by the NPS in 1963, its idea was not new. According to Ted Carton, Dr. Joseph Grinnell had stated it in nearly so many words in 1916 and by a team of NPS biologists in 1931. Catton, 68.

[41]Leopold et al., March 1963.

[42]Sellars, 214.

[43]Catton, 88.

[44]Norris, 435.

[45]Roger W. Allin, "Alaska Plan for Action, November 1966," in Roger Allin 1966 Report file, Box #6, Swem Collection, Department of Public Lands.

[46]Alaskasearch, Ltd., "National Natural Landmark Study, Report I," 28 July, 1967, at AHL and AKSO-RNR, Chief interagency Resource Division.

[47]Alaskasearch, Ltd., 28.

[48]Ellis Taylor, NNL Report.

[49]Norris, 437.

[50]Norris, 438.

[51]Proposed Aniakchak National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska Area Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, December, 1971. HFE, Williss, Box B, in Aniakchak FWS 1971.

[52]Ibid., 442. See bibliography for the NNL report.

[53]NPS, *Final Environmental Statement for the Proposed Aniakchak Caldera National Monument* (Department of Interior, 1974), 27, 31.

[54]M. Woodbridge Williams, "Aniakchak: Kingdom of Genesis" *National Parks & Conservation Magazine* (Vol. 49, No 6, June 1975), 9; a reprint of the article appears in *The Explorers Journal* (vol. 65, No 1, March 1897), 2-7.

[55]Norris, 479; Sandra M. Faulkner, "Father Hubbard, the Glacier Priest" paper delivered at an

Alaska Historical Society symposium, held in Fairbanks in October, 1987.

[56]NPS, "Draft Statement for Management, Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve," May 1983.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Norris, 462.

[59]Ibid, 462.

[60]"Superintendent's Annual Report," KATM/ANIA, 1982, 6.

[61]George Stroud and Lynn Fuller stayed in the CRPA Bunkhouse summer of 1983 and 1984. In 1988 Frank and Penny Starr spent the summer in the cabin. John Eppling and his wife Shakti, who served as a volunteer, stayed in the cabin in 1991.

[62]Craig Medford, "A New Adventure: Aniakchak National Monument's Overlooked Pack-and-Float Option Beckons" *Anchorage Daily News,* January 30, 2005, F-1 and F-2.

[63]Ibid., F-2.

[64]Ibid., F-2.

[65]Bill Regan, interview with Julie O'Keefe, 10.

[66]*Newsweek,* June 11, 1962.

[67]Bernard Hubbard, S.J., *Mush, You Malamutes!*, 49.

<<< **Previous** <<< **Contents**>>> **Next** >>>

ANIAKCHAK

Beyond the Moon Crater Myth
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape
A Historic Resource Study for Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

ANECDOTES

Reflections on Working at Aniakchak

by
Tina Neal
U.S. Geological Survey, Alaska Volcano Observatory

After months of planning our first camping expedition into the Caldera, my vision of Aniakchak was still based largely on photos, the very few written descriptions available, and the stories. Everyone had stories of wind and rain and bears and flying pumice and previous visitors driven mad by the ceaseless, tent-flattening gales that roared into the Caldera. Sure, there were stories of calm and beautiful days, but because I am the quintessential "safety-bear," I fixated on the other extremes. So, when we piled our mountain of gear into the faithful blue Katmailand's Otter in King Salmon, with a slowly dissipating scud to the south telling us to hurry into the air, I definitely had a pit in my stomach.

I was anxious, but also excited. As a volcanologist, Aniakchak was known to only a handful of my peers and the details of the volcano had yet to be explored with modern means and modern understanding of volcanic processes. My colleague and companion, Game McGimsey, and I had read every tale written by Father Bernard Hubbard, SJ, the hyperbolically adventurous amateur geologist and Jesuit priest from Santa Clara. We had combed the sparse existing scientific literature dating back to the 1920s. We had some notions of what we'd find, but largely our minds were open and ready to observe and understand.

Droning above the tundra and flitting in and out of cloud edges, our crusty old pilot calmly asked us to let him know if we saw any oil streaming from the engines. With John Eichelberger, from the University of Alaska at Fairbanks (UAF), we were packed into the back of the Otter with our Weatherport, camping gear, and food for several weeks. The approach to Aniakchak takes one over wind-scoured, increasingly barren, ash- and pumice-covered flatlands, and then the terrain rises and deep gulleys begin to expose layers of volcanic deposits, the succession of clues to eruptions past. With little warning, the Otter burst over the rim of the Caldera and there before us was the crater; still looking like a photograph, but impressive in its size and depth from our truly bird's eye view. John made a quick turn to land on quiet Surprise Lake and we commenced a rapid unloading, ever mindful that weather could pour in at any moment, trapping our Otter. Soon we were alone with a pile of stuff, the airplane's noise quickly fading as it zoomed through the dramatic gash in the east rim, the Gates.

We set up camp quickly and it was late afternoon before our Weatherport and personal tents were up and secured (or so we thought, until the first big blow flattened the back panel of the Weatherport). We took advantage of the solstice hours to climb up Vent Mountain, a great place to get an idea of the incredible volcanic scenery. I remember returning to camp near midnight, the light dimming slightly behind gathering clouds. I was tired, amazed, and

excited at our task ahead; telling the story of this beautiful place.

Over the next few summers, Game and I worked both alone and with other colleagues inside, on the rim, and around the Caldera. We were treated to a few distant bear sightings, sudden meetings with lone and small bands of caribou kicking up the ash as they pranced across the pumice plains. An eagle once swooped low and fast over our heads en route to plucking an unwary fox pup from its den, a scene rendered heart wrenching as the mother fox followed, yelping and dashing in vain after the predator. Steadily we mapped, sampled and analyzed the various volcanic units and determined ages of some of the larger eruptions within the last 3,500 years. The goal was to determine the history of the Caldera to help us evaluate future hazards from eruptions. Aniakchak is remarkable for the diversity of its eruptive styles—including its only historical eruption in 1931 that blasted two new craters through the Caldera floor and blanketed much of southwestern Alaska with ash. Inside the Caldera are classic dacite lava flows, near-perfect strombolian scoria cones, sublacustrine lava domes, tuff cones, and an eviscerated dome and flow complex called, simply, Half Cone.

Camping and working inside the Caldera was a profound sensory experience. My emotional highs and lows mirrored the wild weather and the pace of our understanding of the geology and moods of the volcano itself. Our camp suffered only one bout of damage during a classic windstorm. From this we learned how to really anchor a Weatherport so that walls wouldn't come apart! I learned to sleep with the yellow tent walls occasionally pressing against my face as I lay snug in my REI Volcano sleeping bag. On nights when I could hear the gentle lapping of Surprise Lake and Game snoring in the tent a few yards away and I knew the weather was good and all was well.

One evening, Game, a geophysicist colleague, Carrie, and I sat on the ridge above camp and watched a glorious full moonrise over Black Nose, the towering, dark promontory of volcanic rock that stands high above the south side of the Gates. The air was calm and the temperature a comfortable one for an early summer night on the peninsula. At that moment, gazing up at the bright white disk and its finely etched impact crater-forms visible to the naked eye, Aniakchak, with the summer dusk illuminating its Caldera floor and walls, seemed the perfect planetary link, an observation made by Hubbard sixty years earlier.

One of the joys of doing geology is exploration and we were fortunate and observant enough to make some new finds. We discovered a debris-covered glacier—largely inactive at present—nestled against the precipitous south wall of the Caldera. Our clues included a field of conical mounds of pumice, the result of differential insulation and melting of the icy substrate, as well as a bottomless hole that revealed, upon closer inspection, classic blue ice. Needless to say, we walked across the surface with more care after that!

Perhaps the most wonderful moment of discovery came as we sat one calm afternoon high atop Surprise Cone, so-named by us for the large, variously colored pumiceous bombs from Half Cone we had discovered on the top. Game had been stewing for some time about the morphology of the crater walls. From this perch, he and I could survey nearly the entire Caldera except for the portion hidden behind Vent Mountain. He noted a subtle but consistent terrace or bench high above Surprise Lake. Using our hand as levels, we could follow this feature, albeit discontinuously, around the eastern inner Caldera wall towards the Gates, where the equivalent altitude coincided with another prominent bench. Game surmised that this could be the telltale mark of a formerly deep lake within the Caldera. Over the course of the next few weeks, as we wandered and mapped features and deposits, we clarified and furthered this observation, adding evidence that, indeed, a deep lake had once filled perhaps much of the Caldera. We found lake clays buried by young Half Cone debris, now tens of meters above the modern level of the lake, and subtler terraces that might indicate higher water levels. Textures of some of the lava domes suggested underwater emplacement. The

story was hanging together.

To be fair, others had suggested that a lake once existed—it would not be unusual because these enormous collapsed calderas often contain water (e.g. Crater Lake in Oregon). However, no one had put the observational evidence together—and as we gathered more clues, the story became more and more compelling. What had happened to this water?

Game began to suspect that the deep V-shaped notch at the Gates could have formed catastrophically, perhaps in a sudden biblical draining of the large Aniakchak lake, an assumption supported by the geological evidence. We realized that to investigate this hypothesis, we needed to spend time along the Aniakchak drainage. We had run out of time that summer, but on the flight out, we had a brief glimpse down the Aniakchak River and spied enormous boulders of Caldera-rim rock scattered like child's blocks in the upper drainage, and a deep channel cut into the ash flow sheet. In the back of the plane, stuffed amid the piles of gear and rock samples, Game and I looked at each other and smiled, knowing that we were onto a wonderful story, the kind every geologist yearns to tell. Details would have to wait until the next field season, but this flush of excitement, as we turned north for King Salmon, softened our sadness at leaving such a moving and powerful landscape.

<<< **Previous** <<< **Contents**>>> **Next** >>>

hrs/anecdotes1.htm
Last Updated: 03-Aug-2009

ANIAKCHAK

Beyond the Moon Crater Myth
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Pre-Contact Period (pre-1741)



Example of a more permanent Alutiiq house site, ca. 1912. University of Washington Libraries. Special Collections. THWAITES 247.353.

CHAPTER TWO

The Living World of Aniakchak

> *The Aleut [Alutiiq] inhabitants, knowing no quieter land, take such occurrences as a matter of course. The white trappers and traders bet among themselves as to which of the many volcanoes will blow off next.*
>
> Father Bernard Hubbard
> "The Moon Craters of Alaska"

Over the eons, volcanic activity has shaped much of the Alaska Peninsula's physical history, but, as visitors to the region may not have understood, the massive, sky-reaching peaks of the Aleutian Range affected the peninsula's ecological and cultural history, too. Early explorers expressed astonishment at the region's many active volcanoes. In journals and reports, they prolifically described the peninsula's geology, but paid relatively little attention to the impact of volcanism on the area's living world. [1]

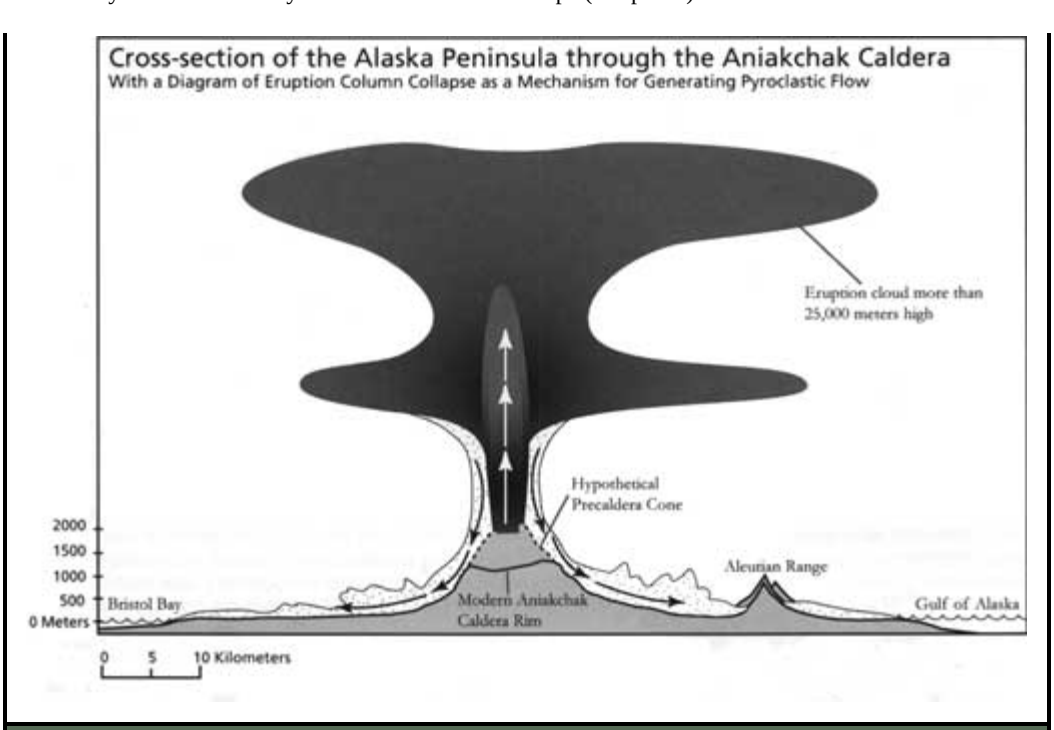
The Alaska Peninsula's first visitors, the Russians, knew that Aniakchak existed, but they believed the volcano to be extinct. After visiting villages along the Bering Sea Coast in 1895, Russian priest Father Aleksandr Kedrovskii, made note of Aniakchak, but he seemed more concerned with other forces of nature. "Between Ugashek and Inangashek is Mashkhik Bay, located at the foot of an extinct volcano" wrote Kedrovskii. About the body of water that fronted Meshik, the priest wrote:

> This bay is the most dangerous on the whole route. It is rarely calm here and it is constantly choppy. One needs 4 to 6 hours to cross it. No small number of baidarkas and people has been lost here. This place sometimes detains travelers for a week or two, but we waited out the wind for only five hours and crossed it on 7 July, Sunday, and at 7pm. Taking advantage of an east wind, which here blows from shore and during which it is calm at sea, we crossed the bay at night and continued on. [2]

Unlike the Russian cleric, another visiting priest, Father Bernard Hubbard, knew that Aniakchak was, indeed, a very active volcano. In fact, Hubbard captured one of the few personal accounts of an erupting Aniakchak. The year following the 1931 eruption, the Glacier Priest published a first-hand narrative of his dramatic return to "the Moon Crater of Alaska" in a book called *Mush, You Malamutes!* [3] Although at times *Malamutes* colorfully exaggerates for a popular audience, the book does provide a description of the 1931 eruption as told to Hubbard by a non-Native man named Frank Wilson, a commercial fisherman, who was living in the village of Meshik at the time. As Hubbard retells it, Wilson's daughter, Mabel, first noticed a steaming Aniakchak on a clear May morning. At noon, on May 1, came a "terrific explosion." Then, as reported by Father Hubbard:

> A dense black cloud of incandescent gas and ashes rushed more than 20,000 feet into the air, spread out like a tremendous mushroom and started to descend rapidly. Wilson and his family rushed to their cabin, as did the few fear-stricken Aleuts of Meshik. The earth shook, flame and smoke rose thousands of feet high, and the pyrotechnic display of individual lava bombs hurtling through the air combined with the lightning forming in the cloud to make a truly fear-inspiring sight. Thunder added its din to the almost constant explosions of the eruption volcano, and the sides of the mountain reverberated to the crash of the falling rocks. A close sound soon aroused the already terrified people of Meshik, when cinders, first the size of peas, then as large as eggs, beat a tattoo on their houses. The eruption lasted uninterruptedly until 11 May, when a final terrific explosion shook the surrounding country and sent into the air rocks and ashes which descended in such great masses as to make it pitch dark for several hours at distances more than sixty miles from the volcano. [4]





The 3500 BP eruption of Aniakchak not only created the caldera, but probably created a biological and cultural dead zone that lasted nearly 1000 years on the central Alaska Peninsula. Reproduced from VanderHoek and Myron 2004, page 146.

Hubbard, however, was not on the Alaska Peninsula at the time, for he had been dogsledding the length of the Yukon, racing the spring thaws. When the Glacier Priest heard the news that Aniakchak erupted, he immediately chartered a flight with Pacific International Airways pilot, Harry Blunt, and co-pilot, Al Monsen, who flew him down the length of the Alaska Peninsula to Chignik, where his exploration team awaited his arrival. While en route, Hubbard observed the environmental impacts of Aniakchak on the surrounding landscape. "As is usual in the volcanic cataclysms of the Alaska Peninsula," wrote Hubbard, "great loss of animal life resulted from the explosion of Aniakchak."

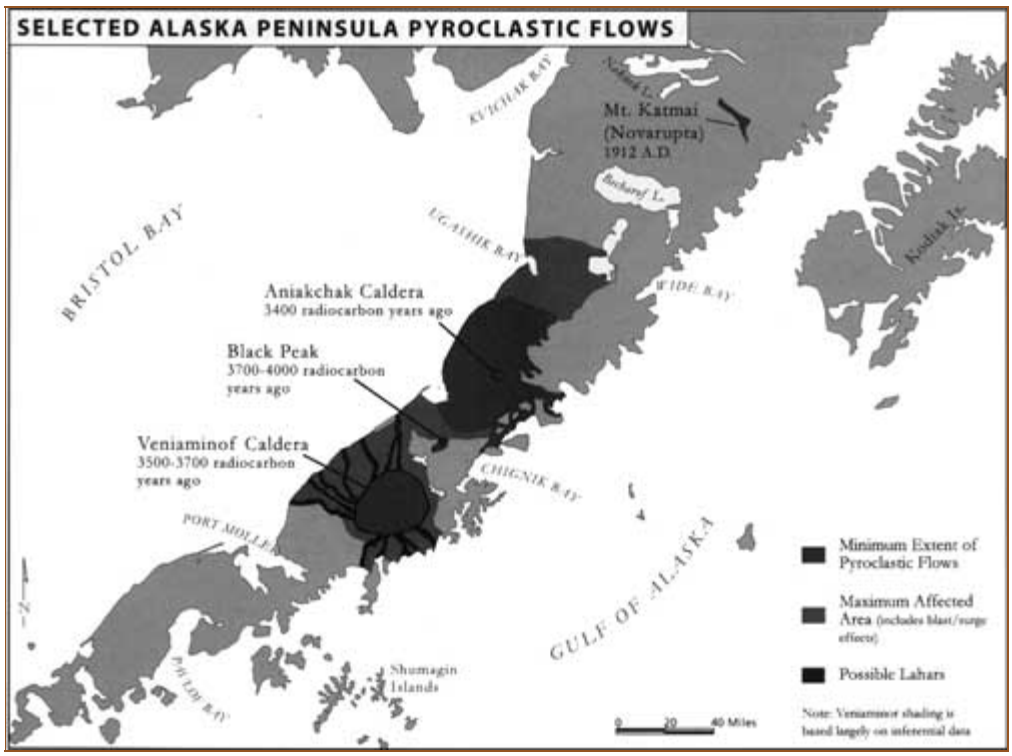
> Reindeer and caribou ground their soft teeth down to the gums from the grit in their food, and died. Dead swans and geese floated down the rivers from lakes on the tundra of the Alaska Peninsula, and cutting them open revealed the cause of their destruction—entrails full of volcanic ash....Clouds condensed rapidly all over the region and raindrops which had formed about the tiny ash bits started falling. Turning the ashes to mud, it literally rained mud balls the size of walnuts for hours at a time, making the snowfields and glaciers black as ink and causing the surrounding country to look as though covered by a huge funeral pall. [5]

Still, Hubbard took only a lukewarm interest in the ecological or cultural affects of Aniakchak, for adventuring into a live volcano was, as the Glacier Priest wrote, "the main objective of our flight." [6] In a telling episode, Hubbard recalls stopping briefly at the village of Meshik. There, the men encountered the Native inhabitants, whom Hubbard described as justifiably "terrified." [7] With Aniakchak erupting only fifteen miles away, one would think the villagers feared ash clouds, fallout, or ballistics, but Hubbard assumed their agitation stemmed from the noise of his airplane, not from the volcano.

Based on his publications, it appears that Hubbard never spoke to the Native residents about Aniakchak, even though it "rose, dark and forbidding, from Meshik." [8] He seemed disinterested in the effects that eruption had on the people who lived on the Alaska Peninsula, one of the most tectonically active regions in the world. He failed to take note of activities on

Native residents that might have been seen as being adaptive, such as how they preserved fresh water, or if they protected their boats from falling ash. Nor, did he inquire about stories or ancient knowledge of past eruptions. [9] In Hubbard's mind, Aniakchak Caldera was a foreign, exotic, empty landscape—like the surface of the moon. He saw Aniakchak Caldera as a world within itself, an unlivable world, in fact, bordered by precipitous cliffs, tilted rock strata, ash flows, vents and craters. To Hubbard, Aniakchak stood alone on the peninsula, as it sheltered a unique assemblage of vegetation and created its own weather. [10]

But through the eyes of the humans, who, for centuries had called the area encompassing the crater home, Aniakchak was neither foreign not empty. To them, the land and surrounding bays of the Aniakchak region teemed with life—caribou, fish, berries, and birds. The volcano was, and remains to this day, integrated into the cultural and physical landscape of the Alaska Peninsula, rather than existing as the separate, discontinuous entity that Hubbard described. Virtually ignoring the people who lived in the shadow of the volcano, it probably never occurred to the Glacier Priest that, in addition to tectonic forces, humans and their relationship to the natural environment played a central part in the story of the place that is now Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve.



Selected Pyroclastic Flows on the Alaska Peninsula. Reproduced from VanderHoek and Myron 2004, page 149. *(click on image for a PDF version)*

A Land of Fire and Ice

Archeologists contend that the human history of the Alaska Peninsula is long and varied, which is fitting since the land itself has been shaped and reshaped by natural forces over centuries, making it one of the most topographically and climatically diverse areas in Alaska. [11] In the 1820s, the Russian Orthodox priest, Ivan Veniaminay, noted that the local region "suffered excessively from subterranean fire," for everywhere Veniaminov went, the priest observed "traces of terrible upheavals which happened sometime in the past." [12] In journals from his stay in the Unalashka [Unalaska] District, Veniaminov described how "the power of subterranean fire" shaped the stark Aleutian landscape:

> Here is volcanic ash; over there, congealed lava; and here is stone rubble scorched on one side and almost transformed into glass or enamel, while the other side remained untouched by fire. In another place where, among the surrounding mountains, there is absolutely no granite, you can see immense boulders of pure granite, probably flung from afar by the awful force of the subterranean fire. In many straits and in several bays, looking at steep crags and precipices, which lie one opposite the other, one plainly sees that they once composed a single hole and were the feet, either of a high range or a huge volcano, which either collapsed into the abyss of the sea or exploded. [13]

When Father Veniaminov described the Alaska Peninsula, the Russian, of course, was unaware of the ongoing mechanisms shaping our planet. It wasn't until the early 1960s that geologists accepted the plate tectonic theory, first set forth in the late 1800s. The theory explained many geological processes, and its re-emergence revolutionized the field of earth sciences. This path-breaking theory suggests that the same geological forces that created Aniakchak shaped much of the earth that we currently know.



View at Aniakchak volcano from Port Heiden airfield on a rare, clear day. Solid black line indicates present-day horizon, and dashed line indicates a hypothetical profile of precaldera stratocone. Airfield was constructed atop pyroclastic-flow deposits from caldera-forming eruption. Annotated photograph courtesy of Tina Neal, USGS, Anchorage, Alaska.

By applying the theory of plate tectonics, scientists now know that the earth's outermost layer is fragmented into a dozen or more large and small plates or slabs. Volcanoes are created in an energetic cycle of tectonic activity. In essence, they are products of what scientists call the "subduction factory." Immense crustal plates are pulled apart in the ocean basins and move away from the mid-ocean ridges and other rift zones in a conveyor belt-like fashion, approximately two to three centimeters a year—about the same rate as a fingernail grows. As the plates separate, the solid but mobile earth's mantle below the rift responds to the decrease in overburden and rises upward to fill in the rift. [14] Progression of the plates may seem slow by human standards, but because this process has been going on for hundreds of millions of years, it has resulted in cumulative plate movement of thousands of miles. Seafloor spreading over the past 100 to 200 million years has caused inlets to grow into oceans and continents to rip apart. [15]

As the plates travel, they inevitably collide into each other. When this occurs, the heavier, oceanic plate descends beneath the lighter, less dense continental plate, creating what

geophysicists call a subduction zone. Subduction is a Latin-based word meaning "carried under." Where the oceanic plate begins its plunge, some of the continental plate is dragged down with it. This makes a deep trench in the bed of the sea. At any given moment, these trenches, which pattern the edges of subducting ocean plates like jigsaw puzzle pieces, consume approximately one million square miles of ocean crust—a land mass the size of Greenland. Trenches are usually very long and very narrow. If one were to link all the trenches of the world together, the line would extend for about nineteen thousand miles, but the width would rarely exceed sixty miles. [16] Parallel to this stretch of colliding land and sea stand approximately fourteen hundred of the world's fifteen hundred historically active volcanoes. [17]

Some of the most recognizable subduction zones are those that enfold the Pacific Ocean. Collectively, they are called the "Ring of Fire." A belt of volcanic activity known as the Aleutian Arc curves along the Alaska Peninsula and the Aleutian Islands and comprises the northern section of the Pacific Ocean subduction zone. Geologists estimate that the Aleutian Arc first formed between 155 million to 195 million years ago, as the subducting Pacific Plate slowly collided with the North American Plate. The 1,560 mile-long Aleutian Trench that extends from the north end of the Kamchatka Trench to the Gulf of Alaska marks the boundary between the two plates. [18] The Aleutian Chain, the narrow neck of land that splits the Bering Sea from the Pacific Ocean, is a classic example of a subduction zone; it is essentially made up of volcanoes and precious little else.

In the Aleutian Mountain Range, Aniakchak is one of twelve young volcanoes that, together with other layers of uplifted rock, form the backbone of the Alaska Peninsula. [19] This chain of tectonic activity is in constant motion, as the downward-moving Pacific slab drives beneath the Alaska Peninsula, dragging with it billions of tons of saturated sediment and rock. Intense pressure forces the release of water in the mineral structure of the sediment. When the waterlogged material reaches a depth of sixty miles, melting begins to occur, producing molten rock, or magma. Magma is less dense than the rocks around it, and rises towards the surface through conduits and fractures, re-collecting within pods, or small chambers, located a few miles beneath the surface.

There, gas-charged, red-hot magma forms clusters and approximately eighty-five percent of it crystallizes. The ten to fifteen percent of the hot material that has melted, however, constantly seeks weak crevices and pathways to the surface in response to mounting pressure. Before long, the accumulating pressure becomes too great and it explodes out into the open air as lava. If the lava is very fluid, the gases escape easily, causing a nonexplosive eruption that result in lava flows. But if the lava is sticky, the gases are more tightly bound, and will build tremendous pressure. Similar to a soda pop bottle that has been vigorously shaken, when the volcanic "cap" is removed abruptly, a mixture of gas and liquid explodes through a vent with remarkable force, erupting in a vicious cannonade of destruction.

Volcanoes are built by the accumulation of their own eruptive products—lava, ashflows, and airborne ash, or what scientists collectively call tephra. Tephra is a general term for fragments of volcanic rock and lava that are blasted into the air by explosions or carried upward by hot gasses in eruption columns or lava fountains. [20] When magma erupts at the earth's surface, it either pours from the vent in non-explosive lava flows, or it shoots violently into the air as dense clouds of pulverized rock fragments. Over the centuries, combinations of these two types of eruptions formed the composite volcanoes of the Aleutian Range.

Composite volcanoes, or, as they are sometimes called, stratovolcanoes, are some of the earth's grandest mountains. They are typically steep-sided, large, symmetrical cones built of alternating layers of lava flows, volcanic ash, cinders, blocks, and lava bombs, and may rise as much as 8,000 feet above their bases. [21] The straravolcanoes of the Aleutian Range

create one of the most conspicuously beautiful landscapes in the world. But Mounts Spurr, Redoubt, Iliamna, Augustine, Katmai, Peulik, Veniaminof, and Aniakchak are more than picturesque, for they contain the power to significantly alter ecosystems for centuries. Often, these cone-shaped volcanoes erupt with extraordinarily violent, explosive blasts that produce far-reaching ash clouds, launch boulder-sized ballistics, and send slurries of water, mud, and sand down to the river valleys below. [22]

As important as volcanoes have been to the geological construction of the Alaska Peninsula, Father Veniaminov failed to recognize another architect at work—ice. During the Pleistocene era, the period of time known for its ice ages, most of the free-flowing water of the northern hemisphere froze into massive glaciers, which exponentially lowered water levels in the polar region. Alaska, known as the northwest corner of the "New World," was once geographically connected to Asia. This landmass formed as various stages of advancing and retreating glaciers caused water levels to fluctuate, periodically exposing the ocean floor, and thus creating an ice-free corridor of land that scientists named Beringia. A thin strip of the Alaska Peninsula marked the southern boundary of this 1,000-mile wide landform. [23] The rest of the peninsula, specifically the mountains of the Aleutian Range, was encased in ice caps that held most of North America in its frozen grasp. [24]

From the volcanic massif of the Aleutian Range, Pleistocene glaciers repeatedly flowed outward, carving Naknek, Becharof, Ugashik, Mother Goose, Black and Chignik Lakes, as well as the peninsula's many coastal bays, such as Bristol Bay, Ugashik Bay, Wide Bay, Port Heiden, and Chignik Lagoon. [25] The Pleistocene glaciers were essentially rivers of ice that moved from places where snow accumulated faster than it melted to places where snow melted faster than it accumulated. [26] As glaciers crept down towards the low-lying valleys, they negotiated bends and bumps, literally moving mountains along the way. Side restraints, called lateral moraines, squeezed and stretched the ice until the glacial pulse began to wane. Like retreating bulldozers, glaciers left behind assorted stones, boulders, and other debris at their farthest extension, the terminal moraine. After their final advance about 12,000 years ago, the glaciers released their cold grip, and in doing so, they permitted the formerly icebound earth to rebound. Figuratively, it was as if the entire Alaska Peninsula sighed deeply and exhaled in relief.

The combination of melting ice and rising seas, however, quickly outpaced the rebounding land, producing a complex history of change in the relative levels of land and water. As temperatures rose, so did the earth's oceans. Nearly 15,000 years ago, the Bering Sea began to cover the tundralands of Beringia, creating the Bering Strait and Bristol Bay, while the waters of the Pacific Ocean rose to consume much of the peninsula's southern coastline. [27] Runoff from melting glaciers formed numerous streams, especially the dominant river systems of the Naknek, Egegik, Ugashik and Chignik rivers. As these meltwater rivers drained the peninsula's barren landscape, refuge salmon populations made their way up the watersheds, risking periods of heavy glacial outwash. After these persistent salmon spawned, they died. With death, came life, as their decomposing carcasses fertilized the raw waters, returning necessary nutrients to the land. Consequently, plant communities, migrating from the unglaciated interior, began to revegetate the glacial wake. Today, while spruce forests have yet to spread south of the Katmai region, sedges, heaths, grasses, as well as willows and alders, cover the peninsula's lowlands. [28]

As the glaciers slowly retreated, the Alaska Peninsula's evolving environment attracted brown bears, which thrived in the mountainous regions and along the Bristol Bay coastal plain. The bruin migrated to the peninsula following the caribou, which traveled seasonally in vast herds down the Alaska Peninsula to consume lichen and moss that grew in the unglaciated portions of the peninsula. Wetlands, created by the rising tides, became choked with millions of waterfowl, inundating the once silent and frozen landscape with a plethora of noisy life.

Nearly two million seabirds came to nest in the bluffs that lined the shores of Bristol Bay and Pacific Ocean, while the peninsula's glacially carved, protected bays served as haulouts for harbor seals, sea otters, and on the Pacific side, Steller sea lions. Various whales fed in the waters off the Alaska Peninsula, too. Orcas and belugas pursued migrating smelt and salmon up the major rivers in spring and summer, while baleen whales such as the gray, fin and the bowhead, flourished in the plankton-rich waters of Bristol Bay. Herring, halibut and Pacific cod all swam offshore, various kinds of clams buried themselves deep in the peninsula's sandy beaches, and mussels attached to nearly every rocky outcrop in the intertidal zone. One animal that was not found on the peninsula's post-glacial landscape, however, was the moose. Though fairly common today, the ungulate migrated into the region only within the last hundred years or so. [29]

This was the transitioning environment that the first humans entered by 9,000 years ago, in likely pursuit of caribou that were moving into places simultaneously vacated by retreating glaciers. Although it is not entirely clear where these bands of hunters came from, some archeologists believe they traveled from the northern Bering Sea coast, where their Siberian ancestors had crossed into Alaska 1,500 years earlier. [30] These hunters left behind traces of their chipped tools on a knoll overlooking a migratory game trail in the Ugashik narrows region off the coast of Bristol Bay. [31] On a clear day from this site, they could scan the terrain for animals. If they looked to the south, they could see the cone-shaped, glaciated volcanoes glistening, and perhaps even steaming, on the horizon. Quite possibly, this nomadic band of hunters were the ancestors of Alaska Peninsula Alutiit.

Changing Land, Changing People: 9,000-3,500 years ago

Archeologist Don Dumond has studied the human history of the Alaska Peninsula for nearly five decades. Drawing upon linguistic evidence, Dumond and others from the anthropological community believe that, by 7,000 years ago, maritime hunters from the north spread onto the Alaska Peninsula and the adjacent Kodiak Island. [33] Although rugged even by Alaskan standards, the peninsula's travel corridors accommodated the movement of people and ideas, and genes throughout southern Alaska. [34] Bristol Bay, Katmai, Kodiak, Port Moller, and the Shumagin Islands all became important cultural hubs on or near the Alaska Peninsula. Wars, trade, and the ceaseless search for predictable food sources brought people to these cultural and ecological centers, as they walked or paddled their way down this narrow neck of land. [35]

As humans arrived over the centuries, they learned to exploit the seasonal diversity of a warming, post-glacial environment. Food sources, especially on the northern and southern ends of the peninsula, stabilized so much so that fishermen and hunters could hone their skills for catching a specific prey. But predictability did not necessarily mean that resources were static. Over ten thousand years, the resource-rich ecosystems of the Alaska Peninsula became deeply tied to overlapping cycles of light and dark, the ebbing and flooding tides, waxing and waning moons, and especially the warming and the cooling of the seasons. Each plant and animal species made its adjustments to these various cycles, so that the migration of birds, the spawning of fish, the movement of caribou, and the fruiting of berries all occur at specific times of the year. Because humans feed on plants and other animals, these first human predators learned to obtain their food—even organized their social lives—largely according to the cycles by which other species of the Alaska Peninsula lived. Thus, a seasonal pattern of mobility began to dominate the lives of semi-nomadic peoples moving onto the Alaska Peninsula. Just as a bear's spring diet of clams and the occasional caribou shifts to salmon and berries during the summer and fall, these hunter-gatherers sought their food wherever it was seasonally most concentrated in the ecosystem. Wherever humans expected to find the greatest natural food supplies, there they went.

Spring arrived upon the Alaska Peninsula when the ice in the Bering Sea melted. As water flowed freely, thousands of geese returned to the tundra. By March, the smelt arrived in streams. This arrival was quite welcomed, since well over half the yearly food supply came from the rivers and seashore. Most significantly, summer brought the return of salmon. Between 4,000 and 5,000 years ago, rivers stabilized and salmon began to spawn in large numbers. To many of the peninsula's inhabitants, salmon was the axis of their economy and the hub of their culture. It is likely that when the fish were spawning, many families or bands gathered at the headwaters of Naknek, Becharof, Ugashik or Chignik lakes to set their nets. To supplement their diets, individuals engaged in other subsistence pursuits during the long, arctic-lit days of summer. On the ocean beaches, women and children dug for clams and mussels buried in the intertidal zone. Offshore, skilled fishermen caught cod with hook and line. From skin boats, called *bidarkas* by the Russians, men hunted seals, otters, sea lions, and whales.

As fall arrived, women and children picked roots and berries. Autumn also brought the caribou herds, which moved along the peninsula. Hunters largely depended on caribou meat to feed their families, but they also used the fat for light and cooking; hides for tents, boat covers, sleeping robes, and footwear; and bone for needles, scrapers, fish hooks, and a variety of weapons. [36] The caribou's seasonal migration marked an end to the summer gatherings. When it was time to hunt in the fall, the communities who assembled around salmon streams disbanded and followed the herds across the Bristol Bay flats. Clearly, all aspects of life on the Alaska Peninsula hinged on seasonal mobility. [37]

Initially, the Aleutian Mountain Range acted as a natural barrier and periodically isolated people on the Bering Sea from the people on the Pacific coast. But whether to hunt, trade, or engage in battle, people began to traverse the peninsula across several corridors. From the Egegik River, these first people could paddle all the way to Becherof Lake and then portage over Kanatak Pass to reach the Pacific. From Chignik Lake, people could follow the salmon up the Chignik River, which flowed from the centrally located Black Lake. Then as fall came, they could move easily toward Bristol Bay to access the caribou herds that grazed on the tundra flats. Similarly, people could cross the peninsula from Ugashik Bay or from Port Heiden to reach the Pacific shores.

Adaptation to their environment meant that the early peoples of the Alaska Peninsula also had to develop technology that suited their needs. Some of their first tools were distinctive artifacts called microblades, which consisted of thin, extremely sharp slivers of flint-like rock proficiently struck from a carefully prepared core. Although the exact ways these microblades were used is unknown, the people who used them were able to efficiently and successfully hunt the peninsula's caribou herds. [38]

These hunters were also expert fisherman and invented or appropriated fishing gear such as drift and seine nets and hook and line technology to exploit salmon, cod and the many other fish species found in the waters of the Alaska Peninsula. But, it was the invention of the harpoon that gave humans access to the abundance of calories and nutrients available from sea mammals. [39] When a hunter impaled a sea mammal at close range, the head of the harpoon detached from its handle and foreshaft while the barbs prevented it from coming out. A seven- to ten-foot line tied the harpoon head to an inflated buoy made of seal intestines. When struck, an animal naturally dove to escape. Dragging even a small buoy through the water quickly tired a seal or sea otter. Exhausted, the animal surfaced, whereupon the hunter attacked. Anthropologists describe such innovation as ingenious—as one researcher notes, "This new technology was as important to their time as the automobile is to ours." [40]

Such technology also allowed hunters to expand their territory. Skin-covered flotillas from the Katmai region regularly traveled to the Sutwik and Semidi Islands, sometimes journeying

even further west toward Unimak Island to hunt sea otters, seal, and sea lions. [41] With such significant progress made possible by subsistence technology, peoples started to dwell in larger, if only semi-permanent, seaside villages. Art and ceremonial practices became more sophisticated. Peopled dressed in intricate clothing and headgear, and traveled in skin-covered boats of elegant design. [42] As the exchange of ideas and trade increased, tools and other material items started to look similar on both sides of the Alaska Peninsula, as well as on Kodiak Island.

Still, while some groups living on the peninsula fused together, others drifted apart. With people migrating farther and farther away, cultural and linguistic traits began to separate and change. Archeologist Don Dumond believes that between 4,000 and 5,000 years ago, speakers of the Eskimo family of languages split into two distinct ethnic groups on the Alaska Peninsula: the first group became the ancestors of today's Yupiit and Alutiit of the northern peninsula and Kodiak Island, while the second group, the Unangan, became the ancestors of the Aleuts of the southern peninsula and the Aleutian Islands. [43]

Today, archeologists identify a cultural boundary zone that divided the Alaska Peninsula into two territories, approximately at Port Moller on the Bering Sea side, and just south of Chignik Bay on the Pacific side. [44] Oral testimony concurs, as Alutiiq elder Iganatius Kosbruk of Perryville recalls:

> Long ago, people used to have wars; they fought like today. Today that's how people live. Aleuts are different people; they used to fight with our relatives, the Alutiiqs. [45]

A Cultural and Ecological Dead Zone: 3,500 to 2,000 years ago

Although evidence is sparse, archeologist Richard VanderHoek, while working on an *Archaeological Overview and Assessment of Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve* for the National Park Service between 1997 and 2000, developed a theory as to how Alutiit and Aleuts separated into "different people." [46] Basing his theory on studies conducted by scientists at the Alaska Volcano Observatory and United States Geological Survey, VanderHoek postulates that Aniakchak Volcano, positioned at the center of the Alaska Peninsula, prevented people from permanently settling in this central region, and thus, directly shaped both it's environmental and cultural history. [47]

About 3,500 years ago, Aniakchak's ancient strarocone blew with an explosive force similar to 10,000 nuclear bombs, sending fifty to one hundred cubic kilometers of pulverized rock, ash, steam, and magmatic froth 82,000 feet into the atmosphere. [48] The initial blast sent a shockwave that pulsated across land and sea, leveling all in its path. Seconds later, the convulsed explosion generated an ominous mushroom cloud made up of hot ash. It enveloped the region and eventually reached landscapes as far away as the Seward Peninsula, six hundred miles to the north, with a blanket of coarse pumice and ash. [49] Lightning flashes cut through blackened skies and thunder boomed across the Aleutian Chain. Hot, glowing avalanches of volcanic gas, ash, and rock debris—called pyroclastic flows—surged down the mountain flanks with hurricane force. The flows radiated as they traveled, reaching as far as Bristol Bay and the Pacific Ocean, thirty miles away.

On the Bering Sea coast, these flows suffocated lands lying between Port Heiden and the Cinder River, spilling deposits far into the sea. Strong evidence also suggests that a tsunami generated by the pyroclastic flow inundated low-lying areas of upper Bristol Bay. [50] The sea's strong currents carried the deposits north, and may have filled in what was once a much larger Ugashik Bay. [51] On the Pacific side, the flows, some as thick as seventy-five meters, rapidly slid down the river valleys, making foothills into isolated islands. [52] Following the

natural forks of the Aniakchak River, the ashflows smothered the riverine ecosystem and filled parts of Aniakchak Bay, mirroring the destruction on the Bering Sea. [53] Accompanying the glowing pyroclastic flows was the hard pelting of ash and acid rains that together likely killed most of the surrounding flora and fauna. The peninsula's east bays, such as Kujulik Bay and Amber Bay, were protected from the effects of the pyroclastic flows by the foothills of the Aleutian Range, unlike the flat, unobstructed tundra that lies to the west of Aniakchak. [54]

During the eruption, the volcano expelled enormous volumes of hot volcanic ash that swept down the slopes in a torrent of avalanches, weakening the layers of solidified lava that had been acting as the mountain's support beams. Moreover, the intensity of the eruption drained Aniakchak's underground magma reservoirs. With its bowels sapped and infrastructure damaged, the existing cone began to crumble. It collapsed upon itself in an horrific implosion, leaving behind a thirty-square mile, 3,000-foot deep crater, and creating a sterile landscape equal to any on the moon. [55]

Other volcanic eruptions on the peninsula also contributed to the disruption of both terrestrial and marine ecosystems. The caldera-forming eruption of Aniakchak, combined with the pyroclastic flows discharged from the Veniaminov and Black Peak eruptions that occurred about the same time, may have created what VanderHoek termed a biological "dead zone" that lasted for centuries. [56] This dead zone, according to VanderHoek, turned the central peninsula into an "ecological roadblock" separating the Alutiiq people from their kin, the Aleuts. [57]

It is unknown whether people lived in the region surrounding the Aniakchak Volcano prior to the caldera-forming eruption, for the pyroclastic flows that blanketed the entire width of the Alaska Peninsula would have annihilated anyone living within a fifty mile radius of the volcano, and covered up any possible trace of their existence. Archeological evidence from the Ugashik lakes area—over forty miles away—suggests that about 3,500 years ago humans disappeared from the record, killed or driven our by Aniakchak ash. [58] The combination of ashfalls and flows significantly depressed the biological resources. The eruption altered the landscape beyond recognition, turning a once thriving environment into a sterile desert. As VanderHoek suggests, "Such hostility could have delayed human settlement on the central Alaska Peninsula for centuries." [59]

Archeologists can only guess if this eruption pushed people towards the peninsula's coastal fringes, or if more abundant and predictable resources, found in northern and southern portions of the peninsula, drew people to those places, making any kind of permanent settlement in the central portion of the peninsula undesirable. [60] In a sea of uncertainty, one thing is certain: the caldera-forming eruption of Aniakchak, and the many smaller eruptions that followed, affected most every living thing on the peninsula. Like the bears, birds, and fish, the people living at both ends of the Alaska Peninsula learned to adapt to their volcanic world.





Example of a "catcher beach," looking southwest from the knoll lust east northeast of Columbia River Cabin, 1990. Frank Norris, National Park Service, Anchorage, Alaska.

Learning to Live in the Shadow of Disaster: 2,000 to 1600 years ago

As far as the archeological record shows, the first sign that the people living on the Alaska Peninsula began to move into the central peninsula appeared just over two thousand years ago, at least 1,500 years after the caldera-forming eruption. Researchers can only guess if they were Aleut or Alutiiq speakers, but they appear to have settled on a bluff overlooking a long crescent-shaped beach fronting Aniakchak Bay, to gather salmon entering the Aniakchak River. [61] Though little information exists about these humans, archeologists, with the help of geologists, speculate that they met a catastrophic end.

In the years after the caldera-forming eruption, rain water and seasonal runoff began to wash over, and eventually flood, the Aniakchak Caldera. Over the decades, the Caldera rim, acting as a circular dam, filled with water. This ancient lake was on average one hundred meters deep and covered about half of the Caldera floor. [62] At the time, it would have looked like a half-full Crater Lake in Oregon.

Beneath the waters of this deep blue lake, eruptions on a much smaller scale continued to spew lava from vents on the crater's surface. Consecutive explosive eruptions eventually produced a cluster of tuff cones and lava domes. These shallow, flat-floored craters formed, as magmatic gas or steam violently expanded and burst through the Caldera floor. Overtime, Aniakchak built two intra-caldera cones, known as Half Cone and the 2,200-foot Vent Mountain, which explorers would later accurately described as a "volcano inside a volcano!" [63]

Geologist Game McGimsey, who conceived the lake-draining theory only after flying over the Caldera and viewing the destruction in its entirety, surmises that about 1,800 years ago, when the Caldera lake was at its deepest—approximately five hundred feet above the current lake level [64]—earthquakes, linked to a minor eruption, rattled the Caldera like a giant swirling pot. With seismic activity intensifying, large waves, caused by possible pyroclastic flows and crashing debris from avalanches, rushed over the lowest point on the Caldera rim, causing weakened rock to burst at an area now known as The Gates.

A wall of water, carrying house-sized boulders several miles, quickly drained the ancient lake, becoming a river of mud nearly a mile wide. [65] This massive wave, with a discharge equal to that of the Mississippi River, flooded the Aniakchak River valley. It surged across the alluvial plain to the Pacific Ocean, leaving behind spewed boulders and annihilating most intertidal life. [66]



Remains at forge traditional Native house located near the CRPA cabin, 1990. Frank Norris, National Park Service, Anchorage, Alaska.

The catastrophic draining of Aniakchak's Caldera drastically reshaped the land surrounding the Aniakchak River valley and Aniakchak Bay. The flood carried so much sediment that deposits displaced nearly a quarter of Aniakchak Bay with a complex of beach berms and sand dunes. [67] Riverine and marine fish, as well as intertidal invertebrates, were washed away or killed by the deluge of fresh water. [68] The flood left behind a mere puddle of the ancient caldera lake, a remnant known today as Surprise Lake.

Based on evidence gathered from core samples taken near the bluff where the prehistoric village site stood, archeologists agree with geologists—that something catastrophic happened here around 1,800 years ago. By that date, humans had occupied Aniakchak Bay, as well as the adjacent Kujulik Bay. [69] No one really knows if people had actually witnessed, died, or abandoned their fishing site as a result of the draining of the caldera, but archeologists contend that sometime after the event, Aniakchak Bay was once again abandoned for several hundred years. [70]

* * *

Even if no one experienced Aniakchak's catastrophic flood, people were nonetheless affected by the eruption that caused it. For this eruption, and those that followed, altered the flora and fauna of the entire Alaska Peninsula, and ultimately affected the people whose lives were deeply connected to the cycles of those resources. After the caldera drained, at least four significant explosive Aniakchak eruptions subsequently occurred. Most of these eruptions sent coarse debris beyond the Caldera rim and at least one eruption produced pyroclastic flows that overtopped its the north rim. Non-explosive lava flows and domes also continued

to erupt in the Caldera during this period. [71] One eruption in particular blasted out material equal to the explosive force of the May 18, 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens. [72]

Beyond the reach of pyroclastic flows and destructive flooding, the principle hazard to the peninsula's ecosystems was, and remains, volcanic ash. Aniakchak's ash often blanketed regions as far as Katmai, allowing one researcher to remark that "ash is the one feature that ties the peninsula together." [73] A blizzard-like ashfall, although seemingly harmless, is composed of glass splinters fused into a stony dust during the explosion. Clouds of ash disperse very quickly with the prevailing winds, as evidenced by the fact that they can engulf a region fifty miles away from the blast within the hour. For the people living on the Alaska Peninsula, deep accumulations intensified erosion, landslides, and mudslides. Ashfall induced changes in the drainage patterns of soils and altered the local flora composition for years. An eruption that spread hot ash in winter might cause an "early spring" that increased flooding. Or, the fallout retarded the melting of underlying snow, preserving snow banks for several seasons. [74]

Ash fallout made travel extremely difficult, as acid rains that routinely accompany ashfalls were especially hard on the covers of skin boats. In addition, thick layers of floating pumice might choke local bays, making escape from the area in boats impossible. [75] Once on the ground, deposits restricted movement by sled or snowshoes. In summer, winds constantly stirred up the ash-laden terrain. Ash-filled streams created dangerous quicksand deposits and contaminated water sources. It did not take much ashfall to affect outlying regions, either. Just five centimeters of ash could smother fragile low-lying vegetation, which served as a significant food resource for animals and people. [76] For fishermen, who depended on fish resources to feed their families, the effect of volcanism on the peninsula's many rivers, lakes and streams was devastating. Ash-filled lakes starved sticklebacks and salmon fingerlings, while returning fish suffocated, or, at minimum, were prevented from reaching their spawning grounds. [77]

Besides terrestrial hunters and freshwater fishermen, those who subsisted from the sea were also greatly affected by ashfall. In other eruptions on the Alaska Peninsula, witnesses observed porpoises, seabirds, and fish floating on rafts of ash and pumice so deep that it choked the coastal bay. [78] It can be assumed that after each Aniakchak eruption, sea mammals that need to surface periodically to breathe likely withdrew from the vicinity. Seals deserted areas where the ash decimated salmon runs. Sea otters, with their special dependency on sea urchins and kelp beds, suffered greatly from factors adversely affecting those resources. [79]

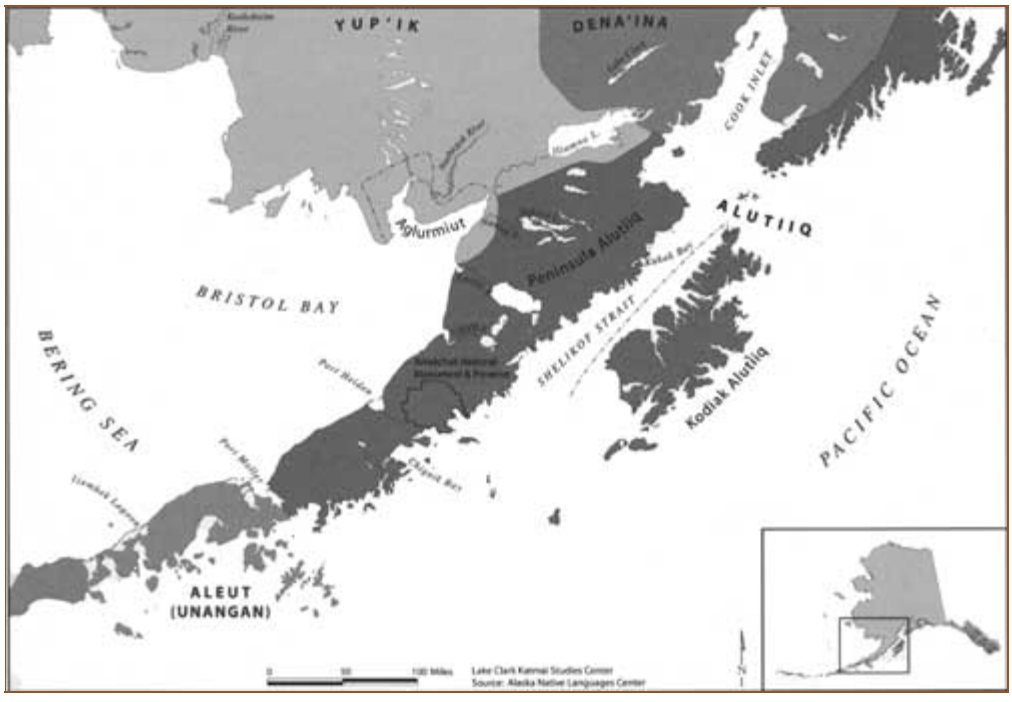
Still, in spite of such catastrophic events, the Aniakchak region did not remain a biological dead zone, for the living world eventually adjusted, recovered, and endured. Without a doubt, explosive volcanoes caused severe damage to the environment and to those living in the immediate blast zone, but successive eruptions like those from Aniakchak also provided important, long-term benefits to those living on the mountain's margins. Overtime, the chemical compounds found in volcanic ashfalls added nutrients to the soils. For instance, the summer after the Katmai eruption, berries on Kodiak Island grew profusely.

The people of the peninsula learned to use hot springs that formed near the volcano to cook fish, sea mammals, and edible roots. To the south, Aleuts used sulfur as a fire starter, apparently collecting it at or near the vents of active volcanoes. [80] Hunters and fishermen made fairly extensive use of volcanic products, including pumice floats for fishing, or as an excellent abrasive to fashion other tools. [81] The most significant stone material, because it was rare and highly prized, was obsidian or volcanic glass. Violent wars between the Aleuts and Alutiit often broke out over a major obsidian source found in the eastern Aleutians. [82]

Re-settling Aniakchak: 400 B.P. to 1741

Despite its destructive potential, humans, like the bears, birds, salmon, and clams, eventually returned to the Aniakchak region. A period of greater geological stability provided a more sustainable environment, which may be responsible for what appears to be the evolution of a more sedentary way of life. About 1,600 years ago, people started living, albeit seasonally, in fairly permanent house sites along the Aniakchak Pacific coastline. [83] House sizes became bigger and more numerous and communities began to form, resembling the more organized village sites found in other Alutiiq regions such as Katmai and Kodiak. Large amounts of material deposited at these sites suggest that people stayed for longer periods throughout the year. Terrestrial mammal butchering patterns indicate that harvests took place away from the village. This evidence, coupled with the lack of fish heads in the middens, make archeologists think that most food stuffs were stored for later consumption, meaning that at least one site on Aniakchak Bay may have been a winter village, rather than merely a seasonal camp. [84]

Within four hundred years of their return, people occupied coastal sites throughout Aniakchak Bay, in Kujulik Bay, and on Kumlik Island. Archeologists have recently found several individual homes assembled within carefully chosen village sites. Middens, some ranging from an inch to three- and four-feet deep, contain the material story of the people who occupied these sites. Newly discovered artifacts show that people fished the rivers and bays that fronted their villages. They dug and ate clams, hunted sea mammals, birds, and possibly hunted whales. [85] The placement of these artifacts, shells, and bone material found in the numerous refuse heaps suggest that these ancient residents processed food, made stone and bone tools, and crafted other utility items, like oil lamps, inside the villages. Fish hooks, net, and line sinkers found at the sites tell us that fishermen caught salmon, herring and cod. Sculpin, halibut, and eulachon bones were also scattered throughout the middens. Some items made of ivory imply that villagers either traveled to the Bering Sea coast or they traded with the inhabitants there. [86]



The various ethnic groups represented on the Alaska Peninsula. Graphic drafted by Barbara Bundy, based on data from the Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska. *(click on image for a PDF version)*

Sometime within this period, humans also began to move inland, strategically positioning a village near the outlet of Meshik Lake. Using the navigable waters of Meshik River, people began to portage to Bristol Bay and back again to the Pacific coast regularly, linking people and resources across the central portion of the Alaska Peninsula, possibly for the first time since the caldera-forming eruption. [87] Over the next five hundred years, people remained in the area, living in small house sites near salmon steams that emptied into the Pacific Ocean and the Bering Sea. Generation after generation existed in the shadow of the volcano without feeling so much as a bump.

Based on linguistic studies, oral histories, and Russian reports made at the time of contact, ethnographers suggest that during this time of geological stability, the seasonal pursuit of resources influenced and shaped people's spiritual view of the world. Indeed, the Alutiiq seasonal mobility continued well into historical times, as one Russian observer noted:

> . . .almost every family has its own dwelling, and many have more than one dwelling in various places. They settle on the bays and inlets, on the sea shore, and near steams, but change their location and dwellings with the seasons. In the spring they usually stay in places where the run of fish from the sea [is early], and in winter near the shallows where they can find subsistence for themselves. [88]

To ensure that the animals, berries, and birds they depended upon did not become scarce, these hunter-fisher-gatherers sought to uphold good relations with the resource's *suas.* [89] According to ethnographers, the Alutiit understood that in each plant, animal, river, or mountain resided a life force called a *sua.* In such a view of the world, it was important that hunters and fishermen attained a collaborative relationship with the surrounding resources, for they believed that all living things participated in a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth in which the souls of both animals and humans were connected. [90] This reciprocity was achieved through rituals of thanksgiving, conducted during the winter months, when villagers reunited.

Winter was a time to visit, sing, drum, and dance. The darkened days kept people inside and provided time to celebrate summer's bounty. Individual families living in semi-subterranean sod-covered houses, which the Russians would later call *barabaras,* held their social dances, ceremonies, and celebrations in a centrally located *barabara* called the *qasgiq.* [91] As the period of feasts came to a conclusion and villagers had exhausted summer food stocks, starvation often followed, making the first light of spring a welcome time. [92]

Frederica de Laguna reported that the way of life of the inhabitants of the Alaska Peninsula and Kodiak Island "seems to have been distinctive, as compared with that of other Eskimos . . . it is not simply a northern culture transplanted to the subarctic, but it has its own roots and history." Similarly, cultural anthropologist Patricia Partnow believes that when people began to successfully adapt to their maritime environment, an Alutiiq identity took shape. [93] By the time the Russian first appear on the shores of the Alaska Peninsula, this identity had clearly formed.





Brown bear sow and cubs in Aniakchak Bay. The Bear Island formation, formerly an island, is in the background. Reproduced from VanderHoek and Myron 2004, page 79

Fire or Ice?

The poet Robert Frost wondered if fire or ice would eventually destroy the world. When flames flew from Aniakchak, its inhabitants surely must have believed the end was near. When arctic winters lengthened the dark nights, perhaps they thought ice would do them in. But fear would have been fleeting and attention would have quickly returned to seasonal and daily tasks at hand. Whether it was the sun, wind, or any other elements of a region, we can assume that to the people of the Alaska Peninsula, Aniakchak Volcano maintained a *sua*, a life force. In their reciprocal relationship with the *sua,* hunter-fisher-gathers must certainly have respected the volcano, especially for what it might do to the world they valued—a place of caribou, berries, fish, and fresh water sources.

There is no doubt that the caldera-forming eruption, and the others that followed, caused profound change to cultures living on the Alaska Peninsula. Aniakchak transformed the region's geological features. Numerous eruptions disrupted vegetation growth, which in turn, altered the movement of grazing animals. Migrating birds died, seals and otters swam away. From the rivers to the ocean, entire ecological communities were destroyed. Evidence even suggests that human populations became separated as a consequence of catastrophic eruptions. And still, the living world came back.

In fact, it is quite possible that the violent activity of Aniakchak positively shaped cultural evolution on the Alaska Peninsula. People learned to use volcanic rocks in tool-making and captured fire from volcanoes to light the realms of the dark and the cold. Volcanic ash eventually fertilized post glacial coastal plains, attracting abundant game to the region. Perceptions of volcanoes perhaps made people fearful, but it is probable that such views also made them strong. Bad weather was probably a far more immediate and real threat to people living along the dangerous body of water that separated the Alaska Peninsula from Kodiak Island or the shallow Bering Sea. Warring neighbors and the cyclical decline of fish and herd animals were also far more dangerous than the fear of a catastrophic eruption. Like Alaskans today who pay high prices for real estate with views of nearby volcanoes despite the potential danger, people living hundreds of years ago may have also enjoyed the beauty of the

volcanoes, while respecting their power. According to Father Veniaminov, the people of the Aleutian Chain referred to these powers of destruction as "the high beauties of earth." [94] Certainly topping their list of things to worry about were finding predictable food sources, keeping their families sheltered from raging storms, and seeking fur-bearing animals to provide warm clothing and tools.

Aniakchak Volcano may have erupted over forty times since the glaciers receded, but animals and people adjusted, and seasonal cycles continued throughout the Alaska Peninsula. At times, the region was abandoned, but people always came back. What many fleeting visitors to the area may not readily understand is that the tectonic forces that transformed a volcanic landscape shaped and remade a cultural landscape, too.

By 1741, fire and ice was replaced by another, even more foreboding agent of change. That year the Alutiiq people encountered the Russian *promyshlenniki,* hunters seeking the sea otters that lived off their coast. Though their numbers were few (only about eight hundred actually lived in Alaska at one time) the Russians brought with them enormous long-term and disruptive change. To a people whose world turned upside down after 1741, the Aniakchak Volcano probably stood as a reassuring reminder, for it was a fixed and unchangeable force, more powerful than any human being.

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<<< **Previous** <<< **Contents**>>> **Next** >>>

ANIAKCHAK

Beyond the Moon Crater Myth
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape
A Historic Resource Study for Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

ANECDOTES

Archeology in the Park — An Aniakchak Journal

by
Brian Hoffman

INTRODUCTION

I always describe myself as a "dirt archeologist." Some archeologists work mostly in the laboratory, others contribute mostly through their writings and theorizing. I love fieldwork—being outdoors, digging in the dirt, and discovering the often faint traces of our past. In the spring of 2003, Jeanne Schaaf, the head of cultural resources for Lake Clark-Katmai, told me about an opportunity to direct a multi-year archeology project in Aniakchak National Preserve. One of the most important pre-contact sites in the preserve, the "South Aniakchak Bay Village", was eroding into the ocean. The Park Service wanted archeologists to excavate the eroding site areas so that the artifacts and other cultural materials could be saved as part of Aniakchak's cultural heritage. As a new professor at Hamline University in Minnesota, this roject provided a great opportunity. I could teach my students field methods while at the same time we would make important discoveries that would help us better understand Alaska's ancient history. Two graduate students also joined the project, Ross Smith from Portland State University, and Linda Chisholm, from University of Minnesota. We began our fieldwork in 2004 and expect to finish in 2007. Below are excerpts from my 2004 and 2005 field journals. Organized into three topics (travel, wildlife, and excavations), these excerpts are meant to give readers a sense of what it is like to do science in Aniakchak.

TRAVEL

Getting into and out of the field are always the hardest parts of the season. We have to move a huge amount of food, equipment, and people into a place where weather and tides rarely cooperate, except for narrow windows of opportunity. For the 2004 field season, we chose to fly into Aniakchak from King Salmon. The weather reports were not good when we arrived in town on the 27th of June. We waited two days before attempting to reach Aniakchak. Our pilot crossed immediately to the Pacific coast where he thought he could follow the shoreline while staying underneath the dense clouds. The "ceiling", however, dropped down to the water after an hour of flying, and we had to turn around when we were probably less than a half hour from Aniakchak. At $500 per hour for the flight time, by budget could not handle too many of these unsuccessful attempts. My journal records my relief when things went better the next day (and my frustration, when the weather delays returned).

1 July 2004, 11:20 PM,
Aniakchak Lagoon Spike Camp

Ross and I are here. Branch River Air (a local air taxi service) flew us out in one of their

Beavers on floats. We left King Salmon around 3 PM, cruised down the Peninsula west of Becharof and the Ugashik lakes, then cut up through the mountains a little before Aniakchak Caldera. We had climbed fairly high, to 7,000 feet. That way we came in over the cloud cover. Reaching the Pacific side, we saw the coast was blanketed by what seemed to be a solid mass of clouds. I was a bit concerned that we wouldn't be able to land after all that flying. It didn't take more than a few minutes, though, before we spotted a break in the clouds. We dropped down through the opening and there was Aniakchak Bay. Perfect!

Unfortunately, we had to land in the lagoon, about two miles from where we wanted to set up the camp. It took Ross and me three hours of hard work just to haul our gear from the lagoon drop off to the bay side. Now we're spike camping on the broad spit at the lagoon outlet.

2 July 2004, 10:30 AM
Aniakchak Lagoon Spike Camp

I'm very thirsty. My water bottles are empty. Our nearest freshwater is a small stream about a mile down the beach. We're just hanging out in our tents at the spike camp. Nothing to do until we go get water, which we plan to do when the rain lets up a bit. The earliest we expect another flight bringing more gear and crew is around 3PM (at high tide so they can land in the lagoon if necessary). The plane will come only if the weather changes. Things looked good when I woke up this morning, but a solid wall of drizzle moved in about an hour ago. Now we wait.

7PM — It's been pretty steady rain since this morning. We got a little break around 2 PM, but it only lasted long enough for us to get water. We actually walked all the way down to where we want to camp. It will be buggy, but sheltered. Saw a dead eagle on the beach and my first Aniakchak fox. It's now too late for a plane to come in even if the weather broke. Hopefully tomorrow we'll see an improvement.

The weather didn't get any better. Ross and I didn't know it at the rime, but it would be three more days before we would get all our gear and crew out to Aniakchak. All in all, a pretty typical experience when attempting to fly into or out of the Preserve. We decided for 2005 that we would hire a boat instead of trying to fly multiple plane-loads into the field. We were fortunate to find John Jones a commercial fisherman operating our of Chignik Lagoon. He and his wife, Colleen, both lifelong residents of Alaska, had traveled many times to Aniakchak Bay. John knew exactly where we needed to go and how to best get us there. The trip our went remarkably smooth, especially considering we had triple the crew and gear of our 2004 field season.

23 June 2005, 9AM,
Aniakchak Base Camp

I'm exhausted. Our camp is a disaster. We left Chignik Lagoon around 4 PM yesterday and arrived in Aniakchak Bay at 9:30 PM. It took less than hour to off load our gear, but then we spent over two hours moving just a portion of our gear pile up from the beach and on to our campsite. Linda and I started putting the Weatherport together (a large Quonset style tent) while the rest of the crew continued carrying stuff up from the beach. By 1 AM, I had everyone working on the Weatherport. We never got it up. The frame is out of whack. It was too dark to see how to fix it. It was raining and buggy and we hadn't eaten since lunch. We managed to get our personal tents up around 2:30 AM and grab a few granola bars then stumble into our sleeping bags. Now it's morning. It's still raining and we still have not eaten a real meal. I'm exhausted but we've got to get back to work.

11:45PM — Well, we have our Weatherport up, kitchen partially organized, all our gear up from the beach, latrine dug, water filters filtering water, solar panel charging our batteries,

and our bear fence up and running The chaos of this morning has been brought under control.

Time for a little backtracking to yesterday's boat ride. The trip from Chignik Lagoon to Aniakchak was a very interesting experience. We spent several hours in the morning loading the boat, the "Zachery J." John Jones had anchored his boat so that it was high and dry at low tide and they could run the ATVs right up to the boat. Larry McCormick and Donny Lind (residents from Chignik Lagoon and Chignik Lake) drove the ATVs. John's daughter, Shanda, and his deckhand stowed all the gear into the fishhold, so we had a lot of people helping.

We had to wait until 4 PM for the tide to come up enough to float the boat. Then we all piled in, along with Donny's wife, Ronna, and their daughter Natalie. I spent most of the trip up on top of the pilothouse. Although it was a little cold, I could see everything from up there—mostly a lot of puffins and murres, but also three or four whales. For a Minnesota boy, it was an exciting experience.

WILDLIFE

Aniakchak Preserve, like much of southwest Alaska, has an abundance of wild animals. Many of my journal entries note the encounters we had with the various "residents" of Aniakchak Bay.

13 July 2005, 9:30PM (70° F),
Aniakchak Base Camp

Partly sunny today. It rained across the bay, but we were spared on our side. Winds are very light. Moderate surf from a two-foot swell is hammering the beach. Makes a thunderous sound. I'm wondering if we were missed by a big storm and the swell is the only sign of its passing.

An excellent and interesting day. I had my call with Nancy and Parker (I called my wife and son once or twice a week on a satellite phone). *That always cheers me up. I tend to get grumpy in between calls. I made the call from up on the bluff edge overlooking the ocean. The view was spectacular. The patchy clouds made the hills, bay, and mountains look richly varied in texture and color. Dark and light. Rain and sun. Very beautiful. I saw all kinds of animals as I talked, including 4 or 5 Dall porpoises swimming from the inner bay to the outer bay; several sea otters; a seal—which was right near shore and watching me; and out towards the outer bay, a couple of gray whales. I saw their fins and spouts very clearly through the binoculars. Add the eagles, sea birds, and jumping salmon and the bay seemed teaming with life.*

1 August 2005, 11PM (53° F),
Aniakchak Base Camp

I'm beginning to notice a definite shortening of the days. It's very dark already. I'm writing by candlelight. Lots of bear activity today. We saw one bear four times—10 AM, 11:30 AM, 3 PM, and 5 PM. The last visit was the most interesting. She came at low tide and had easy pickings with all the salmon stuck in the shallows down by the stream mouth. She caught several fish in a few minutes, played with them, then without really eating more than a bite from each, went on to catch some more. At one point she had just caught a fish when an eagle swooped down and picked up another fish off the beach.

The bear didn't really give us any trouble — approaching the site a couple of times, but backing away as soon as we made some noise. She obviously had her fill of salmon and didn't really care whether she fished by the site. Eventually she wandered down the beach

and started playing with a pile of dried kelp—chewing on it like it was a big dog toy, then head butting it before falling over onto her back where her big, black feet swatted harmlessly at the air. Very fun to watch her.

2 August 2005, 8:30PM (56°F),
Aniakchak Base Camp

Light drizzle right now, despite the fact that the sun is shining on us, a little at least. Today's weather was actually fairly nice. Still SE winds and mostly overcast, but not raining and blowing. Today's highlight was the salmon. The creek by the site is so packed with humpies that the fish are literally swimming on top of each other. The bear was also around. Every time she'd get into the creek up stream from the site the salmon would all retreat down into the pool by the site. There'd be too many for the pool resulting in a splashing mass of fish spilling down stream until eventually a bunch would be pushed back into the ocean. There they'd be met by three seals and a sea lion. A reverse migration with unfortunate consequences. The scene is all the more impressive because of the large humps on the males. Their backs stick out of the shallow water making the stream look even more alive.

THE DIG

[We] archeologists excavate with great care and record very precisely our finds and our observations. Most of my journal entries are devoted to detailed descriptions of what we did on site, what we uncovered, and my impressions and working hypotheses. The South Aniakchak Bay Village is a complicated site with the remains of long abandoned houses, storage pits, and extensive deposits of garbage. We began the 2004 season digging through layer upon layer of garbage deposits, which we refer to as middens. The Aniakchak middens contain massive amounts of shell, mostly from blue mussel, sea urchin, clam, and snail, and usually crushed into tiny fragments. Next in abundance were the bones of fish, mammals, and birds. Scattered through out the middens were the occasional artifact of stone, bone, antler, or ivory. Most of these artifacts were broken and obviously intentionally discarded with the food remains.

28 July 2004, 11:15PM,
Aniakchak Base Camp

Gorgeous day. High clouds with occasional breaks providing us with some sunshine. Today's high temperature reached 69° F after a low last night of 50° F. Just enough breeze to keep the bugs down. No rain while we worked, although it was raining when I woke up.

We worked very hard today. Didn't stop digging until 6PM. We got N454 and N455 (two excavation units on the bluff edge) down to 140 centimeters below datum (about 70 inches below the ground surface). We excavated two distinct midden lenses. The upper midden was my favorite. First we found a thin deposit of solid blue mussel and sea urchin shells smashed into tiny fragments. The shell was on top of a layer of almost pure salmon bone. The lower midden had the shell and bone all mixed together—including most of a sea otter skeleton and scraps of caribou leg bone. Since these midden layers are at the very bottom of the cultural deposits, they represent some of the first meals eaten by the Aniakchak villagers. It is fascinating to think about how they might have felt as they built their houses here and started to harvest their first fish and sea mammals from their new home territory.

6 July 2005, 10:15 PM (64° F.),
Aniakchak Base Camp

Nice evening, although we had an early AM rain and a heavy shower at 3 PM. Forced us to quit for the day. Tomorrow we will build tarp shelters so we can keep working if it rains

again.

The highlight from today came from Block A where Jim and Kirsten (two of my students) each found a slate point (of a 'younger' style—probably 1000-600 years old). Linda and her crew in Block B have uncovered a scatter of fire-cracked rock, apparently from a hearth. They also found a few artifacts including a bone wedge, a quartz crystal, and several large beach cobble spalls used to scrape hides, but no diagnostics (artifacts of a style distinct to a particular time period). Right now I'm interpreting it all as part of a short-term camp created by a Koniag or Thule group. If true, then this is the best evidence for these people traveling so far down the Peninsula from any archeological site in the region.

Ross is working on a 1x1 meter unit on the slope east of the main dig. This unit has also proven very interesting. The upper layer of midden had all kinds of whole shells—as if tossed away just before the Aniakchak villagers abandoned this site (I'm guessing this since these shells were not trampled into little fragments like the shell in lower levels). Given the variety of the other animal bones in this midden, it looks to me like the last occupants were eating well. This evidence suggests that the site was not abandoned due to resource depletion. Whatever reason they finally decided to move away, it probably wasn't because they couldn't make a living in Aniakchak.

I find these speculations very exciting. To a degree we've answered two of our research questions—"who lived here?" and "why did they leave?"

Excavating the midden deposits provided us with important evidence on the Aniakchak villagers' subsistence economy and diet. To learn about other aspects of their society we wanted to excavate their houses. On the surface of the site we could still see several shallow depressions indicating the locations of the pithouses used by the villagers. All that remains of these structures after l,500 years is usually just a compact dirt floor, perhaps a fire hearth and a few stains marking where posts had been placed to support the roof. Although finding a floor and defining its dimensions and shape can be very tricky, houses offer a treasure trove of information. Our goal for the 2005 field season was to excavate one of these houses. By recording the precise location of every artifact and feature inside the dwelling we hoped to learn about Aniakchak families and their domestic life. We had to dig over four feet down before we found our house floor. In the end, though, it proved worth the effort.

26 July 2005, 11:20PM (51° F),
Aniakchak Base Camp

A calm, but cool evening after a mostly wet day. Sporadic rain squalls and light drizzle continued today. Winds were occasionally strong out of the SE. Overcast skies and heavy surf would have made travel iffy by or by plane. Good thing we didn't have to leave today.

We had our "find of the season" today. Jim was digging in Block A when he handed me a tiny bit of "bone" to find out what it was. I cleaned it off a bit and found in my hand a small ivory maskette. I think it was made to be worn by a doll. We put it in rhoplex immediately—so it seems to be stable and not deteriorating. Jim found the maskette on the house floor between 130 and 135 cm below datum. The floor in this end of Block A is very difficult to see. We've been finding lots of stone flakes (debris from flintknapping stone tools) and a little bit of bone, but few other artifacts—nothing like the large number of finds at the south end of the house.

5 August 2005, 11:30PM (58° F),
Aniakchak Base Camp

Today brought a great end to our excavation. We dug the last bit of the house floor and the

whole structure finally started making sense. The north end of the house, where we found the ivory mask, but few other artifacts, appears to be where the family members slept. The south end is where we found all kinds of features, artifacts, and animal bones suggesting that they used this area for their domestic chores (cooking, food storage, tool making, sewing, etc). In the southeast corner, they had dug a narrow drainage ditch (probably to catch the water flowing downhill. I'm guessing this because we also had problems with wet floors on rainy days). They had used this trench to discard or store a lot of stuff. We found eight or nine bone sewing needles, a fish hook shank, and several concentrations of stone flakes in this corner of the house. Most activities in the south end, however, were clearly focused around a large fire hearth. This feature was lined with clay and filled with charcoal and fire-cracked rock. Surrounding the hearth we found several storage pits and lots of fish bones. My favorite find was a small bone knife. It looks like a letter opener.

Near the end of the day I found myself standing inside the remains of the house. Although my crew was working all around me, I had a very strong feeling for the people that had lived here. I could see everything that we had dug—the pits and postholes. I imagined a fire burning in their hearth and the shadows flickering on the walls. I wondered about the people of this house. Did kids live here? Maybe the ivory maskette was for someone's doll. I imagined a family eating meals, sewing clothing, and repairing their fishing lines. Although I was a thousand years late, I was there—in their house.

It was a satisfying moment, but it didn't last for long. There was activity all around me, requiring my attention. Linda was excavating the hearth. Gina was mapping the last of the floor units while Ayla collected all the plotted artifacts. Dave and Jim were digging the subfloor level and Ross was screening everyone's dirt. With so much happening at once, I just supervised. We stayed on site until after 9 PM and didn't finish supper and evening chores until 11 PM. We still have a lot to finish before the boat comes to get us. Tomorrow we'll profile and backfill, then Sunday we can pack everything up and break camp on Monday. It'll be a busy couple of days, but we should have plenty of time to get everything done.

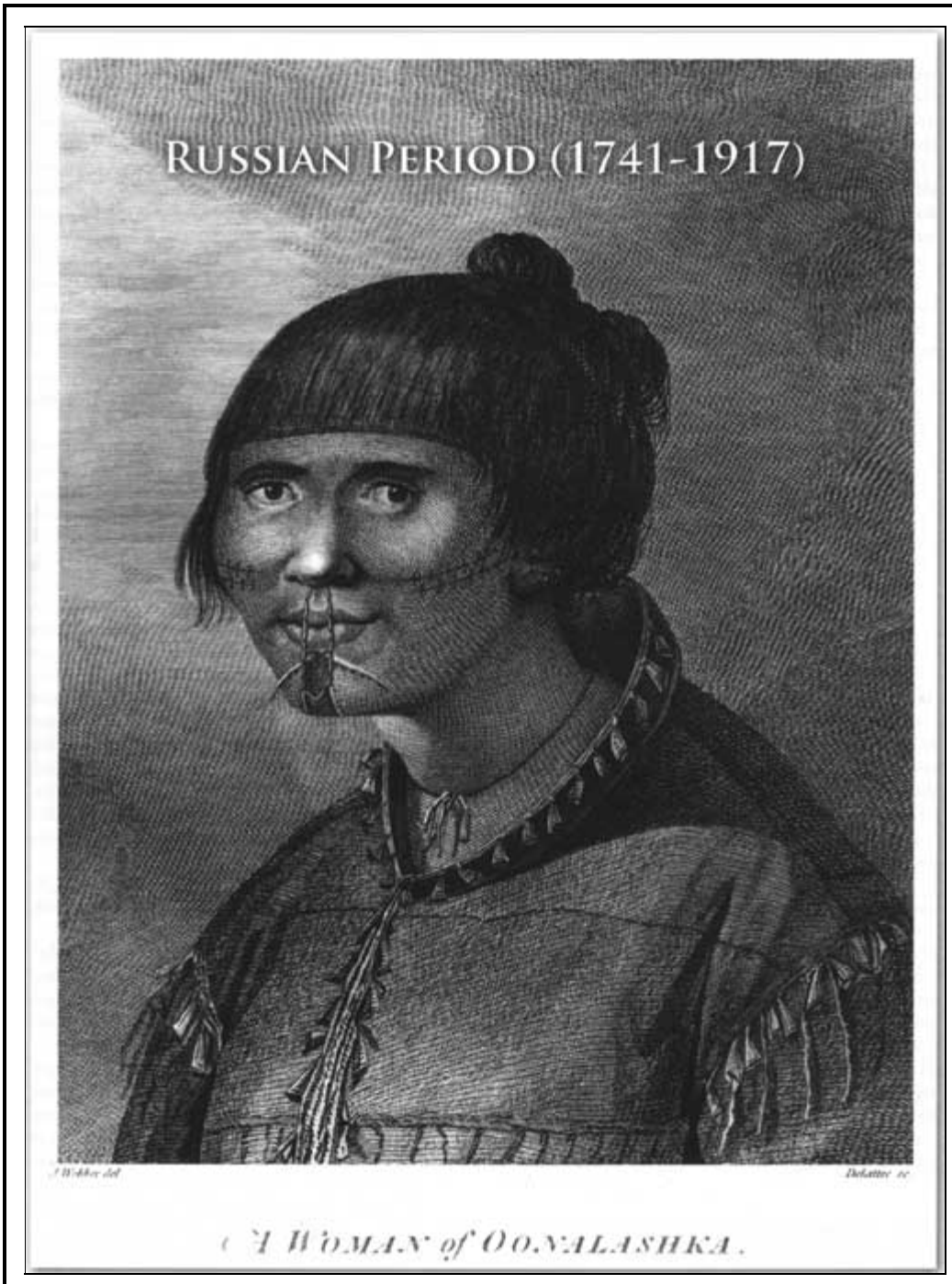
Of course, things did not go according to my plan. I called John Jones on the satellite phone the next day to arrange our pick-up. He told me that the weather forecast called for gale force winds by Sunday. Our choice was either to have him come that day or we would have to wait until the storm passed. We chose to leave ahead of the storm. We finished the site work, broke camp, and loaded everything on John's boat by around 1 AM Sunday morning. Somehow this seemed an appropriate end to our field season.

<<< **Previous** <<< **Contents**>>> **Next** >>>

ANIAKCHAK

Beyond the Moon Crater Myth
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape
A Historic Resource Study for Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

Russian Period (1741-1917)



The sketch is an example of the people with whom Russians made first contact. *Woman of Oonalaska* [engraved portrait by John Webber of Aleut woman with tattooed face and linked

nose labret.] From: *Cook, James A. (Captain) 1728-1779, a Voyage to the Pacific Ocean.* Alaska State Library Collection, PCA 20-226.

CHAPTER THREE
1741: A Brave New World Begins

> *If you would understand Russia, and interpret and forecast aright the march of great events, never forget that, for her, eastward the march of empire takes its way; that as the sap rises, as the sparks fly upward, as the tides follow the moon, so Russia goes to the sunrise.*
>
> Henry Norman, All the Russians.
> As quoted in Benson Bobrick, *East of the Sun: The Epic Conquest and Tragic History of Siberia* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1992).

During their flight to Chignik in 1931, Father Hubbard and his pilots, Harry Blunt and Al Monsen, stopped at the village of Meshik to wait out a storm. The recently blackened landscape, combined with the foreignness of the inhabitants they encountered, probably made the men feel something like William Shakespeare's lost souls in the *Tempest,* for they, too, might have envisioned this small village, clinging to the edge of the Alaska Peninsula, as "a brave new world."

At Meshik, the three men met with the village residents. After offering a young boy andhis tearful sister an orange, Blunt interjected, "Gosh! It makes me feel like Columbus discovering America!" [1] Perhaps flying along the most northwestern part of the North American mainland without seeing any evidence of human occupation upon the flat, lake-studded tundra made Blunt feel as if he were the first to lay eyes upon this world. But Hubbard knew he was neither the first explorer nor scientist, not even the first priest, to visit the Alutiit living in this region.

In *Alaskan Odyssey,* the Glacier Priest described the small village. Subtly underscoring his description were nearly two hundred years of cultural change that had previously occurred there since the time of his contact:

> Meshik is a small jumble of barabaras, as the native dugouts are called, with here and there a slightly more pretentious wooden cabin as well as a deserted Russian church and empty cannery building. The village lies on a bar with the sand-choked harbor of Port Heiden on one side and a shallow enclosed lagoon on the other. It is practically deserted ever since the flu epidemic of war-time carried off most of its inhabitants. [2]

Long before Hubbard visited the Alutiiq villages of Meshik and Chignik, the indigenous peoples of the Alaska Peninsula had encountered other explorers. The first were the Russians. Some people, including many Alaskans, may find it hard to imagine that the initial European expansion into the North Pacific did not come by way of familiar trails that penetrated the American West, but, instead, followed ancient routes through the Asian Far East. Like Columbus, who connected continents on both shores of the Atlantic Ocean, Vitus Bering linked the Pacific worlds the way the land bridge had 20,000 years ago. Suddenly, a window had reopened and the Alaska Peninsula became a meeting point where various cultures from Europe, Asia, and America intersected. According to Lydia Black, Professor *Emeritus* at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, the founding of Russian America was a natural result of Russia's conquest of Siberia and its eastward drive to meet the Pacific.

To a government whose most important source of imperial revenue came from furs, Alaska was "a brave new world." Its discovery gave Russia a foothold along the northwest coast of North America and catapulted this onetime backward empire into the international world of diplomacy, especially in the North Pacific arena. [3] But it became a new world for Native Alaskans, too. The fur trade transformed identity, language, culture, religion, and people's relationship to the natural world. And, from this new world, emerged a diverse and intermingled cultural heritage. Although the Aniakchak region lay on the periphery of the Russian enterprise in southwestern Alaska, the Russian America fur trade nonetheless shaped the people and their cultures of the Alaska Peninsula as dramatically—and as perilously—as Aniakchak Volcano shaped the landscape.



Father Hubbard investigating an Aleut house on Kodiak Island. A similar house style would have been built on the central Alaska Peninsula. 1928. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., Alaskan Photograph Collection. Photograph courtesy of Santa Clara University Archives. H210n.

East of the Sun

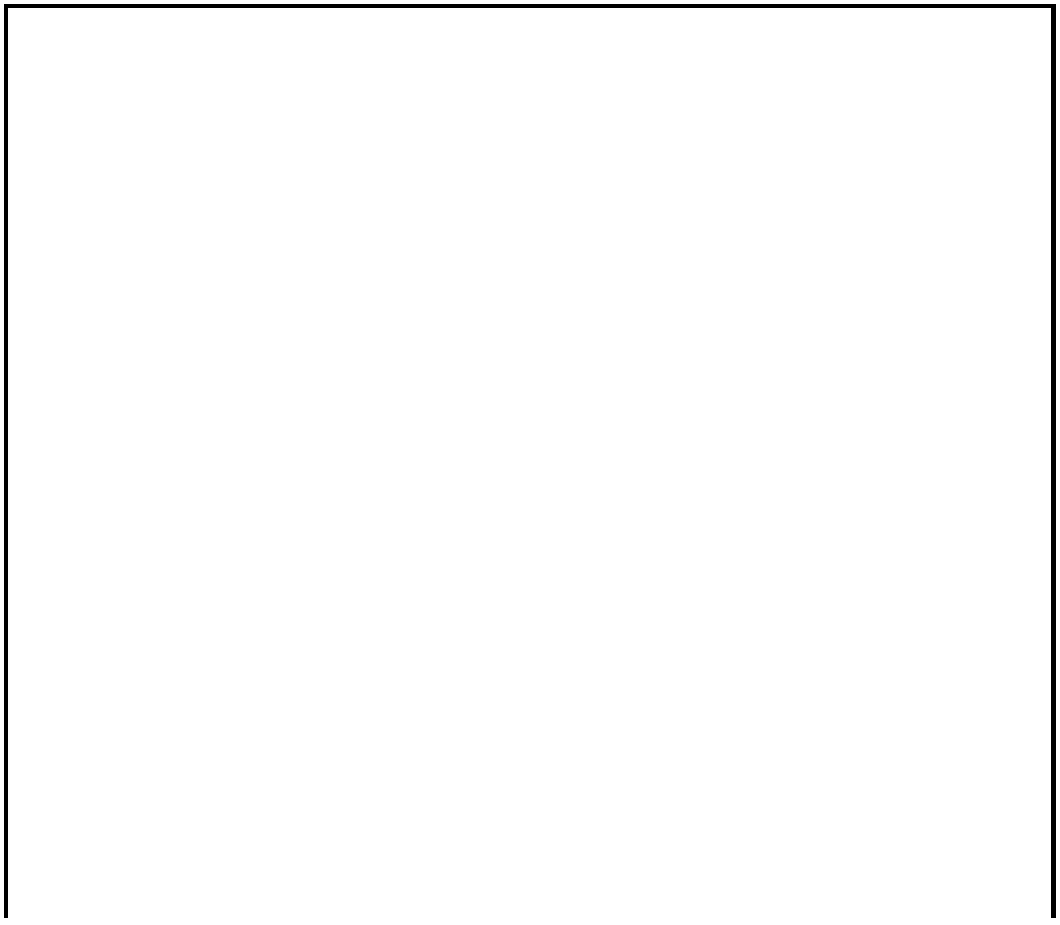
The quest that took Russians eastward was not simply for enlightened discovery or nationalistic glory, for the Russians looked north in search of new lands to settle and new opportunities to exploit. Just two years after Columbus discovered North America, the Russians began to penetrate and expand into Siberia on a two-pronged route. Over two centuries, Russians moved south into the Amur River Basin, while other Russian explorers entered the northern region of the Kamchatka Peninsula. The southern route offered the best chance to establish agriculture and access the Pacific, but there the Russians confronted the Manchus, rulers of Imperial China, who guarded the northern border of Manchuria ferociously. As a result, the Russians turned north, considering the Kamchatka prong their window to the Pacific. The problem with the northern route, however, was that the *taiga,* or the Siberian tundra, could not support agriculture. As Russia's territory expanded into Alaska, this factor became a growing concern. [4]

Russian advancement beyond the Urals and their eventual conquest of Siberia followed a pattern of interaction extending back many centuries. This process of expansion was conducted through a long-established institution called the *iasak* system—a systematic

collection of tribute in the form of furs. [5] Exchange between the conquerors and the conquered was well understood among all Siberian cultures. For example, Russians paid *iasak* to the Mongols after the Mongols conquered Moscow in the thirteenth century. The Mongols also extracted *iasak* from most of the Siberian tribes. Those tribes, when gaining dominance over their neighbors, in turn followed the same practice. [6] The delivery of the *iasak* signified submission to the higher authority, and as the Russian Empire grew, the collection of the *iasak* became the most important method of obtaining state revenues.

By the fourteenth century, northern settlers explored, hunted, and fished Siberia's arctic coast, but most Russians extracted Siberia's natural resources through the *iasak* system, which brought them into direct contact with Siberia's indigenous peoples. Not surprisingly, this system was frequently described as brutal. Often Russians took family members hostages, to coerce Siberian hunters into compliance. In some respects, especially in their relations with Alaska Natives, Russian fur hunters transported aspects of an old, well-established system to the new American world. But what the Crown understood, and its policies would later underscore, was that barbarity was not consistently profitable.

Thus, similar to New England or the Great Lakes region, or any other place where colonists interacted with indigenous peoples, the central Alaska Peninsula became a shared space between Russians and Alutiit that developed during the fur trade era. At first, relations forged during a period that ran approximately from 1761 to 1780 were marked by brutality, theft, slavery, and oppressive taxation, for the Russians lacked central control, and instability led to a great deal of violent conflict. By 1780, however, a new era commenced, one characterized by consolidation and relative cooperation between Russians and Alutiit. Although acts of violence between the *promyshlenniki* and the Alutiit continued through the era, after 1799, the Russian relationship with the majority of the Native groups in Russian America was increasingly determined by the desire to develop cooperative, continuous, uninterrupted trade. [7]





Drawing of two traders holding a fish; probably Russian and English; ship and seals on left. Alaska State Library Collection, PCA 20-177.

First Contact: 1741 to 1761

In 1740, Alutiit lived on the peninsula as they had done for centuries—subsisting upon resources from both land and sea. Bering's famed second Kamchatka Expedition the

following year would set into motion forces of change that completely altered their world. In 1740, Alaska stood on the brink of a new era.

The stage for such monumental change was set during Bering's return trip home, as the crew of the eighty-foot packet, the *St. Peter,* sailed down the length of the Alaska Peninsula in the silence and solitude of a fog-bound ocean. They passed the entire length of Kodiak Island without anyone seeing it. Similarly, no one observed the broken flanks of the Aniakchak Caldera. But toward evening on August 1, 1740, the mist began to lift. On August 3, crewmen saw the snow-clad peak of Mt. Chiginagak, a volcano located just north of Aniakchak. The next day the *St. Peter* sailed among the Semidi Islands, so dense that the naturalist, Georg Steller, observed that the ship seemed to be hemmed in by land. "Wherever we wanted to get out," noted the naturalist, "we found land in the way." [8] Anxious to get to open water, the officers decided to sail farther south, hoping for fair winds.

But with little fresh food and exposure to constant dampness, scurvy had broken out among twenty-one crewmembers, forcing the *St. Peter* to drop anchor in the narrow strait between Nagai and Near islands in the Shumagin Island group, located off the coast of the Alaska Peninsula, just south of Chignik Bay. After burying their dead and filling their casks with brackish water that made the crew even sicker, the ill-fated *St. Peter* steered for open sea, but the breeze died down and the ship failed to clear the island. Stuck, the *St. Peter* dropped the bower behind Bird Island. "Here the event occurred," Steller wrote in his journal, "through which, unexpectedly and without searching, we got to see Americans." [9]

"We all waited for them with the greatest eagerness and utter amazement," wrote Steller as men in two slender skin boats paddled toward them from shore. [10] Pausing a short distance away, the paddlers commenced trade with the strangers. From their *baidarkas,* the "Americans" threw "feathered sticks" and "face paint" to the Russians while the sailors returned the "sign of good friendship" with "two Chinese tobacco pipes" and "some glass beads." [11] This ceremonial exchange marked the beginning of the Russian trade economy in Northwestern America.

After an exchange of numerous gifts, the Native paddlers beckoned the Russians to follow. Lieutenant Sven Waxell; Steller; a Chukchi interpreter, who was present to communicate with indigenous peoples in Siberia; and nine other heavily armed crewmen rowed the longboat to shore. [12] While on the beach, the Russians encountered men and women, who were "full of wonder and friendliness." [13] One elderly man, who carried his kayak one-handed, approached Lieutenant Waxell. The lieutenant offered the man a sip of vodka by demonstrating that the drink was palatable, but the American spat it out. [14] With only fifteen minutes to observe each other, Steller's journal entry for that day captured the earliest known description of an Alaska Native, who occupied the southern tip of the Alaska Peninsula just south of Aniakchak:

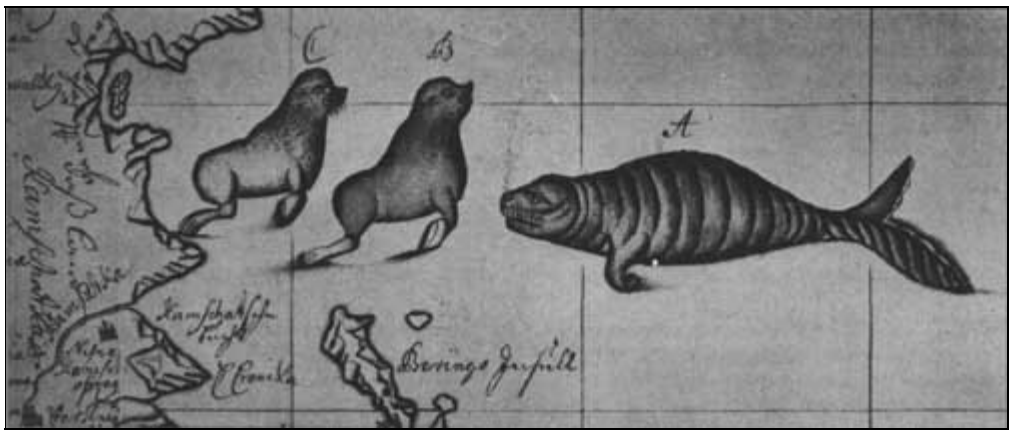
> All had on whale-gut shirts with sleeves, very nearly sewed together, which reached to the calf of the leg. Some had the shirts tied below the navel with a string, but others wore them loose. Two of them had on boots and trousers which seemed to be made after the fashion of the Kamchadals out of seal leather and dyed brownish-red with alder bark. [15]
>
> These people regard it as a special ornament to pierce holes anywhere in their faces, as we do in the lobes of the ears, and to insert in them various sticks and bones. One fellow had stuck a slate . . . through the nasal septum. Another had a piece of bone stuck through crosswise about the chin just under the lower lip. Still another had a bone like it fastened in the fore head, and another, finally, had a similar one in each of the wings of the nose. [16]

As the wind and surf pounded harder against the shore, Waxell ordered his crewmen back to the boat. According to Steller, the Americans were reluctant to let go of their Chukchi companion, "whose speech and looks fully resembled theirs." [17] Failing to induce the Siberian to remain, the Americans seized him, which caused a struggle among the men. Fearing the worst, Waxell ordered two musket shots fired into the air. The boom thundered off the cliffs, sending the terrified Americans to the ground. The sound of gunfire, heard on the Alaska Peninsula that day for the first time, would echo throughout southwestern Alaska for the next century. [18]

The eight days the *St. Peter* spent in the Shumagin Islands sealed the fate of this now infamous crew. Autumn storms had arrived, and their gale-force winds tossed the ship in a constant fury, adding misery to the men inflicted with scurvy. Death, one after the next, turned Pacific waves to graves. Following the snowy volcanic peaks of the Aleutian Chain, williwaw winds, localized, but fierce North Pacific storms, continually struck them, one more terrible than the next. "Our ship was like a piece of dead wood," wrote Waxell, "we had to drift hither and thither at the whim of the wind and waves." [19] By the end of October, no crewman was well enough to steer the ship.

Realizing they could not make it to Russia, the crew wintered on an unknown island that they eventually named Bering Island, after their captain, who died and was buried in its rocky soil on December 8, 1741. During their eight-month stay on the island, the men survived by consuming a "large group of sea otters" Steller observed of them, "Their fearlessness was proof that they had never seen man before." [20] By March, the sea otters moved offshore, but were soon replaced by fur seals. Luckily for the men, the expedition had stranded itself on one of the major rookeries of the northern fur seal. [21] Along with the fur seals, sea lions also came, and as the men recovered from scurvy, they ventured out to hunt several young sea cows, which they considered a real delicacy. Improved health even allowed the men to kill the pesky Arctic foxes that harassed them ceaselessly. [22]

Those who survived the tempest of the North Pacific and the long winter on Bering Island returned to Kamchatka with some nine hundred pelts of sea otter, fur seal, and blue Arctic fox, killed for food and clothing. [23] The pelts from these fur-bearing animals commanded very high prices from Chinese merchants in Kiakhta, a trading post on the Siberian-Mongolian border south of Lake Baikal. Word spread that these "American" pelts were more valuable than the Siberian sable, which two centuries earlier had drawn the Russians across Siberia in their "Urge to the Sea." [24] Thus, these two events—the ceremonial trade conducted with the "Americans" and the luxuriant goods Bering's crew sold in China—initiated a rush for American furs that would completely transform Aniakchak's living world.



Drawing of a fur seal, sea lion and sea cow on Waxel's chart of Bering's voyage, 1741. From:

Golder, Frank Alfred, Bering's Voyages. Alaska State Library Collection, PCA 20-182.

Native Peoples of the Alaska Peninsula At the Time of Contact: 1761

In the early years of the Fur Rush, the closest Russian landfall to the central peninsula occurred in 1761, when the merchant ship, the 62-foot *Sv. Gavril* wintered in Bechevin Bay, establishing for the first time a long-term European presence on the Alaska Peninsula. About two years later, Russian *promyshlenniki* sailed past the northwest flanks of Aniakchak Crater, and into the north side of Bristol Bay, where they established private trade networks with Yupiik residents of the Nushagak River. [25]

At the time of contact, most Alutiiq inhabitants of the Alaska Peninsula lived in a number of small settlements in which they resided during their seasonal hunting and fishing rounds. It is very likely that people frequented the Aniakchak region, moving from coast to coast, from one seasonal site to the next. [26]

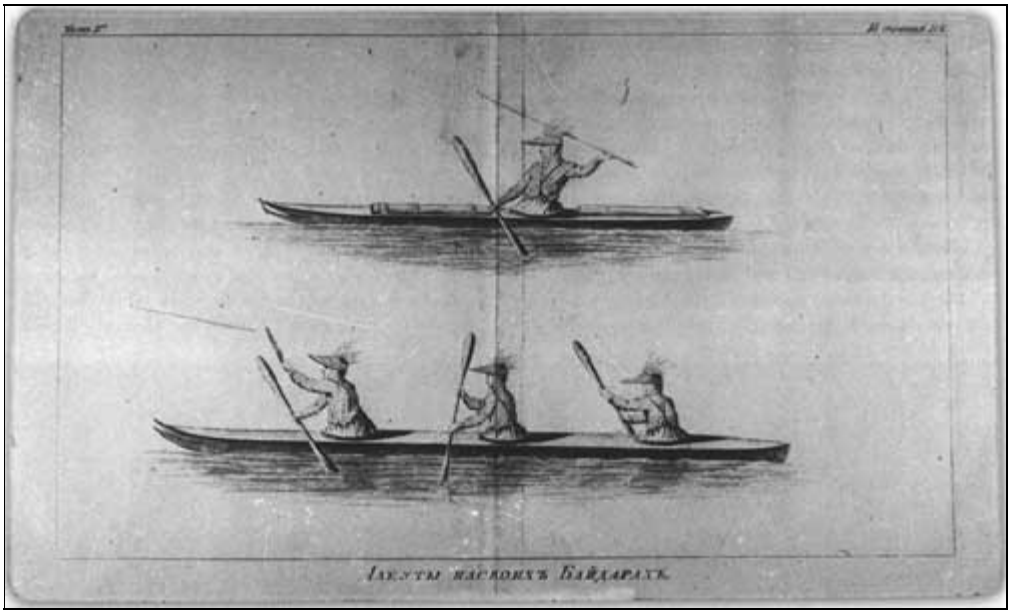
Early Russians reported that the Alutiit living on the north end of the peninsula regularly traveled to Sutwik and Semidi islands to hunt or make war on southern tribes. Quite possibly, these warrior-hunters stopped to rest or wait out a storm in the protected Kujulik and Aniakchak bays. Alutiit living on Chignik Lagoon used the Aniakchak coastline as part of their customary hunting and fishing grounds. [27] On the Bering Sea, Russians noted that a group of Alutiit, known as the Ugashentsy, lived along the Ugashik River and traveled across the peninsula to the Pacific side to hunt abundant sea mammals, skirting, if not entering, Aniakchak along the way. [28]

By 1761, when the *promyshlenniki* reached the Alaska Peninsula, they found a variety of people all speaking different languages. Besides the Alutiiq speakers, who occupied most of the Alaska Peninsula and Kodiak Island, there were three other ethnic groups who called the peninsula home. The Unangan speakers lived offshore of the Shumagin Islands, and shared a similar language and culture with their Aleutian Island neighbors. In the northeast section of the Alaska Peninsula, lived Dena'ina Athabaskan Indians, an inland people who had moved into the region approximately 1,000 years earlier. [29] Finally, the Yupiik-speaking Kiatagmiut, as well as the more recent Aglurmiut, occupied the northwestern portion of the peninsula near Bristol Bay. [30]

The Russians responded to such diversity by simply renaming the people they encountered. *Promyshlenniki* and missionaries called the Alaska Peninsula *Aliaksa* and referred to those people who lived there as *Aliaksintsy*, meaning Alaskans. [31] They also called many Alutiit "Americans," a term they used to designate all indigenous peoples they encountered in their New World dominion. As the fur trade moved beyond the Aleutians, Russians assigned the catchall term *Aleut* to both the Unangan and Alutiiq speakers, modifying each group with a geographic adjective. Thus, those people living on Kodiak Island and the Alaska and Kenai peninsulas became known as *Koniag Aleut.* As Russian expansion spread northward, missionaries and traders even began to call the peoples bordering Bristol Bay *Aleuts.* [32] Not only did the idiom create confusion for anthropologists attempting to sort out the ethnographic history on the peninsula for years to come, but the name *Aleut* eventually changed people's self-identity, as well. To this day, many people of the Alaska Peninsula refer to themselves as Aleuts, for the term "Alutiiq" is simply the word *Aleut,* spoken in the Native language. [33]

According to both Native and Russian accounts, the various ethnic groups living on the Alaska Peninsula were anything but unified. For the most part, they were all bitter enemies, defending their territory, while attacking regions occupied by other groups. Oral tradition offers evidence that Dena'ina warriors waged war on other peninsula groups living as far

south as Lake Becharof, [34] while Aleuts frequently fought against their enemies—the Alutiit of Kodiak Island. Kodiak Alutiit even battled their own kin, who inhabited coastal areas on the Alaska Peninsula.



Sketches of two Baidarkas (skin boats); top shows Aleut man with spear, bottom shows three Aleuts rowing. From: Sarychev, Gavrill Andreevich, *Atlas of the Northern Part of the Pacific Ocean* compiled in sheets by the Imperial Navy Department from the latest reports and maps, 1826. Alaska State Library Collection, PCA 20-56.

Many Yupiik stories discuss a time shortly before the Russians arrived when peninsula people were pushed southward and inland by invading Yupiit from the north. Russian reports concur, for in the 1830s, Russian American Chief Manager Wrangell explained how the Aglurmiut, who were themselves displaced by their enemies, the Kuskokwim, invaded the Ugashentsy and forced them to flee from the Nushagak River:

> The Agolegmiuts [Aglurmiut] and the Kuskokvim [Kuskokwim] are enemies, since the former were driven from their homes on the banks of the Kuksokvim...they finally moved away to Nunivok [Nunivak] Island and another island at the mouth of the Nushagak, where they settled under the protection of the commander of the [Novo] Aleksandrovskii Redoubt and were safe guarded from the attacks of the Kuksokvim . . . For their part, the Agolemiuts expelled the natives living at the mouth of the Nushagak, and these wandered as far as the eastern half of the Aliaska Peninsula and are now known as the Severnovtsy (Northerners) and Ugashentsy [35]

Stories, told and retold, described how the roving bands of Aglurmiut men terrorized western Alaska. Moving down the peninsula toward Chignik Bay, the invasion eventually involved most of the various ethic groups on the peninsula—Alutiiq, Aleuts, and Yupiik all engaged in regional warfare. If one were to view such conflict from the perspective of the local tribes, they might describe it as a kind of world war. [36] Despite battle, displacement, and drawn boundaries, Alutiit and Yupiik seemingly interacted and the phenomenon of cultural borrowing grew. When the Russians arrived, they noted a strong connection between Ugashik and Katmai people, as well as between Ugashik and Nushagak people. In 1897, according to Russian observers, the Orthodox community of Chignik consisted of Creoles, *Aleuts* [Alutiit] and Aglomiuts." Such records indicate a lasting influence of the Yupiik invaders, and

demonstrate that during times of peace or war, human cultures seldom remain static. [37]

In the days prior to contact, trade went hand in hand with warfare. For instance, slaves, taken in war from Unangan, Dena'ina, or Yupiik, could be bought and sold, given as gifts, or bartered back to their original villages. [38] Significantly, inhabitants of Alutiiq settlements maintained affiliations with former allies, and, therefore, established relationships necessary for trade. From the Alaska Peninsula, people exchanged sinew and caribou skin for amber and bone ornaments, which they received from the *Koniags* from Kodiak Island. [39] Through extensive trade routes that reached far into the interior and along the Northwest coast, Alaska Peninsula groups were even able to obtain items such as the highly valued dentalium shells and pearls from Dena'ina middlemen. [40]

Such widespread trade was apparent when the crew of the *St. Peter* encountered the *Aleuts* of the Shumagins. Stunned, Steller recorded in his journal that two of the men carried "a long iron knife in a sheath of very poor workmanship." The naturalist observed that "it was of iron, and besides that, it was not like any European product." Steller reasoned, "Either the Americans had iron ore and knew how to smelt and work it, or they had traded the knives from the Chukchis." [41] Thus, the Alutiiq desire to acquire luxury goods was not a phenomenon restricted to the contact period, for it was also a characteristic trait of late prehistoric Alutiiq society. [42]

Besides warriors and traders, the people the Russians encountered were extraordinary sea mammal hunters. Alutiiq hunters donned elaborate bentwood head gear that they intended would transform them into master seamen, capable of braving the ocean and its dangers. The helmets masked the hunter's human identity from his prey, and at the same time, exhibited an ingenious work of art. [43] Decoys, made out of the same animal, were cleverly used to hunt seals. [44] The skin sea kayak, or *bidarka*, however, was arguably the most important piece of technology used by the sea mammal hunters. Like the Aleuts of the Aleutian Islands, the Alutiit impressed Russian observers with their skill in building, maneuvering, and hunting from these boats. [45] As the Russians quickly learned, the people of the Aleutians, the Alaska Peninsula, and Kodiak Island were the best hunters of sea otters in the world. [46] Numerous accounts by visitors acknowledged the Alutiit mastery of the sea. Hieromonk Gideon, an Orthodox official sent to report on Russian America in 1803, described the methods used by Kodiak Islanders to hunt sea otters:

> The first man who sights a sea otter signals the others by lifting his paddle. The others try to encircle the place at a distance within range of their spears. Only those who occupy the forward hatches throw the spears, everyone at will, before each other, while those in the rear hatches maneuver the baidarkas. Sometimes the sea otter is hit by two spears and in such a case the carcass belongs to the hunter whose spear struck the animal closer to the head or above the other spear. If the spears are spaced evenly, then that hunter receives the sea otter who, before commencement to shoot, uttered the cry: "Ku-ko-ko!" [47]

When the Russians arrived on the peninsula, they encountered a people with a highly organized social structure. For spiritual guidance, communities followed three specialists: the shaman, a healer, and a wise man, all of whom mediated between the complex human and spiritual realms. [48] Politically, no region-wide territorial government existed on the Alaska Peninsula. The village was the basic political unit, where each family was represented by an *anayugak*. The *anayugak* ruled by maintaining respect as a skilled hunter and warrior. He was known to be a persuasive speaker and was responsible for amassing and redistributing wealth through gifts and rewards. Women, too, had the means to wield power. Some of the girls were even raised as boys, which entitled them to participate in councils of men. Others were trained as shamans and maintained important positions in society. [49] Russian visitors

also noted that Alutiiq children exercised power over their parents, for when they cried, children were usually given everything they needed or wanted. Accordingly, parents never struck children; they exerted control through lecturing and shaming. [50]

Thus, when the Russians arrived on the Alaska Peninsula in the 1760s, a people with a complex understanding of how they fit in the universe, met them. As the Russians observed, residents maintained a deep, comprehensive relationship with their surrounding environment. Yet, these were not a people living in a utopian world. Even before they encountered the Russians, the people of the Alaska Peninsula had experienced ethnic conflict, cultural aggression, and social displacement. They had developed a strong tradition of barter among themselves and with interior groups. Communities respected strong leadership in the human world and feared those with wisdom of the spirit world. They were deadly warriors, stealthy hunters, and loving parents. And, in many respects, the Russians did not have to introduce or initiate unfamiliar trade activity in order to meet their economic demands. Rather, the newcomers had to simply intensify practices already in place. [51]

Violent Encounters: 1761-1780

At the time of contact, the combination of profit and politics drove the Russians eastward into Alutiiq territory. This was certainly clear to Georg H. Von Langsdorff, a young Russian naturalist, who observed that:

> The constant decrease in the number of sea-otters taken for some years upon the coast of Kamschatka [Kamchatka], and the great advantages derived from the trade in these valuable skins, induced the Russians to extend their possessions eastward from the continent of Asia; first, to the [Aleutian] islands between that coast and America; and finally, to the north-west coast of America itself. [52]

During these early years of expansion, the Russians lacked any kind of central control over their fur operations. Even though, by 1764, forty-two hunting or trading expeditions had embarked from Kamchatka for Alaska, most were organized by small groups of traders and carried out in crude vessels manned by Siberia's commoners. Bering and his crew had shown the way, but the scrimmage for advantage in the North Pacific occurred between individual Russian adventurers and the entrepreneurial *promyshlenniki.* [53]

Technically speaking, the activities of the *promyshlenniki* show that these men were not exactly hunters or even traders. They are more accurately described as pelt procurers, for the Russian word *promyshlennik* is a derivative of promysl—business. [54] Initially, the *promyshlenniki* captured sea otters without assistance. But because the Russians lacked the skills to hunt the animals from boats, they began to enlist the aid of Natives. To do this, the Russians developed simple trading relationships with the indigenous peoples, but for the most part, the *promyshlenniki,* far from view of Imperial authorities, coerced Alutiiq hunters by taking family members as hostages and, when necessary, used brute force. [55]

Therefore, following familiar patterns established long ago in Siberia, the first *promyshlenniki* to reach Alaska subdued native communities by forcing them to pay a fur *iasak.* The *iasak* system stemmed not only from the backwardness of Russian manufacturing, which consequently, made trade goods low in quantity and high in price, [56] but it was, as Professor Black notes, "a logical outgrowth of patterns established in the Russian homeland from its earliest days." [57] Likewise, James R. Gibson, author of *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods,* points out that the actual "trade" in the Russian Fur Trade at this time referred to the exchange of furs between Russian and Chinese merchants, not so much between the Russians and Alaska Natives. [58]

Brutal tactics by these first fur procurers led to a high degree of violence. The Russians may

have conscripted a flotilla of indigenous residents to hunt sea otters, but Alaska Natives fought back against Russian intrusion—so much so that they prevented the Russians from establishing permanent hunting camps on the Alaska Peninsula until after the turn of the nineteenth century. [59] One of the worst examples of violent interaction occurred in 1761, when men of the Russian ship, the *Sv. Gravil,* committed unspeakable and unprovoked atrocities to the Aleuts living on the southern portion of the Alaska Peninsula. Avenging this act, in December 1763, the Aleuts overcame long-time ethnic disagreements and mounted a concerted counter attack. At the outcome of the battle, the Russians had lost four vessels and out of two hundred men, only twelve survived. [60]

Russians reasoned that such a strike demanded revenge. Throughout the next summer, a man named Ivan Solov'iev and his crew attacked several Aleut villages, reportedly killing forty to sixty Aleut men. Moreover, Solov'iev employed a scorched-earth policy, in which he systematically destroyed the Aleuts' weapons, kayaks, and large skin boats, annihilating the villagers' means to subsist. Oral history records this destructive time as the beginning of the end of indigenous sovereignty. According to Professor Black, "the most violent acts committed by the Russians through time have come to be ascribed to this man." [61]

The combination of *promyshlenniki* autonomy and Native insurgence increased the potential for violent confrontation from Kamchatka to Kodiak. When Empress Catherine the Great took the throne in 1762, she reformed the tribute system by abolishing the hostage system and terminating quotas for pelts. To prevent the destruction of Native cultures, Catherine implemented a policy of maximum isolation, which intended to leave Native peoples in peace. The Czarina also ordered the Orthodox Church to set up churches, schools, and charity programs in Siberia, which would later extend to Russian America. Despite Catherine's enlightened intentions, the policy fell upon deaf ears, for the *promyshlenniki* needed the Natives to hunt the elusive sea otters, and although Russian goods were of poor quality, the Natives had grown somewhat dependent upon them. [62] Alaska's geographical and political distance from St. Petersburg seemed to epitomize the Russian proverb, "God dwells high, and the tsar is too far." [63]



Russian hunting route along the Central Alaska Peninsula (From Morseth, 2003). By B. Bundy.
(click on image for a PDF version)

Era of Consolidation: 1780-1799

As competition between Russian investors in the fur trade intensified, it increased their need for expert hunters, and as a result, relations between Russians and Alutiiq hunters began to shift. Hieromonk Gideon, an observer sent to Russian America by the Czarina, noted that one company was almost wholly reliant upon the skills and products of the Alutiit. Likewise, two Russian inspectors reported, "In chatting with the Aleuts [Alutiit], and in fact with all the Natives, we have come to the conclusion that they are not in slavery to the Company at all, but that in fact the Company itself has become a slave to them." [64] Moreover, supplies came slowly and expensively from Moscow and attempts to develop agriculture continually failed. Undermanned and overextended, the Russians began to depend almost entirely on Native support, making it clear that occupation of Alaska would be impossible without them. [65]

Within just twenty years of the discovery of Alaska, large Russian merchant companies with ties to the Crown had forced out the small independent entrepreneurs from the fur trade. By 1780, only two companies dominated: the Lebedev-Lastochkin Company, which mainly operated in Cook Inlet and the Upper Peninsula, and the Shelikhov-Golikov Company, or the Northeastern Company, under the direction of the Siberian merchant Grigorii Shelikhov.

At first, the shift in power was hardly recognizable. In 1780, Grigorii Shelikhov proposed that the government establish a monopoly modeled after the British Hudson Bay Company. He argued that one company could more efficiently entice the Natives and exploit Alaska's resources, but Catherine the Great, a firm believer in free enterprise and Native enlightenment, turned him down. Shelikhov was all too aware that the destruction of four Russian vessels by the Aleuts in 1763 contributed to the downfall of some notable fur traders, and consequently believed the Russian government needed permanent and orderly fur trading bases in Alaska. [66] Because the Czarina only administered a proclamation and provided no imperial military presence to back it up, Shelikhov ignored Catherine's policies toward the Natives and set out to establish a base on Kodiak Island by way of force.

In 1785, at a conference with all the mariners of his company in attendance, Shelikhov adopted a policy known as "The Resolution," which, for the first time, outlined perceived problems regarding interactions between the Russians and the Native population. [67] To understand the relationship between the Russians and Alaska's indigenous peoples during these early years, it is important to remember that Shelikhov's men lacked strength. Many new arrivals to the new world died from disease or exposure to the elements, and those who did not die were often weak from malnourishment. At the same time, tradable goods from Russia were slow to come or never came at all, making trade relations with the Alutiit more difficult. Moreover, the Alutiiq on Kodiak Island greatly outnumbered the Russians. [68] In this so-called Resolution, mariners, who feared to live even with friendly Kodiak people, agreed that emphasis should be placed on establishing relations with Natives for "bargaining" and to "subdue [them] into citizenship of the Russian Empire." Shelikhov called this approach "reconciliations." [69]

To achieve successful and safe bargaining relations, Shelikhov knew that first, "with difficulty and great battles," they had "to conquer the Native." [70] Thus, shortly after they arrived on Kodiak in 1784, Shelikhov's men used cannons and muskets to attack hundreds of men, women, and children who had fled to Refuge Rock on Sitkalidak Island, just off Kodiak. Alutiiq elder Arsenti Aminak recounted the massacre in 1851:

> The Russians went to the settlement and carried out a terrible blood bath. Only a few [people] were able to flee to Angyahtalek in baidarkas; 300 Koniags were shot by the Russians. This happened in April. When our people revisited the place in the summer the stench of the corpses lying on the shore polluted the air so badly that none could stay there, and since then the island has been

> uninhabited. After this every chief had to surrender his children as hostages; I was saved only by my father's begging and many sea otter pelts. [71]

Over the next several years, Shelikhov's men continued to coerce more Alaska Natives under the authority of the Russian Empire. Any show of rebellion was thwarted with use of weapons, terror tactics, and hostage taking. In a telling document written in 1786, Shelikhov instructed his chief manager, Konstantine Alekseevich Samoilov, on how to deal with those people already pacified:

> ...Add as many of the local pacified natives as possible to strengthen the Russians. In this manner we can move faster along the shore of the American mainland to the south toward California ... With the strengthening of the Russian companies in this land, try by giving them all possible favors to bring into subjection to the Russian Imperial Throne the Kykhtat, Aliaksa, Kinai and Chugach people.
>
> ...Appoint khaskaks and set by their own free will the amount of *iasak* to be paid into the treasury so that it will not be a burden to them. They should be made to understand that if they are good subjects and pay this tax, they will have the protection of Her Imperial majesty. The best of the natives should be given presents from the company's stock, according to their influence.
>
> ...When the above mentioned natives are subjugated, every one of them must be told that people who are loyal and reliable will prosper under the rule of our Empress, but that all rebels will be totally exterminated by Her strong hand. The purpose of our institutions whose aim is to bring good to all people, should be made known to them. They must be told to stop wars and robbery among themselves, murderous plotting against the Russians.
>
> ...You must see that the inhabitants who become subjugated do not lack food and clothing, as are apt to happen due to their laziness and negligence. Before we came they were living in poor conditions due to their profligacy and laziness. After they know what good housekeeping and order are they will acquire a taste for a better life and will become ambitious and quit their licentious and willful ways. When they know a better way of living, they will understand and will take part in the work that enlightened people are doing. [72]

To orchestrate the incorporation of Alaska hunters into the fur trade, Russians introduced a new social position to the Native community, called a *tuyuq.* Russian agents appointed *toions* (plural for *tuyuq)* from among the respected leaders, or *anayugaks.* Their role was to influence or convince their fellow villagers to work for the Company. Accordingly, the Russians aimed to model the *toions* on traditional Alutiiq leadership positions. [73] But because the *anayugak* led individual families, not entire villages, the *toions* enjoyed a different type of authority and power than their predecessors. Under the Russian system, the *tuyuq* represented the entire village. The *tuyuq* negotiated the fate of hostages and chose and sent the required number of hunters on each trip. The *toions* received the trade goods at the end of the season and redistributed them throughout the village. Certainly, a *tuyuq* was needed to organize sea mammal hunting parties that prowled the shores of Aniakchak.

In 1788, Shelikhov addressed Catherine the Great directly and petitioned her to grant his company a request for financial and military support. Although Shelikhov understood that brutality undermined lucrative barter and instructed his men to show restraint and some kindness toward the Native inhabitants, his company's activities appalled the Czarina. Since she prohibited *iasak* collection long ago, the Empress wished to know on what basis the

company had been collecting *iasak.* Not only did Catherine refuse Shelikhov's requests, but she ordered an investigation into the Company's activities. Charges of misconduct and brutality toward the Natives were lodged by Orthodox missionaries against Shelikhov and his men. Clearly, the Empress had grave doubts about expansionist aims into the Pacific: "It's one thing to trade," remarked Catherine, "quite a different thing to take possession." [74]

In 1795, Grigorii Shelikhov died, and his company took direction from his wife, Natalia, while Aleksandr Baranov, who had taken over as the company's manager in 1790, remained head of the company's day-to-day organization. Between 1741 and 1798, the Russians sent pelts from over 400,000 seals, 96,000 sea otters, and 102,000 foxes back to Russia. Perhaps because Russian America represented great wealth, four years after Shelikhov's death, the new Russian Emperor Paul I, granted the monopoly for the Russian American fur trade to Shelikhov's heirs. With the grant, all remaining fur operations in Alaska consolidated with the Shelikhov Company, forming the aptly called Russian-American Company in 1799. [75] Although it never held judicial powers, the Russian-American Company effectively became the governing body of Russia's American Territories. The new company had the right to explore and occupy newly discovered lands in the name of Russia, to establish settlements where needed, and engage in commerce with all nearby powers. Moreover, the Imperial Government authorized the Navy to use its forces to support the Company's needs. [76] Like the British East India Company, the Russian-American Company was a thinly masked imperial enterprise calling itself a trading company. [77]

Until 1799, the Native communities outside Kodiak had preserved much of their political independence by playing Shelikhov's company off against its main competitor, the Lebedev-Lastochkin Company, as well as other, smaller, entrepreneurial traders. But when Shelikhov eliminated the competition and set out to monopolize the fur trade, those groups living outside Kodiak, especially those groups living on the Alaska Peninsula, had little room to maneuver, and political independence was lost to all peoples within the immediate control of the Company. [78] "From that point on," contends ethnographer Michele Morseth, "Alaska Natives had to deal with only one set of intruders." [79] Still, with consolidation of the fur trade under one company, trade goods improved and violence and conflict subsided. Although the Russians exploited and irreparably disrupted indigenous lifeways, the merger of these two groups undoubtedly created new systems and understandings. Thus, in the enclaves of the Russian fur trade, people—both Russians and Natives—began to adapt to the new world that together they had created.

A New World For All: Russian and Alutiiq Relations in Aniakchak: 1799 to 1818

In the book, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America,* historian Colin Calloway notes that after 1492, the Americas not only became a "New World" to the Europeans, but over time, encounters and exchanges between Indians and Europeans transformed the cultural landscape into a "New World" for its indigenous peoples as well. [80] The same can be said for Alaska after 1741. As Russians and Alaska Natives began to inhabit the same land, Aniakchak, too, became a New World for all.

As Shelikhov's old company continued to "reconcile" Native inhabitants, it expanded operations to the Alaska Peninsula, including the establishment of fur hunting camps, or *artels,* near Aniakchak. In 1798, Baranov ordered his men to build an *odinochka,* or a one-man trading post, at Sutkhum, located on or near Cape Kumliun on the southern shores of Kujulik Bay. He may have established another on Sutwik Island. [81] *Artels* or work crews stationed there serviced these *odinochkas.* Compared to the Kodiak and Katmai settlements, the Sutkhum *odinochka* was never more than a minor outpost of the Russian-American Company. Almost as soon as he ordered the post built, Baranov wrote in 1800 that "only a few men are sent to Sutkhum way to hunt birds as there are not as many of them there as

formerly." [82]

Little information is known about daily life at Sutkhum, but researchers do know that both Russian and Native peoples were associated with the *artels.* Not only were these work stations the mainstays of the Russian-American economy, but *artels,* including the one that worked at Sutkhum, combined various Alaska Native peoples, which included both men and women, and through their everyday interactions, the *artels* became the stage on which a integrated Russian-American society and culture emerged.

The purpose of the Sutkhum *artel* was to supply the seasonal sea otter and seabird hunts at nearby islands. [83] As with Shelikhov, in Baranov's colonial labor system, Alutiit men were forced to join hunting parties commanded by Russian foremen, or a *baidarshchik.* [84] Hunting parties mixed together one-time enemies, Aleut, and Alutiiq, from various parts of the Alaska Peninsula, Kodiak, and Prince William Sound. Gradually, inter-tribal conflict began to cease under pressure by the Russians, who left these traditional warriors with no time for battle. Also practiced during the Baranov era, although expressly forbidden by the Imperial government, was the removal of large numbers of people from one ethnic area and their relocation to another. The Russians resettled Eastern Aleuts and Kodiak Islanders to places such as the Shumagins, the Pribilofs, and to outposts like Sutkhum on the Alaska Peninsula, while Aleuts and Alutiit were brought to the Chugach area and eventually into Tlingit territory. [85] With the advent of the Russian American fur trade, Yupiit, Aleuts, and Alutiit came to know each other more than ever before. [86] Sutkhum had become a meeting place for hunting parties from Unalaska and Kodiak who now scoured the Alaska Peninsula coast and islands—instead of each other. [87]

Beginning in March, several groups of hunters, under the leadership of a Russian *baidarshchik,* paddled to different areas each year. Those groups, who hunted near the shores of Aniakchak, headed west from Kodiak towards the Shumagin Islands via Tugidak, Chirkof, Semidi, and Sutwik islands, and then along the Alaska Peninsula coast to Cape Kumliun, where the Sutkhum *artel* was located. [88] Hunting parties at times consisted of about 150 *baidarkas.* Because of rough seas and ceaseless winds, only the best hunters with well-built *baidarkas* made the long and dangerous crossing from Tugidak to Chirkof and across to Sutkhum [89] And indeed, many never survived.

If men of the village were either too young or too old to hunt sea otters, then Shelikhov and later Baronov drafted them to hunt birds. Beginning in early May, bird hunting parties, consisting of about 100 men, left Sutkhum for the Alaska Peninsula in large, skin-covered rowing boats. The Company supplied the parties with tobacco, guns, gunpowder, lead, axes, and kettles. A skilled hunter caught 300 to 500 birds, which the women at the *artel* sewed into parkas. [90]

The small Alutiiq villages that once facilitated hunter-gatherer seasonal rounds during pre-contact times gradually disappeared, as people converged near *artel* settlements. Initially, Russians brought only hunters and servants from Kodiak to work in the *artel.* Even as late as 1803, the Russian researcher Gavril Ivanovich Davydov reported that "the Sutkhum *artel* was made up entirely of Kodiak Natives, and that there was no settlement of non-employees nearby." [91] Soon thereafter, however, some Alutiiq families had moved to Sutkhum where it was reported that a Russian Orthodox chapel once stood. [92]

As previously mentioned, in the first few decades of the Russian-American fur trade, Russians obtained these male hunters and female workers by force. But with an improvement in the quality of trade goods, by the early 1800s, hostage taking became unnecessary. The Alutiit rarely rebelled, and in fact, Patricia Partnow notes that the Alutiiq peoples of the Alaska Peninsula "had come to depend on and enjoy the goods they received in exchange for

animal pelts or hard labor." [93] Sometimes hunters received Europeans goods such as sugar, tobacco, knives, and alcohol. [94] Alutiiq women quickly enhanced their status through luxury goods like needles, cloth, thimbles, glass beads, kettle pots, ceramic dishes, and even western style dresses. The acquisition of material items meant social prestige for themselves, their families, and their children. [95] But what the Russians really altered during this time of transition was how people acquired traditional supplies. With their incorporation into the Russian-American Company's economic sphere, Native people received items they would have normally made on their own had they not been working for the Company—items such as bird skin parkas, sealskins, and nets. [96]

After the turn of the century, the Russian American fur trade was as much a social and cultural complex as it was an economic activity. The Russians needed Natives for food, technology, labor, and also for companionship. [97] If the Sutkhum *artel* was similar to other Russian *artels,* when the Native men left the community to hunt, their absence from the community provided the Alutiiq women working there the opportunity to enhance their status and family resources through other means of exchange. The arrival of families meant that women lived at the Sutkhum *artel* where, contrary to popular belief, Native women facilitated trade that occurred within the post and likely maintained some measure of control within the community. [98] Russian reports note that while all able-bodied Alutiiq men between the ages of 18 and 50 were conscripted to hunt for the Company, the women continued their regular tasks of sewing mats and baskets, gathering berries and roots, processing skins into clothing, and procuring and preparing smoked and dried salmon to supply both the Company hunting parties and the *artel* community. [99] Even in 1890, after Russia sold Alaska to the United States, U.S. census taker Ivan Petroff noticed that women participated in the fur trade: "From their village, the hunters proceed to some lonely cast near the hunting-ground, either in their canoes or by schooners and sloops belonging to the trading firms, [and] a few women generally accompanied the party to do the housework in the camp." [100]

According to Petroff, Aleutian hunters initially believed that sea otters possessed an aversion to females, but with the spread of Orthodox Christianity, the census taker reasoned that most of these beliefs eventually disappeared. Indeed, Petroff notes evidence that women shared work with men at the various fur stations: "The wives and daughters of the sealers linger around the rear of the death-dealing column, reaping a rich harvest of blubber which they carry away on their heads, the luscious oil dripping down their faces and over their garments." [101] Thus, like most staple industries, the fur trade on the Alaska Peninsula generated a distinctive regional way of life that was reflected in patterns of work.

In the groundbreaking book, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870,* author Sylvia Van Kirk convincingly shows that even more than the men, Native women welcomed the advent of Western technology, especially items such as kettles, knives, awls, and woolen cloth, that considerably reduced their onerous domestic duties. [102] Thus, it is not surprising that it was in the woman's interest to advance the cause for peaceful and productive trade between Alutiiq hunters and Russian *promyshlenniki.* Furthermore, as women literally fed participating members of the fur trade through their task as fish processors, traditional divisions of labor became significantly altered. Besides childcare and their daily chores within the *artel,* Alutiiq women began to include men's jobs into their schedules, such as mending nets, subsistence hunting. Over time, they gained more responsibility and increased their power both at home and in the community. [103]



Women remain important cultural integrators on the central Alaska Peninsula. Sassa Struck at Ugashik, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

Besides work and trade, opportunity also came through intermarriage. Throughout North America from the seventeenth century onwards, liaisons between Native American women and fur traders were widespread. [104] To maintain and extend its territorial domain, Russian-American Company charters explicitly encouraged officers to marry Alutiiq women. Researcher Katherine Woodhouse-Beyer contends that traditional Alutiiq women, like the

indigenous women of the Canadian fur trade, used intermarriage as a tactic to preserve at least some aspects of their own culture. As Richard White points out, these sexual unions "were a bridge to the middle ground, an adjustment to interracial sex in the fur trade where the initial conceptions of sexual conduct held by each side were reconciled in a new customary relation." [105] These new customary relations, whether taking the form of long-term marriages, or solitary trysts, resulted in the birth of a special class of Russian citizens, the Creoles. [106]

Creoles played a major role in development of life on the Alaska Peninsula. They represented not only a new, mixed ethnic identity, but they also created new conceptions of how people constructed their worldviews. By 1862, one-third of the population was Creole. In Alaska, the Russian-American Company regarded them as full Russian citizens. This meant that the Company educated and later hired the children of Russian men and Alutiiq or Aleut women. Although no evidence suggests that Sutkhum maintained a school, most *artels* maintained facilities to educate Creole children. Creole children learned the Russian language and heard Russian stories and folktales. Many Creoles worked for the Company as managers and supervisors. These Creole families were supplied with *baidarkas*, tools, and gardening plots at the Company's expense. [107] Company motives, however, were more ulterior than altruistic. The government believed that providing such benefits would create potentially loyal Russian subjects, and more importantly, a stable workforce for the Russian-American Company. [108]

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the sea otter population around Sutwik Island had declined significantly, a likely reason that Sutkhum did not support a school. Besides sea otters, most other fur bearing mammals throughout the Aleutians and the Alaska Peninsula had come perilously close to extinction. One permanent victim of the fur trade, the Steller sea cow, was last seen in 1768. In the early 1800s, as fur bearing animals and birds waned, trading interests along the Alaska Peninsula subsided. Company headquarters shifted from Kodiak to Novo-Arkhangel'sk (Sitka), nearly 1000 miles away in Southeast Alaska. Although the Company banned sealing on the Pribilof Islands in an attempt to allow resources to rebound, damage to the region's wildlife was so severe that by the early 1820s, settlers briefly abandoned Sutkhum.



Women remain important cultural integrators on the central Alaska Peninsula. Sassa Struck at Ugashik, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

The Russian Fur Trade Ends, A Brave New World Begins: 1818-1867

In 1824, the Sutkhum *artel* resumed a limited fur harvest. [109] Russian census records for 1825 indicate that in spite of failing resources, thirty adults and eleven children resided in the *artel's* dilapidated company buildings at Sutkhum. [110] Between 1818 and 1867, the Native people at Sutkhum, as with Alutiit throughout the peninsula, began to experience notable changes in Company policies. In 1821, the Russian-American Company's second charter finally ended the practice of conscripting Alutiiq hunters once and for all. Instead of forcing the Natives to hunt for them, the Russian Crown required that the Company managers pay the hunters for their goods and services. Upon their return, hunters received on average thirty rubles per first grade sea-otter skin. [111] Freedom did not mean independence, however. Alutiiq dependence on the Russians grew even more intense as the second stage of a market economy, characterized by the credit system, appeared on the peninsula.

The second charter ensured that adult hunters had time to feed their families through the winters. This allowed peninsula Alutiit to hunt big game animals such as caribou and bear in the fall, and to trap fox during the winter months. Salmon fishing remained the most important subsistence activity during the summer months. Although the abolishment of slave labor meant that Alutiiq men had the opportunity once again to hunt animals for food and clothing for their families as they had in pre-contact times, many men actually intensified their market hunting. In the Russian period, these one-time subsistence hunters and fishermen gradually began to allocate a percentage of their catch for trade or to pay off debt. Even more significantly, for the first time, Native hunters worked for cash. Partnow, in her study of ethnicity on the Alaska Peninsula, explained how the market incorporation process occurred:

> Instead of obtaining just enough furs and meat for his family's clothing and food, each man spent additional time on the trapline to bring in dozens of pelts, decreasing his available time to obtain subsistence food. As a result, he needed money to buy food and goods to help his family subsist through the year. Nor did he have time to make his own snares and traps, depending instead on company-owned metal traps issued at the beginning of each season on credit. The "Free Aleuts" thus started each year owing a portion of their future catch to the company. [112]

The fur trade not only took time away from obtaining animals for food and clothing, but over-hunting forced Native hunters to spend more valuable time traveling to remote areas to find animals that had once been abundant. [113] Over-hunting along the coast not only affected traditional subsistence practice, but it also directly altered the highly complex relationship with nature. Members of Sutkhum's hunting parties must have been traumatized by the numbers of animals killed on coastal islands. From their point of view, Russian hunters continually broke Alutiiq taboos without repercussion, and hunting tours lacked the appropriate ritual, ceremony, or intended respect toward the natural world. The Alutiit not only witnessed the Russians commit acts against the animals' *suas* that were contradictory to powerful Alutiiq beliefs, but more significantly, they observed that nothing happened to the offenders. This absence of anticipated cause and effect undoubtedly undermined the pre-contact relationship with nature. Over the years, witnessing, as well as participating in such practices, allowed Alutiiq hunters to incorporate a more materialistic view of the natural world.

At the same time that the Alutiit adopted a more pragmatic relationship with the natural

world, Russians began to embrace more conservation measures to save it. Although Russian interests had expanded into new territories along the Pacific Northwest coast, the Company was aware of the toll that over-hunting was taking in the Aleutians and on the Alaska Peninsula. In an attempt to restore the fur sea and sea otter populations, conservation practices were implemented in 1828. Such policies limited the number of animals that could be taken per year in a given district. In addition to the rotation of hunting grounds, in specific hunting areas, they prohibited hunters from killing females and pups and traders from obtaining their pelts from Native hunters. Other measures implemented by the Russians were even more drastic and included the prohibition of settlement near sea otter hauling grounds. Russian authorities, for example, moved the entire Aleut population of Sanak Island, one of the most famous sea otter grounds in Alaska, to the Alaska Peninsula, where they settled the village of Belkofski. [114]

Russian leaders also implemented health programs to protect their Native hunters from epidemic diseases. When the Russians came to Alaska, they unknowingly brought diseases that Native people had not encountered. Because they had no natural immunities from ailments such as measles, smallpox or influenza, Alaska Natives died in extraordinarily high numbers with each wave of illness. [115]

Despite the introduction of smallpox vaccine in Alaska in 1808, a smallpox epidemic spread from Kodiak to the Alaska Peninsula between 1836 and 1840, reducing the aboriginal population by as much as one-third. [116] Often lost were the primary caregivers and educators, whose responsibility it was to pass knowledge down to the next generation. As death rapidly claimed seemingly innocent victims, people began to lose faith in their spiritual leaders, the shamans, who lacked the power to cure their loved ones. [117] Using new medicines, the Russians vaccinated willing Natives and finally controlled outbreaks of smallpox and even some venereal diseases. According to Lydia Black, "the lesson was clear and taken to heart...and vaccinations conducted by employees of the company and progressive village chiefs, had found wide acceptance." [118]

In his book *Chills and Fever: Health and Disease in the Early History of Alaska,* physician and Alaska historian Robert Fortuine argues that by the end of their stay in America, the Russians had developed a "well-thought out system of health care," which extended to Company employees and Alutiit alike. Fortuine suggests that the Russians administered "a well-organized effort that was effectively adapted to the living conditions and geography of Alaska." [119] And as a result, when another small pox epidemic swept most the North American continent in the early 1860s, Alaska escaped, due to the administration of vaccines to Alaska Natives by the Russians. [120]

Despite notable progress in Russian-Native relations and sea mammal conservation, by 1850, Russia began to show signs that its ties to Russian American were crumbling. The Russians had never solved the problem of adequately supplying their American colony with goods and manpower, and this failure, despite effort to the contrary, left them dependent on the indigenous peoples as well as their international rivals. Indeed, Russia's geopolitical position had changed over the last century and a half. By the nineteenth century, Russia no longer had the North Pacific to itself. Although in 1786, it proclaimed imperial sovereignty over an arc extending from the Kuril Islands to the Alaska panhandle, St. Petersburg remained too far away to properly protect its American Territories. The official naval voyages Catherine did actually deploy—the Krenitsyn-Levashev expedition of 1763-4 and later the Billings-Sarychev expedition of 1790-93—were apparently insufficient attempts by the imperial navy to enforce the entire empire.



Children attending school at Pilot Point. Teachers were Florence and Sam Hanson, circa 1920s. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

As early as 1778, Captain James Cook had surveyed the northwestern coast of North American and passed through the Bering Strait into the Arctic Ocean. Similarly, by the 1780s, New England merchants, collectively called "Bostonians," started to collect furs from the Tlingit of the northwest coast in exchange for cloth, rum, and guns, the last of which the Tlingit occasionally discharged at Russians. [121] By the mid-nineteenth century, a new emerging power, the United States, seemed destined to dominate North America, as the 1848 war with Mexico had demonstrated.

Six years later, Russia had its own war to worry about. On the other side of the world from Russian America, Imperial Russia engaged in battle with Turkey on the Crimean Peninsula. On the verge of a Russian victory, the war was extended for nearly two years, as France and England joined the Turkish cause. Not only did the Crimean War drain the Russian treasury, it eroded Russia's relationship with England, which eventually dictated to whom the Russians would sell their American Territories. With their loss of the Crimean War, the Russian government gained new interests in their Siberian holdings, which resulted in improved border relations with Manchuria. New treaties signed between the Russian and Chinese empires provided Siberian *promyshlenniki* with new access to furs in the Amur Region, and a rich agricultural area as a bonus. [122]

American expansion, the opening of the Amur Region to Russians, and the outcome of the Crimean War sealed the fate of Russian America, a colonial experiment that had seemingly run its course. On March 30, 1867, Russia sold all its Alaska land claims to the United States for 7.2 million dollars. Later that year, on October 18, the formal transfer took place, and by nightfall, the American flag flew over what the U.S. Congress named Alaska, a derivative from the Aleut term *Alaxaxaq,* for the land east of the Aleutians. Russian and American dignitaries never consulted the Alaska Natives about this sale, and for many years, the change in ownership hardly affected Alaska Peninsula Alutiit. Eventually, however, this transfer was felt by both the Native and Creole population, as hordes of newcomers from the south and east came north to exploit Alaska's natural resources. After 1867, the Aniakchak region once again became a symbolic "Brave New World" to American traders, trappers, and cannery men.



Russian Imperial Coat of Arms, date unknown. Alaska State Library, Michael Z. Vinokouroff Photograph Collection, ca. 1880s-1970s. PCA 243-3-009.

Like Shakespeare's heroes, who shipwrecked on Prospero's Island, the Russian story in America began with a ship at sea and a tempestuous storm. By the end of the Russian era, the Alaska Peninsula had become a place where people from diverse cultures had fought, exchanged goods and ideas, and even formed advantageous and loving relationships. Old World imperialism and New World capitalism were important factors, but these global systems remained relatively minor players on the central Alaska Peninsula, for it was the relationships forged between Alutiit and Russians that shaped this story.

Indeed, monopolization by the Russian-American Company altered forever the lives of so many Alaska Natives. Decisions as to where people could live and hunt were determined by the needs and policy of the Company. People became dependent on purchased food and clothing to supplement what they could obtain by hunting and trapping. [123] Division of

labor changed, as well as people's relationship to the natural world. Diseases caused population decline, while people's relationship to the spiritual world also became distorted. But what the history of Russians in Alaska clearly shows is that cultural change never meant cultural death.

From the cultural collision between these two worlds, a new, integrated world emerged. As the Russians left and Americans arrived, people living in the central peninsula settled new villages and made their adjustments. In these new villages, people continued to respect the plants and animals, they taught their children the old ways, and elders remained the cultural pundits, passing down their wisdom to younger generations. As Partnow explains, "underlying such cultural persistence was always hope." [124]

The story of Russian America teaches us that Alutiiq culture changed, but important aspects of it recovered, and survived. And, as Americans and their industries moved into the Aniakchak region, they imported more change, but they also brought opportunity. Like Shakespeare's optimistic Miranda, who declared:

> O wonder! / How many goodly creatures are there here!
> How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world
> That has such people in't! [125]

Alaska had become once again a new world for all.

NOTES

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[5]Lydia T. Black, *The Russians in Alaska, 1732-1867* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2004), 6.

[6]Ibid., 6.

[7]Ibid., xiii.

[8]Georg Wilhelm *Steller, Journal of a Voyage with Bering, 1741-1742* ed. O.W. Frost (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 81.

[9]Ibid., 97.

[10]Ibid., 97.

[11]Ibid., 98-100.

[12]Black, *Russians in Alaska,* 45.

[13]Corey Ford, *Where the Sea Breaks its Back: the Epic Story of Early Naturalist Georg*

Steller and the Russian Exploration of Alaska (Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Books, 1966), 101.

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[15]Steller, 103.

[16]Ibid., 106.

[17]Ibid., 100.

[18]Ibid., 101.

[19]Ford, 114.

[20]Ibid., 122.

[21]Black, *Russians in Alaska*, 48.

[22]Ibid., 48.

[23]Raymond H. Fisher, "Finding America" in *Russian America: the Forgotten Frontier* eds. Barbara Sweetland Smith and Redmond Barnett (Washington State Historical Society, 1990), 28.

[24]Benson Bobrick, *East of the Sun: The Epic Conquest and Tragic History of Siberia* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1992), 67-78.

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[27]Merry Allyn Tuten, *A Preliminary Study of Subsistence Activities on the Pacific Coast of the Proposed Aniakchak Caldera National Monument* (Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Alaska Fairbanks, 1977), 3.

[28]Partnow, 37.

[29]Boraas, 7.

[38]Partnow, 27.

[31]Ibid., 30.

[32]Morseth, 5.

[33]Partnow, 31.

[34]James Kari, personal communication, 7/2005.

[35]Wrangell, in Partnow, 37-38.

[36]Partnow, 44.

[37]Morseth, 23.

[38]Ibid., 17.

[39]Hieromonk Gideon, *The Round the World Voyage of Hieromonk Gideon, 1803-1809* trans and eds. Richard Pierce and Lydia Black (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1989), 57.

[40]Morseth, 20.

[41]Ford, 102.

[42]Katherine Woodhouse-Beyer, "Artels and Identities, Gender, Power, and Russian America," in *Manifesting Power: Gender and the Interpretation of Power in Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 1999), 143.

[43]Lydia T. Black, *Glory Remembered: Wooden Headgear of Alaska Sea Hunters* (Alaska State Museums, 1991), 15-16.

[44]Gideon, 56.

[45]Partnow, 48.

[46]James Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods: The Maritime Fur Trade of the Northwest Coast, 1785-1841* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 14.

[47]Gideon, 56.

[48]Partnow, 56.

[49]Morseth, 16.

[50]Ibid., 18.

[51]Gibson, 8.

[52]Ibid., 12.

[33]Bobrick, 211.

[54]Barbara Sweetland Smith, personal communication, 12/10/1004.

[55]Frank Norris, *Isolated Paradise: Katmai and Aniakchak History* (Anchorage, AK: National Park Service), 412.

[56]Gibson, 15.

[57]Black, *Russians in America,* 1.

[58]Gibson, 15.

[59]Tuten, 16.

[60]Black, *Russians in America,* 89.

[61]Ibid., 89.

[62]Stephan, 38.

[63]Black, *Russians in America,* 165.

[64]Pavel Golovin, *Civil and Savage Encounters: The Worldly Travel Letters of an Imperial Russian Navy Officer 1860-1861* trans Basil Dmytryshyn and E.A.P. Crownhart-Vaughn (Portland: Western Imprints 1983), 138; Gibson, 15.

[65]James R. Gibson, "Russian Dependence on the Natives of Alaska," in *An Alaska Anthology: Interpreting the Past* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 21.

[66]Tuten, 16; Black, *Russians in America,* 101.

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[68]Black, xiii.

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[74]Black, *Russians in America,* 113.

[75]Ibid., 102.

[76]Katherine Arndt, "Consolidation and Expansion: The Russian American Company" in *Alaska Geographic: Russian America,* Volume 26, Number 4, (1999), 26.

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[83]Morseth, 38.

[84]Crowell, 56.

[85]Black, *Russians in America,* 130.

[86]Partnow, 100.

[87]Morseth, 38.

[88]Ibid., 36.

[89]Ibid., 39.

[90]Ibid., 39.

[91]Gavrill Davydov, *Two Voyages to Russian America, 1802-1807* ed. Richard Pierce (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1977), 192-193.

[92]Morseth, 38.

[93]Partnow, 67.

[94]Ibid., 68.

[95]Woodhouse-Beyer, 131.

[96]Partnow, 71.

[97]Stephan, 38.

[98]Woodhouse-Beyer, 131.

[99]Ibid., 140.

[100]Ivan Petroff, *Preliminary Report on the Population, Industry, and Resources of Alaska.* U.S. Congress House Executive Document No. 40, 10th Census, 1880 (Washington D.C.: US Department of Interior, 1881), 52.

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[103]Woodhouse-Beyer, 143.

[104]Ibid., 146.

[105]White, 65.

[106]Woodhouse-Beyer, 146.

[107]Ibid., 147.

[108]Partnow, 96.

[109]Ibid., 75.

[110]Morseth, 38.

[111]Gibson, 15.

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[113]Ibid., 101.

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[115]Ibid., 97.

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[117]Robert Fortuine, *Chills and Fever: Health and Disease in the Early History of Alaska* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1992), 199-208.

[118]Black, *Russians in America*, 196.

[119]Fortuine, 128-129.

[120]Black, *Russians in America*, 196.

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[122]Andrei V. Grinev, "Why Russia Sold Alaska: The View from Russia" *Alaska History*, Vol. 19 Spring/Fall (2004): 1-17.

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[124]Partnow, xiii.

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hrs/chap3.htm
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ANIAKCHAK

Beyond the Moon Crater Myth
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape
A Historic Resource Study for Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

Russian Period (1741-1917)



Father Aleksandr Kedrovskii (shown with his family) was the priest of Unalaska, and made numerous trips to chapels located along the central Alaska Peninsula coastline, including Kanatak and Chignik. Alaska State Library Collection, Michael Z. Vinokouroff Photograph

Collection, ca. 1880s-1970s, P243-2-168.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Russian Orthodox Church:

Bridging the Old World with the New

From Wide Bay, the peaks of the mountains of Kodiak became visible, like little black hats on the sea. We passed the bay of Kanatnoi [Kanatak] and at 7 o'clock in the evening landed on the shore for the night. The sea was quiet, only faintly the surf rustled, presaging a change in the weather...

Father Tikhon Shalamov, Orthodox Priest Describing his travels to the Alaska Peninsula from Kodiak Island *American Orthodox Messenger*, 1895

Besides promoting himself as an outdoorsman, mountaineer, and geologist, Father Hubbard always identified himself as a jesuit priest. [1] Beyond his persona as the "Glacier Priest," Hubbard saw and consistently described God's omnipotence and beauty in the natural world of Aniakchak. He even said Mass while inside the Caldera, offering communion and spiritual guidance to his faithful companions. Once, while waiting for transportation to Aniakchak at a salmon cannery, his crew and a few employees became engaged in a lively discussion about how salmon manage to return to Alaska Peninsula's rivers. Hubbard, who retold the story in his book *Cradle of the Storms*, offered this explanation:

> For several years, I have been interested in the salmon question myself, and as I am not in the employ either of the Bureau of Fisheries or of any particular canning interest, I can discuss the subject in a disinterested way. Naturally I start at the beginning, and the beginning, of course, starts with God. [2]

Father Hubbard's faith in both religion and science, coupled with his passion for adventure, placed him in a category of men known for their pioneering explorations of North America's frontier. In his exploits inside the Aniakchak Caldera, Hubbard followed a trail blazed earlier by seventeenth and eighteenth century Jesuits who canoed, trekked, and camped across the New World when it was to most colonists an unknown and unexplored land. With their reports, many Jesuits added significantly to the Old World's knowledge of the New. They made innumerable studies of the flora, fish, and fauna, as well as observations of the land and original occupants. As the historian Hubert Bancroft noted in 1886, "not a cape was turned, not a river entered, but a Jesuit led the way." Three centuries later, Hubbard continued the tradition of the frontiering priest. As fellow Jesuit Francis Talbot wrote:

> He [Hubbard] seeks to learn what is deep in the interior of a volcano erupting, what residue lies in the crater, where the storms have their origins, whither the salmon migrate, what lies beyond those distant mountain peaks... [3]

As such, Father Hubbard's expeditions assisted Catholic causes in Alaska. "I resolve only to use my camera with full permission..." declared Hubbard, "...when God's honor or my neighbors' spiritual goods, or real charity require it." But his avocation and talent were so strong, notes Hubbard's biographer Kathy Price, that cameras remained by his side throughout his life, and he continually found reasons to use his photography and films. [4] When Father Hubbard visited Alaska villages, instead of preaching from the Bible, the Glacier Priest proselytized his service to the cross through the lens of a camera. In Chignik, for example, Hubbard showed a movie called "The Sign of the Cross." Chignik Lake resident Christine Martin remembers that summer day in 1931:

> ...It must have been Father Hubbard [who] showed a movie, a Bible movie, 'cause they said he was Father Hubbard. It was a good movie. All about Jesus, from Adam and Eve, to New Testament. I can't forget it. 'Cause it was so real, like my Bible pictures. I think about it lots of times. I look, when I see advertisements, I look for that. [5]

By the time Father Hubbard reached the Alaska Peninsula in the late 1920s, most inhabitants, like Christine Martin, already professed the Christian faith. For nearly 200 years, priests had visited the central peninsula, prompting the religious conversion of many of its people. Over the years, these missionaries braved raging seas and unfamiliar lands. They, along with their parishioners, built new settlements, brought literacy to the region, contributed to improving the general health of the area. The missionary priests made important observations about the physical environment, and described their strong spiritual connection to it. Most significantly, the priests witnessed and documented tremendous technological, material, and cultural change on the peninsula. But unlike the Jesuits of the North American frontier, who traveled from east to west, propagating Roman Catholicism, Russian Orthodox priests followed the rising sun eastward, tending to their Orthodox Christian followers.

Between 1741 and 1867, representatives of the Russian Imperial government occupied portions of the Aniakchak region, and its fur trappers and traders—the *promyshlenniki*—left a permanent mark on the indigenous population living there. But, as new diseases, environmental degradation, and societal disintegration generated by the Russian invasion eroded cultural confidence, it was the missionaries—priests of the Russian Orthodox Church—who gradually gained a strong foothold within Native communities on the Alaska Peninsula.





Portrait of Veniaminov, Ivan (Ioann, Innokentii), Metropolitan of Moscow, 1797-1879, Russian Orthodox priest, archbishop and scholar. Alaska State Library Collection, PCA 20-31

Besides cultural disruption caused by the retreat of the Russian fur trade, Alutiit had other reasons for converting to Orthodoxy. As the furs began to decline, American businessmen introduced practices that began to upset trade systems long-established during the Russian era. "They told me that the agents of the [Alaska Commercial] company so underrated sales...," noted a priest in Wide Bay, "...that they give for a fox a cup of tea." [6] As it evolved in nineteen century villages, the Russian Orthodox Church began to represent a kind of alliance, formed against the encroaching American culture and economy. Thus, the Russians and the Alutiit together established an institution that they both thought furthered interests generated within their own societies. And, perhaps as artificial as conversion was in the beginning, mutual understanding between priests and parishioners was maintained through rituals and ceremonies based on religious parallels and spiritual commonalities.

Orthodoxy did not pose as a façade, where beneath it lay ancient beliefs and values. Instead, the Church became a place where both Russian and Native people interacted and became equal participants in the conversion process. According to scholars like Sergei Kan and

Andrei Znamenski, Native people were able to adapt Christianity to their own needs and were able to transform it into something meaningful to them. In fact, because there were so few actual "Russians" on the Alaska Peninsula, adoption of Orthodoxy by Alutiiq inhabitants could be considered not an imposition, but rather a choice. This accommodation contributed to the formation of what scholars would call a genuine form of Alaska Native Christianity. [7]

Ironically, this significant period of Slavic influence on the Alaska Peninsula did not occur during Russia's tenure in Alaska, but when the Alutiiq people had already lived a few decades under American rule. [8] From the time Russia sold Alaska to the United States to approximately the time of the Russian Revolution in 1917, the role of the Russian Orthodox Church transformed from an agent of change to a physical and social entity, a place where Russians and Natives shared the same space. Ultimately, in Native villages throughout the peninsula, Orthodoxy and indigenous tradition synthesized and transcended into a new form of spiritual belief.

By the end of the nineteenth century, American newcomers to the Alaska Peninsula began to change the composition of nineteenth century village society. By importing innovative technology, modern goods, new forms of transportation, conflicting moral and religious systems, disease, alcohol, and, of course, capitalism, Americans brought significant economic and societal change. As a result, status quo accommodation within villages began to break down. Nevertheless, despite Americanization, the Alutiiq brand of Orthodoxy continues to this day. Indeed, nowhere was Russian influence greater or more lasting on the central peninsula than in the religious transformation that bridged the Old World with the New. [9]

The Transition from Promyshlennik to Priest: 1794-1808

The transition from *promyshlennik* to priest did not occur over night. The Russian Orthodox mission officially began in Alaska in 1794, as "a frank instrument of Russia's pacification policy," according to historian Barbara Sweetland Smith. [10] In that year, monks from a monastery in Siberia arrived in Russian America and established the Ka'diak Spiritual Mission. The establishment of the mission was due in part to Grigorii Shelikhov, whose exaggerated reports to the government strongly argued that conversion of the indigenous peoples was vital to the new territory for the peaceful exchange of furs.

Shelikhov might well have been more concerned with fur profits than faith. In the early days of Russian occupation, it was common for Russian *promyshlenniki* to baptize Alaska Natives, ostensibly for the purpose of having the baptized became a servant to the baptizer. Shelikhov observed this activity and from apparent concern that his company would lose Native hunters to competitors, he successfully convinced Catherine II to assign a religious mission to the colony to regulate baptisms and end the competition for converts. [11] Catherine II sent ten missionaries to the new colony with the instructions not to force Christianity, but to attract converts by example. [12]

Although considered an independent institution, the Church received financial support from the Russian-American Company to build chapels and churches, pay salaries of priests, and operate schools. [13] In Russian *artels,* Christianity was tied to the economic and social activities of the fur trade. The monks increasingly operated as both religious enlighteners of the Natives and moral overseers of the Russians. Not surprisingly, the Russian-American Company, which paid the priests' salary, expressed its wish that the monks confine their work to the task of Native conversion. Village priests continued to preoccupy themselves with company matters and, as a result, clashes between company employees and missionaries frequently occurred. [14]

The missionaries primarily objected to the Company's treatment of the Native population. In 1796, one monk in particular took matters into his own hands. He abandoned his post without authorization and brought the Native cause directly to the attention of the Holy Synod in St. Petersburg. [15] The Church heard his complaint, and consequently commissioned Hieromonk Gideon in 1804 to inspect and report on the conditions of the American colonies and churches. Gideon confirmed rumors that the Russian *promyshlenniki* took human lives in the same contemptuous way that they slaughtered what had once been Alaska's bountiful sea mammal population. Gideon's reports reached the highest levels of Russian government and were instrumental in bringing about positive modification in the behavior of company personnel. Gideon's formal observations also influenced the decision to remove Alexander Baranov as manager of the Russian-American Company for his abuses of the Native population. [16]

In addition to defending Native people against exploitation by the Russian-America Company, Russian priests also devoted much of their time to describing Native cultures. Gideon's papers serve as the best ethnographic record of Alutiiq people in the early 1800s. In one report, for example, Gideon described a Women's Dance at an Alutiiq feast:

> Women and young girls always dance by themselves, without men. They solemnly line up in a row, tightly one behind another, and by slight, almost imperceptible movements, they crouch down, then straighten up in the same manner, now and then swaying to the right and then to the left. At the beginning of their dance they first of all extend slightly forward their left hands, and with fingers bent, hold them in this position as long as the singers sing without words. As soon as those who beat the drums and sing begin to sing about their dead ancestors, the women immediately and in unison, turn their palms downward, toward the ground. During the women's dance, old men who are enjoying themselves make every possible effort to make some of them laugh, as according to their custom the father or husband of the woman who succumbs to teasing and laughs must pay a fine for the benefit of the old and the poor: it is enough for a wife or a daughter just to smile ever so slightly while dancing. I myself was given a gift of a lavtak by a father and a sealskin by a husband when their daughter and wife respectively violated their ancient tradition. I donated these items for the benefit of the poor and received from the old men then present much approval and gratitude. [17]

With the transfer of the Russian-American Company headquarters from Kodiak to Sitka in 1808, priests slowly began to replace *promyshlenniki* as the dominating Russian presence on the Alaska Peninsula. Within the first few decades of the nineteenth century, a relatively small group of ecclesiastics, three of the original ten clerics converted much of the aboriginal population of the Aleutian Chain and the Alaska Peninsula to Christianity. About that time, Archimandrite Ioasaf Bolotov reported that missionaries had baptized 6,740 Natives from Kodiak, the neighboring islands, and the Alaska Peninsula and performed 1,573 marriages. [18] Three priests would not have been able to convert such an astounding number, had it not been for the role the Alutiit themselves played in extending Christianity throughout the region.

Alutiiq Shamans and Orthodox Priests Blending Systems of Belief: 1808-1867

The widespread religious conversions that occurred during the first half of the nineteenth century happened at a time when outside forces were continually contradicting traditional beliefs. After years of Russian control and integration, Alutiiq peoples' sense of cultural identity and independence began to change. For years, the Russians dominated economic activities, and the one-time subsistence population became dependent upon European trade

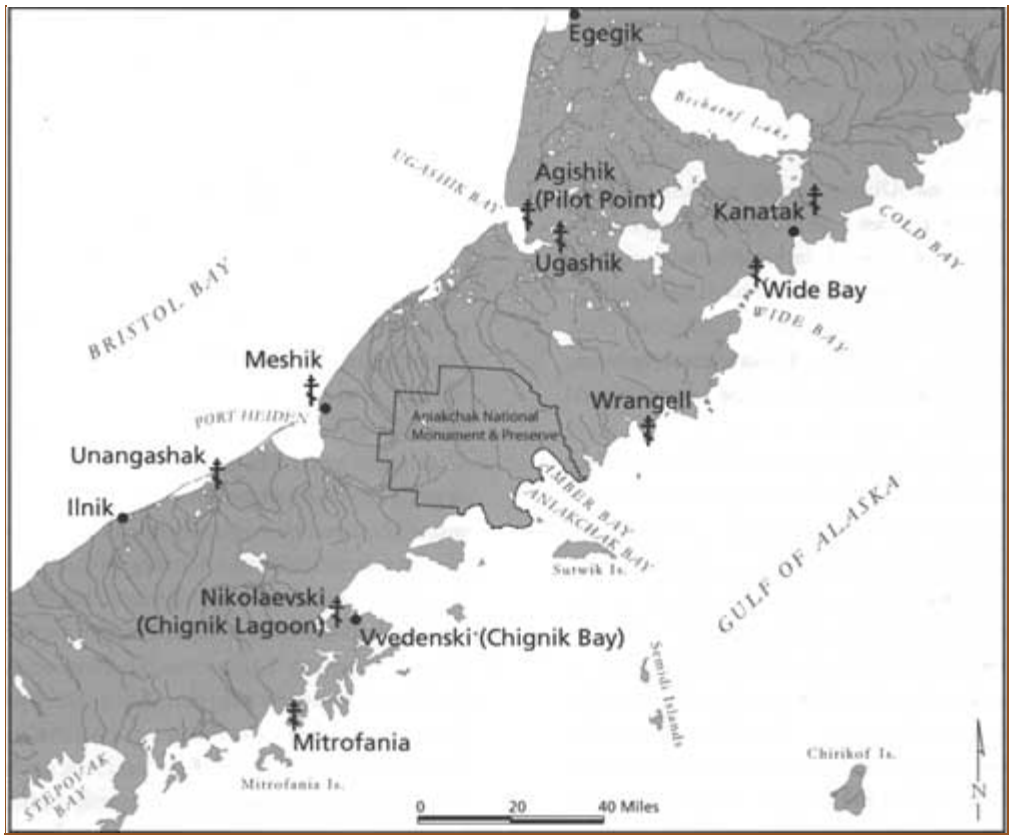
goods. Epidemics and harsh working conditions caused Native populations to rapidly decline, while hunting practices nearly wiped out the fur-bearing animals that once flourished in the region. Alutiiq hunters presumably experienced terrible guilt as they left meat to rot for the price of furs. Such practices undermined traditional knowledge of the natural world as Natives witnessed Russian, and later, American, hunters consistently break taboos without repercussion.

This lack of control over their spiritual lives led many confused and anxious people to question their own ways of knowing. According to their worldview, the most feared thing was the breakdown of the equilibrium inherent in nature, which would disturb "the balance so necessary for the survival of society." [19] According to a priest from Kodiak, Natives and Creoles of Wrangel established the small village because they were "attracted to the sea by sea otters," that had been decimated in other areas, and because they were fleeing from "the oppressive stewards [and hunting practices] of the company in the Nushagak District." [20] As disease, over-hunting, and environmental degradation began to fragment the existing order, Alutiit sought relief within the Church, whose priests could supply them with explanations. Based on the Orthodox tenet that the priest, not the individual, maintained the balance between human individuals and the spirit world, the Church was able to comfort the collective conscience of its parishioners. It appealed to a people utterly distraught and no longer feeling capable of maintaining balance in such a world of change. Many people consciously chose the alternative that Orthodoxy afforded and adopted Orthodoxy as a strategy to deal with the contradictions and dislocations that had bombarded their traditional worldview. [21]

The success of the Christian synthesis of Native and Russian societies began, in part, with the attitudes priests held towards nature. Most the Russian priests who proselytized on the Alaska Peninsula in the last half of the nineteen century had never experienced the urban life in St. Petersburg or Moscow. Rather, they came from monasteries set in the backdrop of the Siberian wilderness, and some even maintained indigenous blood ties to the Asiatic region. As a result, Russian Orthodoxy was unlike European Christianity, especially in terms of beliefs about nature. According to Andrei Znamenski, the missionary's struggle to survive the peninsula's harsh environment was more than a job hazard, but rather, a requirement of it. Instead of living above nature, Orthodox priests were required to live, and more accurately, suffer, within it.

In his book, *Shamanism and Christianity,* Znamenski suggests that clerics entered the wilderness searching for an experience to prove their asceticism and imitate Christ's suffering in the arid, hostile desert wilderness. According to official church doctrine, each missionary was to look for an ideal place that would remind him of the Biblical desert and help him to renounce the pleasures of life. As Znamenski contends, the metaphor of the desert was transplanted to the northern environment, where severe cold and ice of the tundra lands replaced the extreme heat of Biblical Palestine. [22]





Russian Orthodox Churches in the Aniakchak Landscape. By B. Bundy. Source: Morseth, 2003, Map 4.A and 4.B. *(click on image for a PDF version)*

Thus, Orthodox priests allowed the desert metaphor to guide them as they ventured the length of the Alaska Peninsula's tundra lands. Father Tikhon Shalamov's experience in 1895 is representative. After a particularly bad coastal storm prevented him from reaching a village, the priest watched in great awe as the sun eventually broke through the clouds, allowing him and his Native companions to reach their destination. Father Shalamov interpreted the improving weather as a sign from God and wrote in his journal, "The morning sun joyously beamed, illuminating the land... the sea rolled upon its shores; clean, cloudless sky showed blue." He had not forgotten, however, his terrifying crossing of Shelikof Strait from Kodiak to the mainland, and when he celebrated Mass after reaching the Alaska Peninsula, a relieved Shalamov recounted his near-death experience in reaching the Alaska Peninsula, and effectively tied his experience to his Native parishioners. "Tears came to our eyes," he later wrote as he recalled the response of those who had gathered to attend Mass. "All the inhabitants reverently with faith and love joined the Cleansed Body and Blood." Then, when it was time to move on to the next village, Shalamov praised not only the Natives he had converted, but also the natural world in which they lived, acknowledging that good weather was fleeting and indeed, a great gift from Above:

> Having eaten, at 3 o'clock we packed everything in the canoe and set off toward the village of Katmai. From Wide Bay the peaks of the mountains of Kodiak became visible, like little black hats on the sea. We passed the bay of Kanatnoi [Kanatak] and at 7 o'clock in the evening landed on the shore for the night. .. .. The sea was quiet, only faintly the surf rustled, presaging a change in the weather. [23]

Unlike French and English missionaries who viewed the North American wilderness as an evil place, indeed, as a place to fear, Russian priest seemed to authentically embrace Alaska's

natural world. For example, Father Shalamov, while visiting a village at Wide Bay, appeared content that the peninsula's natural beauty—the clear blue skies and glistening snow covered mountains—aptly served as walls and ceiling of an Orthodox chapel:

> There still being no chapel, we asked permission to build one. Meetings took place under the open sky; in the place of the meetings stands two lecterns and a cross... For services the Aleuts [Alutiit and Creoles] put together from new clean boards two tables, which we sprinkled with holy water, and on the holy cross we supplied the form of the Savior. At 5 o'clock we anointed the children, and at 6 o'clock we conducted a vespers vigil. The place of the service was on a peninsula; on two sides the sea and all around snow-covered mountains. During the blessing all kneeled. The sun set in the mountains, the sunset turning crimson. It was completely quiet. . . . [24]

It is likely that the Alutiiq people viewed the missionaries' awareness of the natural world as being consistent with their own traditional relationship with nature. Thus, it is important to remember that the dynamic southwestern Alaskan landscape and its numerous challenges resonated in the Orthodox experience, playing much the same significant role that it had in traditional Native spiritual beliefs.

The attitudes that Russian priests held towards the Alutiiq's traditional spiritual leaders, the shamans, also helped blend religious views. In contrast to French and Spanish Jesuits, in most areas of southwestern Alaska, some Russian clerics tolerated shamanistic practice, even among those already baptized. Although they discouraged ceremonialism and other forms of religious practice, the clergy supported the shaman's social role as healer, seer, and hunting administrator. [25] The shamans, on the other hand, did not separate economic and social life from religion. To maintain the success of such activities, shamans constantly sought spiritual power from as many sources as possible, and were, as Znamenski contends, open to innovation." It is important to note that Christianity was just one source with which shamans readily blended their own rituals. [26]

With power provided by medical innovations like the smallpox vaccine at his disposal, the Russian Orthodox priest slowly took on the social and spiritual responsibilities traditionally held by the shaman. Gradually, as the priest became the healer, clairvoyant, pacifier of the forces of nature, and the link to the spirit world, Native religious views shifted from animism to an all-encompassing relationship with God, or at least, what the Alutiiq version of God became. [27] By the beginning of the twentieth century, the shaman's role became, in essence, an instrument through which the priest was able to teach villagers a new kind of spirituality —a spirituality that could be superimposed upon a belief system already familiar to parishioners. Orthodoxy, then, became compatible with villagers' traditional religious views through the conduit that the shaman offered.

For a long time a blurred line existed between Shamanism and Orthodoxy, for the missionaries recorded the coexistence of both. As Znamenski points out about the Alutiiq neighbors, the Dena'ina, "In order to retain their group identity along with other tools, the Dena'ina used Russian Orthodoxy, which was the most familiar European church to them and apparently appealed to them because of its ancient ritualism." [28] It is important to remember that Native belief, like any, were constantly filtered through personal social and spiritual experiences and not all Alutiit made the transition to Orthodoxy in the same way. However, this gray transition period served as a refuge where residents negotiated the transition to Christianity on their own terms.

By 1821, the conversion numbers on the Alaska Peninsula had increased even more. Enlightened governmental reforms that emphasized the multi-national character of the

Russian Empire inspired a new missionary zeal within the Orthodox Church, which responded by sending more missionaries into the eastern territories. That same year, the government provided the Russian-American Company with its second charter. Charter terms required that the Company make an organized effort to Christianize the Natives within its jurisdiction. [29]

To achieve such goals, the Church instructed missionaries to train an indigenous clergy, to render Native languages into written form, and to translate the Sacred Books in Aleut, Alutiiq, Yupiiq, and Athabascan so that liturgy could be performed in the Native tongue. [30] But as Znamenski notes, "even Russian clerics who demonstrated a tolerant approach to natives still maintained ambivalent attitudes towards Native clergy whom they judged in an evolutionary sense to be somewhere between the 'wild' natives and the Russians, and did not extend to them complete trust or respect." [31] The advantage of an indigenous clergy was that they understood the aspirations of the local people and they could employ traditional channels in making the Orthodox Church message attractive and appealing. Thus, in accordance with the 1821 Russian-American Company Charter, by the mid-1820s, the Russian Orthodox Church had designed a bilingual educational system to train, teach, and convert Alaska's indigenous population.

Indeed, a multicultural education system played a major role in converting Alaska's Native population to Christianity, but it did something that other colonial-civilizing projects did not—it indigenized the Russian Orthodox Church in Alaska. Unlike most colonial powers in North America that marginalized the indigenous peoples, the Russian Orthodox Church included Native people more or less as equal mediators and translators of the missionary message. This was based on the Church's fundamental principle—which held that one did not have to become a Russian to be a Christian. [32] This meant that Orthodox educators allowed Native peoples to keep their most salient cultural trait—their language.

At first, however, administrators of the Russian-American Company used the system to their own advantage—as a means to create a convenient labor supply. Hardly altruistic, the Company agreed to give all Creoles a free education in exchange for future work. Still, Creole children who learned to read, write, and do arithmetic in company schools were able to work their way up the social ladder. Some children gained specialized training in navigation and maritime schools and became middle managers in the Russian colony. But regardless of the social advantages, the Imperial government's primary goal for bilingual education was to teach Native people to read from the Holy Scripture and spread the word of God.

By the mid-1800s, the degree of linguistic diversity in Russian America was astonishing. Some parish schools offered as many as four different languages: Russian, English, Church Slavonic, and a Native language. [33] Orthodox priests sent to Russian America after the Second Charter pioneered these multilinguistic achievements. One of the most significant, Bishop Innocent Veniaminov, for whom the stratacone south of Aniakchak is named, arrived at Unalaska in 1824. Veniaminov compiled Aleut dictionaries and translated important parts of the New Testament and other Christian texts from Church Slavonic and Russian into several Native languages. These works were used for both Church service and school education. Other gifted representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church include Veniaminov's colleague and protege, Father Iakov Netsvetov, a Russian Creole, who was the first Orthodox priest of Aleut descent.

From 1840 to 1866, the Russian-American missions grew from four churches and an equal number of clergy, to nine churches, including a cathedral, and 35 chapels. [34] In the following year, however, the Orthodox faithful suffered a painful blow. With the sale of the Russian-American holdings to the United States, Company personnel withdrew from Alaska,

and consequently, so did many of the priests. By 1870, only the churches of Kodiak, Sitka, and Unalaska remained in full operation. [35]

In the light of the change in national governments, the Church began to reassess its continued support of its missions in North American. Encouragement came as the United States and Russia settled treaty terms. According to Article II and Article III of the Treaty of Cession, the "Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church" was allowed to retain its property in Alaska and continue its mission. The Church's activities would be protected by guarantees of freedom of religion. [36] As a result, Orthodoxy continued to make a deep impression on the indigenous inhabitants after the 1867 sale, especially in southwestern Alaska.

Over time, despite the initial shock resulting from the separation from Russia, the Orthodox Church in Alaska, not only survived, but grew, especially on the Alaska Peninsula. [37] Money to support the Church still came primarily from the Motherland, which also appointed the bishops and trained most of the clergy. With continuing funding, the parish built new churches and chapels while older ones were revived. And even though the Russian Orthodox Church in North America remained a diocese of the state church of Russia, throughout the early American period—from 1867 into the early twentieth century—the blending of Native and Russian culture had transformed the religion into something new.

Conversion on the Tundra Nineteenth Village Life in Aniakchak: 1860s-1890s

During the period that took place approximately between the American purchase and the Russian Revolution, the Orthodox Church served as a refuge, where late nineteenth century villages on the Alaska Peninsula could recover from the retreating Russian fur trade and be, at least for the time, shielded from encroaching American culture and economy.

In addition to concern hardships brought about by a retreating fur trade, Alutiiq anxieties had been elevated, as well, by the advancement of American culture. Encroaching American systems introduced economic changes such as a debt-inducing credit system, cost-cutting business practices, and racially charged cultural perceptions that caused tension between the Alutiit and the early American newcomers. The Church clearly offered respite to the Alutiit from worldly pressures that were beyond their control. In an 1895 Kodiak parish document, Russian Orthodox priest Tikhon Shalamov illustrated this point, as he described the resettlement of Wide Bay by Native and Creole groups, recounting the villagers open embrace of the Orthodox religion:

> Here the Aleuts had resettled not long ago, in the last two years... the majority being arrivals from the Nushagak parish, the village of Ugashik, fleeing from stewards of the trading company [to be] nearer to the sea where valuable sea otters can be found... [38]

Like the Alutiit, the Church was also leery of a growing American presence. Many priests believed that Protestant missionaries would challenge the Orthodox Church and attempt to steal converts from its parishes. It formed an alliance with Native leaders who also viewed American enterprise as intrusive and used the Russian Orthodox faith as an amalgamating force.

Between 1799 and 1840, most of the churches established in villages near Aniakchak were administered from two parishes: the Kodiak parish located on Kodiak Island, and the Belkofski parish located near the southern tip of the Alaska Peninsula. To serve parishioners, the priest from Kodiak traveled across the treacherous Shelikhov Strait, and the Belkofski parish priest had to negotiate the length of the Alaska Peninsula. In 1841, a new Nushagak parish was established to serve villages located on the Bristol Bay side of the peninsula. In 1906, the priest from Belkofski parish requested that the parish center be moved to Chignik,

where half of his members lived. [39]



Russian Orthodox Church Port Heiden, ca. 1912. University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, THWAITES 247.185.

During their journeys up and down the peninsula's coastline, Orthodox priests encountered Native peoples who had spent the last century adapting to cultural change and were outwardly caught between a Native and a Slavic world. No longer dominated by Russian traders, residents of the Alaska Peninsula gradually returned to more traditional cultural patterns, where families lived, at least seasonally, at temporary fishing and hunting camps. In 1861, for example, a priest visiting the Ugashik River noted:

> From 13 to 16 July, the people, especially the men, began to disperse to fish; many women, too, left the settlements for [illegible], sorrel, etc, and we could not censure this departure of the residents before my departure or consider it their ignorance or indifference toward the priest. This is nearly the only time of year when they put up every kind of supplies for the year's subsistence. [40]

Still, the return to subsistence strategies was not fully realized, for the Alutiit had learned to blend much of their culture with customs, practices, and material items belonging to the outsiders. For decades, the Alutiit had moved in the orbit of European commerce, and as a result, hunters gravitated towards local trading posts to exchange a percentage of their catch for pots, guns, sugar, flour, coffee, and alcohol. As long as Natives received fair and balanced trade, the last half of the nineteenth century proved to be a period of stability on the Alaska Peninsula. In 1895, Father Vladimir Modestov of the Nushagak parish noted that "from Ugashek a merchant will send [to the residents of Agishek] provisions and other goods, and receives furs from them." [41]

For most of the year at least, these residents lived in villages scattered across the central Alaska Peninsula and adapted seemingly well to their multicultural existence. They wore an ensemble that combined Native ground-squirrel parkas with Western woolen shirts and trousers. Even the remaining *promyshlenniki* and the incoming American traders wore distinctive outfits consisting of Russian, Siberian, Native and European garments. [42] Footwear usually consisted of the well-made traditional *nalugatut* boots. Men's hairstyles modeled Russian cuts and many grew long, bushy beards. [43] Creoles, who spoke both Russian and Alutiiq, made up the majority of inhabitants, but other Alaska Natives, such as

Yupiit and Aleuts, also moved into the villages from outlying regions. Even villagers' houses were architecturally stuck between two cultures, for most people lived in half-frame and half subterranean homes. Although they continued to preserve food in traditional ways, the process was conducted outside the home, while inside, people practiced better hygiene. In 1909, Father Apollinarii Kedrovskii even advised the residents of Chignik Lagoon "to build roomy houses and put wall paper on the inside." [44]



Interior of a Russian Orthodox Chapel ca. 1912. University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, THWAITES 247.912.

Most nineteenth century villages were not founded on traditional sites, but were built in entirely new locations. Although the promise of Church membership was not the sole factor for the establishment of new communities, the Orthodox religion attracted settlers displaced by the declining Russian fur trade, and, simultaneously acted as a unifying force for the new inhabitants. One of those villages was Vvedenski, now known as Chignik Bay. An account from the Orthodox Church records written in 1909 describes the formation of Vvedenski:

> The village consisting of 2-3 barabaras was founded about 10 years ago. In 1907/8 upon the priest's requests, the inhabitants built a church in the name of the Entry [Vvedeniye] of Virgin Mary into the Temple. Since then the village has grown. Orthodox from Nushagak mission and Afognak parish moved here. People from other villages are also settling down here since there are a number of local conveniences. There is a lot of fuel in the area and it is close at hand; there is an ample supply of salmon; there are stores and a post office and 2 fish canneries where people can get jobs. There is a doctor and the priest visits the settlement every year. Eskimos, Agle s and creoles do not have such conveniences in their old places and therefore, are settling down in Chignik abandoning their old residences. [45]

Other new settlements in the Aniakchak region included Agishik (Pilot Point), Meshik, and Unangashak on the Bristol Bay side, and Kanatak, Wide Bay, Wrangell Bay, Chignik Lagoon and Mitrofania on the Pacific side.

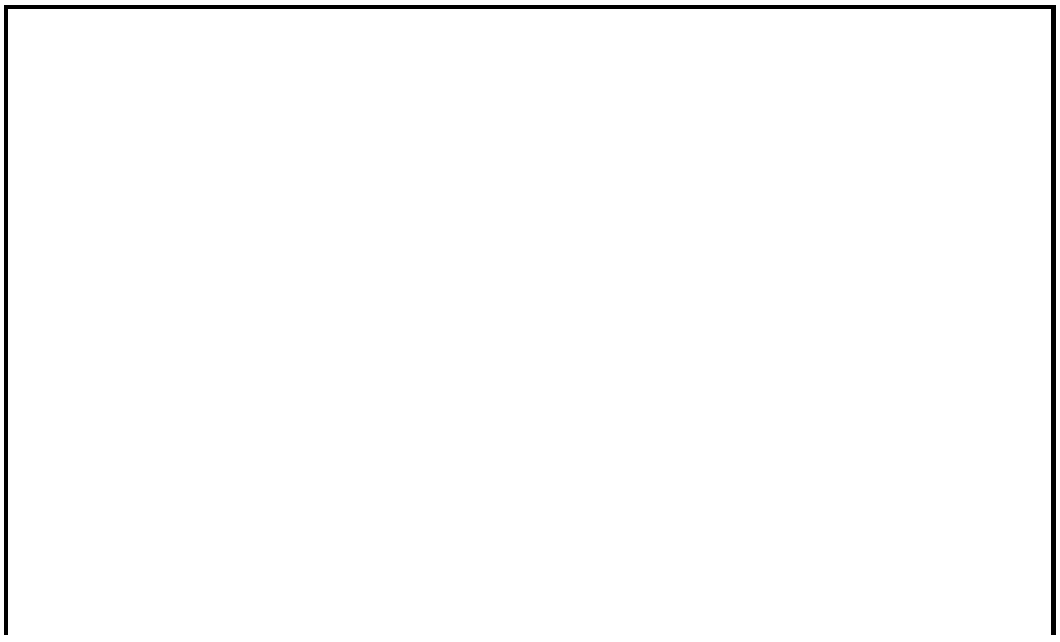
Local residents were not the only group faced with a period of adjustment after the sale of Alaska to the United Stares. Although parishes received funding from the Russian government and the Russian Foreign Missionary Society, Orthodox priests had to learn to

manage without immediate support from the Russian-American Company.

Each spring, missionaries set out from their parish centers and traveled to distant villages. From Nushagak, a solitary priest visited the villages of Ugashik, Agishik (Pilot Point), Meshik (Port Heiden), and Inangashek (Unangashak). From Kodiak, another priest traveled to Kanataq (Kanatak), Kuiukak (Port Wrangell), and for a brief time, Sutkhum. Finally, from Belkofski, a priest traveled over 200 miles to the villages of Kaluiak (Chignik Bay), Nikolaevski (Chignik Lagoon), Vvedenski (Chignik Bay) and Mitrofania. For transportation to these village sites, Russian priest depended entirely on the Alutiiq men who guided them. [46] The priests usually rode in the middle hatch of a three-holed *bidarka*, paddled by their Alutiiq guides, who also hunted for the party's food, set up camp, and found shelter if the group had to wait out bad weather in the small bays—a situation that happened frequently on the stormy Alaska Peninsula coast. As it happened, the Alaska Peninsula was the perfect setting for priests to imitate Christ's suffering in the wilderness.

As mentioned, most Orthodox priests were familiar with the seemingly inhospitable lands of Siberia, or were, in fact, of mixed Alaska Native and Russian heritage, and thus, were accustomed to the harsh climate the Alaska Peninsula afforded. Nevertheless, travel to the remote Native villages remained difficult—so difficult that bad weather forced some priests to postpone their visits for years at a time. In 1891, Father Vasily Shishkin, from the Nushagak parish, reported that he planned to "leave for Inangashak to consecrate the prayerhouse there." He then added, "I do not know when I shall return [to Nushagak]; the trip will be by sea, and from mid-July it already begins to become the stormy season and travel in *baidarkas* is not without danger." [47] Regardless of the time of year, travel along either coastline always exposed visiting priests to danger. In a parish report, Father Modestov explained why traveling the Bristol Bay coastline in the late nineteenth century was so difficult:

> In the wintertime, it is four to five days' travel from Ugashek to Inangashak, but there is no forest on the way and without firewood it is impossible on the winter trail. In the summer time, constant south and southeast winds delay you and sometimes force you to sit by the sea and wait out the weather for seven or eight days. Only in the spring, and early spring at that, is it convenient to go from Ugashek to Inangashak, since then the ice in the sea hold back the waves, but at that time the ice does not allow you to go from Nushagak to Ugashek, since there is a mass of ice at the mouth of the Nushagak River until 20 or 25 May. [48]





The presence of canneries on the Alaska Peninsula impacted the common ground between Russian Orthodox priests and local Alutiiq residents. "Salmon's Last Round-up," Alaska State Library Collection, Michael Z. Vinokouroff Photograph Collection, ca. 1880s-1970s, P243-2-142.

When a priest survived his wilderness test and arrived safely at a new village, it is not surprising that one of his first duties was to convince the residents to build a chapel. Parishioners built chapels at Wrangel in 1884, Mitrofania in 1889, Kanatak in 1890, Unangashak in 1896, Agishik in 1899, and Meshik in 1907. [49] Morseth notes that even a

short-lived chapel once stood at Sutkhum. [50] If a chapel had already been constructed, the priest checked the structure's condition. Although many Orthodox churches built in Russian America were architecturally complex, most of the religious structures on the Alaska Peninsula were considered chapels and maintained a more simplistic design. Because no trees grew on the tundra, parishioners constructed their chapels from driftwood and often used material from the newly built canneries. They found driftwood in piles along the peninsula's "catcher beaches." But despite the hodgepodge pieces used to build them, the structures were usually uniform, consisting of strong vertical walls, with steeply pitched roofs carrying block work towers, crowned by a bulbous dome, surmounted by a cross. [51] Inside, a warm light from dozens of candles would spill into the shadows and illuminate the many gold-framed icons that filled the chapel walls. Indeed, the colorful interiors became the antithesis of the foggy, windswept tundra surrounding the village.

Residents typically placed the chapel on the highest ground near the village. The chapel stood geographically away from where villagers engaged in daily activities. Socially, however, the chapel stood at the center of village life. Similar to the traditional *qasiq,* which functioned as a community hall, Orthodox chapels welcomed village parishioners, especially during the dark winter months. Worshippers used the chapel for all religious services—baptism, weddings, and funerals. As part of the Russian Orthodox celebrations of Christmas, New Year's, and Easter Sunday, chapels were also used by parishioners to perform traditional winter rituals, such as masking. [52] The celebration of *Selaviq,* or Starring, is a winter custom that emerged from Russian serfs and Siberian Natives and is now celebrated by many Alaska Natives. It exemplifies the intertwining of indigenous practice with a Slavonic folklore tradition to become a unique expression of local identity. [53] Thus, Orthodox chapels throughout the Alaska Peninsula were used as a space where indigenous religious practice merged with Christianity. The region's harsh environmental conditions facilitated this phenomenon by making it difficult for the parish priest to visit villages on a regular basis. This type of "hit and miss" visitation allowed most village chapels to evolve independently from the parish center.

In addition to the barriers of bad weather and a troublesome natural landscape, priests, as well as their parishioners, faced other challenges, many of which were financial. Even Petroff observed that "the majority of these chapels are in the hands of natives and creoles, who are not members of the clergy," who were, in the census taker's opinion, "of course, poor." [54]

With the Russian-American Company no longer supporting the Church after 1867, it was up to the parishioners to raise funds to partially support Church activities. After the visiting priest inspected the structural condition of a chapel, he would take an accounting of church funds, which, on the peninsula, were usually quite slim. "A chapel in the name of Church Teacher Mitrofan of Voronezh the Miracleworker was built in 1889 of old Kodiak lumber," wrote one priest visiting the chapel at Mitrofania. "It is not in seemly condition and has almost rotted. There are almost no utensils or church service books and no immovable property or valuables." [55] Likewise, when Father Modestov visited the new village of Agishek, he viewed his parishioners' subsistence activity as a form of poverty. In his report to the Nushagak Parish, the priest wrote: "The residents are all Aleuts who have moved here from Ugashek due to an abundance of caribou. They live not badly, but they do not have cash in hand." [56] Such lack of funds or need for funds show that by the turn of the century the transition to a cash-based economy had not completely occurred on the Alaska Peninsula.

Although people continued to live a life of relative mobility, by the end of the nineteenth century, Church membership encouraged more and more Alaska Peninsula inhabitants to lead more settled lives. In Chignik, for example, when Father Evfimii Aleksin consecrated the chapel there in 1897, he recorded only 49 people, including children. A few years later, nearly one hundred people belonged to the Church. Aleksin, probably a bit too self-serving in

statement, noted the increase:

> ...in a general meeting they [his entire parish] declared that if the *batiushka* will come to them every year and teach them the word of God, they will give up their itinerant life and remain until death in Chignik [57]

Arguably, a priest's most pressing duty was to train and appoint lay leadership to sustain the village chapel in his absence. The lay leadership in communities throughout the Alaska Peninsula reflected the long tradition of Native involvement in the Orthodox Church. Many lay-persons' tasks were secular, and therefore, they did not need to be recognized as clergy. Lay readers, who read Orthodox scripture to parishioners in the priest's absence, could be either male or female. Not only was it their job to maintain the upkeep of the physical structure, but also these appointees maintained the vitality of parish life throughout the village. In 1895, a cleric from Belkofski noted the work of two laypersons in Mitrofania: "Creole Ivan Stepanov takes care of the finances and the sale of candles and other church materials," wrote the priest of the church warden, and "Toyon Prokopii Stepanov directs the church services and teaches the children reading and writing." [58]

The willingness of the clergy to preach in Alutiiq clearly motivated many parishioners, but it was the ability of the layperson to read in both Russian and Alutiiq that invited village residents into the fold of the Orthodox Church. [59] This strong bi-lingual tradition handed down by the Russian-American Company's Second Charter, continued long after the sale of Alaska to the United States. In 1906, a visiting priest from Belkofski observed that the elderly Creole population of Mitrofania "speaks Russian well and consequently can understand the church service language." [60]

As with the educational system in Russian America, Orthodox priests continued to run schools that were open to Creole and Native children in settlements such as Unalaska, Sitka, and St. Paul Harbor on Kodiak Island. At least one child from Chignik, and one from Mitrofania, were sent to a school in Unalaska in the 1890s. Both boys, after training, returned to their communities as readers for the Church. [61] As more and more of the peninsula's Creole and native children became educated, the Church's instructional system branched out to some of the smaller settlements. In the later 1800s, a new school opened in Ugashik under the governance of Bishop Nikolai, and by 1895, another school opened in Mitrofania. [62] Historian Richard Dauenhauer notes that the bilingual education, brought to Alaska by the Russian Orthodox priests, "attempted to build on indigenous talent and potential," and clearly helped to bridge the Native world with a Russian one. [63]

Through mutual accommodation, by the turn of the century, village life on the Alaska Peninsula tundra recognized, and ultimately reconciled, the economic and socio-political constraints imposed from the outside. Residents had learned to act within those constraints. For nearly a century, they had struggled for individual and collective survival in a world dominated by Russian fur trade. Thus, the blending of both Russian and Alutiiq spiritual beliefs maintained a sense of cultural identity and equal status in a world of powerful newcomers. [64] Perhaps during such times of transition, a new religious orientation may not have seemed revolutionary, but instead, necessary. [65]

Accommodation Breaks Down: 1900-1917

At the end of the nineteenth century, the momentum involved in the bilingual and bicultural religious practices had weakened, prompted by an increasing sense of unrest throughout the region. One source of insecurity came from both short- and long-term environmental change. The violent eruption of Novarupta, which decapitated the Katmai Volcano in 1912, uprooted villagers living along the Katmai Coast and forced them to hastily resettle along the

peninsula's southern Pacific coast. Witnessing a volcanic eruption was not only terrifying to people living along both sides of the peninsula, but it was socially upsetting for those villagers forced to move, as well as those who had to adjust to a sudden influx of refugees.

Moreover, environmental degradation caused by the fur trade had taken its toll. Although most hunters and fishermen were practicing Orthodox Christians, they continued to perform indigenous rituals, reviving aspects of the relationship with nature that existed during pre-contact times. As more animals disappeared, the more people grew doubtful, anxious, and hungry. As resources declined and trade posts closed, it is not surprising that people collectively believed nothing—not even the land and the resources upon it—was stable. At the turn of the century, a visiting priest observed such decline:

> Belkovskiy is a small and not very wealthy village, although twenty to twenty five years ago it was one of the wealthiest parishes in all of Alaska. The reason for such relatively rapid impoverishment lies in the fact that sea otters have recently disappeared from [the] region. They say that in 1875-1880, there were so many sea otters that every Aleut could kill several a day right near the village. Now they have totally disappeared. [66]

Clearly, volcanic eruptions and collapsing resources negatively impacted people living on the central peninsula, but what stood to shatter the delicate balance achieved through long years of Russian and Native accommodation was American social, economic, and religious persuasions that began to encroach upon the Alaska Peninsula soon after the Alaska Purchase. The late nineteenth century brought many new Americans to the region, some looking for adventure, others looking for precious minerals, and most hoping to escape economic depression afflicting the rest of the United States between 1893 and 1896. Though many left as the national economy improved, a few men stayed to compete with native hunters for sea otters and furbearing land mammals. Within a few years, many bays along the coast of Aniakchak were occupied during the winter by American sea otter and fur seal hunters. [67]

Alutiit not only associated these isolated newcomers with the decline of the fur-bearing mammals, but many of the Americans married Alutiiq women, and then prevented them from attending Orthodox Church services. "The American does not let his wife be Orthodox or go to liturgy," explained an exasperated priest in 1907. [68] Father Evfimii Aleksin also noted such intolerance for the Orthodox Church:

> Among them were three families of American citizens who have forbidden their wives and children from visiting the Orthodox Church, contrary to a signed promise given at the time of marriage. Those deprived of the happiness of being present at a common prayer service in the temple asked me to hold a prayer service for them, which I immediately did. After the prayer service I proposed to the wife of an intolerant American that I chrizmate her baptized infant, which she gave her full consent. [69]





A Native couple from Chignik, ca. 1912. University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, THWAITES 247.121.

The burgeoning canned salmon industry contributed to declining Orthodox influence. By the late 1880s, salmon canneries began to operate on the central peninsula. In 1888, the first

cannery opened in Chignik, and a year later, a salmon saltery opened on the Ugashik River in the Bristol Bay fishery. At first, priests, cut-off from their homeland, took advantage of the industry's modern services. They received items like wood and tile from the canners to build churches and chapels. In addition, priests valued the safer form of transportation canneries brought to the region. In 1909, a priest with a sick wife wrote, "I really need to get to Chignik and the only way to go there is by steamboat. The mail steamer stops there [at the cannery] all the time." [70] Priests even encouraged parishioners to work for the canneries, believing that the employment of Natives would replace the need for canneries to import Chinese and Japanese laborers. [71] Although these canneries endangered traditional fishing resources and could potentially cause famine in some of the villages, by hiring Natives for seasonal jobs, canneries in Bristol Bay and Chignik became a significant source of income for Alutiiq families.

As wage labor supplemented hunting and fishing on the central peninsula, people gradually became integrated into a market economy. The transition to wage labor, however, was no easy task for either Native people or their Orthodox priests. Almost from the beginning, priests and parishioners began to experience disrespectful attitudes from those working at the cannery. In 1911, the cannery foreman at Chignik complained to Father Apollinarrii Kedrovskii that when he arrived during the processing season, local workers abandoned their shifts to attend church. "The [cannery] owner demands that I come to Chignik only in August, at the end of the factory's work," explained Kedrovskii, "but I cannot and do not want to push people away from the church so that they can work when indeed they want to pray." The priest also noted that Native peoples were stigmatized at the cannery for their Orthodox beliefs, for Kedrovskii added, "I heard from our people that the owner makes fun of religion and those who believe." [72]

It did not take long for priests to recognize that activity introduced in the canneries undermined a Christian life. The priest's most notable concerns came from alcohol, which had been introduced by Russian *promyshlenniki*, and was made readily available at the canneries. In 1909, Kedrovskii noted that the rise of alcohol abuse corresponded with the establishment of canneries:

> A new fish cannery has been built next to the village this year (it's third in this area). Little by little, the Natives are pulled into cannery work and wage labor. But not everybody uses his earnings productively. People suffer from alcohol abuse. [73]

The Church responded by punishing the drinkers. Priests admonished drinkers and made them kneel in the chapel during services. Other preventive measures employed characteristically progressive methods such as temperance societies. These temperance societies, or "Brotherhoods" as they were also called, formed as early as 1897 in Agishek and Ugashik. [74] Members belonging to a Brotherhood in Chignik promised to refrain from alcohol for one year. If a member broke this promise, he or she was banished, not by the priest, but rather by the village. "Out of the whole parish this village especially pleases me with its obedience," wrote Kedrovskii, "Not so long ago alcohol was running like a river here." [75] These societies, however, did not keep all villagers sober. Sadly, women in particular succumbed to the temptation. Priests blamed the canneries—"Women "have begun, thanks to the Americans, to indulge in drunkenness and debauchery... As a result, venereal disease has recently appeared among them." [76]

It is quite possible that Native women interacted with cannery men to gain material and social power as their female forbears had in Russian *artels* a century before. However, the outbreak of new diseases, like sexually transmitted diseases and chicken pox, caused by the interaction of parishioners and cannery workers, concerned priests and added another

dimension to the overall feelings of anxiety about Americanization. For example, a Russian priest wrote:

> Arrived in Chignik at noon. At 1pm I was taken from the pier to Vvedenski, a village with a chapel, by the parishioners. I learned sad news: people are sick and are dying from [chicken pox?] and sore throat. In the last 6 months, 6 people died due to various reasons. There are four people sick and two of them are very seriously ill. [77]

Disease had become a source of anxiety that spread throughout the Native population, especially in the Yupiik villages on the Bering Sea side of the Aniakchak region. In the summer of 1900, a combined epidemic of measles and influenza struck western Alaska. That same year Kedrovskii reported from Nushagak that "so many people had died in the parish that the confessional lists were no longer relevant and would need to be recompiled." [78] The epidemic quickly moved south, affecting people living in the area from Ugashik to Unangashak. According to U.S. Census records, population numbers along the central peninsula coastline dropped from 418 in 1890 to 256 in 1900. [79] So many people died from the epidemic that the region's Yupiik people called it the "Great Sickness." [80]

To make matters worse, the non-Native population—Russian priests, fur traders, and cannery newcomers—were hardly affected by the epidemic. As thousands of Natives died from the flu, the disease produced only mild symptoms and a handful of deaths among Euroamericans. [81] According to Morseth, "Epidemic illness devastated populations, not only in Alaska, but world wide, as medical knowledge and natural immunity were not able to keep apace with the viral diseases transported aboard ships in an increasingly mobile world." [82]



This photograph of the village of Port Heiden taken in about 1912, depicts the village scene that Father Hubbard, Harry Blunt and Al Monson would have likely encountered in 1930. Benjamin A. Grier Collection. "Port Hayden, Bering Sea (My Alaska Girls Home and Family) Native Children and Dogs in Front of Barbara." University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library, Archives and Special Collections.



"Alaska Bidarki or Skin Boat" ca. 1912. Benjamin A. Grier Collection, University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library, Archives and Special Collections.



"Fur Seal, Alaska" ca. 1912. Benjamin A. Grier Collection, University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library, Archives and Special Collections.



"Sea Gulls, Alaska Coast." Benjamin A. Grier Collection, University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library, Archives and Special Collections.



The aptly named "Cold Bay," ca. 1923. "Kanagtak, Cold Bay, AK, Distant Scene." N.T. Gilbertson. Benjamin A. Grier Collection, University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library, Archives and Special Collections.



The Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 transformed Kanatak into a frontier boomtown, built by resources from outside the region. "Men and stacks of lumber on Beach. Cargo Lumber I took to Cold Bay, 1919 From Seattle." Benjamin A. Grier Collection, University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library, Archives and Special Collections.



"Kanatak, Cold Bay Alaska, 1923. Two men and dog standing in front of Ray C. Larson Lumber Company shack," Benjamin A. Grier Collection, University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library, Archives and Special Collections.



As written on the back of the photograph: "Horse Race on Beach. Kanatak, Alaska near Valley 10,000 Smokes. Was there 1 year. Only two horses on the 'island' with different riders we raced them everyday. These damned horses tried to commit suicide. I don't blame them," 1923. Benjamin A. Grier Collection, University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library, Archives and Special Collections.



As oil brought attention from the outside world, the outside world began to explore areas surrounding Kanatak. "We only wanted a few. Lake Bicharoof," Benjamin A. Grier Collection, University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library, Archives and Special Collections.



"Reindeer herd." Date unknown. Benjamin A. Grier Collection, University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library, Archives and Special Collections.



Indigeneous Scandinavians, or Saami, as shown, trained Alaska Native herdsmen and helped to shape cultural lifeways on the Alaska Peninsula, ca. 1912. Benjamin A. Grier Collection, University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library, Archives and Special Collections.



"40,000 Red Salmon, Alaska Peninsula Salmon Tender at Dock, ca. 1912. Benjamin A. Grier Collection, University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library, Archives and Special Collections.



"Alaska Salmon at Cannery," ca. 1920s. Benjamin A. Grier Collection, University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library, Archives and Special Collections.



Two foxes in fox farm pen, ca. 1920s. Benjamin A. Grier Collection, University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library, Archives and Special Collections.



Arctic Fox in pen, ca. 1920s. Benjamin A. Grier Collection, University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library, Archives and Special Collections.



Two men standing with brown bear kill on the Alaska Peninsula, "One I got," ca. 1920s. Benjamin A. Grier Collection, University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library, Archives and Special Collections.

In addition to environmental catastrophes, industrialization, and disease brought by the influx of newcomers to the region, another major source of social disruption came from rival Christian missionaries. After the sale of Alaska, Protestant missionaries, led by Presbyterian minister, Sheldon Jackson, partitioned off several regions in Alaska to various Protestant Churches, which then began to compete with the Russian Orthodox Church for converts. Generally, the Baptists received Kodiak; the Presbyterians, the Southeast and the Arctic; the Moravians, the Kuskokwim; the Episcopalians, the upper Yukon and the Interior; and the Methodists, Unalaska and the Aleutians. [83] According to Partnow, these missionaries had three goals: To convert the Natives to Protestantism—even those who were already Orthodox Christians; to teach the Natives English; and to guide the people away from Native and Russian ways and toward American culture. [84]

Orthodox priests felt the Protestant influence as early as 1895. That year, while visiting the Orthodox chapel in Mitrofania, Father Aleksin received a shock. With the exception of one, all the icons adorning his chapel had been replaced with artworks painted by English, French, and German artists. But even more alarming was an actual portrait of Martin Luther hanging above the altar! Aleksin later reported:

> Upon examining all this, I quickly removed and burned some of them. I blessed the water and sprinkled everyone and everything; it turns out that all this was bought in the company [cannery] store and not cheaply. [85]

The impact of Protestantism on the peninsula's Orthodox, though subtle, had even deeper effects. In 1877, the U.S. government had become concerned that the only schools in Alaska were run by the Russian Orthodox Church. Amplified by policies initiated by the Presbyterian Sheldon Jackson, education among Alaska's Native groups became radically different from those of educators and missionaries in the Russian Period. [86]

Nor surprisingly, Jackson's education initiative in Alaska coincided exactly with the culmination of the drive to acculturate and assimilate American Indians in the Lower 48. [87] Unlike Father Veniaminov and other Orthodox priests, Jackson argued that Alaska Natives

could not become Christian until they had been "civilized." Stunned that the Orthodox had been translating Christian thought into what he described as "heathen languages," Jackson abandoned the bilingual religious training in schools. In fact, he expressly forbade the use of Native languages in all American schools. All instruction was to be taught in English. [88]

In 1903, an American school opened on the south side of Chignik Lagoon. In 1907, Father Kedrovskii visited a class there. In his report, the priest noted that the American school, unlike the school run by the Orthodox, did not provide education for Native students:

> There are 20 students—children of both sexes. All of them are Russian Orthodox and are children of Creole women who are married to Americans. The school is small but clean. Children are taught by a teacher [female] who is Methodist. On Sundays there are praying gatherings. According to parents (mothers) these gatherings do not harm Orthodoxy... I asked the teachers to accept native children as well. She replies: "I would be glad but there is not enough room." [89]

By 1912, the American government closed most of the Orthodox Church multicultural and bilingual schools. As many Alaska scholars agree, Protestant missionaries intended to acculturate Alaska's Native population by supplanting their culture with mainstream, white, Protestant, American culture. Education specialist Richard Dauenhauer suggests that the overriding goal driving both the missionaries and the U.S. government was the "eradication of Orthodoxy and all vestiges of a pre-American past." [90]

American acculturation eventually disrupted village society that surrounded Aniakchak. In most communities, people's spiritual reality had not just become blurred, but had become outright confused. According to Vyacheslav Ivanov, who wrote *The Russian Orthodox Church of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands and its Relation to Native American Tradition,* the competition of different Christian denominations seemed to lessen the importance of each of them. And, as a result, a partial revival of shamanism occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century. [91] In 1913, Father Apollinarii Kedrovskii described an event that illustrated the negativity that people were beginning to feel towards religious institutions in Alaska Peninsula villages. In his report, Kedrovskii described how a young Native woman, in an effort to cope with what was likely a terrible sexual violation, displayed elements of pre-contact indigenous religion in his presence. Although she claimed to be a "messenger from God," it is probable that the young woman was attempting to deal with confusion and anxiety brought about by massive cultural change that had been occurring since the turn of the century. The priest's hostility toward the woman is a sure sign that accommodation between the Native people and the Orthodox Church was breaking down:

> Today I was visited by a young woman (19 years old) and her family who are Wrangel residents (Afognak parish) who spent a winter in Chignik. She announced that she is "God's messengers," that she has much to tell me and, as a matter of fact, that the people live here badly. I accepted "this messenger" very coldly because I have heard about her activities from letters that I received from here [Chignik] in the winter. Also I heard about her in Nikolaevski where she "fooled" trusting Agelmiuts.
>
> I talked to the so-called "psychic." Anna [her name] did not know the main prayer and her mother could not [shame?] her this time. Her mother, they say, visited every seance this winter and sometimes directed her daughter at the meetings they themselves organized. Both, the mother and the daughter are illiterate. I know for sure that both have been through all imaginable in regards to the opposite sex. However, Anna claims that she is a "saint" because "she has

> not sinned". . . She began to talk nonsense, but in her words "open God's will to the people," after the Katmai catastrophe of 1912 (volcano eruption).
>
> I heard from people that Anna used to gather meetings with people in the winter by ringing bells in the chapel. Then she performed something resembling a church service, fainted and in such a state told stories to people saying that those were messages from heaven. When awake and well she drew pictures (primitive) of "the other world." She said in the other world "women give birth to angels" and that "people live there as well and drink beer." She also added that "not all sins can be told to the priest during confession." She said that "during big holidays angels throw boxes on the ground" (and there were some who went to look for these boxes). I heard in the winter people were very eager to hear such fairy tales from heaven and at the beginning Anna had the hearts and minds of the people in her hands. But later they figured out what she was. [92]

In 1917, the Russian Orthodox Church received a staggering blow when the Bolshevik Revolution broke out. The atheistic Communist revolt, led by Vladimir Lenin, destroyed the power and finances of the Russian Church, and severed the Alaskan Orthodox missionary from Mother Russia. Lack of support disrupted regular services, and other religious activities, particularly the priest's missionary rounds to the villages. Perhaps even more distressing, ecclesiastical authorities stopped paying the priests, who, in turn, could not pay lay reader's salaries. Thus, the Russian Orthodox priests had little power in preventing the spread of American culture and religion. Still, this did not mean that American customs entirely replaced Russian influence.



The Seventh Day Adventist Church is an example of the encroachment of the America Protestant churches on the central Alaska Peninsula, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

Bridging an Old Creole World with the New American World

Instead of falling alongside the Russian monarchy, the Russian Orthodox Church somehow managed to survive in places like the Alaska Peninsula. This is quite amazing considering that by 1918, the elderly ordained clergy in Alaska had dwindled to nine. Most priests eventually died off and were buried by parishioners in their mission fields. [93] But, as Orthodoxy faced annihilation back home in Russia, it survived in America because during those years of accommodation, Orthodoxy provided people with a set of beliefs and ritual practice that assisted both Alutiit and Creoles in coping with their changing social, economic, and intellectual environment, while simultaneously enabling people to preserve key aspects of their traditional lifeways. By the time American culture became a dominating presence on the Alaska Peninsula, Russian Orthodoxy had essentially transformed from being a European import into a distinctly Native institution.

When Americans, lured by the prospects of oil and fish, began to arrive in greater numbers, they encountered a people who linked Native Alaska and Russia America genetically. Moreover, these people of mixed cultural backgrounds served as brokers between a much older Russian-Alutiiq world and an encroaching American way of life. To this generation, terms like "Russian" and "Russian Aleuts" no longer elicited memories of conquest, but "communicated culture, intelligence, and non-foreignness unattainable by the newcomer Americans." [94] This new cultural identity separated Alutiiq residents from the Americans, but it also identified them as "Christians," which, in the long run, helped people maintain their "respectability" in the eyes of the American newcomers. Most importantly, the blending of Orthodoxy and Native religion allowed Alutiit some measure of control over the rate of change in their own lives.

By the 1920s, American corporations had made their way to Aniakchak's lands, rivers and bays. Despite their entry into a cash economy, Native villagers managed to hold on to what they saw as their religion—an indigenous version of Russian Orthodoxy. The very fact that the Russian Orthodox Church remains today the largest single religious denomination among Alaska Peninsula residents is a lasting testament to the powerful influence of the Russian Empire in Alaska. Most significantly, however, the very survival of the Church represents the extraordinary adaptability of both Russian priests and Native parishioners during those years of transition and accommodation on the central Alaska Peninsula.

NOTES

[1]Price, "Adventuring with the Glacier Priest", 4.

[2]Hubbard, *Cradle,* 66.

[3]Hubbard, *Cradle of the Storms,* viii.

[4]Price, 14.

[5]Christine Martin, Chignik Lake, Alaska, October 19, 1992. H95-35-10-UAF ANIA 2089/007.02-01, Box 1, Folder 11.

[6]Tikhon Shalamov, "From the travel journal of 1895 of the Kodiak Resurrection Church" *Russian Orthodox American Messenger,* Translations by Richard Bland, Patricia Partnow, and Irina Dubinina, in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[7]Sergei Kan, *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Cultural and Russian Orthodox Christianity through Two Centuries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), xx.

[8]Andrei A. Znamenski, *Shamanism and Christianity: Native Encounters with Russian Orthodox Missions in Siheria and Alaska, 1920-1917* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood. 1999), 1.

[9]Barbara Sweetland Smith, *Russian Orthodoxy in Alaska: A History and Analysis of the Church Archives in Alaska* (Alaska Historical Commission: 1980), 3.

[10]Barbara Sweetland Smith, "Russia's Cultural Legacy in America: The Orthodox Mission" in *Russian America: the Forgotten Frontier* (Washington State Historical Society, 1990), 245.

[11]Ibid., 245.

[12]Morseth, 47.

[13]Partnow, 85.

[14]Smith, "Russia's Cultural Legacy", 245.

[15]Smith, *Russian Orthodoxy in Alaska,* 4.

[16]Gideon, vii-viii.

[17]Ibid., 46.

[18]Partnow, 85.

[19]Znamenski, 25.

[20]Tikhon Shalamov, "From the travel journal of 1895 of the Kodiak Resurrection Church" *Russian Orthodox American Messenger,* Translations by Richard Bland, Patricia Partnow, and Irina Dubinina, in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[21]Partnow, 91.

[22]Znamenski, 46-52.

[23]Tikhon Shalamov, "From the travel journal of 1895 of the Kodiak Resurrection Church" *Russian Orthodox American Messenger,* Translations by Richard Bland, Patricia Partnow, and Irina Dubinina, in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Soterios A. Mousalimas, *The Transition from Shamanism to Russian Orthodoxy in Alaska* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1994), 314-321.

[26]Znamenski, 36.

[27]Mousalimas, 314-321.

[28]Znamenski, 2.

[29]Partnow, 85.

[30]Smith, 5.

[31]Znemanski, 62.

[32]Richard L. Dauenhaur, "Education in Russian America." In *Russian America: The Forgotten Frontier* (Washington State Historical Society, 1990), 156.

[33]Vyacheslav Ivanov, *The Russian Orthodox Church of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands and its Relation to Native American Traditions* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1997), 3.

[34]Smith, *Orthodoxy in Alaska,* 6.

[35]Ibid., 8.

[36]Smith, *Orthodoxy in Alaska,* 8.

[37]Ibid., 8.

[38]Tikhon Shalamov, "From the travel journal of 1895 of the Kodiak Resurrection Church" *Russian Orthodox American Messenger,* Translations by Richard Bland, Patricia Partnow, and Irina Dubinina, in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[39]Morseth, 54.

[40]Feofil Uspenskii, "Brief Journal of the domestic activities and travel of the missionary of the Nushagak Mission, 1861" Alaska Russian Church Archives, R149/f686. Translations by Kathy Arndt in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[41]Vladimir Modestov, Nushagak, Report to Dean of Clergy of the Unalaska District, July 29, 1895, from "Agishek/Pilot Point Alaska Russian Church Archives, R145/f120. Translations by Kathy Arndt in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[42]David W. Rickman, "Costume and Cultural Interactions in Russian Americas' in *Russian in North America: Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Russian America* (Fairbanks: Limestone Press, 1990), 242.

[43]Partnow, 148.

[44]Apollinarii Kedrovskii, "Report to Belkofski from Vvedenski/Chignik Bay, 1909." Alaska Russian Church Archives, R134/f246. Translations by Kathy Arndt in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[45]Ibid.

Partnow, 89.

[47]V. Shishkin, "Report to Alaska Consistory from the Bristol Bay Coast, 1891," Alaska Russian Church Archives, R149/f653. Translations by Kathy Arndt, in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[48]Vldimir Modestov, "Report to Nushagak parish," Dec 1896, Alaska Russian Church Archives, R145/f24-67. Translations by Kathy Arndt in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[49]Partnow, 162; Morseth, 73-77.

[50]Morseth, 38.

[51]Kathleen Lidfors and Steven M. Peterson, "the Architectural Legacy of Russian America," in *Russian America: the Forgotten Frontier* (Washington State Historical Society, 1990), 223.

[52]Partnow, 162-163.

[53]Ann Fienup-Riordan, "Following the Star: From the Ukraine to the Yukon" in *The Forgotten Frontier,* (Washington State Historical Society, 1990), 227.

[54]Petroff, 42.

[55]Evfimii Aleksin, "Report to Bishop Nikolai of the Aleutians and Alaska from Belkofski, 30 Sept 1895" Alaska Russian Church Archives R136/f333-336. Translations by Kathy Arndt in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[56]Vladimir Modestov, "Report to Nushagak Parish. May 30, 1898," Alaska Russian Church Archives, R145/f239. Translations by Kathy Arndt in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[57]Evfimii Aleksin, "Report to Belkofski from Chignik, 1897" Alaska Russian Church Archives, R136/F342-443. Translations by Kathy Arndt in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[58]Evfimii Aleksin, "Report to Belkofski from Mitrofania, 1895" Alaska Russian Church Archives, R133/f333. Translations by Kathy Arndt located in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

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[60]Evfimii Aleksin, "Report to Belkofski from Mitrofania, 1895" Alaska Russian Church Archives, R133/f62. Translations by Kathy Arndt located in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[61]Ibid.

[62]Ibid.

[63]Daunhauer, 157.

[64]Kan, xxx.

[65]Partnow, 91.

[66]Vladimir Modestov, "Visiting the Villages of Karluk, Unga, Belkovskiy and Unalaskhka" *Russian Orthodox Messenger,* Vol. 3. pp. 613-615. Translations by Irina Dubinia located in ANIA files 2089/008.02-01, Box 2, Folder 05, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[67]Partnow, 127-128.

[68]Father Evfimii Aleksin and Father Apollinarii Kedrovskii, "Report to Belkofski from Chignik Bay, June 9, 1907" Alaska Russian Church Archives, R134/F 147. Translations by Kathy Arndt located in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[69]Father Evfimii Aleksin and Father Apollinarii Kedrovskii, "Report to Belkofski, from Chignik Bay, June 10, 1906" Alaska Russian Church Archives," R134/F96. Translations by Kathy Arndt located in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[70]Father Evfimii Aleksin and Father Apollinarii Kedrovskii, "Report to Belkofski, from Chignik Bay, Jan-Dec 1909" Alaska Russian Church Archives, R134/f244. Translations by Kathy Arndt located in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[71]Apollinarii Kedrovskii, "Report to Belkofski from Vvedenski/Chignik Bay, June 26, 1909" Alaska Russian Church Archives, R134/f251. Translations by Kathy Arndt located in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[72]Apollinarii Kedrovskii, "Report to Belkofski from Vvedenski/Chignik Bay, July, 1911" Alaska Russian Church Archives, R134/f326. Translations by Kathy Arndt located in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[73]Apollinarii Kedrovskii, "Report to Belkofski from Vvedenski/Chignik Bay, June 25, 1910" Alaska Russian Church Archives, R134/f284. Translations by Kathy Arndt located in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[74]Evfimii Aleksin "Report to Belkofski, From Agishek and Ugashek, Oct 1897" Alaska Russian Church Archives, Fr. 524-525. Translations by Kathy Arndt located in ANIA files 2089/008.02-01, Box 2, Folder 05, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[75]Apollinarii Kedrovskii, "Report to Belkofski from Vvedenski/Chignik Bay, June, 1909" Alaska Russian Church Archives, R134/f286. Translations by Kathy Arndt located in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[76]Vladimir Modestov, "Report to Nushagak to Dean of Clergy of the Unalaska District Alexsandr Kedrovskii, 29 July 1895" Alaska Russian Church Archives, R149/f389. Translations by Kathy Arndt located in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

Apollinarii Kedrovskii, "Report to Belkofski from Vvedenski/Chignik, 1911" Alaska Russian Church Archives, R134/f318. Translations by Kathy Arndt located in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 05, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[78]Morseth, 67.

[79]Ibid., 67.

[80]Robert J Wolfe, "Alaska's Great Sickness, 1900: An Epidemic of Measles an Influence in a Virgin Soil Population," *The American Philosophical Society,* Vol. 126, No. 2 (1982) 91.

[81]Ibid., 91.

[82]Morseth, 66.

[83]Daunehauer, 165.

[84]Partnow, 164.

[85]Evfimii Aleksin, "Report to Belkofski, Sept 30, 1985" Alaska Russian Church Archives, No. 26-f333. Translations by Kathy Arndt located in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[86]Daunehauer, 161

[87]Haycox, 185.

[88]Dauenhauer, 157.

[89]Apollinarii Kedrovskii, "Report to Belkofski from Nikolaevski, June 9, 1907" Alaska Russian Church Archives, R134/F 198. Translations by Kathy Arndt located in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[90]Daunenhauer, 162.

[91]Ivanov, 32.

[92]Apollinarii Kedrovskii, "Report to Belkofski from Vvedenski/Chignik Bay, 1913" Alaska Russian Church Archives, R134/359-360. Translations by Kathy Arndt located in ANIA files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[93]Smith, 9.

[94]Kan, xxx.

ANIAKCHAK

Beyond the Moon Crater Myth
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape
A Historic Resource Study for Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

ANECDOTES
A Sense of Place

by
Patricia H. Partnow

I had flown into the Chignik area several times before I hitched a ride on a fishing boat in 1990 and saw the land the way it should be seen—from the sea. Luckily, the weather was perfect, a clear day in May. It was just before the first halibut opening, so the fishing boats were ready, but their crews were not yet frantic.

We chugged out of Chignik Lagoon, and as we passed the spit, the captain pointed out the site of the "Old Village." A terrible influenza epidemic had wiped out almost everyone two generations ago, leaving only a few *barabaras* and the Orthodox church still standing when the site was finally abandoned in 1920. All traces had by now been obliterated, but Mike Sam, a resident of modern-day Chignik Lagoon, told me he had heard the story of the village's demise many times from his grandfather Innokenty Kalmakoff, who had been the reader at the church. In 1990 Mike lived on the south shore of the lagoon, on what is called the "Flat Side," to distinguish it from the "Cannery Side" which had at one time been the commercial center of the region.

From the early 1910s to statehood, the largest had been the site of amazingly profitable canneries that employed Alutiiq salmon canners, Chinese workers up for the season from San Francisco, and Scandinavian fishermen. Like Aniakchak Bay, Chignik Lagoon was also the site of several fish traps, some resting on piles, others floating. Millions of red salmon on their way to spawn in the Chignik River returned to the lagoon, where many were caught in the fish traps. When traps were outlawed at statehood in 1959, the fishery changed to seine netting, but continued to be a rich source of income for canneries and, in some cases, fishermen as well.

Today's residents of Chignik Lagoon and nearby Chignik Bay are the descendants of people who lived and hunted for many generations along the Aniakchak coast. They recounted story after story of childhood winters spent at trapping sites north of Chignik during the first half of the twentieth century. Each family had a barabara adjacent to established traplines up nearby valleys. Children helped their parents, but also learned on their own traplines. I remember Julia Boskoffsky telling me about the time her father taught her and her brother, Walter, in a very Alutiiq way, how to trap a land otter. Julia and Walter had competed for the same otter, one putting a trap at the bottom of the trail that went up a hill, the other at the top. Both failed. Only when their dad had successfully caught the otter did he divulge the secret: place the trap slightly to the side of the trail, where the otter's legs could be caught. The children had put their traps in the middle, and the otter had simply slid over them on its belly.

Families sometimes visited with each other during the winter, but for the most part they lived in isolation, reading, sewing, trapping, and playing cards. The exceptions were periodic trips

back to town (either the Lagoon or the Bay) for staples and to check on mail, and summers when they returned to the Chignik area so the parents could work for the canneries while the children attended school.

But there were older stories going back many generations, tales about villages settled and then abandoned and sometimes resettled. I was struck by the mobility of the people. They moved because a trading post or store had been established in the next bay. Or a terrible epidemic had wiped out most of the people. Or the promise of oil had proven false. Or commercial fishing was more conveniently launched from another locale. One time a teenage daughter married someone, and her family—in this case the village's entire population—moved with her to her new home. As far back as 1805, the German explorer Langsdorff had noticed that the population of what is probably Kukak Bay had dwindled under pressure from the Russian-American Company for hunters and skin sewers. And, of course, the most catastrophic event in living memory, the 1912 eruption of Novarupta Volcano near Katmai, resulted in a mass migration from the northern shore of the Alaska Peninsula's Pacific coast southward to the Chigniks and Perryville. The role-call of abandoned villages represents Alutiiq, Russian, and American days: Katmai, Douglas, Kukak, Toujoujak, Kuyuyukak, Kanatak, Puale Bay, Sutkhum, Chiginagak Bay, the Old Village at Chignik Lagoon, and Mitrofania.

And there are even older stories about the Aniakchak coastline. People remembered and passed down tales of battles fought and won—and, rarely, lost. The enemies were usually Unangan men traveling stealthily in sleek qayaqs from the Aleutian Islands. The most ingenious defense strategy was to take refuge on the top of a steep rocky island. Knowing that there was only one way to the top, the defending Alutiiq would lug spiked logs up to the small plateau at the summit, then roll them down the slope onto the attacking Unangan.

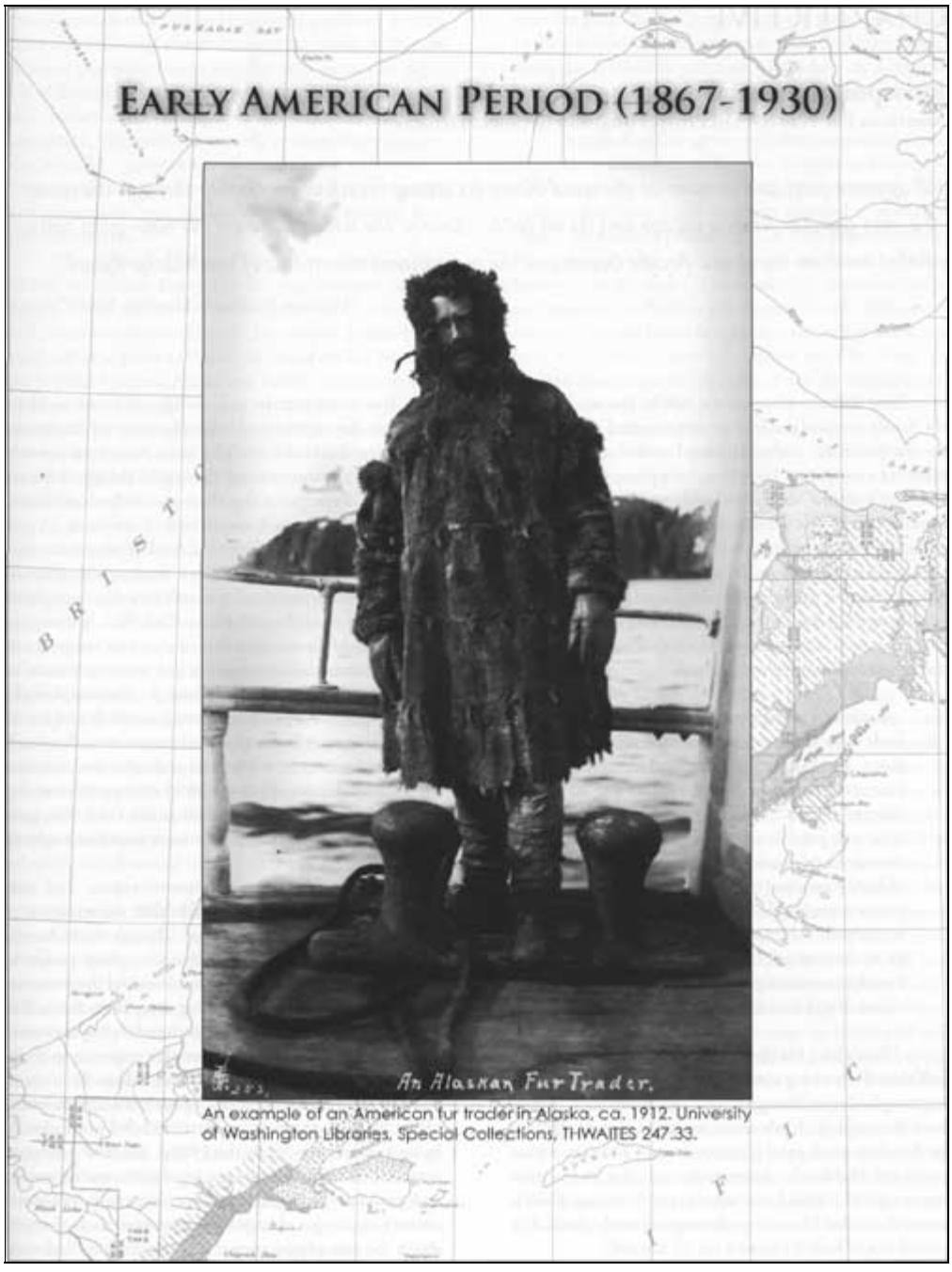
On this day in May 1990 as the fishing boat putted past the spit, around Rabbit Point, past Mud Bay, and into Anchorage Bay, I looked out across the Gulf of Alaska and peered at the sheer cliffs to the south. I tried to imagine myself in a skin qayaq making this same journey 200 years ago. Had I been there in the 1700s, I reflected, I would have turned my face to the sun just as I was doing now. I would have breathed the salt air, heard the screeching birds, and felt very small as my skin boat bobbed in the swell. But I would also, I thought, have been much more aware of the human history that lay like an invisible film on the rocks, beaches, capes, spits, and inlets. Every feature of the land would have had a name and a history, and I would have felt at home. I would have sensed the ancestors who had traveled the same route so many times before. For now, I had to be content with other people's memories, grateful at the glimpses into the past they allowed.

<<< Previous <<< Contents>>> Next >>>

ANIAKCHAK

Beyond the Moon Crater Myth
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape
A Historic Resource Study for Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

EARLY AMERICAN PERIOD (1867-1930)



An example of an American fur trader in Alaska, ca. 1912. University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, THWAITES 247.33.

CHAPTER FIVE
Incorporating Aniakchak:
American Fur Traders, Oil Prospectors, and Reindeer Herders

> *All appears quiet and content as the wind blows its strong breath of ownership through the ruins of a once popular Alutiiq village and its oil fields. Surely, the wind does own the now-quiet town nestled between the grand Pacific Ocean and the magnificent mountains of the Alaska Range.*
>
> Marlane Shanigan, Kanatak Tribal Council

Near the very place on the Alaska Peninsula where the Russian crew of the *St. Peter* encountered "Americans" for the first time, Father Hubbard waited at the Harris salmon cannery, near False Pass, for a plane to fly him up the length of the Alaska Peninsula and into the Aniakchak Crater. While waiting for the weather to improve, Father Hubbard happened to strike up a conversation with a fish trap operator. The operator was infuriated that the Bureau of Fisheries, the federal agency charged with regulating the Alaska fishery, was allowing seine boat fishermen to catch salmon near his fix trap site. "It's this way," the operator grumbled to Hubbard:

> ....Suppose a miner working hard all his life finds a good prospect in an undeveloped region. He locates his claim and develops it. Later on others flock into the region and stake claims above and below his. That's all right too, as far as it goes. It is part of the game for many to reap where few sow. But suppose some sort of legal maneuver closes up the original prospector's workings, because he is getting too much gold, while the others who have come in on the strength of his pioneer efforts are allowed to continue panning—then the original miner would have a real grievance.

"That's life," Hubbard agreed. "Some people spend half their life making something and the other half keeping everybody else from getting it away from them." Hubbard then added, "Only when we get to heaven shall we be free from such earthly annoyances." The trap owner pondered Hubbard's observation, and after only a moment, replied, "Well, I sure want to get there, but if hell is worse than what I have to go through on earth, then I'd be plumb out of luck if I missed out all around."

The sentiment the trap owner expressed to Hubbard that day represented a broader view of frustration and anxiety held collectively by many Americans towards ongoing socioeconomic and ideological changes. Historian Robert Weibe notes that throughout the decades that bridged the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, "A pall of thwarted opportunity, of frustrated dreams, hung over large parts of the nation." [1] Such frustrations stemmed from rapid industrial development occurring throughout the country since the end of the Civil War. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, cities had grown in size and number. Americans flocked to many of them to labor in factories. Meanwhile farm production skyrocketed, invigorated by new marketing methods and use of new machinery. Railroad construction stimulated and unified the economy, while gold and silver strikes in the West fueled dreams. Even the sticky dark petroleum, discovered in Pennsylvania just before the Civil War, gave rise to a new industry and became what many began to call "black gold."

Rapid urbanization, industrialization, and immigration conspired to drastically alter the structure of American economy and society. Though most Americans benefited from this transformation, many people at the time felt as if control over their lives and the resources

they depended upon was slipping away from them. The combination of rapid changes produced during the twentieth century, and ultimately people's response to those changes, caused a shift in American values, from those held by isolated, autonomous agricultural communities of the 1800s to those of corporate-minded professionals living in urban regions by the 1920s. The new American mind-frame valued continuity, regulation, specialization, and practical management. Moreover, such twentieth century challenges changed the way Americans thought about the role of government. In an effort to deal with the magnitude of social and economic problems derived from this industrial transformation, reformers of this era believed that government was the only institution capable of finding solutions to cure society's ills. As power in this country shifted from the individual to an amorphous institution, Americans accepted, perhaps begrudgingly, the "need for a government of continuous involvement." [2] Thus, to maintain a sense of order and tangibility, the federal government was suddenly engaged in peoples lives like never before.

When Father Hubbard arrived in Alaska in the 1930s, the Glacier Priest, like the trap operator, sought out an American frontier landscape in which one could still control one's own destiny. But despite Father Hubbard's effort to paint a frontier picture of the Far North in his popular lectures, Alaska was hardly immune to such instruments of change. In fact, within just ten years of the Alaska purchase, the architects of American incorporation—big business and the federal government—began to absorb Father Hubbard's remote, exotic, and isolated Aniakchak region into the larger American world.

In fact, when the United States purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867, U.S. officials saw Alaska's value, especially its economic worth. According to William A. Williams, author of *Roots of the Modern American Empire,* in 1867, a number of U.S. lawmakers argued that the annexation of Alaska was necessary for the expansion of American trade and influence in Asia and eventually the whole world. Echoing sentiments of Manifest Destiny, Ignatius Donnelly of Minnesota declared that it was America's true destiny "to grasp the commerce of all the seas and sway the scepter of the world." Similarly, Congressmen Green Berry Raum of Illinois argued that the annexation of Alaska would hasten transformation of the Untied States into "the leading commercial nation of earth," which would control all the rich trade with the East. [3]

Historian Walter LaFeber makes a similar argument in his book *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898,* which states that the culmination of American expansion is linked to the national industrial capacity and the need to seize new markets, especially Asian markers. LaFeber points out that the first to realize this need was Secretary of State William H. Seward. [4] Likewise, In his study *Conflict on the Northwest Coast: American-Russian Rivalry in the Pacific Northwest, 1790-1867,* Historian Howard I. Kushner supports Williams and LaFeber's argument, for he suggests that Seward, the architect of the Treaty with Russia, looked upon annexation of Alaska as "a stepping-stone to Asia's markers." [5] According to Kushner, the sale of Alaska was the "culmination of continental expansion," which even the great Pacific Ocean could not stop. [6] According to these historical interpretations, then, the United States made the decision to purchase Alaska because American leadership saw Alaska as a bridge that connected them to the markets and resources of the Pacific. [7]

Though Kushner agrees with the interpretation that American leaders desired Russian America as a bridge to Pacific markers, he also justly adds that American businessmen saw value in the northern acquisition in its own right. [8] As Kushner points out, U.S. entrepreneurs recognized the potential of everything from Alaska's whaling fishery to its ice trade. As a result, U.S. leaders began to put pressure on Russian dignitaries, which, as Kushner contends, would have brought the sale sooner had it not been for America's internal conflict, the Civil War. In Russian historiography, the aim, if not the exclusive reason, for the

sale of Russian America was U.S. expansion and even the threat of an immediate military clash. Articulating Russia's realization that the Russian-American Company alone could not defend its territory in North America against a growing American presence, the frustrated Russian minister to the United States, Edward de Stoeckl, wrote, "American freebooters" were "rapidly multiplying in the Pacific.... [And] however spacious the regions of the United States Federation may be, they do not seem extensive enough for the feverish activity and spirit of enterprise of the Americans." [9]

Thus, contrary to popular frontier mythology, immediately after Russia sold Alaska to the Untied States, Corporate America and the Federal Government—not rugged individuals—began to explore and, eventually, integrate the coastal areas of Aniakchak into a distinctly American way of life. The first American capitalists to reach Aniakchak Bay represented the California-based Alaska Commercial Company, which ran a station at Sutkhum from 1878-1884, and introduced the system of American credit to the region. Just over a decade later, oil seeps off the peninsula coast attracted exploratory drillers, who staked their first claims in 1901. Within two decades, companies like Chevron and Mobil had transformed the village of Kanatak, located up the Pacific Coast from Aniakchak, into a booming frontier town. And, finally, in a paramount attempt at social and cultural engineering, beginning in 1910, government-sponsored reindeer herding was introduced to the Bristol Bay side of Aniakchak. By providing subsistence-dependent Alaska Natives with a specialization, the program endeavored to instill within the Alutiiq population there, along with the Inupiaq in-migrants, an entrepreneurial spirit, and ultimately, to incorporate the Aniakchak region into America's capitalistic culture.

For many individuals—the "little guy"—especially the newcomers still holding onto nineteenth century American frontier values, this was a time of great disillusionment. Time and again, individual dreams had been trumped by corporate and governmental interests. For those who spent half their life making something and the other half keeping everybody else from taking it away from them, these changes represented more than simple annoyances. As the fish trap operator explained to Hubbard, "it felt like hell on earth."



Print at The *Signing of Treaty of Cessation,* March 30, 1867, from the painting by Emanuel Leutze showing the Alaska purchase. Shown left to right; Robert S. Chew; William. H. Seward (Secretary of State), William Hunter; Mr. Bodisco; Baron de (Eduard) Stoeckl (Russian Diplomat) Charles Sumner and Frederick W. Seward. Alaska State Library, P243-1-086.

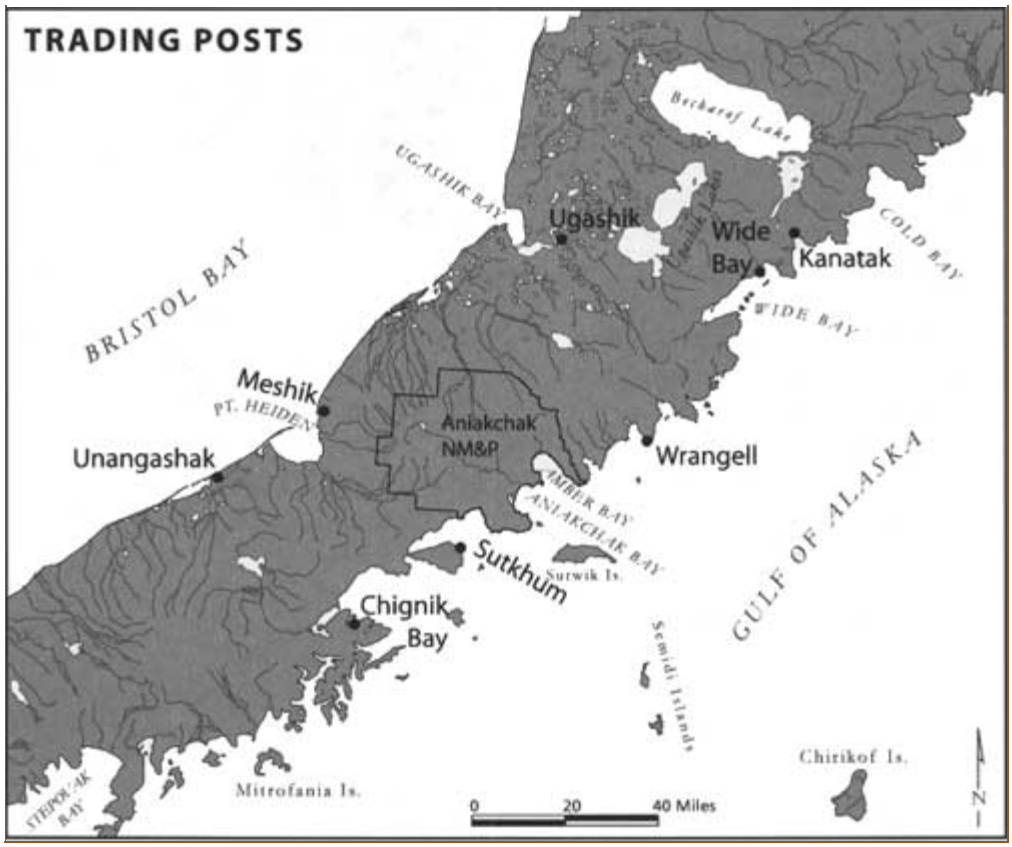
AMERICANIZING THE RUSSIAN FUR TRADE: THE ALASKA COMMERCIAL COMPANY 1868-1884

Not surprisingly, one of the first commercial enterprises that American businessmen pursued in the new territory was the sea otter trade, a venture that had been well established by the Russian-American Company for at least eighty-three years. In 1868, just one year after the purchase, The San Francisco-based Alaska Commercial Company formed to facilitate the Alaskan fur trade. Economically speaking, the Americans picked up where the Russians left off. Within ten years, the Alaska Commercial Company began to operate trading posts throughout the Aniakchak region, and, at first, most residents hardly noticed things had changed.

In fact, for the most part, life on the central Alaska Peninsula under American rule existed much as it did under Russian authority. The number of American newcomers was still relatively low in the late 1800s; therefore the cultural and social reality created between the mix of Russians and the Alutiiq residents remained basically intact. Like the Russian *artels*, American trading posts attracted Alutiiq and Creole settlements, from which their inhabitants engaged in trade. However, over time the American fur traders began to introduce subtle changes characteristic of a capitalistic, market-driven culture. Although notable cultural disruption did not take place immediately, companies like the Alaska Commercial Company paved the way for the larger American corporations, which did begin to alter the Aniakchak region enormously by the turn of the century.

In December 1867, Hayward Hurchinson, a successful wartime business promoter representing the San Francisco-based business, Hurchinson, Kohl and Company, traveled to Sitka to bid on the Russian-America Company's remaining assets. There, Hurchinson met Prince Dmitrii Maksutov, the company's chief manager, and *de facto* representative of the imperial government in Alaska. With Alaska now held by the Stars and Stripes, it was Maksutov's responsibility to sell off the Russian-America Company's merchandise and property, consisting of a merchant fleet and a far-flung chain of trading posts. [10] That winter, a charming and diplomatic Hurchinson outmaneuvered his American competitors and purchased from Maksutov the company's inventory, merchant vessels, and trading posts. Hutchinson was even able to negotiate rights to the Russian-American Company's coveted sealing interests in the Pribilof Islands. [11] Hunting and procurement of fur-bearing animals quickly ensued, and the following autumn, associates from Hutchinson, Kohl founded the Alaska Commercial Company to take over the American fur trade in Alaska.

Because of the conservation measures taken by the Russians to protect their investment in the fur trade, sea mammal numbers had rebounded in the Aniakchak region. Consequently, the Alaska Commercial Company restored Russian outposts and opened a few new trading posts there. By the 1880s, Native and Creole inhabitants, who had deserted previous settlements as a result of the declining Russian fur trade, now had incentive to return to the region in larger numbers and settle entirely new villages along the Alaska Peninsula coastline. Chignik elder Polly Shangin recalled, "After the white people came and put up a store, my father hunted sea otters." [12] For many, it was business as usual.



Alaska Commercial Company trading posts. By B. Bundy. *(click on image for a PDF version)*

During 1880, U.S. census taker Ivan Petroff recorded people living at the villages of Oogashik [Ugashik], Oonangashik [Unangashak], Mashikh [Meshik], Kuiukak [Wrangell], Kaluiak and [Chignik Bay]. [13] Not surprisingly, each village was the site of an Alaska Commercial Company post. The company also opened a store in Wide Bay in 1897, drawing people from Bristol Bay to the future village of Kanatak on Portage Bay, and in "Sutwik Bay," at what was the Russian-American Company's *artel* site at Sutkhum. [14]

The Alaska Commercial Company's Sutkhum station ran a seasonal store, outfitted hunters, and bought or traded sea otter and other furs between 1878 and 1884. Hunters from Wrangell, Afognak, Katmai, Kodiak, and Ugashik traded at Sutkhum. Using *bidarkas*, dories, or the mail steamer *Dora*, which later served the cannery operations, furs from wolverine, mink, red fox, caribou, and otter were brought to Sutkhum by local inhabitants to sell or trade. [15] From there company agents sent the furs to stations on Kodiak Island, where transport businesses like the Alaska Steamship Company, sailed the cargo to San Francisco and Seattle. From the West Coast ports, pelts were sold in markets all over the world. In payment for furs, the Alaska Commercial Company traded western commodities—tea, coffee, hardtack, clothing, and crockery—items to which Alutiiq people had grown accustomed. [16] The Company did not sell liquor and drastically limited the amount of available sugar sold in their posts, to discourage people from making home brew. [17]

The Sutkhum hunters found the methods American employed along the central peninsula coastline to be similar to the hunting practices during the Russian days. Hunters searched for animals along the reefs and islands, from the Shumagin Islands to Puale Bay. Mike Sam of Chignik Lagoon recalls stories his grandfather used to tell him about sea otter hunting. According to Sam, hunters still used bow and arrows. Like their ancestors, they were constantly exposed to storms, and while waiting out the bad weather in what was usually some kind of makeshift shelter, the hunters gambled away their catch to one another. [18] In

1880, Ivan Petroff described a typical sea otter hunt:

> The great body of Aleutian [Alutiiq] hunters still retain the spear and in a few instances, the bow and arrow. The sea otter is always hunted by parties of from four to twenty bidarkas, each manned by two hunters. From their village the hunters precede to some lonely coast near the hunting ground, either in their canoes or by schooners and sloops belonging to the trading firms, a few women generally accompanying the party to do the housework in the camp....the rents of the party are pitched in some spot not visible from the sea, and the hunters patiently settle down to await the first favorable day, only a smooth sea permitting the hunting of sea-otter with any prospect of success...As soon as the otter comes up within spear's throw one of the hunters exerts his skill and lodges a spear head in the animal, which immediately dives. An inflated bladder is attached to the shaft, preventing the otter from diving very deep. It soon comes up again, only to receive a number of other missiles, the intervals between attacks becoming shorter each time, until exhaustion forces the otter to remain on the surface and receive its death wound. [19]

Like the Russians before 1867, the Alaska Commercial Company maintained a near monopoly of fur trade along the central Alaska Peninsula coastline. But, as operations became more commercialized, signs of competition began to develop along the peninsula, which eventually led to problems between the Alaska Commercial Company's traders and their Alutiiq hunters. A noted Company rival operating in the same region was Nikolai Olgin, a church leader, who built the Mitrofania chapel in 1881 and owned a schooner, which he used as a trading post. [20] Although he was a single operator, Olgin chipped away at the Alaska Commercial Company's control of the market in this area by selling merchandise at lower prices. In 1888, an exasperated agent from the Wrangell Station described the competitive situation along the central peninsula in a letter to the Alaska Commercial Company's headquarters in Kodiak:

> Reed & Olgin were also on the [Suthwik] Isld. My party reported Olgin bought from Ugashik party one sea otter paying $75.00 therefore. Olgin has an assortment of Mdse thru his trades with other parties. Although my party had no money when they left for Suthwik, several of them brought Mdse and money from there, the natural inference, that Olgin has succeeded in buying also sea otters from my party. [21]

Although seemingly advantageous, selling their furs to the highest bidder created a problem for local hunters. Accordingly, hunters lured by higher prices from the competition allowed their debts incurred from the Alaska Commercial Company to deepen. The Company tried to garnish wages from hunters, even those hunters who tried to avoid their obligations by changing the stations with which they exchanged their furs. But, even as hunters continued to amass debt, the Company continued to outfit hunting expeditions. [22] In a report written in 1898, Father Vasilli Martysh described how debt kept Native hunters in a kind of indentured service to the Alaska Commercial Company:

> ...for furs on hand which Natives bring to the store for sale, they are paid, not in money but by company checks, which can be cashed only at the company agents'... It's not an infrequent occurrence, where even for furs in hand such checks are not issued but simply the catch added to a half-century old debt. [23]



Four men, seated at Alaska Commercial Company's office, San Francisco, 1904, Left to right: H. McIntyre (formerly Treasury agent), Capt. M.C. Erskine, Professor George Davidson and Capt. Gustave Niebaum. Alaska State Library, Michael Z. Vinokouroff Photograph Collection, ca. 1880s-1970s. PCA 243-2-168.

While the fur exchange economy made its inevitable transition to capitalism, the language spoken between hunters and agents to negotiate their transactions became a problem. Unlike the Russian-American Company, which mainly hired bilingual Creoles to manage trading posts, Euroamericans ran most Alaska Commercial Company stores, and they spoke only English. Most hunters and other lower employees were Russian Aleut and/or Alaska Native, and allegiant to the Russian tongue. If local residents wanted to do business, however, they had to learn to communicate in English. At some stations, mainly on the Pribilofs, the Company provided American educational courses, which published textbooks in English and Russian. One textbook taught a Creole or Native person that:

> The people in California or other states live in fine houses, built of wood, brick, iron, or marble. The Americans work very hard to earn money and instead of spending it in gambling and drunkenness, they build fine houses in which they have good books, fine furniture, and every necessity of life. [24]

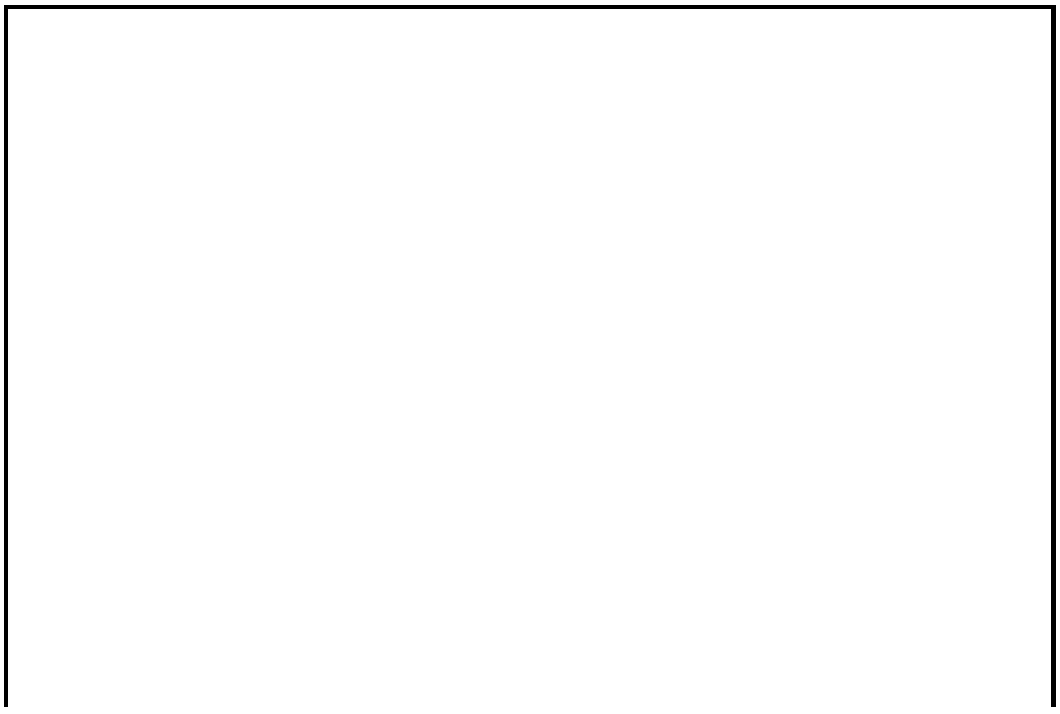
Adding to the problems between agents and hunters was an apparent lack of interest that managers of the Alaska Commercial Company paid to their operations on the Alaska Peninsula. The primary reason for such a lack of interest was economic: the region's commercial hunting activities were often eclipsed by the profits the Company received from its Pribilof Island lease. Between 1870 and 1890—the Company's heyday years—Sutkhum, and the rest of the peninsula posts, remained mere afterthoughts compared to the sealing stations in the Bering Sea, as well as the more lucrative Kodiak and Aleutian stations. In the spring of 1882, Grigorii Panshin, who operated the station in Sutkhum, wrote to Benjamin McIntyre, the Alaska Commercial Company's chief trader for the Kodiak district, to inform him that too few hunters were available to hunt for sea otters and requested that Kodiak send families to procure furs. [25] Although a small group of people spent their winters on Sutwik

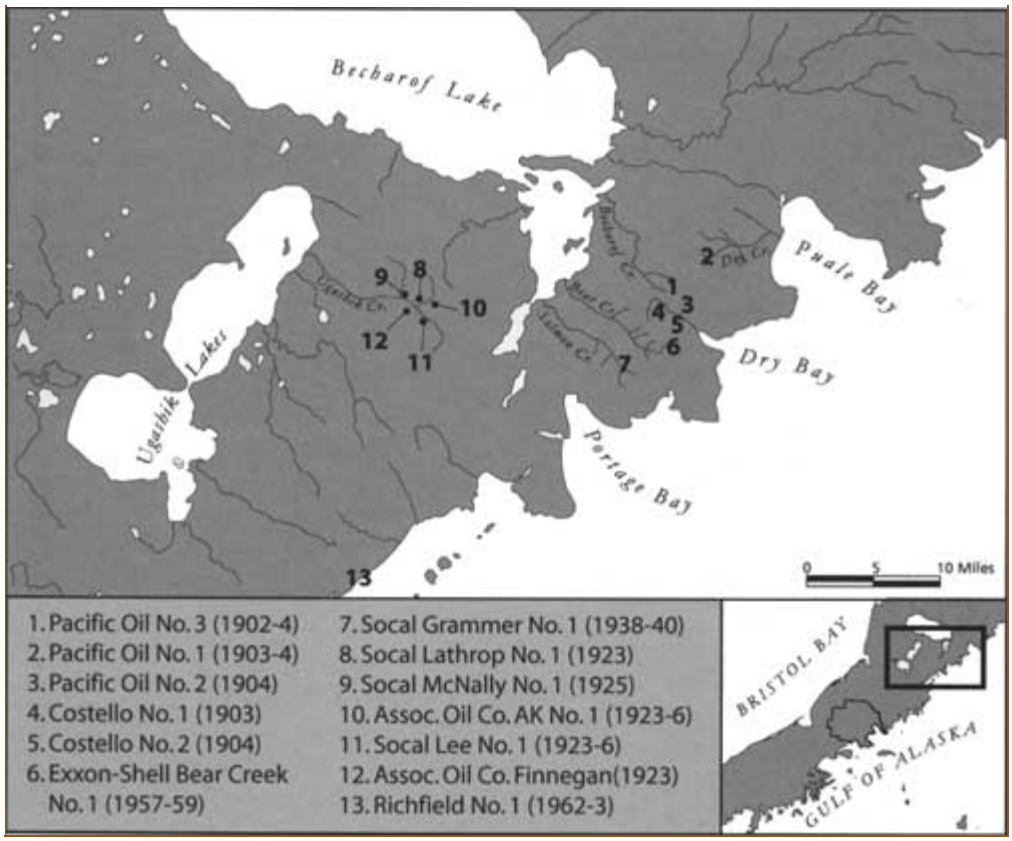
Island, it appears that no resident hunters resided at Sutkhum at all. [26]

As a result, the Sutkhum station, like most stations on the Alaska Peninsula, spiraled downward in the 1880s. In his letter to McIntyre, Panshin described famine, depleted sea mammal supplies, a possible epidemic, and even the rumor that "they [management of the Alaska Commercial Company] will remove the Sutkhum store." As difficulties intensified, personal conflicts brewed between the American agent and the Creole hunters. Panshin complained that hunters took what they wanted from the store, sabotaged *baidarkas,* and even threatened his life: "I also write to you that I am sending Ego Patriotic Naomi," wrote Panshin. "I would not send him for any purpose but I am afraid to leave him here. He nearly killed me in March." [27]

By the same token, agents seemed to have had little respect for the native hunters. Some agents, like Frank Lowell of Wrangell and Frank Kruger of Ugashik, married local Alutiiq women and invested their time and resources in the communities. Most agents, however, treated the Creole and native hunters with contempt. For example, agent Fisher, who preceded Lowell at the Wrangell post, described the local people as being "lazy," "drunk," and "worthless." Fisher stared in a letter written in 1888 that he was "disgusted with the pagans" and requested that the Alaska Commercial Company relieve him as soon as possible. [28]

By 1880, sea otter and fur seal populations had declined exponentially, and even though the company paid Alutiiq hunters fairly high prices for pelts, the rarity of the animals made producing an income nearly impossible. A marked increase in demand for seal fur caused prices to rise, and suddenly, seal hunters from countries all over the world scoured the northern seas. Many of the sealers who worked Alaskan waters were Atlantic fishermen and whalers accustomed to the open ocean or pelagic hunting style of the Grand Banks. The pelagic hunters killed their prey at sea, outside the cloistered waters surrounding the Pribilofs or the coastal waters of the Aleutians and the Alaska Peninsula. Because pelagic hunters had no way of knowing the gender of their prey, they killed both males and females. Moreover, pelagic hunting practices were inefficient. Many times, even if they managed to harpoon their target, many wounded animals were able to escape, only to die somewhere else. As a result, these wasteful methods soon reduced the number of pelts available, and everyone engaged in the fur trade suffered.





Oil wells drilled in Cold Bay between 1902 and 1963. None of the drills discovered commercial sized oil seeps. Modified from Roderick, 1997. *(click on image for a PDF version)*

The Alaska Commercial Company made ten million dollars in profit between 1867 and 1880, three million dollars more than the United States paid for Alaska. Although the Company was the most successful trading company in the region, with fewer skins to sell, the Company was forced to diversify investments. By late 1897, the excitement of the Klondike Gold Rush had permeated the country. As a result the Alaska Commercial Company shifted interest from furs to gold, hoping to sell goods and services to the thousands of Americans trying to reach the golden fields of Nome and the Yukon. [29]

With a new focus, the Alaska Commercial Company began to cut loose its posts located outside of the gold mining interests. It sold the Ugashik store to its agent, Frank Kruger. It was even suggested by Lowell, the agent in Wrangell, that managers sell the Wrangell stock and accounts to Kruger for cash. [30] By 1902, Alaska Commercial Company had either closed or abandoned all its stores on the Alaska Peninsula, including Sutkhum in 1884.

The slow decline of the fur trade brought varied change among local residents. Alutiit responses and their adjustments to the decline—both good and bad—began to show just after the turn of the century. Russian priests described a rise in starvation and disease throughout the peninsula, due in part to a lack of food and medicine normally purchased at local Alaska Commercial Company stores. One priest, however, reported that store closures positively affected local peoples. In 1901, Father Vasilii Martysh noted that "First, drunkenness is undoubtedly less... Secondly, the Aleuts [Alutiit] returned to their original [traditionally prepared foods, rather than canned food, etc.] which are the only ones appropriate to Alaska." [31] The end of the fur trade certainly meant tough times for many people who had grown accustomed to and dependent on Western goods. But as hard as this period of transition was on the people living in the central Alaska Peninsula, they managed to adapt.

In fact, the strategies most people employed at the end of the nineteenth century were not so new. In order to survive, many Alutiit returned to pre-contact ways of gathering food and making clothing. They trapped land mammals in the winter, dug for clams in the spring, gathered berries and hunted caribou in the fall, and fished for and dried salmon all summer for winter storage. [32] Along with the technological knowledge and skills required to meet substantive and material needs, the Alutiiq people were able to either maintain or revive many elements of the pre-contact spiritual relationship with the natural world. When oil companies from the Lower 48 began to drill near Kanatak after the turn of the century, and the Columbia River Packers Association moved into Aniakchak Bay to trap salmon for their cannery located in Chignik Bay in 1917, residents of the central Alaska Peninsula were actively using the area on a seasonal basis. [33]

THE SEARCH FOR COMMERCIAL OIL

As the people living in the Aniakchak region moved into the twentieth century, the only economic activity that they had known for 150 years—the fur trade—was coming to a close. Even worse, there was no evidence that gold, the most important mineral of the day, existed within the Alaska Peninsula's ashen landscape. In 1880, U.S. census taker Ivan Petroff reported:

> On the coast of the peninsula opposite Kodiak island coal has been found, together with many indications of the existence of petroleum; but if other mineral deposits are hidden within the recesses of the mountains they have thus far escaped the searching eye of the prospector and explorer. [34]

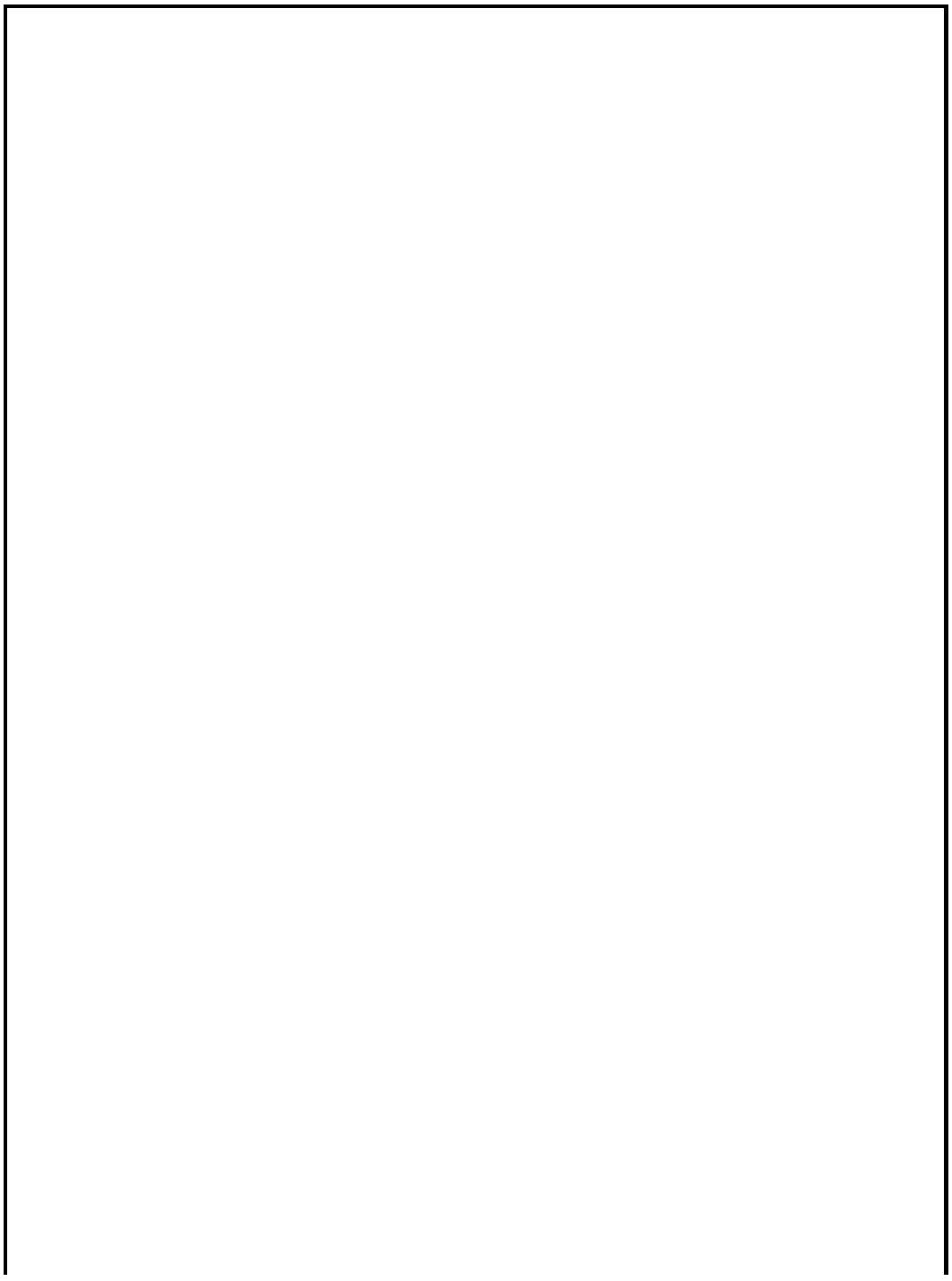
Although such revelations regarding the region's resources dissuaded a rush of gold miners to the region, "indications of the existence of petroleum" ignited interest from another group of prospectors. Thus, as quickly as the Alaska Commercial Company was abandoning outposts and selling its stock and assets, the booming American oil industry set its sights on the Alaska Peninsula coastline, When the discovery of gold near the Klondike River attracted a rush of American prospectors and capitalists to Alaska in 1897, not all came looking for gold. Some were convinced that beneath Alaska's frozen ground lay pools of petroleum just waiting to be drilled from the earth.

Oil, then, represented Aniakchak's entrance into the modern capitalistic system at the beginning of the twentieth century that, in many ways, marked the end of 150 years of mutual dependency and interaction between Alutiiq hunters and parishioners, Russian *promyshlenniki* and priests, and American trappers and traders. In the decades after the Civil War, the United States had made great advances in production, which linked rural economies to centers of industry and manufacturing on the East Coast. By the turn of the century, investors in those power centers, including the oil-producing states of Texas and California, began to explore the northern region for fossil fuels and, by 1901, had staked claims along the Pacific coast of the Aniakchak landscape.

As this study has attempted to show throughout these chapters, it was during the fur trade—from 1741 to the early 1900s—that the central Alaska Peninsula served as a kind of common ground, characterized by relatively mutual agreement between Alutiit, Russians, and early Americans. Throughout most of those years, not only did the Alutiiq people adjust to demands of the fur market without entirely abandoning their older spiritual relationship to the world around them, but because trade networks at the time were limited and military enforcement remained far away, to survive, both Russians and early Americans adopted, and at times depended upon, Alutiiq technology, hunting and fishing skills, as well as their intimate knowledge of the region's natural resources. In many instances, these newcomers needed the Alutiit, not only the men for hunting furs, but women too, for companionship,

which ultimately resulted in a new mixed Native-Euroamerican culture.

Although the fur trade linked the Aniakchak landscape to distant markets from Moscow to Peking, to New York and, in doing so, imposed a new set of meanings on the local landscape, transport systems and global markets remained quite limited, and therefore the trade goods and other resources that entered into Aniakchak did little to shift the balance of power in one direction entirely. Admittedly, the American arrivals caused significant disruption after 1867 in terms of sea mammal depletion, new cost-cutting business practices, racism, and religion. But, it was not until the Americans began to import all necessary means to extract Aniakchak natural resources, making them ultimately independent from the 150-year-old local trade system, that Aniakchak's cultural and social accommodation broke down and relationships of power shifted toward the American corporations. In other words, the Alutiit and Creoles, even the American solitary entrepreneur, were no longer necessary participants in such economic endeavors.





Families utilized furs well into the 20th century. Mary Griechen, Joe Oda and Sophie Griechen, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

Although the fur trade continued well into the twentieth century, the first signs that the balance of power was shifting on the central Alaska Peninsula occurred in 1901 at the small

coastal Alutiiq and Creole village of Kanatak, located on the shores of what was then known as Cold Bay. That year, oil seeps off the peninsula coast attracted exploratory drillers to the village and, within two decades, companies like Chevron and Mobil had transformed the village of Kanatak into a booming frontier town. Unlike the few Russians and Euroamerican who stayed and married within the Native and Creole communities throughout the Aniakchak region, these American had no plans to stay.

The actions of these oil seekers were driven by outside forces that had nothing to do with the local community or ecosystems. Those who attempted to capitalize on Kanatak's oil knew that their aim was to extract the resource entirely, and then leave. They came to extract wealth and, consequently, saw Alaska as little more than a storehouse of commodities. As Alaska historian Stephen Haycox points out, these newcomers "did not go to the frontier to live a subsistence lifestyle in the wilderness, they went for the money." [35] Thus, unlike Alaska Commercial Company agents, Orthodox priests, or Russian *promyshlenniki,* who, along with the Alutiit, basically lived dependant upon Aniakchak's natural resources, in Kanatak, oil prospectors found the local trade networks mainly irrelevant in their quest for oil. For they imported all necessary needs and constructed a boomtown that replicated the material, institutional, and ideological characteristics of the American culture they left behind.

The prospectors who came to Kanatak never consciously intended to destroy a culture or an ecosystem, but, rather, their aim was to discover oil. In *Crude Dreams,* author and oilman Jack Roderick writes, "Like the gold prospector, the oil explorer has a peculiar mind-set. He or she believes that tomorrow the mother lode will be found." [36] "Tomorrow," however, never arrived for those oil explorers who spent over sixty years prospecting along what was believed at the time to be one of Alaska's most promising sites—the oil fields of Cold Bay. These hopeful prospectors simply didn't know that however obvious these seeps seemed, they were often inaccurate indicators of recoverable subsurface petroleum reservoirs.

At the time, scientific and popular belief held that oil lay within the earth like a lake or basin. Today, geologists know that oil is found in porous rock—sandstone or limestone usually. Crude oil, or commercial grade crude oil, can only be found as it flows through these interconnected porous spaces. [37] Although scientists remain puzzled as to why the layers of rock below Kanatak never produced commercial sized deposits, geologist Robert Blodgett offered the following multi-layered explanation: *"One*, local volcanism generated a "void filling mineral" possibly occupied the space in which oil would have normally been reserved; *two,* the technology used by turn-of-the-century oil drillers never reached depths that modern day rigs can descend; and *three*, they simply were drilling in the wrong places." [38]

In the end, this seemingly oil rich region did not result in the prosperous boomtown for which prospectors hoped. Despite the close attention of both the federal government and some of the most powerful business interest in the world, Kanatak disappeared from the world-view. With several failed attempts to strike the "mother lode," Kanatak became not unlike the numerous ghost towns hidden in the mountains and valleys of the American West. Still, the fate of Alaska's first fossil fuel economy, albeit minuscule by later standards, offers a glimpse of things to come.

The First Boom...and Bust

Alaska's oil comes from fossilized marine life deposited in enormous quantities on the ocean floor millions of years ago, which over the eons was buried by sediments that prevented its complete oxidation and decomposition. Today, crude oil represents millions of years of solar energy, collected in the fossilized life and, compressed by layers of earth, into a thick, dense, powerfully energized sludge. [39] In his study of Alaska's long relationship with fossil fuels,

Donald Worster notes that "Tapping that fossil energy is like calling back all the protein that fed all the dinosaurs on earth for hundred million years and gorging on it." [40]

The first real attempt to bring fossil fuel energy to market in Alaska centered near the small native village of Kanatak, known primarily as the place where the winter mail for Bristol Bay and Nome was carried across the peninsula by dog team. [41] But by the turn of the century, Kanatak had become synonymous with oil. U.S. surveyors identified the region the "Cold Bay District," an area that included the Alaska Peninsula coastline from Wide Bay to Puale Bay, and extended inland to Becharof and Ugashik lakes. [42] The name designation acknowledged the district's cold, incessant wind and rain. Even before U.S. surveyors provided the name "Cold Bay," a Russian Orthodox priest described the area as "A dreary, harsh, cheerless region!" [43] Oilmen who worked in Cold Bay agreed. For they found the area hard to work in because the climate was "generally disagreeable, always windy, usually raining....Temperatures fell well below zero. Blizzard conditions prevailed." In the winter "the ground was frozen so solidly as to be unworkable..." In the spring, "it was so swampy as to be almost unworkable." [44] The weather was so "foggy and rainy" during the summer of 1920, lamented a U.S. geological surveyor, that conditions were "highly unfavorable for photographic mapping." [45]

Despite difficult climate conditions, people inhabited Cold Bay, specifically at the village of Kanatak. Alutiiq immigrants from the Bristol Bay village of Nushagak founded Kanatak in 1890. [46] Kanatak grew from "just a few *barabaras"* to a village of at least one hundred people by the 1940's. Ties with other communities were maintained when friends and relatives traveled from Kanatak to hunt, fish, or seek summer work at the local cannery. The village was also a refuge for families from Cold Bay, Katmai, and Wrangell after their homes were destroyed by the Katmai volcanic eruption in 1912.

Long before oilmen from the Lower 48 took interest in the Alaska Peninsula, these Native inhabitants had been aware of the area's petroleum seeps since "time immemorial." [47] While encountering first Russian *promyshlenniki,* and later Americans speculators, Alaska Natives happily told these international visitors of "oil seeps in lakes and near riverbeds" scattered along Alaska's coast from Katella to Kanatak [48] Such accumulated pools produced thick oozing pockets of oil with "an odor that could be detected miles from the source." [49] Bears near Kanatak were reportedly seen "covered with the stuff." [50] Moreover, Native people made good use of these petroleum pools. Some burned blocks of oil-saturated tundra for a fuel to cook their food and heat and light their homes. Later, the inhabitants of Kanatak would use what they called "tar" to clean their guns. [51]

Although local Natives and Creoles clearly regarded oil pools as valuable, their uses for it were limited, and therefore, their demand for the resources was considerably less than its supply. What made the possibility of commercial-sized oil in Kanatak valuable was "the human labor and skill that fashioned it into useful objects." [52] Because crude oil in its raw form had much less intrinsic value, local people could afford to be generous in sharing it. "For the most part..." as on historian put it, "...fuel was buried beyond all their knowledge and skill to recover [it]." [53] To make Kanatak's oil valuable, modern geological science had to discover its full extent, appreciate its potential, explain it origins, and figure our how to drill it and use it.

To Jack Lee, a young oil prospector exploring the district of the Alaska Peninsula in the vicinity of upper Becharof and Ugashik lakes, oil had a much greater intrinsic value. Lee, while prospecting in 1900, observed the seeping pools of oil in Kanatak. He knew what the local people did not—that oil, among other uses, made a combustible engine run. [54]



Men wearing ground squirrel parkas at Wrangell village in Chigninagak Bay on the Alaska Peninsula. This photo may be of the Wrangell Station of the Alaska Commercial Company, circa 1900. Morseth, 2003, page 85. Photo courtesy of the National Archives, RG22-B5350.

After his discovery, Lee succeeded in convincing prominent oil companies that the surface seepages and oil residues in the area were worth investigating. Geologists made preliminary surveys and found that the district showed promise of oil production. [55] By 1901, the word was out, and suddenly, East Coast investors had turned this "hard, dreary cheerless region" into oil country. [56] Giant pools of oil seemed to seep everywhere, while the sedimentary mountain range rising up from the coastline formed what geologists called anticlines, which appeared to prospectors as geological "traps"—ideal places to contain oil. [57] According to U.S. geologist Robert Blodgett, "they thought Kanatak was going to be the next Houston." [58]

At the time, the central Alaska Peninsula was still considered to be so remote that the current *U.S. Coast Pilot* could offer "no accurate information.., about the bays between Port Wrangell and Chignik Bay." [59] Lack of geographical information did not stop commercial interests, however. In 1901, pioneering oilman and speculator, J. H Costello, staked several oil claims where five giant seepages oozed into a stream, aptly named Oil Creek. Between 1902 and 1905, Costello, using a steam-powered cable tool rig, drilled two holes near the creek, one hole measuring a quarter-mile deep. In 1903, excitement over what oilmen described as Kanatak's "eastern" fields soared when passengers, supplies, and drilling outfits landed at Cold Bay. Prospectors immediately commenced the construction of several miles of wagon road to access the drilling sites in the east field. [60]

Meanwhile, another group of claimants from California incorporated under the name Pacific Oil and Commercial Company, and drilled three shallow holes on Trail, Dry, and Becharof creeks, burning the oil from the surface seepages to fuel the rigs. Later, the Oil Creek wells were designated Costello No. 1 and Costello No. 2, while the other wells became known as Pacific Oil No. 1, Pacific Oil No. 2, and Pacific Oil No 3. Promise of a future "mother lode" drove these prospectors and increasingly lured more, creating a boomtown at the head of Puale Bay. [61]

By 1903, companies shipped in machinery and lumber. Prospectors there constructed two

substantial frame buildings that were used as a trading post and post office. [62] Depths of 500 to 1500 feet were reached with the crude equipment, oil-bearing sands were penetrated, causing temporary optimism, and even small quantities of oil were obtained, but the gushers never came through. [63] Although hopes ran high for about a year, the excitement ended. [64] The project was deemed a failure and the disillusioned backers refused to finance further oil drilling in the district.

* * *

Turn of the century interest in Kanatak's oil possibilities reflected a near frenzied search for petroleum products generated by several oil strikes that occurred in the mid-to late nineteenth century in the Lower 48. Even if Alutiiq and Creole communities depended upon solar radiation to support a hunting and fishing existence, the rest of America was becoming more and more dependent upon a fossil-fuel system and the industrial way of life. Donald Worster provides a snapshot of this emerging American lifestyle in an essay titled *Alaska: The Underworld Erupts:*

> They [white Americans] employed that energy to bring into their homes resources from the most distant corners of the earth, including Alaskan canned salmon, whalebone corsets, and gold watch chains. They warmed themselves in their townhouse parlors by coal they had not personally collected but had purchased from a deliveryman, who carted it about the city in a horse-drawn wagon." [65]

And, of course, the greatest portion of the energy Americans consumed by far went to feed a plethora of machines that made their clothes, carried them across the continent, and allowed them to communicate from hundreds of miles away. Even before the invention of machines like the internal combustible engine in the late 1800s, people used petroleum products for a variety of treatments. Early settlers used oil as an illuminant in kerosene lamps, for medicine, and as lubricant for wagons and tools. A U.S. Geological Survey conducted by William Henry Dall reported in 1869: "Petroleum floating on the surface of a lake near the Bay of Katmai, in its crude state was an excellent lubrication for machinery." [66] While these applications were important, the main purpose of oil was to light city streets and homes throughout nineteenth-century America.

Prior to 1850, most lamp oil was rendered from animal fat, particularly whale oil. A thriving whaling industry developed to provide sperm whale oil for lighting, and a lower quality whale oil as a lubricant for machine parts. Sperm whale oil, widely known as "spermaceti," was very expensive. In fact, a gallon in the early 1800s cost about $2.00, which today equates to about $200 a gallon. Nonetheless, whale oil was the illuminant of choice, especially for the rich. The demand for whale oil took a tremendous toll on whales and some species, such as the bow-head, were driven to the brink of extinction. The hunt for whales in northern waters was curbed when a clean-burning kerosene lamp invented by Michael Dietz appeared on the market in 1857. Kerosene, known in those days at "Coal Oil," was easy to produce, cheap, and smelled better than animal-based fuels. The public quickly abandoned whale oil products and by 1860, at least thirty kerosene plants were in production in the United States, driving whale oil ultimately off the market as an illuminant by the end of the century. [67]

On August 27, 1859 in Titusville, Pennsylvania, prospectors, attracted by oil found floating on water, attempted to tap oil by using a drill. At a depth of sixty-nine feet, the newly formed Pennsylvania Rock Company of Connecticut hit pay dirt, and Titusville and other towns in the area boomed. The discovery of oil in Pennsylvania attracted John D. Rockefeller, a young man with a reputation for organizing businesses to increase profitability. In 1860, he and his partner built a small oil refinery, and in 1866, Rockefeller opened an export office in New

York City. The next year, he, his brother, and a few associates created what was to become the Standard Oil Company. By 1870, Standard Oil had become the dominant oil-refining firm in Pennsylvania. Rockefeller's company quickly grew vertically, but it also grew horizontally, as Rockefeller set out to integrate and control all aspects of the commercial oil industry; specifically, scientific research and development, transportation, and internal as well as international markets.

Standard Oil also expanded by absorbing its competition. In 1900, Standard Oil purchased the Pacific Coast Oil Company and in 1906, the company incorporated all its western operations into Pacific Oil, a company known today as Chevron. [68] By 1903, Henry Ford had incorporated the Ford Motor Company. His now-famed invention—the Model T—transformed the automobile from an American luxury into an American necessity. Even in Alaska, demand for Ford's affordable model-T rose, and by 1920, Chevron was the principal marketer of refined products in the Territory. [69]

* * *

The abundance of visible oil in the Kanatak area made it a seemingly natural site to drill. It seemed to the early explorers that it was only a matter of drilling straight down through the petroleum residue to strike commercial oil deposits. And, with Ford's assembly lines pumping out a car every few minutes, demand for new sources of oil was constant. Oilmen like Jack Lee believed Cold Bay was still the place to look, despite their busts in 1903 and 1904. Lee believed that had Kanatak pioneers drilled using more modern equipment, they might have reached the black gold they sought. [70] The visibility of oil, coupled with an increasing demand, did not easily overcome the difficulties of drilling in the remote region. Still, it was the federal government—not the mountainous landscape, brutal weather, nor the expense of oil exploration and development that prevented the oil industry from developing in Alaska for the next eleven years.

In 1906, an executive order issued by President Theodore Roosevelt withdrew from entry all known coal deposits on America's public lands, freezing their development until Congress could come up with a better plan to legislate Americans' natural resources. Then, to the dismay of the Kanatak oil prospectors, in 1909, Roosevelt added oil lands to the no-entry list. [71] Because Alaska was a federal territory, by 1910, the government had withdrawn all new oil leasing from Alaska lands, and in doing so, brought what little business remained in Kanatak to a standstill. For a decade the Cold Bay oil district was virtually deserted. [72]

From 1904 until 1920, only one or two non-Native people lived permanently in Kanatak, while approximately forty Native inhabitants lived there in the winter, particularly to maintain traplines for the numerous small land mammals. In the summer, however, all but one family scattered—some going to the Bristol Bay side of the peninsula to work in the canneries and others to the small native village at the head of Becharof Lake where they caught and dried salmon for winter food. [73] Any interest in oil appeared to have all but vanished.

The Second Boom...and Bust

In 1920, Kanatak reemerged to the forefront of oil exploration, when Congress passed the Mineral Leasing Act, which reopened previously withdrawn lands. According to one observer of the industry, "When Congress passed a law prohibiting entry on Alaska oil-lease lands. . . [it] proved to be a blessing in disguise, because when Congress changed its mind again in 1920, and passed a new bill permitting oil-land development under certain prescribed conditions, interest was immediately simulated in Alaskan oil prospects." Accordingly, "This new interest would probably never have taken place without the temporary probation." [74]

The new law allowed prospectors to lease oil and gas land, setting aside the old requirement of staking the land for mineral claims and working it each year. Whether it was a twenty-one-year-old from Seattle or Rockefeller himself, anyone who filed an oil lease application in the federal land office and paid a $10 filing fee, plus a rental fee of twenty-five cents an acre, received an exclusive right to the petroleum under that land for ten years. [75] With what the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* exclaimed "the unlocking of the oil fields of Alaska," seasoned gold miners, bankers and bootleggers, as well of some of the biggest oil companies in the nation, joined the "oil rush" to Cold Bay, and the near ghost town of Kanatak was resurrected.

By 1921, geologists were again dispatched to the area, while the vicinity of Kanatak was the scene of concentrated activity. From a small Native village, Kanatak grew into a well laid out American small town of two busy streets boasting a number of boom town businesses—hotels, restaurants, stores, and taverns. According to one observer, "three hundred people lived in Kanatak's environs at its height of prosperity." [76]

Again, large number of prospectors and business adventures descended onto Cold Bay. Lumber, drilling equipment, crawler-type tractors were barged north and brought onto the beach, and new arrivals were immediately put to work. The first task at hand: to build a road seventeen miles long from Kanatak, up through the mountain pass, and over to the spot above the southeast corner of Becharof Lake were the drilling was projected. One of those new arrivals was Benjamin A. Grier who managed the Ray C. Larson lumber yard in Kanatak from 1923 to 1924. Grier, who lived in many parts of Alaska and even served on the Alaska Territorial Legislature in 1925 and 1927, was no shrinking violet, and even he noted how tough it was to live in Cold Bay. For entertainment, miners raced the only two horses in town against each other. According to Grier, "these damned horses tried to commit suicide. [And] I don't blame them !" [77]



The mainstreet of New Kanatak. Morseth 2003, page 82. Photo courtesy of the University of Alaska Fairbanks Elmer E. Rasmusen Library, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Mother Collection 82-178-69.

But in spite of the dreary weather and seemingly impenetrable landscape, excitement for oil discovery eventually pushed claimants south, covering most of the central peninsula, to as far as the Chignik District. Geologists representing at least three different private oil companies, as well as U.S. Geological Survey parties, crowded into the small village to examine possible

oil-pool locations. In addition, companies, such as Standard Oil Co. of California (Chevron) and Associated Oil Co., hired experts and non-experts alike to engage in drilling, establish a safe harbor, and engineer possible routes for a road to the oil fields. [78] That year, U.S. geologist S.R. Capps described the oil seepages on Oil Creek:

> The most frequently visited seepages are those on the head of Oil Creek, about 5 miles west of Cold Bay. Here the largest seepage emerges from a smooth vegetation-covered slope in which no rock outcrops can be seen. The oil, accompanied by an abundant flow of water and considerable gas, bubbles forth as a strong spring, the surface of which is coated with a thick layer of brown oil. A rough estimate placed the volume of the oil flow at about half a barrel a day. The gas flows by heads and is of sufficient volume to support a strong flame for several seconds at a time. From this seepage the escaping water and oil flow down a long grassy slope in which most of the oil is entrapped. Similar conditions have existed for a long time, with the result of building up a large area of the less volatile paraffin residue of the oil, which has now hardened to a stiff, putty-like consistency. [79]

The role that the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) played in Kanatak's oil development was clearly significant. Reports such as Capps's gave credibility to Kanatak's economic potential and, literally, put the small coastal village on the map. Such descriptions generated so much excitement that even the first round-the-world flight—"the Magellan's of the Air"—made Kanatak one of their stops in 1924. [80]

Established in 1879, the USGS mission was to explore, identify, and catalog America's uncharted territory. According to historian Alan Trachtenberg, "Information gathered by the agency contributed to the federal government's policy of supplying fundamental needs of industrialization." [81] From the beginning, the agency's meticulously planned expeditions were concerned with natural resource development. As exploration continued throughout the American West, USGS maintained a close relationship with investors in mining enterprises and in the new field of economic geology. Increasingly, scientific inquiry began to serve as the cutting edge for competitive innovation. [82]

Because Alaska was so remote, the agency took little organized interest in territorial exploration before 1895. It was only after the 1897 Gold Rush that Congress gained a strong interest in Alaska's developing mineral industry. Lawmakers directed the Geological Survey to serve as the scientific arm to prospectors and mining engineers in Alaska. [83] The agency, then, produced reports that contained "useful information" in "untechnical language." [84] As historian Morgan Sherwood points out in his study of U.S. explorations in Alaska, "The primary emphasis on economic mineral deposits set the tone for all the Survey operation in the Far Northwest during the century." [85]

Such was the case for the agency's role in putting the region north of Aniakchak on the map. Due to USGS reports, word was out, and people flooded into the remote area. In the summer of 1922, two steamers landed drilling equipment at Portage Bay, and the small village of Kanatak was inundated with a wave of prospectors, surveyors, and dreamers. The non-Native population in the Cold Bay District increased from ten or fifteen to about two hundred within weeks. Prospectors hastily erected over one hundred tents, log cabins, and frame buildings to furnish necessary accommodations. Plans for a town site were laid out, and an attempt was made to regulate the location of buildings so that a future readjustment would not be necessary. By late autumn, hopeful prospectors continued to arrive on every boat, making one wary government surveyor note, "The future population of the town must depend upon the success attained in the drilling, as there is no other activity in the district that could sustain so many people." [86]



Industrial remains of the Kanatak oil boom, ca. 2004. Photograph courtesy of Roger Blodgett.

One of those hopeful prospectors was a man named Earl Grammer. [87] Grammer, armed only with a bedroll and a canvas tent, had prospected the Cold Bay District for over thirty years. Grammer, like Jack Lee, represented the "little guys," individuals who spent most their life savings, as well as their lives, searching for commercial oil on the Alaska Peninsula. In the spring of 1920, Grammer, along with several other "boomers" arrived at Kanatak and immediately began to explore the area. Convinced that commercial oil lay within the bedrock near Bear Creek and Salmon Creek, Grammer filed applications for oil and gas leases under his own and his business partners names. He even applied under the name of his sister and many of her friends. But, Grammer knew that if commercial oil was to be extracted, the endeavor would need support from a company the size of Chevron.

With the passage of the Mineral Leasing Act in 1920 by Congress, leasing large tracts of land became easier than under the old system, and thus, the large oil companies began to pay more attention to Alaska. Chevron's chief geologist, G. Dallas Hanna, concluded that Cold Bay was the best bet for large oil reserves in the Territory. In 1921 the company teamed up with General Petroleum (Mobil) to explore Cold Bay. Hanna acquired claims and leases held by other operating oil companies, as well as individual prospectors, and by 1922, Chevronand Mobil had each acquired the use of 10,000 acres. Based on information Hanna received from Earl Grammer, the companies built a cable-tool rig on top of the Pearl Creek Dome, or what prospectors called the "west field." In March 1923, they began to drill the Lee No. 1. It was the region's first deep oil well.

With such anticipation focused on Cold Bay, speculators began to look beyond the oil fields surrounding Kanatak. Rumors suddenly sprouted of seepages all over the Alaska Peninsula. Even along the remote Aniakchak coastline, oil seepages had been reported "from the country west of Aniakchak Bay and east of the high mountains in the central part of the peninsula" as well as "on the cape between Amber and Aniakchak bays." [88] A USGS report by geologists Smith and Baker specifically noted that a gas seepage was seen near the head of

the East Fork of the Kejulik River. . .the gas flows in a nearly continuous stream of bubbles and has built up a low mound around the orifice." [89] Still, some geologists began to question the existence of commercial oil south of Kanatak. U.S. geologist George C. Martin, who had visited the Cold Bay District in 1903-04, expressed that in 1923, "The causes that led to the staking of most of the oil claims apparently were a general but erroneous popular opinion that much, if not all, of the Alaska Peninsula is probable oil land." [90]

At the time, however, most oil prospectors believed that the oil-bearing strata of the Cold Bay field similarly underlay the Chignik District. This popular but mistaken notion led many to quickly stake claim to what was termed the "Aniakshak" field. This field covered a broad area along the central Alaska Peninsula, covering an area that extended from the Ugashik River to just north of Chignik Lagoon. [91] Although Martin reported that he had found "no oil seepages, residues, gas springs, or structural conditions that are especially favorable for occurrence of petroleum" in the Chignik District in 1923, a large number of oil claims had been staked in the "Aniakshak" field by that year. [92]

According to NPS historian Frank Norris, "During the 1922 fiscal year thirty-five entries, totaling 115,200 acres, were made in the so-called Aniakc[as]hak field." For the next two years, the speculative fever quickened and "Anikashak" became the most popular field in the territory; eighty-eight new entries were made covering 225,280 acres in fiscal year 1923, while forty-three entries, covering 112,808 acres, were made the year afterward. [93] By 1923, speculators had thoroughly staked the area within the current park boundaries. In the end, they claimed a total of seventy permits. According to Norris, "the only area which was not staked was the Caldera itself." [94]

Many of the Aniakshak claimants were "pencil prospectors," in that they hoped to cash in on the work of others. [95] For those individual oilmen—the little guys—whose dreams depended on hitting the "mother lode," life was not only tough, but ultimately, a complete disappointment. In fact, many of the Kanatak prospectors gave their lives in the search for commercial oil. Between 1920 and 1926 Earl Grammer recorded the death of fifty friends and fellow prospectors in his journal. On one page, Grammer listed their deaths under the simple heading "Dead Men:"

> Thompson, Curry and Boudin, froze. "Swede" committed suicide with a shotgun. Gordon Gust died from inhaling gas. Three froze, five drowned, five were murdered, five committed suicide and nine died natural deaths. [96]

The impact of the oil rush was similarly hard on Kanatak's Native inhabitants. By 1922, the new oil town had emerged parallel to the Native village. A fence and the narrow Kanatak Creek was all that separated the northern boundary of the Native village from the growing frontier sprawl. U.S. census takers first reported Kanatak in 1890, when twenty-six residents were counted. Kanatak and Wide Bay inhabitants were mainly affiliated with Ugashik and the Alutiiq village of Meshik. [97]

A U.S. survey in 1922 noted that most of Kanatak's residents were Creoles and "are all members of the Russian Orthodox Church." [98] The village maintained a church, which contrasted sharply to the subterranean houses in which most people lived. People spoke both Russian and their native language, and they lived by hunting, trapping, and fishing. [99] Some residents, according to the visiting priest, sold two or three sea otter pelts to the Americans exploring for oil. [100]

Father Martysh, Kanatak's visiting priest in the 1920s, strongly resented the new arrivals. "The general impression of [Kanatak Bay] I had was quite good," reported the priest. "But still on the return trip I found out, that here is a nest of drunkenness and every disgrace."

[101] To Kanatak's local residents, it seemed as though nature itself objected to the industry's presence. In 1923, after a winter storm blew several buildings off their foundation, the police chief of the Kanatak village, Nicholai Ruff, told Grammer: "White man drink whiskey, no go church, stay up all night, water come, take house away. Native go church all time, water come, no touch Native house." [102] Grammer's journal also recorded tragic circumstances that habitually struck those ill-fed, ill-housed and shabbily clothed: "Demion, second Chief Fred Kalmakoff, and the Chief Ruff Kalmakoff, Chief of the Kanatak Natives—all died of T.B." [103] Too young to have experienced the oil boom era himself, Paul Boskoffsky, Ruff's grandson, recalls stories told to him by Kanatak's elders.

> Families had lived in Kanatak for hundreds of years. The village was always small until prospectors came looking for oil. Then Kanatak became a boomtown with a store, a school, and many people. When no commercial oil was found, they all left. [104]

Traditionally, residents managed to survive in Kanatak, because they kept their population low. Up through the fur trade era, inhabitants of Kanatak were mobile, moving from place to place, always in pursuit of resources, especially during the winter when resources were scare. Because no major salmon stream existed in Cold Bay, residents hiked over the mountain pass to the headwaters of Lake Becharof, where they could easily catch salmon returning up the Egegik River, and, while on the Bering Sea side, they could hunt for caribou. In the winter, they returned to the Pacific to trap and gather shellfish and sea mammals in the spring. Therefore, to survive, even in relatively recent times, the village was small and residents moved within a seasonal cycle of their local ecosystem. When the oil boom brought exponentially more people to the area, the ecosystem could support neither American newcomers, nor the Native and Creole villagers. Consequently, humans, including the local people, began to depend more and more on imported goods such as food, clothing, and medicine, and less and less on the land surrounding them. So, in spite of corporate support, individual sacrifice, and federal science, when the search for commercial oil on the Alaska Peninsula went bust, both the town and the village of Kanatak disappeared.

By 1926, the enthusiasm for Aniakshak field was finally proved to be groundless and the oil frenzy of 1920-23 showed no more promise than the earlier boom in 1903-4. Geological surveyors failed to find the rumored oil seepages and reported, "The country southwest of Wide Bay, especially the Aniakchak District, is covered by large areas of igneous rocks, in which oil does not occur." [105] A survey report from the following summer made it clear: "the outlook for oil in the Chignik District is not hopeful." [106] Within a decade, the government cancelled most existing oil permits located in the Aniakchak and Chignik regions.

Even Cold Bay, the one-time Alaska's hot spot, lacked any sign of commercial oil reservoirs; it simply remained cold. Chevron decided to abandon the Lee No. 1 at 5,033 feet of depth in 1926, and as a result, Hanna recommended to investors that they pull out of Cold Bay. Such news stifled Earl Grammer's hopes for a mother lode find, but it did not end his dreams entirely. Unlike the Aniakchak and the Chignik districts, hopes for Cold Bay died hard. Geologists and oilmen could not believe that commercial oil did not exist in the anticlines and oil-pocked landscape. Chevron and Union Oil of California, and Tidewater Associated returned in 1937 to drill for oil on a 40,000 acre block of land leased by Kanatak's "little guy," Earl Grammer, wildcatter Russell E. Havenstrite, and three of Havenstrite's famous investors: Walt Disney, Darryl Zanuck, and Hal Roach. [107] But even Hollywood magic, not to mention its bankroll, could make Grammer's dream come true. The Grammer No. 1 well produced only saltwater, and at 7,595 feet, Chevron called it off. The Kanatak oil story was indeed, a repetition of the first oil venture.

Prospectors saw one last gleaming hope for Cold Bay in the 1950s when Shell Oil began to explore the area around Bear Creek and nearby Wide Bay, mainly using leases held by Grammer. [108] Shell partnered with Humble Oil and Refining Company, a company known today at Exxon. By April 1957, Shell had drilling units at Bear Creek, Ugashik, and Wide Bay. Exxon built a port and a five-mile road to the drill site. By late summer, drilling began on Bear Creek No. 1 well, on a lease held in the name of Earl Grammer's sister, Elsie. When, at 14,000 feet no oil was found, Exxon abandoned the well and the leases returned to Grammer. The drilling had cost Exxon over $7 million, as much as the United States had paid Russia for Alaska ninety years earlier. [109]

Kanatak Becomes a Ghost Town

In the end, thirteen wells were drilled in Cold Bay between 1902 and 1963, and none found crude. Like the boom that created it, Kanatak was impacted considerably by the industry's bust. Under the terms of the government lease rights, claimants took out all buildings and machinery. In 1939 all that remained was a single store, a school and a government weather station. [110] "Needless to say," notes Kanatak tribal member Marlane Shanigan, "when the oil companies left so did the stores, the bakery, the hotels, and the merchants." [111] Likewise, Boskoffsky recalls that when he was a child growing up in Kanatak in the 1950s, the stores and school were gone. There was no more electricity, and the mail boat from Kodiak that came once a month was their only communication with the outside world. [112]

Although the fossil fuel economy failed to materialize in Kanatak, the experience of this now-forgotten town is representative of events that occurred in varying degrees throughout the nonagricultural West; what historians would describe as the cyclical process of boom and bust. [113] Investors in Kanatak created the boomtown, based on speculated wealth. When no oil was found, Kanatak no longer had a reason to exist.

One by one, families began to leave Kanatak. Some left because they wanted their children to be educated, others left to find jobs. By 1952, the Russian Orthodox Church listed ten remaining people, who "counted themselves as the last." [114] Then, without warning, the U.S. government closed the post office. Boskoffsky, whose father was the postmaster, remembers those days:

> We were stuck with no way to contact the outside world. One afternoon a helicopter flew over. Dad whipped off his coat and waved and waved. The pilot dropped down to check us out. Dad said, "Would you please call the Coast Guard and ask them to come early to fuel the light house and bring us groceries? We're all out of food! [115]

Two days later the Coast Guard arrived, bringing the Boskoffsky family provisions. Then, with little warning, the mail boat to Kanatak—the residents' only regular source of supplies—also stopped coming. The last boat to Kanatak arrived in 1956, and the remaining resident families—the Shanigans and the Boskoffskys—had to abandon their home with only what they could carry. They left behind furniture, bedding, and kitchen items—some even left with dinner on the table. As Boskoffsky recalls, "We said goodbye to our village, our home, and our baby sister in the ancient overgrown cemetery." [116] Kanatak had become a ghost town once again.

* * *

The failure to strike oil on the Alaska Peninsula, in some ways, represents events that shaped most prospectors' lives during this time. Few hit those "once in a lifetime" strikes like at Nome, the Klondike, Kennecott, or Prudhoe Bay. Though many oil seekers left the Alaska Peninsula disappointed rather than rich, it does not mean that their experiences were any less

significant.

Had those prospectors struck the "mother lode," Kanatak would have experienced a much different story. As it happened, the oil industry's impact on the physical environment was minimal. Oilmen left behind steam engines and oil derricks that eventually rusted and rotten over time from Kanatak's ceaseless winds. The numerous miles of boardwalks and roads that connected the town of Kanatak to the oil fields are also gone, replaced by alders that from the air appear as a giant green maze, fanning outward from Kanatak.

Likewise, the oil industry would have disrupted the local villagers as well as others on the peninsula far more significantly had they discovered their "mother lode." Most people moved to familiar communities like Port Heiden, Egegik, and Chignik. Many families with roots to Kanatak continue to travel to Becharof Lake where their fish camp is located. And although the president of the Kanatak Tribal Council currently resides in Wasilla, the federal government recognizes that people are still culturally affiliated with the place. [117] Although today Kanatak is referred to as "abandoned," Marlane Shanigan, whose family left Kanatak on that last boat, disagrees. "Abandonment means that one leaves without the intention of returning. And Shanigan intends to return to her land someday, and thus "to our Alutiiq culture." [118] A visitor to Kanatak observed in 1931, "[Today] Kanatak is almost forgotten. But the little native village has its name on the map, and," like Shanigan, "waits for better days." [119]

REINDEER HERDING COMES TO ANIAKCHAK

Since the days when the Bering Land Bridge connected Asia to America, the Alaska Natives who inhabit Alaska's northwestern region—the Inupiat—have depended upon walrus, seals, whales, and particularly, caribou for their survival. Around fifteen thousand years ago, the species *Rangifer tarandus* crossed the land bridge from Europe and Asia and moved into North America. When the waters of the Bering Strait rose, the species that remained in Europe were called reindeer; in North America the animal became known as caribou. [120] Despite the watery division, reindeer and caribou remained close cousins, for both animals could interbreed. Still, as historian John Taliaferro notes, "Reindeer had a thousand-year head start toward docility; caribou would always be caribou, not readily tamed." [121]

For thousands of years, the peoples of northwestern Alaska hunted caribou for food and warm, comfortable, resilient clothing. Conversely, Siberian Natives living on the other side of the Bering Strait—the Chukchi—began to domesticate caribou. A millennium of breeding turned the wild caribou into the meeker, more manageable reindeer, which could be herded, used to pull sleds and pack supplies, even be milked. [122] The distinct cultural and environmental histories of reindeer and caribou remained geographically separated until events occurring in the late nineteenth century reunited the species.

Sometime in the mid-nineteenth century, the caribou herds of northwest Alaska began to dwindle. Some scientists think that hunters armed with efficient guns pushed the herds into the inhospitable interior of Alaska. Others argue that natural shifts in migratory patterns caused the decline. [123] Either way, problems ensued for the Alaskan peoples living along the Bering Strait and such problems became the impetus for the planned introduction of reindeer to the region.

Reindeer husbandry, a circumpolar endeavor everywhere except North America, came to the Aniakchak and surrounding regions in the last decade of the nineteenth century as a government project headquartered near Nome. The reindeer experiment in Alaska began in 1890, when Captain M.A. Healy of the Untied States Revenue Cutter, *Bear,* who had witnessed starvation among the St. Lawrence Island Eskimo in previous years, conceived the

idea of transporting domestic reindeer from Siberia to the coast of the Seward Peninsula. Though the condition of starvation was far more perceived than real, Healy proposed the plan to Dr. Sheldon Jackson, General Agent for Education in Alaska, who was a passenger on the cutter. Dr. Jackson, a Presbyterian minister, embraced the idea and vigorously began to lobby both the U.S. government and private sources for assistance. He argued for the importation of reindeer because, as the minister proclaimed, Alaska Natives had become "a vanishing race." [124]

Just two years later, Jackson convinced Congress to appropriate funds, and the domestic reindeer industry in Alaska commenced. Between the years 1892 and 1902, a total of 1,280 reindeer from various parts of Siberia were exported to the Seward Peninsula, near Port Clarence. While the original plan was designed mainly to provide food and clothing for famished and freezing Eskimos, in 1897, gold was discovered near Nome. By 1898, large numbers of miners entered the peninsula, creating a commercial market for reindeer products and draft animals. Boosters claimed that reindeer meat would be soon sold in American markets just like beef and mutton. "Eventually...", wrote an industry booster, "...the American housewife should be able to buy juicy steaks and roasts from Alaska as cheaply as those from our Western prairies." [125] Even as early as 1895, Dr. Jackson wrote, "It is now found that the reindeer are as essential to the white man as to the Eskimo." [126]

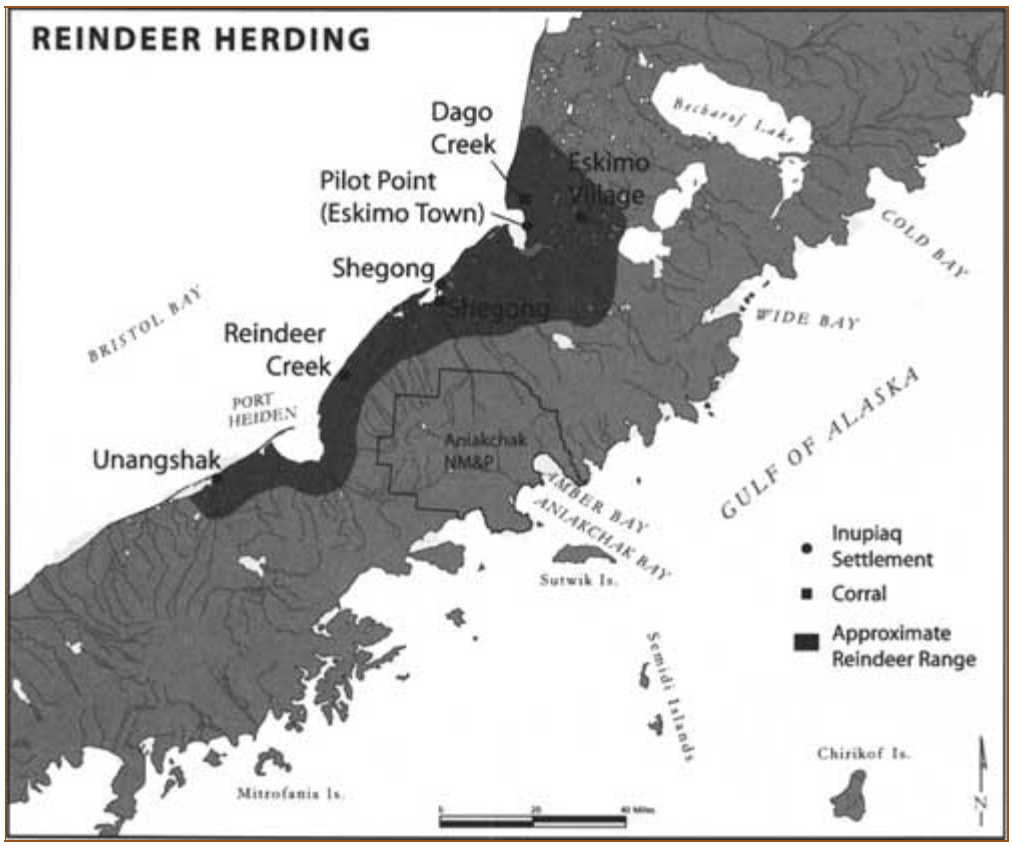
In spite of a potentially profitable commercial market, Dr. Jackson devised a system by which local men were trained as herders, and could then participate not only as laborers, but also as owners in the new industry. In 1892, the same year the reindeer were brought to Alaska, Jackson established the apprenticeship program, which was administered by regional superintendents. To receive reindeer from the government, Alaska Natives were required to serve a term of internship of approximately five years. During this term, the apprentice, who was accompanied by either Saami herders or the more experienced Native herders, tended the herds day and night, winter and summer, and learned the proper care for reindeer. Besides learning reindeer husbandry, the apprentice also became an invested partner, for at the end of his first year of service, the apprentice received reindeer as payment. As each of the four remaining years of his apprenticeship was completed, the apprentice received more animals. By the time that he had concluded his apprenticeship, the Eskimo would have a small herd of his own. This system assured the government that the local herder had gained a thorough knowledge of his responsibilities, and, when he assumed ownership of the herd, he was able to act independently and wisely. [127]

Because Dr. Jackson was the general agent of education, the mission stations and the schools fell under his administration. Accordingly, Jackson's reindeer program became an integral part of the territory's educational systems. [128] Since district superintendents of the schools assumed the dual role of educators and Reindeer Service administrators, the existing school system controlled both distribution and custody of reindeer. Between the years 1905 and 1907, Dr. Jackson fell under political attack for his handling of the schools system and the reindeer program, particularly his wide use of missions as institutions for distribution of government deer.

Thus, several important policy changes occurred that affected the future of Native involvement in reindeer herding during 1907. Because it was no longer possible to entice a sufficient number of young men to leave their home village to learn reindeer herding on the Seward Peninsula, it was decided that the reindeer herds would be taken to them. That year a campaign was launched to distribute the reindeer owned by the government, missions, and Saami to new reindeer stations. [129] The herds, then, would be moved to distant villages throughout western Alaska. [130]

The Ugashik Herd and the Inupiat In-migration

The most southerly reindeer herd established by the Reindeer Service headquartered in Nome was the southwestern district, [131] which managed the Ugashik Range beginning about 1910. That year, the U.S. Revenue Cutter transported 380 deer to the reindeer station at Pilot Point, located on the Ugashik River. The government owned 131 deer in the Ugashik herd and Natives owned 249. [132] Although no food shortage at the time existed, the program was established on the central Alaska Peninsula to supplement winter hunting and trapping. Like the government overseers in Nome, local Reindeer Service agents touted reindeer herding in Southwest Alaska as a modern way to improve the economic well being of Alaska Natives by turning them into entrepreneurs. [133]



Reindeer range on the central Alaska Peninsula in the 1920s. Redrawn from 2003, Map 9.B.
(click on image for a PDF version)

In the early years of herding on the peninsula, animal numbers were relatively small and cared for by a chief herder who was allotted an individual range, on which he maintained his own corrals. Although by the 1920s, the largest herd was owned by Sara Hansen, an Alutiiq woman who was from Pilot Point, the majority of the Native-owned deer belonged to the Inupiat families that had been moved into the area as herders. [134] Their job was to manage the herds and take on local apprentices. William Zunganuk was chief herder of the Port Heiden herd in the early 1920s. Zunganuk's herd grazed lands south of the Cinder River, past Port Heiden, and perhaps even as far south as Unangashak. The herd was corralled at Reindeer Creek, which runs west-northwest from the Aniakchak crater. [135] A chief herder named Nikavak owned the reindeer heard that grazed near the Cinder River. Nikavak corralled his deer near the river's mouth at a settlement known as Shegong. Another early corral was located at Dago Creek, at the mouth of Ugashik Bay. [136]

Many trained Inupiaq herders living on the Seward Peninsula saw the spread of the reindeer industry onto the Alaska Peninsula as a new opportunity. By the beginning of the twentieth

century, the gold rush had passed into history, leaving many Nome residents looking for cash-paying jobs. Aniakchak residents recall that the Inupiat initially moved to the Alaska Peninsula with the reindeer herds that were introduced to the Pilot Point area in 1910. A few years later, family members began to join them, traveling on the revenue cutter or private schooners. For instance, three generations of the Supsook family made the trip to the Alaska Peninsula on Charlie Madsen's schooner *Challenger* in 1914. Other families, such as the Zunganuks, came by skin boat, a journey that took them two summers to complete. [137]

During these early years of reindeer herding, the Inupiaq families were tightly connected. Because the Inupiaq never embraced Orthodoxy, the Alutiiq and Russian-Creole residents held a great deal of distrust of the newcomers, fearing shamanism and other aspects of the Inupiaq's unfamiliar customs. [138] The Inupiaq lived much of the year in isolated settlements, spoke their own homeland language, worked, and socialized within their community. When it came to reindeer herding, families assisted each other. Each year Sam Supsook's family went to the Zunganuk's roundup on Reindeer Creek, where the boys helped with the corralling. Sam's son, Valentine Supsook, remembers that corralling the deer was how he met his future wife, Pauline, Zunganuk's daughter. [139] Similarly, chief herder Nikavak married Valentine Supsook's sister. Valentine, who also helped with the Cinder River herd, recalled that during the winter corralling, five or six young men would camp "back of Cinder River" and move the deer toward the corral. As the reindeer crossed through the waters, Valentine recalled, "The whole lagoon would be filled up with deer." [140]

Though reindeer herding beckoned many to the Alaska Peninsula, it was not the only opportunity awaiting the Inupiaq. The canned salmon industry operating in Bristol Bay and in Chignik was expanding, seemingly without limit, and the canneries needed workers. As Michele Morseth points out, the Inupiat in-migration resulted from reindeer herding, but most found stable work as cannery workers and fishermen. [141] As a result, the Inupiaq began to settle near Bristol Bay canneries, ranging everywhere between Port Moller to the Ugashik River. By 1917, Port Heiden had become a village of both Alutiiq and Inupiaq residents. The new migrants also formed small settlements at Unangashak and Shegong on the coast, and Ugashik Lakes in the interior of the peninsula. The Inupiaq communities established just outside the Alutiiq villages of Ugashik and Pilot Point were respectively called "Eskimo Village" and "Eskimo Town." [142]

From these settlements, the Inupiat continued to herd reindeer, hunt and trap, and like most everyone else living on the central Alaska Peninsula, they worked in some capacity for the commercial fishing industry. Unlike other seasonal activities, fishing took the herders away from their deer for most of the summer months. "My dad was a reindeer herder, chief of reindeer," explained Pauline Supsook, about her father, William Zunganuk. "[We] lived in Agashak for many years, back and forth, from 20s and 30s. Father took care of the reindeer until fishing time and fishing time you have to go fishing ['cause] gotta have something, some food to eat." [143] So when the family sailed to Pilot Point to fish for Bristol Bay salmon, the reindeer were on their own.





Reindeer herd across the River from Pilot Point, ca. late 1920s. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

The Saami Herders

Inupiat were not the only newly arrived ethnic group to impact the Aniakchak region. The reindeer industry also attracted indigenous peoples from the northern regions of Scandinavia, the Saami, a nomadic people once called Laplanders, whose knowledge of reindeer breeding and technology spread throughout the Alaskan ranges. The Saami had not been Dr. Jackson's first choice to tutor Alaska Natives in reindeer husbandry. Because the first few shipments of deer came from Siberia, the minister naturally thought to employ Chukchi herdsmen to instruct the local residents. Much to the surprise of Reindeer Service personnel, the Inupiat, especially those from the nearby village of Kingegan, were not so pleased that reindeer were being imported into their territory. In cooperation with the Diomede Islanders, the Kingegan Inupiat held a mainland monopoly on the Siberian reindeer trade and saw their new instructors as a threat to their political and economic hegemony. [144] After violence broke out between the Bering Sea neighbors, the Siberia herdsmen returned to the Chukchi Peninsula, fearing for their lives. With the Siberian abandonment of the Alaskan reindeer herds, Sheldon Jackson invited six Saami reindeer herders to replace the Chukchi in 1894. The Saami were apparently more successful, and Jackson extended the invitation by asking Scandinavian newspapers to print the following advertisement:

> In the introduction of domesticated reindeer into northern Alaska a few men are wanted who have had practical experience in the herding and management of reindeer. If any reader knows of a Laplander in the United States or Canada who has been brought up to the care of reindeer, and who would like to go to Alaska to take charge of reindeer, please communicate his name and address to Dr. Sheldon Jackson, Bureau of Education, Washington, D.C. Also state condition of health, age, experience with reindeer, and wages asked. [145]

Jackson's plan was to introduce the Saami reindeer herders, their equipment, and their herding dogs to the various Inupiat peoples living on the Seward Peninsula. And, with pastures in Norway becoming too overcrowded for reindeer herding, the nomadic Saami saw Alaska as a place to practice their livelihoods. Their responsibilities as instructors included teaching their apprentices herding, driving, milking, lassoing, and taming the reindeer, as well as teaching the Inupiat families how to make cheese, glue, sleds, fur boots, and harnesses. [146] According to Faith Fjeld, project coordinator for the Saami Baiki Foundation

and director of the traveling exhibit "The Saami: Reindeer People of Alaska," Saami people pioneered the skills that went with reindeer herding such as lassoing, building *pulkas* or Saami sleds, and the use of herding dogs. In turn, they introduced these skills to Alaskan herdsmen. They also introduced a few traditions outside the realm of reindeer herding such as the cultivation of turnips and rutabagas, certain ways of smoking fish, and probably their most popular introduction, skis. [147] Instead of a payment for their work as instructors, the government provided the Saami with a loan of one hundred deer for their services. [148] Thus, the Saami, in just a few short years, had become major players in the reindeer industry in Alaska.

Valentine Supsook, who would have been a small child at the time, remembers that two Saami herders were sent to oversee the Ugashik herds: "They come up with that Revenue Cutter, maybe? Two of them, you know, or some kind of ship, anyway. They [the Reindeer Service] brought them Laplanders with them, see. So, they [Native herders] could see how to take care of reindeer." [149] Unfortunately, no records have been uncovered that provided the names of these men, where they came from, or how long they remained in the area. A small group of Saami did, however, live on the Kuskokwim River, near the community of Akiak. The Saami there worked as reindeer drivers, transporting gold and supplies to and from the miners working local claims. [150] By the 1920s the Saami had remained in Kuskokwim as herders, and drove their deer as far south as Naknek where there was a reindeer station at Reindeer Point, located near what is today Katmai National Park and Preserve.

A Yup'ik elder from Levelock remembers back in the 1920s when the Saami arrived, driving their herds on skis. According to the informant, the Saami were herding 5,000 reindeer from Kuskokwim byway of Old Stuyahok, Reindeer Valley, and on down to South Naknek. [151] Likewise, South Naknek resident Carvel Zimin remembers when the Saami herders came though his village:

> Yeah. The Lapps [Saami] stayed with the reindeer all summer, and they'd come in, and the head guy'd come in and ask who wanted reindeer, and whatnot, and they slaughtered for whoever wanted—no refrigeration. So they kept 'em alive. In fact right where my house is here is one of the places to slaughter the reindeer...they slaughtered 'em and some of the people wanted the skins for mukluks. [152]

Even if the two anonymous Saami herders remained only a short time and had little impact on the either the people or the herds that occupied areas west of Aniakchak, their cultural influence on the industry was clearly represented, transported by the Inupiat herders who emigrated from the Seward Peninsula in 1910. The Inupiat herders brought with them Saami knowledge of using herding dogs, breeding techniques, and taming deer. Norwegian anthropologist Ornulv Vorren, author of *Saami, Reindeer, and Gold in Alaska,* argues that not only did "the Saami who arrived as instructors in 1894 succeed in preparing a foundation for the establishment of reindeer domestication as a family livelihood among the Inuit" but, "because of their traditional herding techniques, sensible breeding, and versatility," the Saami allowed for "the reindeer industry in Alaska to stand on its own"—at least for awhile. [153]

Rounding up the Ugashik Herds

In July 1932, the Ugashik herd comprised 3,665 deer, of which the government owned only 851. [154] Because it was extremely difficult to keep large herds separate, quarrels among owners often occurred. To settle range disputes caused by mixing herds, Native herders formed two reindeer stock companies in the early 1930s. The Inupiat reindeer herders consolidated into the Peninsula Eskimo Reindeer Company of which Zunganuk was named chief herder. The Alutiiq herders organized the Ugashik Cooperative Reindeer Company and

named Charley Johnson, a Scandinavia-Alutiiq, president. [155]

Various herd owners became members of the companies, who appointed their chief herders and gave them administrative and decision-making control of the day-to-day deer operation. For example, if an owner desired to replenish his home meat supplies or sell a deer, he had to both secure a government permit from the superintendent, and accommodate oversight by Zunganuk or Johnson, or whoever was the presiding chief herder at the time, in the selection the deer to prevent another owner's deer from being mistakenly selected. The chief herder identified an owner's herd by the cut marks on an animal's ear. Although 250 permits were issued in 1937, the local reindeer superintendent, Samuel C. Hanson, complained to his superiors in Nome that illegal private sales were taking place by members of both reindeer companies. [156] Still, to many Native herders, it seemed logical to sell the meat under the table rather than negotiate the confusing maze of government red tape. [157]

With the advice and consent of association members, the chief herders also hired young herders to assist with the herds. [158] That meant that there were usually two or three people managing the deer. Reindeer herding on the Alaska Peninsula was done entirely on foot and commonly aided by dogs. The type of herding practiced in the Aniakchak region was considered close herding. As opposed to open herding, where the animals were allowed to wander the country at will, close herding kept the deer held closely banded together. Typically, close herders made a big circle around the band each day, without disturbing it, while at the same time working in the few strays that wandered too far away from the outer grazing circle. [159] Close herding also allowed the deer longer continued human contact, which made the animals quite tame. Pauline Supook remembers feeding the tame deer sugar from her hand. "It tickles my... (laughs). I tried to pet them." [160] If permitted to roam about unherded, the reindeer quickly became half-wild. Thus, to Zunganuk, careful herding was of prime importance, not only to keep the deer in a state of domestication, but also to prevent mixing herds and loss of strays.

Moving herds along the peninsula coast presented few challenges, primarily because reindeer develop a strong affection for the range they customarily inhabit and, especially during the April and May fawning season, the deer manifest a strong urge to return to the range of their birth. The Ugashik herd's fawning grounds were located on the open tundra just south of Port Heiden. En route, reindeer fed exclusively on lichen plants, a low protein content herb which grows prolifically on the tundra throughout the Bristol Bay lowlands. This meant that herders worried little about starvation among their deer.

Because reindeer spend much of their energies in the summer months seeking relief from the swarms of insects that inhibit their range, each spring the chief herders instructed their assistants to navigate their deer to grazing grounds near the shores of Bristol Bay, where the sea breeze provided some relief. Reindeer are also fond of salt, and therefore drank the sea water or licked up the deposits on the beach. But when the herders left to go fish in the summer, the reindeer spread loosely on the range. Thus, summer herds grazed in a pattern more characteristic of open herding.

During rutting season, which occurs during September and early October, herders, who had completed their fishing duties and returned, moved the deer north toward the Ugashik Lakes area. There, the hills protected the reindeer from autumn storms. On the winter range, the herders usually lived in isolation in small cabins. From a cabin, one or two herders would go out each day to watch the herd, sometimes remaining out overnight. [161] One such herder's cabin probably was built near the headwaters of Reindeer Creek, at a locale known today as Caribou Cabin. "Reindeer cabins up—creek...There's camps up there," explained a Port Heiden elder:

> A little above Caribou Cabin...that's where the reindeer headquarters [was]...just a little ways from the cabin...Southeast, south, directly south...It's on the bluff...when you stand over it, you could look down at the creek going down. [162]

When winter had settled in on the Alaska Peninsula, both the Alutiiq and Inupiaq herders commenced the big roundup. As stated in a 1922 report on reindeer herding in Alaska, a roundup was a "systematic business management of the herd." In Ugashik, the intent of the roundups was to split the herds between the two Native reindeer companies. [163] Beginning around mid-February, herders were sent out to locate the deer and then drive the animals towards their ranges. Because the herd size had reached to over 3,500 deer, usually twenty to twenty-five extra men, including the chief herder and his helpers, were needed during the roundup. [164] Superintendent Samuel Hanson attended a roundup in the winter of 1937. He described "the Big Roundup" at Ugashik in a letter to his supervisors in Nome:

> When all the rest of the deer were together, Willie Zunganok came in after me with his dog ream. The day was ideal. Fine weather favored us. A skiff of snow had lately fallen which grew deeper the further we went east, until the dogs, already weary with two weeks of almost constant goring from morning till night, could scarcely pull the sled. Finally, after traveling about fifteen miles to the northeast of Pilot Point Village, we saw the deer on the knolls two miles left. Across "Pike Lake" was the camp, about two miles further. Willie's leader, which he had tuned lose, broke and ran after the deer, and "Snowflake," a reindeer dog that used to belong to Pete Olimpie, followed her. Some time after the five Eskimo dog teams that had come with us had arrived, Eskimo teams from Ugashik arrived. (The way these Eskimos can smell when the others are coming is uncanny.)" [165]

From the knoll, the herders could see the entire herd, and could, therefore, plan how to divide it. As Valentine Supsook explained, at a big roundup, "They tried to divvie up the large herd and Eskimos take half and half take to big lake, chase 'em down there and take 'em across the Ugashik." [166] In 1937, the Alutiit took their four hundred deer north to the Dago Creek Range, and the Inupiat herded their deer south, to the Ugashik Range.

"Good bye, we are gone. Good Luck!"

Although reindeer experts recommended that the herds be corralled at least twice a year—once in the summer and again in the winter—by the 1930s, the Ugashik herd had not been corralled since 1918. [167] The lack of corralling, at least at the reindeer station near Pilot Point, may have been due to the peninsula's undependable coastal climate. In his letter to Nome, Hanson complained that the corral he built in 1934 was rotten before the next season:

> As I have told the Nome office many times before we are up against something different here, with the deer proposition, than you are up there in the Seward Peninsula. Here this winter, we had open weather all winter, water, water everywhere. There was so much water this winter that the Natives and Eskimos couldn't trap, nor visit their traps for weeks. [168]

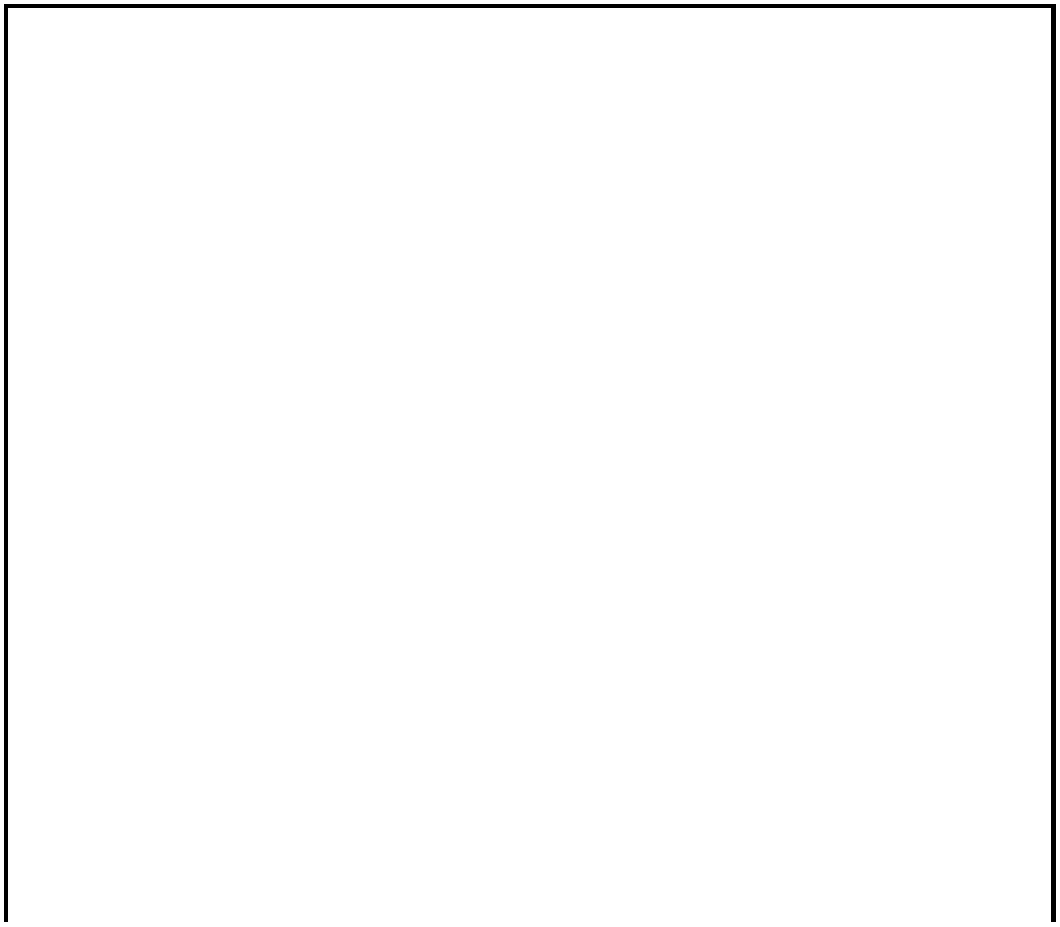
In fact, by the 1930s, reindeer herding on the peninsula faced far bigger problems than the weather, including excessive alcohol consumption. "They drink too much Bevock," observed Hanson, "that's no doubt why the deer got away. Hanson also mentioned that the Alutiiq and Inupiat crews often failed to cooperate with each other. Making matters worse, when the chief herders went fishing and left their deer to roam in the summer, the herds merged with each other, and as a result, ownership disputes continually arose. Additionally, without the

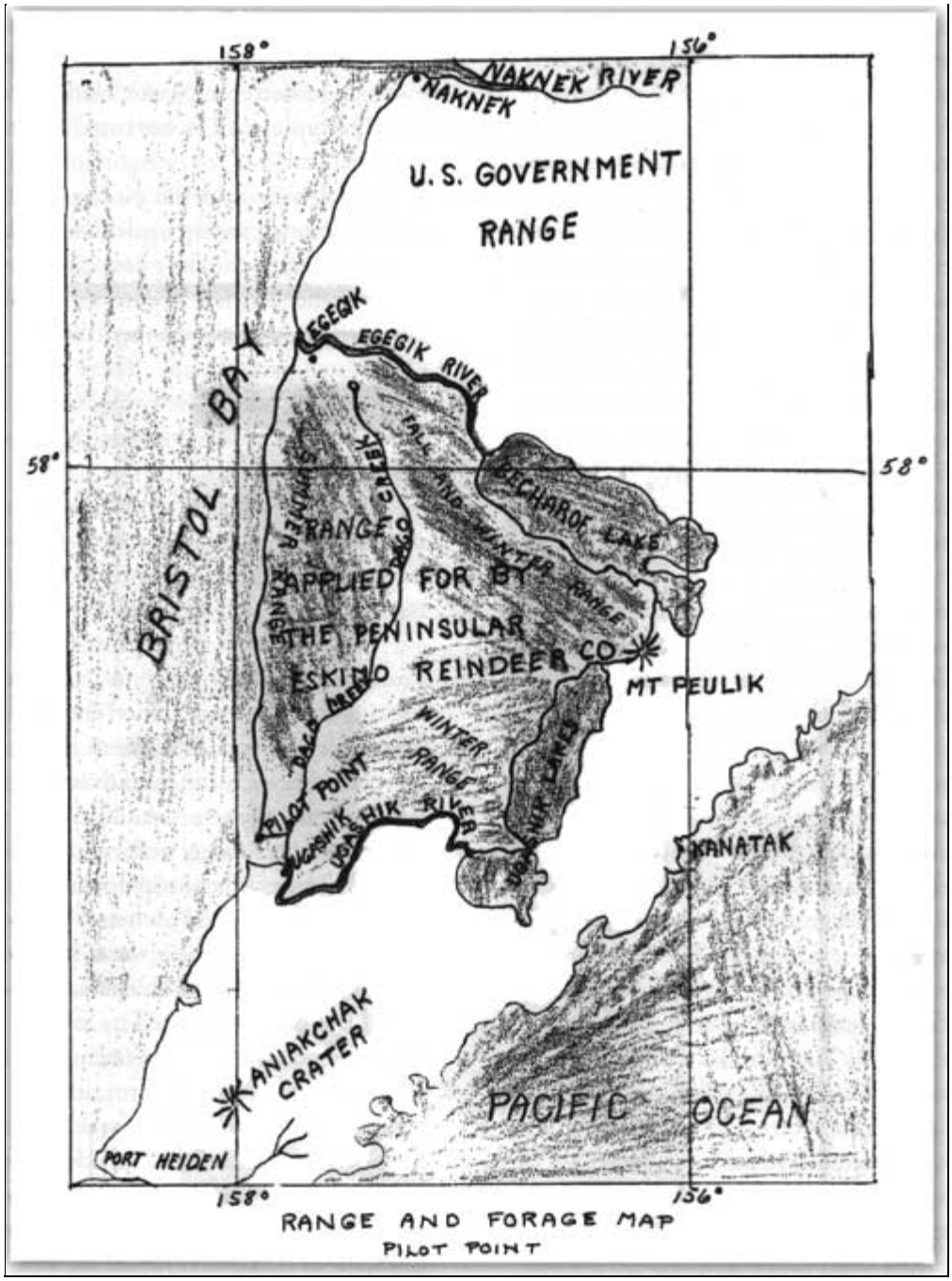
watchful eye of the herder, wolves, coyotes and bears preyed upon the deer. After a trip down Dago Creek in 1937, an Alutiiq herder named Jocu and his nephew, "Little" Nefotie, reported that there were "Plenty of dead deer!" [169]

Another major problem facing reindeer herders was illegal hunting, conducted by trappers. The illegal hunters were "non-owners," according to Hanson, "who lived in Egegik, Kanatak, and around Lake Becharoff and the Ugashik Lakes and Dago Creek." Hanson surmised that the poachers killed the deer for fox bait. He reported that in one incident a trapper from Egegik had killed twenty deer. Local resident Nick Alabama admits that he hunted domesticated reindeer when he was young. "It was the source of food for the people. . ." explained Alabama, ". . . and [there] use to be plenty back in those days in the area of Kuigaaq Creek." [170]

Still, the obstacles hindering the reindeer industry on the Alaska Peninsula transcended predators and poachers. The fact remained that the settled, isolated existence of the reindeer herder was never fully embraced by central Alaska Peninsula area residents who lived a seasonal lifestyle. Besides the distraction of the fishing season, the trapping season, which was conducted during the winter months, overlapped with corralling, which according to range rules had to transpire by the end of February.

Although new apprentices were hired in 1931 and 1932, it was becoming increasingly difficult for the Reindeer Service to find young men who were willing to give up the more lucrative activities of fishing and trapping for an industry that promised slow returns on a large investment of time. In spring, 1937, Willie Zunganuk complained to Hanson that the deer were fawning but he couldn't get anyone to help. [171] Even Charlie Johnson, president of the Alutiiq Reindeer Company, reported that he could find no reliable apprentices. According to Hanson, when Johnson went out to visit his herders at camp, they were gone, leaving only a note in their place saying, "Good bye, we are gone. Good Luck!" [172]





Sketch of the Ugashik Reindeer Range and Forage by Alfred J. Opland, Reindeer Service Unit manager of the Southwestern District, 1941. Alaska Reindeer Service. General Case Files. Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives, Alaska Region, Box 53 location 05/05/12 (5).

Reindeer Herding Comes to an End

On September 1, 1937, Franklin Roosevelt signed into law the Reindeer Act, which restricted ownership of domestic reindeer in Alaska to Natives only. This measure did not prevent an unmotivated generation of Ugashik herders, however, from giving up on theindustry. [173] The consolidation of the reindeer into herds of 2,000 animals made herding impossible for the few dedicated herders left to work the Aniakchak region. By 1941, the Reindeer Service Unit Manager of the Southwestern District had moved to Dillingham. According to the unit manager's sketch map, the Ugashik range had shrunk in size, relegating the entire herd to lands north of the Ugashik River.

Also during the mid-1940s, caribou returned to the Ugashik area for the first time in many decades, and as a result, the reindeer rejoined their ancient relatives and "went caribou." [174] Although caribou differ from domesticated reindeer in that they are proportionately larger animals, they are the same species so it did not take long for the caribou to absorb the remaining reindeer into their herds. The effects of such unique breeding can still be seen today—the size and color of the Alaska Peninsula caribou herd are markedly larger and lighter than other herds in Alaska. "I can still recognize reindeer from caribou..." notes a Newhalen elder, "...'cause they are stocky, have shorter legs and color of fur different from caribou." [175]

The Inupiat from the Seward Peninsula say that the disappearance of reindeer was like "melting snow in the spring." [176] In other words, the reindeer and their lasting affects on the region were not entirely lost, but instead, were ecologically and culturally absorbed. Even though the reindeer industry failed to engage the people of the Alaska Peninsula into a single occupation, remnants of the government experiment remain scattered throughout the peninsula. Certainly, the unique characteristics of the Alaska Peninsula caribou herd are a permanent outcome of the reindeer industry. Place names like Reindeer Point, Reindeer Station, Reindeer Valley, Reindeer Creek, and Caribou Cabin have survived the industry and serve as constant reminders of the region's cultural and economic history. But probably the most lasting impact of the commercialization of reindeer herding on the Aniakchak region was the Inupiat in-migration. By 1950, Pilot Point had more Inupiat residents than Alutiiq. Inupiat family names such as Achayok, Awanuk, Kiglonok, Metigoruk, Nikavik, Spoon, Supsook, and Zunganuk are to this day associated with the central Alaska Peninsula. [177] Undoubtedly, the reindeer industry had lasting impact on the central peninsula's ethnic identity and cultural landscape.

* * *

In some ways failure of the reindeer industry was due in part to the naïveté of government officials who wanted to modernize Alaska Natives by assimilating them into a contemporary economic system. What the government failed to recognize was that this was an unnecessary endeavor, for Alaska Peninsula Alutiit had been part of an exchange or market driven economy for more than a hundred years. Indeed, as historian Roxanne Willis points out, "Native involvement with economic development was often part of a larger strategy of adaptation and cultural endurance, particularly in the twentieth century." [178]

Introduced first by Russian hunters and traders, and later by American corporations, the commercialization of hunting, trapping and trading had engaged residents long before the business of reindeer herding was introduced. Not only were these activities far more lucrative, but they also worked within the seasonal lifeways practiced by local people for generations. Herding on the other hand, prevented, or at least interfered with many seasonal pursuits on the central Alaskan Peninsula.

Although the people living on the Aniakchak landscape interacted with the outside world, by the turn of the twentieth century, the eventual decline of the commercialized fur trade and the failure of the oil industry was only the beginning of American incorporation. Indeed, the contrasting success of the canned salmon industry in the region ultimately was the cementing factor that brought the people of the central Alaska Peninsula into the fold of the American economic and cultural systems.

NOTES

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[2]David Herbert Donald, in the Foreword to Wiebe, viii.

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[4]Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963) 29.

[5]Howard I. Kushner, *Conflict on the Northwest Coast: American-Russian Rivalry in the Pacific Northwest, 1790-1867* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975) xi,

[6]Ibid., xi-xii.

[7]Russian historian Nikolai N. Boklhovitnow draws similar conclusions in *Russian-American Relations and the Sale of Alaska, 1834-1867* (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1996), 1-4.

[8]Ibid., xii.

[9]For a discussion on Russia's decision to sell Russian America to the U.S. see Bolkhovitnov, 167-204.

[10]Molly Lee, "Context and Contact" in Nelson H.H. Graburn, Molly Lee, JeanLoup Rousselot, *Catalogue Raisonne of the Alaska Commercial Company Collection* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 22.

[11]Ibid., 24.

[12]Polly Shangin, interview by Michele Morseth 3/31/92, transcripts ANIA Files 2089/007.01-01, Box 1, Folder 10, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[13]Morseth, 52.

[14]Ibid., 86.

[15]Tuten, 29.

[16]Lee, 30.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Mike Sam, Interview by Patricia Partnow, 6/5/1990. ANIA 2089/0007.02-01, Box 1, Folder 11, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[19]Petroff, 52-53.

[20]Ibid., 58.

[21]Ibid., 59.

[22]Ibid., 59.

[23]Vasilli Martysh, Pravoslavnyi Amerikanskii Vestnik' *[American Orthodox Messenger]* Vol. 3, p. 91. 1899. Translations by Patricia Partnow; reviewed and corrected by Lydia T. Black. Copies located in ANIA Files "Russian Orthodox Messenger" misc. documents, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[24]Lee, 32.

[25]"Letter to McIntyre from Grigorii Panshin, Sutkhum 8 May 1882" Original in *Alaska Commercial Company Records,* Box 118, folder 1082: Kodiak Station, Letters, Incoming: Sutkhum 1882, translated by Katherine Arndt. Copy located in ANIA file 2089/009.01-01, Box 2, Folder 6. Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[26]Morseth, 87.

[27]Letter to McIntyre.

[28]Morseth, 58.

[29]Partnow, 128.

[30]Morseth, 61.

[31]Vasilii Martysh, "Travel Report to Afognak Parish, 1902," *America Orthodox Messenger,* Vol. 8, p. 13-15, 1904. Translations by Partnow, reviewed by Black. Copies located in ANIA "Russian Orthodox Messenger" misc. documents at Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[32]Tuten, 14-33

[33]Ibid.

[34]Petroff, 25.

[35]Haycox, ix.

[36]Jack Roderick, *Crude Dreams: A Personal History of Oil and Politics in Alaska* (Fairbanks: Epicenter Press. 1997), 24.

[37]Ibid., 24.

[38]Robert Blodgett. USGS geologist, personal communication, 7/27/2005.

[39]Donald Worster, "Alaska: The Underworld Erupts," in *Under Western Skies: Nature and History in the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 159.

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[41]W.R. Smith and Arthur A. Baker, "Cold Bay-Chignik District," *Mineral Resources of Alaska; Report on Progress of Investigations in 1922,* USGS Bulletin 755 (Washington: GPO, 1924), 163.

[42]Stephen Capps, "The Cold Bay District" *Mineral Resources of Alaska,* USGS Bulletin 739, (Washington: GPO, 1921) 77

[43]Tikhon Shalamov, "The Alaska Travel of the Right Reverend Tikhon, Bishop of Aleut and Alaska" From the travel journal of 1895 of a priest of the Kodiak Resurrection Church. Translations by Richard Bland, Patricia Partnow, and Irina Dubinina. Copies located in ANIA Files 2089/008.02-01, Box 2, Folder 05, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[44]Roderick, 28.

[45]Capps, 80.

[46]The village of Kanatak first appears in census records in 1890.

[47]Roderick, 23.

[48]"In Search of Black Gold: Early Exploration" in *Katalla to Prudhoe Bay a Special Publication of Petroleum News,* date unknown. Aniakchak HRS Collection, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

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[50]Roderick, 23.

[51]Ibid.

[52]William Cronon, "Kennecott Journey, in *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), 40.

[53]Worster, 160.

[54]George J. Eicher, Jr., "Kanatak Folds Again" in *Alaska Life* (Feb. 1944), 13.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Blodgett, personal communication, 7/27/2005.

[57]Roderick, 22.

[58]Blodgett, personal communication, 7/27/2005.

[59]Norris, 418.

[60]Capps, 77

[61]Norris, 419.

[62]Smith and Baker, 163.

[63]Eicher, 13.

[64]Roderick, 24.

[65]Worster, 163.

[66]George Davidson, *Coast Pilot of Alaska*, (Washington D.C. GPO, 1869), 36.

[67]For more information on the Whaling Industry see John R. Bockstoce's *Whales, Ice, & Men: The History of Whaling in the Western Arctic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), 166.

[68]Joe, LaRocca, *Alaska Agonists: the Age of Petroleum: How Big Oil Bought Alaska* (North East, PA: Rare Books, Ink, 2003).

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[70]Eicher, 14.

[71]Worster, 177.

[72]Norris, 419.

[73]Smith and Baker, 164-165.

[74]Eicher, 14.

[75]Roderick, 21.

[76]Eicher, 14.

[77]From the Benjamin A. Grier Scrapbook and Photograph Album; 1911-1952, UAA Consortium Library; Archives and Special Collections Department, University of Alaska, Anchorage.

[78]Smith and Baker, 154.

[79]Capps, 107.

[80]The Round-the-World flight itinerary lists Kanatak, along with Dutch Harbor, Atka and Attu, on the Aleutian Islands leg of the trip. *World Flight Chronicle,* "Seattle Ready for Next Flight to Ducth Harbor" Vol. 2 No. 24. 29 April, 1924.

[81]Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorruption of America Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 20.

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[83]Institute for Government Research, *The U.S. Geological Survey: Its History, Activities and Organization,* Service Monograph for the U.S. Government No. 1 (New York, 1918), 43.

[84]Morgan Sherwood, *Exploration of Alaska, 1865-1900* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1992), 172.

[85]Sherwood, 171.

[86]Smith and Baker, 164.

[87]Earl Grammer's story can be found in Roderick's *Crude Dreams*, 19-31.

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[90]George C. Martin, "The Outlook for Petroleum Near Chignik" *Mineral Resources of Alaska; Report on Progress of Investigations in 1923,* USGS Bulletin 773 (Washington: GPO, 1925), 209.

[91]Norris, *Isolated Paradise*, 420, Martin, 209.

[92]Martin, 209.

[93]Ibid., 420.

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[97]Morseth, 80.

[98]Smith and Baker, 165.

[99]Ibid., 165.

[100]Vasilii Martysh, "Travel Journal for 1902" *Russian American Orthodox Messenger*, vol. 8, pp. 32-34, 1904. Translated by Partnow, reviewed by Black. Copies located in ANIA file "Russian Orthodox Messenger" misc. documents, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, AK.

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[103]Ibid., 29.

[104]Paul Boskoffsky, *Alaska: Man from Kanatak* (Duluth, Minnesota, Arrow Printing: 2002), 14.

[105]Smith and Baker, 210-211.

[106]Martin, 213.

[107]Roderick, 29.

[108]Ibid., 29.

[109]Ibid., 31.

[110]Eicher, 15.

[111]Crowell, et al, 86.

[112]Boskoffsky, 15.

[113]Cronon makes the same claim in "Kennecott Journey," 44.

[114]Vital Statistics and Confessional Records 1896-1965, Vital Statistics for Kanatak Settlement [1923-1952], trans. Ekaterina Ogan, Afognak Village Corporation.

[115]Boskoffsky, 24

[116]Ibid., 25.

[117]Marlane Shanigan, "Kanatak Tribal Council," in Crowell, et al, *Looking Both Ways*, 86.

[118]Ibid., 86.

[119]Douglas, 14.

[120]Roxanne Willis, "A New Game in the North: Alaska Native Reindeer Herding, 1890-1940" *Western Historical Quarterly* 37 (Autumn, 2006), 279.

[121]John Taliaferrro, *In a Far Country: The True Story of a Mission, a Marriage, a Murder, and the Remarkable Reindeer Rescue of 1898* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), 7.

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[124]US Bureau of Education, *Report of the Commissioner of Education for 1892-1893* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1895), 1708-10.

[125]Frank G. Carpenter, *Alaska: Our Northern Wonderland* (Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc. 1928).

[126]Sheldon Jackson, *Sixth Report on Introduction of Domestic Reindeer in Alaska*, 1896 (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1896), 15.

[127]Arthur S. Peterson, "The Introduction of the Domesticated Reindeer into Alaska," *The Norwegian-American Historical Association*, Volume XI: 102.

[128]Dean F. Olsen, *Alaska Reindeer Herdsmen: A Study of Native Management in Transition* (Fairbanks: Institute of Social, Economic and Government Research, 1969), 13.

[129]Olson, 38.

[130]Ibid, 38.

[131]An outline of grazing areas in 1926 shows that the Port Heiden was the most southerly of all grazing herds. In Ornulv Vorren, *Saami, Reindeer, and Gold in Alaska: the Emigration of Saami from Norway to Alaska* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, Inc, 1994), 83.

[132]Morseth, 145.

[133]Partnow, 233.

[134]Ibid., 234.

[115]Morseth, 146.

[136]Ibid., "Map of 1920s Reindeer Range," 148.

[137]Ibid., 142.

[138]Ibid., 151.

[139]Ibid., 146, 144.

[140]Valentine and Pauline Supsook, Pilot Point. (8/6/97 H98-04-04 ANIA 2089/007.01-01 Box 1, Folder 10, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK).

[141]Morseth 148.

[142]Ibid., 142.

[143]Valentine and Pauline Supsook, Pilot Point.

[144]Olson, 21.

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[147]Faith Fjeld, "The Saami: Reindeer People of Alaska," A traveling exhibit held at the Alaska Native Heritage Center on June, 2004.

[148]Olson, 25.

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[150]Vorren, 127.

[151]*Neqa to Tepa: Traditional Knowledge of the Alaska Peninsula* (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 211-031-102793, 1993.)

[152]Partnow, 234-235.

[153]Vorren, 160.

[154]Samuel Hanson to Sidney Rood, May 5, 1937, Bureau of Indian Affairs RG 75 Box # 53, Alaska Reindeer Service general Case Files, File 156.8 Ugashik 11933-1937. National Archives-Alaska Region.

[155]Hanson to Rood.

[156]Ibid.

[157]Partnow, 235.

[158]Olson, 58.

[159]Seymour Hadwin and Lawrence J. Palmer, *Reindeer Herding in Alaska*, Bureau of Biological Survey, USDA, Bulletin No. 1089 (Washington, D.C., September 22, 1922) 33-52.

[160]Valentine and Pauline Supsook.

[161]Hadwin and Palmer.

[162]*Neqa to Tepa*, 283-000-92101, 2001.

[163]Hanson to Rood

[164]Hadwin and Palmer.

[165]Hanson to Rood.

[166]Morseth, 147.

[167]Hanson to Rood.

[168]Ibid.

[169]Ibid.

[170]Morseth, 147.

[171]Hanson to Rood.

[172]Ibid.

[173]Olson, 15.

[174]Willis, 301.

[175]*Neqa to Tepa*, 243-00C-111592, 1992.

[176]Olson, 54.

[177]Morseth, 144.

[178]Willis, 278.

<<< Previous <<< Contents>>> Next >>>

hrs/chap5.htm
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ANIAKCHAK

Beyond the Moon Crater Myth
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape
A Historic Resource Study for Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

EARLY AMERICAN PERIOD (1867-1930)

CHAPTER SIX
Aniakchak Ensnared:
The Canned Salmon Industry in Ugashik, Chignik, and Aniakchak Bay

> *"There's only one thing wrong with the fish here," I put in. "The poor fish don't know anything acout volcanology—that's where all the trouble lies."*
>
> Father Bernard Hubbard,
> "Salmon" from *Cradle on the Storms*

The weather worsened while the explorers waited. Itching to get out to Aniakchak Bay, the restless men sat on the pilings of a cannery dock. While lingering, they began to watch with interest the fishing activity going on before them in the bay. One after another, fish traps filled cannery tenders with sockeye salmon. "This is nothing," the cannery superintendent explained to Hubbard, "There are about eight thousand salmon in this bunch, but during the early runs even thirty thousand at a lick wouldn't be large." [1]

Although Father Hubbard sought adventure in the last frontier, the Glacier Priest was impressed with the efficiency and modernity of the commercial fishing industry. The priest recognized the technological innovation and capabilities that the canning industry had introduced to Alaska over the decades, and perhaps on some levels, he saw such patterns of industrialization and incorporation as more influential on the region than even his beloved Aniakchak Crater:

> The brailing had meanwhile been finished, the nets were let back into the water, and with its shining load of sea wealth, the tender was speeding back to the cannery. With modern efficiency methods, all those fish would be in labeled cans within twenty-four hours and ready for the market of the outside world... There are more interesting problems than volcanoes on the Alaska Peninsula! [2]

About the same time prospectors were searching for commercial quantities of oil in Cold Bay, the canned salmon industry reached the central portion of the Alaska Peninsula, and brought the mechanized business of catching and processing salmon for profit to the region. Salmon canneries were similar to the oil boom town of Kanatak, in that they were self-contained company towns, complete with their own mess hall, meat locker, stable, chicken coop, laundry, machine shop, carpenter shop, hospital, bunkhouses, bookkeeping office, provision warehouse, and stores.

On a much larger scale than the oil industry at the time, the commercial fishing industry imported from the Lower 48 every machine, tin, plank, and employee that would be needed

for canning fish on their private fleet of sailing ships. [3] Through a network of mobile transportation and seemingly boundless markets, the industry extracted salmon in extraordinary numbers out of Alaska and sent the canned fish to locales around the globe. With the local communities and older systems of exchange no longer necessary, power relations among Alutiit, Creoles, and Americans changed significantly in Aniakchak.

By 1900, commercial fish packers began to concentrate their primary fishing and canning activities in river systems located on the fringe of the central Peninsula—specifically, along the Ugashik River in Bristol Bay and the well-protected Chignik Lagoon on the Pacific. Like the Cold Bay oil claimants who moved beyond their Kanatak headquarters and into the hinterland of the central peninsula in search of petroleum pools, fish canners also sought new fishing grounds in coastal waters near the Aniakchak Crater.

Instead of failure and disappointment, the commercial fishing industry found success in the bays contouring Aniakchak's Bering Sea and Pacific coastlines—at least for awhile. The original commercial sites, the Ugashik and the Chignik fisheries, continue to be two of the largest sockeye or red salmon *(Oncorhynchus nerka)* nurseries in the world. A subsidiary of the Chignik fishery, Aniakchak Bay, produced pink salmon *(Oncorhynchus gorbuscha)* in addition to sockeye. As the industry diversified its productivity after World War I, both species were harvested there. The men who worked the trap sites until they were closed in 1937 represent the largest group of non-Native immigrants to settle, albeit seasonally, on the central Alaska Peninsula to date. Unlike any other industry, the commercial fishing industry, with its legions of canneries and wage-paying jobs, managed to secure a lasting and influential role in the modern development of the forces that shaped the Aniakchak region in the twentieth century. As an Alaskan scholar noted, "Canneries transformed this entire area and represented the industrial revolution of the North." [4]





Salmon on drying rack for dog food, circa 1930s. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

Salmon canneries, with their billowing smokestacks, pulsating machines and efficient fishing, processing, canning, and marketing methods, drastically altered the ecological world of the central Alaska Peninsula, especially in the years before World War II. Even before 1900, when fish packers began to use modern traps, they employed primitive fishing techniques that were equally destructive. They barricaded an entire stream with logs that forced the salmon to school where they would be easy to capture, preventing the fish from moving upriver to spawn. Additionally, waste was staggering in the early days. In the *laissez-faire* economic context of the time, natural resources were only considered "valuable" if they were converted

into industrial and consumer products. The value of economic growth far outweighed the cost to the landscape and the resources it supported.



Ugashik River Bay, Ben Hanson saltery in foreground, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

By the 1920s, the canned salmon industry dominated Alaska's economy. During the decade after World War I, salmon fisheries surpassed mining as Alaska's major industry, as the Territory became the world's principal salmon producer. Despite industrial declines caused by depressed markets in the 1930s, by World War II, the salmon industry represented the largest investment of capital, the biggest annual financial yield, the greatest employment of labor, the largest single source of territorial revenue, and, as a result, was the dominant factor in Alaska's political, economic, and social life. [5] "Salmon and Alaska..." wrote Dr. Ernest Gruening in *The State of Alaska*, "...have been as closely intertwined as cotton and the South." [6]



Local Fisherman drying salmon near the Columbia River Packers Association (CPRA) cabin in Aniakchak Bay, 1973. Keith Trexler, photo, NPS.

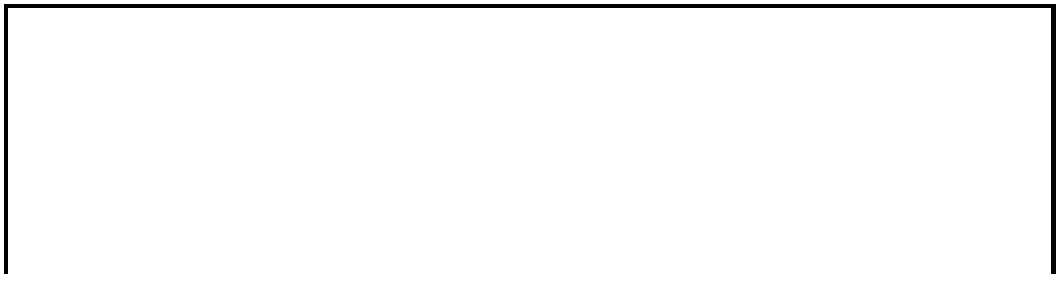
Such an economic force affected Aniakchak's cultural landscape like nothing before. Without question, the Russians had introduced the Alutiit to new modes of economic production as well as new religious orientations, and the Alutiit effectively integrated those systems with traditional systems already familiar to them. But it is important to recognize that for many decades the Alutiit, who far outnumbered the Russians priests and *promyshlennik*, contributed directly to that social and economic exchange and transformed the new cultural world into

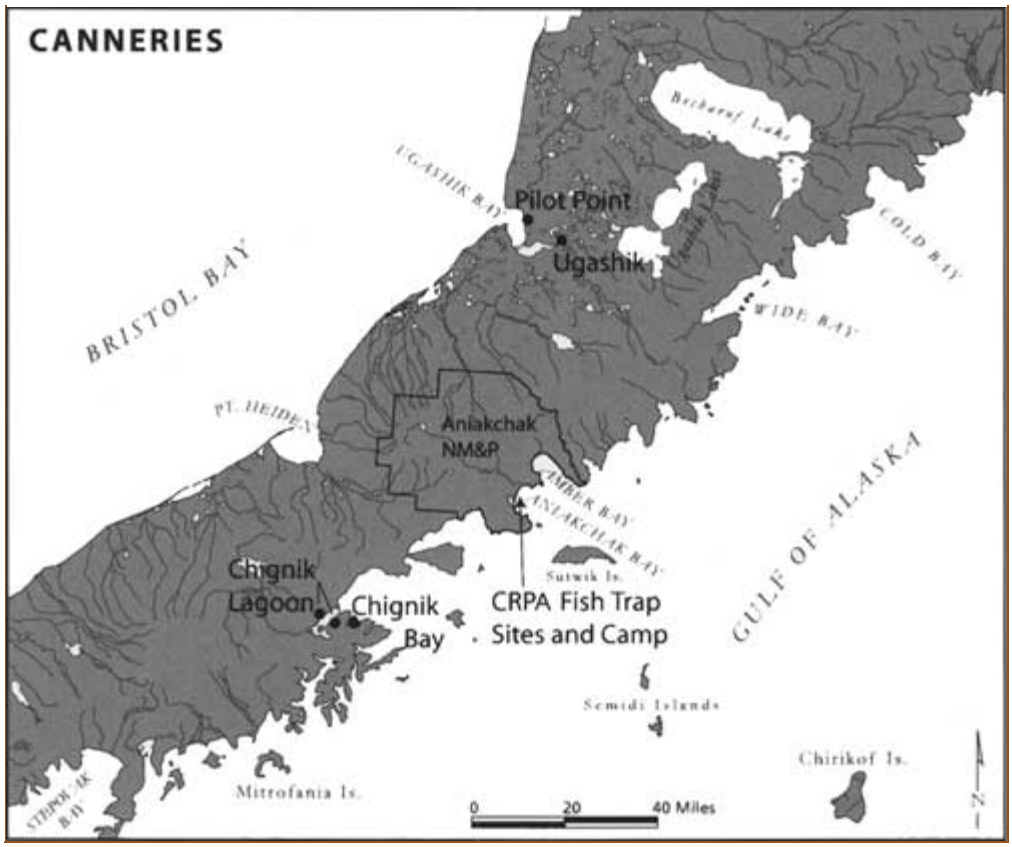
one they eventually embraced and called their own. When the American system of modern capitalism began to dominate the economic and social constructs in the Aniakchak region, Alutiiq people found that familiar and traditional systems were not as easily integrated into this new American system as it had been with the Russian customs and practices.

From their perspective, the canners arrived at a fortuitous time. Because they were able to bring necessary, if limited, jobs to destitute fur hunters, it can be said that their arrival was fortunate for the Native population, as well. The involvement, however, by both Alutiiq men and women in the commercial canning process as "cannery workers" undermined the males' traditional role as "fishermen" and the females' role as "decision maker." The sheer number of newcomers with backgrounds from Asia, Europe, and America, re-shaped the cultural composition of the region. For the first time, non-Native immigrants, who sought wealth from the waters along the Alaska Peninsula, overshadowed and outnumbered the Alutiit and Creoles that lived there. [7] Canneries altered social organizations drastically, while alcohol caused new levels of dependency. Most significantly, canneries brought devastating diseases, particularly the Spanish Influenza pandemic, which caused high mortality and greatly disrupted indigenous populations across coastal Alaska. By 1920, a considerable population change had occurred, tipping the scale heavily in favor of Euroamericans.

With the older Russian-Alutiiq relationship diminishing, a new battle for Alaska's most lucrative resource began to take shape in the Aniakchak region. The new contest not only brought fresh players to the table, but it took competition for those resources outside of the ecological landscape and placed it into the political arena. In the world of politics, the fishing industry increased its influence beyond the Alaska Peninsula, across the Alaskan Territory, and all the way to Washington D.C. On the political landscape, a new three-way relationship replaced the older order. Competing for political control of Alaska's most lucrative resources were the fish companies, the Territory of Alaska, and the federal government. This triad eventually served to shape historical events, specifically Alaska's battle for statehood. In 1912, the Alaska Organic Act was passed, which provided the territory with a legislature and limited self-government, but it contained a provision specifically prohibiting the newly created territorial legislature from passing any laws that would "alter, amend, modify or repeal any federal laws relating to the fishers of Alaska." [8] Consequently, the federal government managed Alaska's salmon resource from the time America purchased Alaska in 1867 until January 1, 1960, one year after Alaska achieved statehood. By mid-century, a highly volatile political exchange between the salmon industry, the Alaskan territory, and the federal government began to take precedent on the Alaska Peninsula. The indigenous people were recognized as marginal players, if at all, on the political landscape.

By World War II, the Alutiiq people had assimilated into the capitalist, American system. Weakened by resource depletion, cultural displacement, and disease, the Alutiit had no recourse than to find jobs in canneries so they could provide for their families. Even in this time of massive cultural change, many Alutiit, as they did with their first encounters with the Russians, managed to hold onto many of their old ways, proving that assimilation was neither quick nor entirely complete. Within those first few decades of the twentieth century, however, the indigenous people of Aniakchak, like the salmon returning to the Alaska Peninsula's rivers, became ensnared in the web of modern America.





Salmon canneries in the Aniakchak area. By B. Bundy. *(click on image for a PDF version)*

Nature Shapes Culture on the Alaska Peninsula

In early July 1778, Captain James Cook was charting a bay, which he named after a friend, Augustus John Hervey III, Earl of Bristol, when he noticed a significant number of fish jumping around his vessel. In his log, Cook later wrote of Bristol Bay: "It must abound with salmon." [9] Indeed, from the beginning of commercial salmon fishing in America, the river estuaries of the Alaska Peninsula, particularly those in Bristol Bay, have been the largest producers of red—or sockeye—salmon in the world. [10]



Pilot Point Cannery, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.



The Ugashik Cannery, ca. 1930s. Photograph courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Gust Griechen. National Park Service file H-2261.

Five species of Pacific salmon (members of the genus *Oncorhynchus,* meaning hook-nosed) spawn throughout the Alaska Peninsula's numerous freshwater rivers and lakes, but it is the sockeye salmon that return in such massive numbers. According to biologists for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Bristol Bay returns three to sixty-three million fish a year, with significant run sizes also occurring in the Chignik drainage. [11]

In the Aniakchak region, sockeye salmon are born in the gravel beds of tributaries of the Ugashik Lakes, Chignik Lakes, even Surprise Lake, located inside the Aniakchak Caldera. Young sockeye, or alevins, hide in the river gravel and feed off the nutrients in their yolk sac for a period of about forty-five days, then emerge from the gravel sanctuary as fry. The fry spend at least one summer and one winter in their freshwater nursery, feeding on zooplankton and preparing for their journey out to sea. As the fry descend toward the open ocean, they undergo a physiological change called smoltification that allows the fish to survive in salt water. Ugashik Lakes smolts travel down the Ugashik River and enter into the silt-filled waters of Bristol Bay, while on the other side of the Peninsula, smolt from Surprise Lake descend the Aniakchak River. Chignik Lakes smolt swim into a large saltwater lake known as Chignik Lagoon, then into Chignik Bay where they enter the North Pacific Ocean.

Nearly all Alaskan sockeye will spend up to two years in the Pacific, following ocean currents that take them to the Gulf of Alaska where they feed on rich aquatic organisms and grow to adult size, anywhere from four to eight pounds. As May approaches, millions of sockeye begin to school, forming the "silver horde," and commence their migration back to their natal streams thousands of miles away. As they approach their home rivers, usually in the first weeks of June, the sockeye undergo another metamorphosis. When the fish enter

freshwater they stop feeding, and begin to live off their body fat. As the fish travel upstream, their silvery bodies turn fire-engine red and their heads, a dark mossy green, while the males develop a humped back, a curved jaw, and enlarged hooked nose.

The salmon's spawning ritual is one of the most grotesque, yet beautiful, spectacles in nature. Historian Joseph Taylor III put it quite well when he noted: "As Pacific salmon mature sexually, they also fall apart." [12] Without nourishment, salmon become emaciated and exhausted, which make them easy targets for bald eagles, bears and other critters roaming the riverbanks. Along the grueling migration they can succumb to fungal infections that turn their flesh white with sores. Males, using their elongated canine teeth, will tear the skin off competing salmon, while females, in the process of digging their nests into the riverbed, may fray their tails to stumps of bare bone. [13]



The Columbia River Packing Company cannery in Chignik, 1912. University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, THWAITES 247.279.

But on the verge of death, the salmon's one instinct is to create life. A spawning pair moves over the nest and together release a mix of milt and eggs into the gravel. They cover the eggs with loose rocks from the riverbed, and then repeat the process. The salmon will aggressively guard their mound of gravel, or redd, from other mating pairs or hungry rainbow trout, until they can no longer maneuver within the water. Spent, the fish die and, as their bodies decompose, they provide the nutrients for a new generation of sockeye salmon. [14]

About 5,000 years ago, this complex, anadromous life cycle of the salmon stabilized and became the foundation for life on the Alaska Peninsula's post-glacial landscape. Salmon runs moved tons of sediments downstream and helped stabilize river channels. Salmon also returned ocean-gathered nutrients to the glacially plowed soils. [15] Spawned-out salmon provided food for a wide variety of carnivores and other scavengers. Numerous studies reflect how salmon, consumed by bears, otters, eagles, ravens, and others, distributed nutrients throughout what was a nutrient-poor, volcanic landscape, and transformed it into thriving ecosystem. [16]

But as much as the salmon affected the natural environment, the natural environment impacted the salmon. As each generation of salmon returned home to spawn and die, their decomposing bodies left behind a nitrogen fingerprint in the sediment. In recent studies, researchers like Bruce Finney from the University of Alaska Fairbanks have measured the

amount of the nitrogen fingerprint—isotope, N15—deposited in regional lake bottoms to determine the size of pre-historic sockeye salmon runs. From the nitrogen isotope in the sediment layers, Finney calculated the relative size of salmon runs over time. Markers, such as ash from known volcanic eruptions, helped the scientists affix a date to the layers. To his surprise, Finney discovered that over the last three hundred years, run sizes in Bristol Bay have varied considerably. Causing abrupt changes in the size of sockeye, according to the scientist, were large-scale climate shifts in the North Pacific Ocean, as indicated by sea surface temperature records and tree ring analysis. In general, sockeye runs were larger during periods of warm climates and smaller during cold periods. [17]



The dangerous trip to the Alaska Peninsula from San Francisco resulted in numerous shipwrecks, such as the St. Katherine, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

Such fluctuations of the salmon runs not only affected lake and steam ecosystems, but they undoubtedly affected the human societies that were living there. In an environmental history of the Pacific Northwest fishery entitled *Making Salmon*, Taylor argues, "Most historians concentrate only on human impacts upon salmon, ignoring nature's impact on history."[18] This point is most definitely driven home on the Alaska Peninsula, for it is clear that nature has constantly shaped the fate of peninsula salmon, which, in turn, shaped the lives of the people who depended on them. As one fish writer eloquently describes, *Homo sapiens* and *Onchorhynchus* evolved together, "for they were re-colonizing the post-glacial barrens at the same time." [19]

Indeed, the salmon runs of the Alaska Peninsula provided nutrients not only to the land, but for the Alutiiq people as well. Salmon were by far the largest single source of protein in the Alutiiq diet. In ancestral time, families from all over the peninsula traveled to various streams to feast upon the returning salmon. Because the salmon run lasted only about six weeks, people afterward moved on to places where other resources existed. When humans developed the technology to preserve salmon so that it lasted throughout the winter, they were able to remain longer along the river. People began to meet together on a seasonal basis to communally capture the salmon, and as a result, social customs and organization began to take shape around the return of the sockeye. [20]

Over the centuries, the pursuit of salmon undoubtedly influenced Alutiiq culture. The establishment of divisions of labor illustrates this point. At communal sites known as fish

camps, it was the men who usually caught the fish. Using technology that was potentially as effective as modern methods, men harvested large numbers of salmon with harpoons or nets with pumice-made floats, as well as V-shaped weirs made of wood or stone that they constructed across spawning streams. [21] While the men at a fish camp worked to catch salmon, the women used their expert knowledge to preserve the fish for the long months of winter.

Because fish are more susceptible to spoilage than other animal protein foods, methods of preservation were essential to the utilization of fish as food. "Fish," according to food historian Charles Cutting, "occupied a key position as one of the most easily accessible sources of protein food, and the spread of man himself was probably determined by the success of the techniques of preservation and storage employed." [22]



Tatiana Orloft stripping nets after the fishing season circa 1930s. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

In subsistence cultures in Alaska, including Alutiiq culture, the act of processing fish empowered women, and the "spread of man" was probably made possible through decisions made by a woman. According to archeologist Lisa Frink, who studied the role of female fish processors in western Alaska fish camps, the esteemed role women held within this society demonstrates that processing fish was an extremely skilled occupation in that it was highly managerial and particularly complex. Because fish processing and its winter storage were critical to most native communities, almost all Native women maintained important decision-making positions, and these positions have continued to the present day. [23]

Traditionally, cutting fish is a learned talent, requiring technical prowess and skillfully made choices. It required fish processors to know about the properties of different species of fish, the conditions of the fish at the time of capture, the effect of weather and insects on processing, and the productive capacity of the laborers available. In her study, Frink notes, "These were all crucial management factors and decisions negotiated and made by women." [24] Moreover, processing knowledge was taught, learned and passed down, as grandmothers, mothers, and daughters usually cut fish together. As a result, elder women

were, and still are, active managers of the fish camp operation. Not only did they control the daily allocation of foodstuffs, but the food caches were "owned" and managed by an extended family's female elders, who "decided what is to be eaten and when." [25] In the fish camp corporation, women maintained processing, managerial, and ownership roles.

Salmon served as more than just food or as a social organizing force, for they were also living spirits who shared the river, and ultimately themselves, with the people who caught them. "To the first peoples of the North Pacific," observed fish author and activist Tom Jay, "salmon was not merely food, it was energy. It was not energy in our sense of BTU's or calories, but was what William Blake meant when he said energy is eternal delight." [26] Alutiiq people interpreted this "energy" as the *sua*, and were very careful to respect the spirits of the fish. In some instances, fish intestines were customarily returned to the water because these parts were the home of the animal's soul. The first fish caught each year was eaten entirely except for the gall bladder and the gills. If anything was wasted, it was believed the fish would not return. [27]

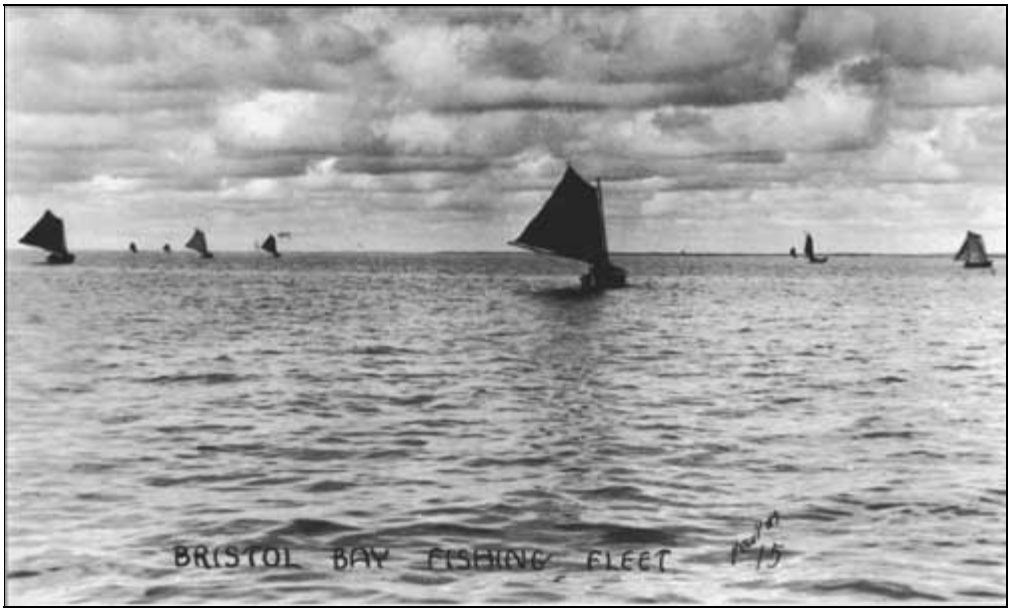


1939 cannery crew leaving Pilot Point on a barge to a ship waiting at the anchorage below Pilot Point. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

Maintaining a spiritual relationship with the salmon by no means made the ancient Alutiit proverbial "children of nature." [28] Although the Alutiiq people lived very much within nature, they also intentionally shaped and managed it. Alutiit were experienced, rational fishers, and throughout long periods of trial and error, or when the climate changed and salmon runs declined, they developed a cultural mechanism that controlled abuses such as over-fishing or heavy consumption. Their spiritual relationship with salmon was pragmatic, rather than romantic, and their response to runs constantly fluctuated due to either human or natural causes. [29] Primarily because the Russians came for furs not fish, runs were not over-harvested during the fur trade, and, therefore, the Alutiit managed to maintain a relationship with the salmon in which culture and environment continued to shape each other reciprocally. Not only was this view of the salmon held by the Alutiiq people, it is held by most Alaska Natives.

When American capitalists first began to exploit Alaska's salmon runs in 1878, according to Finney, high nitrogen values in lake sediments indicate that sockeye salmon numbers were high at this point in time. [30]

In other words, commercial fishers sailed into the peninsula's rivers under good climatic conditions.



Bristol Bay sailing fleet, Alaska State Library Collection, Michael Z. Vinokouroff Photograph Collection, ca. 1880s-1970s, P243-2-143.

Commercializing the Pursuit of Salmon: 1878-1893

The establishment of canneries on the central portion of the Alaska Peninsula was part of a larger pattern of commercialized salmon packing that was occurring throughout Alaska and the Pacific Slope. The first salmon canneries were built along the Sacramento and the Columbia rivers after the Civil War, but as the combination of over-fishing, intensive mining, and timber activity depleted the salmon resources in those rivers, canners moved north. [31] In 1878, fish packers opened the first canneries in southeastern Alaska, and, by 1882, they had established the first cannery in Central Alaska. Two years later, canners were packing fish in the remote reaches of Bristol Bay. Amazing tales of "red gold" trickled from the north. Suddenly the rush to establish other canneries began, and the era of commercial exploitation of the salmon resource in Alaska was on.



Bristol Bay sail boats, ca. 1920s. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

Once these fish entrepreneurs reached the unforgiving Alaskan shore, reality soon replaced rumor. Alaska's brief fishing season had a marked effect upon employment, capital needs, and the marketing system. [32] It drove up operating costs and forced canners to place a premium on accurate planning. Immediately after the end of the fishing season, canners began to plan for the next season. This meant cannery operators had to forecast the probable size of the runs and correlate a budget with the estimated pack for each of their canneries. Nearly all expenses, including labor, had to be funded before the season began. If runs failed or canneries were unable to put up the pack, cannery owners sustained heavy financial losses, usually causing bankruptcy.

In these early days of salmon canning, the industry struggled simply to survive, for the vast natural landscape challenged canners at every turn. From the beginning of the commercial era, the main outfitting, employment, and financial centers for the Alaska salmon industry developed outside of the territory, primarily in San Francisco and Seattle. Maintaining a successful operation in the North was about as easy as NASA putting a man on the moon in 1968. [33] It took the square-riggers several months of constant danger to sail to Alaska and even longer to transport the canned product to East Coast markers. Shipwrecks that caused loss in terms of both people and product were commonplace.

Still, the salmon canning industry remained appealing despite the severe challenges posed by the immense and volatile natural landscape. Transportation, labor and dependency on run size may have been something of a gamble, but the actual construction of a cannery was relatively cheap. As historian Richard Cooley describes, "Canneries were simple, inexpensive handicraft units, offering an ideal activity for the enterprising individual of limited means who was willing to pioneer a new venture in a new territory." [34] When one company prospected an area, established a cannery near good fishing grounds, and turned a profit in its initial seasons, other operators rushed in and established their own canneries. The early history of cannery operations is a story of over-expansion and rapid investment in what American entrepreneurs called the new frontier.



Children often participated in cannery life. Darryl Seybert and Andrew Abyo, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

The sheer grandness of Alaska's rivers and fish led canners to believe that the territory's resources were inexhaustible. With fish traps sometimes lined across entire rivers before 1889, [35] the fish resources quickly collapsed, reducing annual catches and cannery profits. The situation was further aggravated by unstable market conditions. The salmon rush caused market gluts, which resulted in lower prices. In his landmark study *Politics and Conservation: The Decline of the Alaska Salmon*, Cooley observes that this pattern of exploitation "was the logical outgrowth of a free fishery in a free competitive economy." The ruthless competition that dominated the industry before the turn of the century hinged upon the desire for both maximum cannery packs and elimination of rival businesses. [36]

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, a movement to unify control of production and marketing emerged. Cooperative working agreements between a limited number of individual cannery owners formed the first attempts to consolidate the fishery, and, by 1895, almost all the operators on the central Alaska Peninsula were included in the agreement. Marketing pools, quotas for individual plants, and complete closure of many plants characterized the working agreements. The Alaska Packing Association, an outgrowth of this early movement, was formed in 1892 and incorporated into the Alaska Packers Association (APA) in 1893.

Essentially a profit-sharing organization, APA started with thirty-one canneries, only nine of which continued to operate after 1893. APA gave each cannery owner shares in the pool. The number of shares given to each operator was in proportion to the size of his pack of the previous year. [37] By 1900, APA controlled seventy percent of the industry, but, by then, the market had stabilized and the total pack was more than two million cases, annually, a value of nearly $10 million. [38] In the years after 1900, the salmon industry began to look much different. No longer considered a "frontier industry," commercial salmon canning was now the backbone of Alaska's economy. [39] It was during this period of commercialization that canners came to the Aniakchak region.



Encounters with Japanese fishers at the turn of the 20th century linked the central Alaska Peninsula once again with Asia. For example photographed here are Pilot Point resident Joe Odas's relatives in Kobe Japan. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

INDUSTRIALIZING THE UGASHIK AND CHIGNIK FISHERIES: 1889-1914

Salteries

Before canning corporations entered the fray, fish packers salted and stored their salmon catch in barrels. The business of salting salmon was a standard practice for the Russians, who used the product as an exchange item in the local fur trade. [40] The practice was adopted by the Alaska Commercial Company after 1867. In 1880, Petroff, whose tasks as U.S. census taker included the identification of new resources and possible avenues for U.S. commerce, [41] noted that "The salmon family, the greatest feeder of all the Alaskan people, frequents in astonishing numbers in the Nushagak and other streams emptying into Bristol Bay...American fishermen [mostly Alaska Commercial Company traders] have for some years been engaged here every season in reaping a rich harvest and shipping the fish, salted in barrels, to market." [42] Twenty years later, an inspector for the U.S. Fish Commission, Jefferson Moser, noted that Petroff's observations did much to motivate this early salting industry. The census taker not only encouraged a small "saltery" rush southward to the Ugashik, but Petroff also emphasized the potential for commercializing fish processing in Bristol Bay. [43]

Less than ten years after Petroff's report was published, several small salting outfitters settled near the Alaska Commercial Company's post and the two Native villages—Agishik (Pilot Point) and Oogashik (Ugashik)—and began to commercially salt salmon for the first time on the Ugashik River. C.A. Johnson was the first salmon pioneer on the river, building and operating what was known as the "Johnson Saltery," located two miles down river from the Alaska Commercial Company's post, in 1889. [44] In 1891, Johnson sold his operation to the Bering Sea Packing Company, which built a second saltery on the right bank of the Ugashik River, near Pilot Station. [45] Two years later, Charles Nelson established a saltery near Johnson's original site.

The Ugashik, like most rivers in Bristol Bay, is what early fish entrepreneurs described as a "redfish river." As Moser observed, "It [the Ugashik River estuary] is a wonderful salmon country, and can not be equaled." [46] The early fish packers quickly profited from the

hundreds of thousand of sockeye salmon returning each summer to spawn on the shores of the river's headwaters, the Ugashik Lakes. "The facilities for building traps and weirs are also extraordinary," noted one optimistic fishery observer, "and hundreds of barrels have been filled with a single clean up of a trap." [47] Yet at the time, observers noted that these undersized fish packers were too small to fully exploit the Ugashik run. As Petroff lamented, "The only drawback to this business is the short period over which the run extends, necessitating the employment of a very large number of hands while it lasts." [48] When such potential for profit reached the ears of corporate interests in San Francisco, the more expensive and elaborate, but more profitable, canning process quickly rivaled and eventually replaced salting as the dominant method for salmon processing on the Ugashik River.



Peughing fish into truck, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

Canneries

In 1893, the newly formed corporate giant, Alaska Packers Association, established a saltery not far from the Bering Sea Packing site. By 1895, Johnson, Nelson, and even the Bering Sea Packing Company, had sold or merged their interests with the Alaska Packers. [49] The Association filed hundreds of homestead claims around Bristol Bay, shrewdly encompassing all the freshwater creeks where any potential competitors might build. With its many new additions, including the Ugashik sites, APA had become by far the biggest fish packing organization on the Pacific Coast. [50]

That same 1895 season, Alaska Packers built a cannery on the right bank of the river, immediately above Pilot Station, which the company renamed the Ugashik Fishing Station. [51] "To support its far-flung operations," notes historian Amos Burg, "everything had to be transported to remote canneries by ship—construction supplies, food, fuel, tools, canning supplies, fishing boats, fishermen and hundreds of hard working, dependable Chinese cannery workers." [52] At the time, APA's Ugashik Fishing Station was the largest industrial facility to be established in the Aniakchak region. It made its first pack in 1896, and, after 1903, the canning lines were fully mechanized. At the peak of the season, the Ugashik Fishing Station had the capacity of producing 2,400 cases of canned salmon per day. [53]

In 1900, a company organized by the stockholders of the Naknek Packing Company sent a cannery outfit to the Ugashik and established the Bristol Packing Company (later known as the Red Salmon Canning Company) near the site of the recently defunct trading post of the Alaska Commercial Company. [54] At first, this new company paled in comparison with the productive output of the Alaska Packers Association, but within a decade, these two companies maintained a healthy rivalry that jockeyed for fishing position on the river. [55] In 1901, APA built a second cannery fifteen miles above their main cannery at Pilot Point; however, it operated only until 1906, and was later dismantled. [56]

While fish packers were establishing canneries on the Ugashik River, they also began to cast their eyes on the Pacific coast of the central Alaska Peninsula. In 1888, the Fishermen's Packing Company of Astoria, Oregon, sent a reconnaissance party to Chignik Bay in search of salmon. They returned home with 2,160 barrels of salted salmon. The following year the fishing company returned to Chignik with tin plate, solder, salt, and cases and built a cannery on the east side of Chignik Lagoon, 2.5 miles from its entrance to the Pacific Ocean. [57] By 1892, two other canneries moved into the area. That year the three canneries consolidated into one, which operated under the patronage of the Alaska Packers Association in 1893. [58]



The Alaska Packers cook standing in front of the mess hall at Pilot Point, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

Salmon canners employed various methods to obtain fish. Fishing gear, ranging from nets to traps, depended on the type of environment in which the cannery was located. On the Ugashik, for instance, the river's strong currents, narrow channels, and the discolored water made gillnetting the choice of fishing methods. Gillnet fishermen employed by the canneries, conducted most of the salmon harvests. To catch reds, fishermen used a net seventy-five to eighty fathoms long, with twenty to twenty-six meshes, each 6-1/8 to 6-1/4 inches stretched. [59] A lead line ran along the bottom, a wooden cork line floated along the top, while the mesh of the net was big enough to let the head of the salmon go through but not his body, catching the gills in the twine strands. [60]

Ugashik fishermen fished from 25-foot to 32-foot-long Columbia River double-enders. The vessels were an oar- and sail-powered craft that maintained a carrying capacity of 1,400 sockeye salmon. While drifting, the boat was pulled stern-first through the water as the net

filled with fish. A seaworthy design with a fine bow and stern entrance allowed the sailboat to stay with the net regardless of how rough the waves got. Referred to simply as "salmon boats," the double-enders superbly adapted to the work of gillnet fishing and the conditions of the choppy Ugashik River. Because the double-ender sailboat specialized specifically to catch a Pacific prey, it is recognized as one of the few work-boat designs to originate on the West Coast. [61]



Mike Joseph and Andrew Abyo at Pilot Point, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

Two men formed the double-enders gillnet crew. One set the net, while the other pulled, or steered, the boat. When the wind blew, as it most often does in the Bay, the fishermen raised the mast and the three-cornered canvas sail powered the boat into the channels at the river's mouth. If the morning breeze failed to blow, then the men had to use the oars. The crew worked the tides, and when the fish ran strong, they remained near the cannery. When the run slackened, they drifted as far as fifteen to twenty miles away. When the net started to jerk, the gillnetter knew the net was heavy with fish. The two men pulled the net in over the stern and began to pick the fish entangled in the web with practiced hands, aided by a small handy hook. [62]

According to nautical historians Ralph Andrews and A.K. Larssen, who together wrote the book *Fish and Ships*, "The Bristol Bay gillnetters never had it easy." [63] The fishermen slept on their boat under the tented bow. They rose at three a.m. and only had what they called a Swede stove to cook their food and warm their coffee. In 1900, a crew received two cents each for every sockeye salmon and ten cents shared between them for the less plentiful king salmon, if the cannery was taking kings. Fishermen delivered their catch to a company tender, which rallied and transported the salmon to the cannery. [64]

In 1922, the *Santa Flavia*, a floating processor for the International Packing Co., entered Bristol Bay and unleashed a small fleet of engine-powered boats that employed a far more efficient purse seine (a net that encircled the schooling fish and scooped them with an action similar to tightening a purse string) near the Ugashik River, directly challenging the sailboat fleet. Not surprisingly, the fishermen in motored boats easily intercepted salmon attempting to return to the river's headwaters. In response, the politically influential Alaska Packers Association lobbied Congress to ban floating processors, purse seiners, and powerboats in the bay. Legislators felt banning processors was too blatantly self-serving for APA, but Congress did eventually pass a bill prohibiting engine-run fishing boats, a law that would stand until

1954. According to local legend, a powerful cannery boss with a fleet of thirty-two-foot boats flexed his political muscle and tacked a length limit of thirty-two feet onto the bill, a vessel-length limit which remains to this day in Bristol Bay. [65]

On the Pacific side of the peninsula, a fleet of gill netters and purse seiners harvested salmon for its Chignik cannery during the first few years of the commercial fishery. In four years, the APA plant averaged well over 50,000 cases per year. Still, fishing the shallow, murky waters of Chignik Lagoon proved difficult. During the mid-to late 1890s, APA increasingly came to rely on pile traps, fixed fishing gear which beach gang crews literally pounded into the muddy bottom of the lagoon. Canners favored these "pound nets," as they were originally called, because they were efficient and relatively inexpensive to operate. [66]

Chignik Lagoon pile traps were large rectangular wooden structures approximately thirty-five to forty feet long with 1,200-foot leads. Although operation of a pile trap was relatively cheap, constructing them was expensive and complex. Canneries employed a machine called a pile driver with a sixty-foot hammer that could pound sixty-five foot timbers ten feet into the mud. Once built, operation of the pile trap was quite simple. First, the "lead," a line of piling driven ten feet apart and hung with chicken wire, literally led the migrating salmon from the shoreline into an enclosed V-shaped "heart." From the heart, salmon swam into a twenty-five-foot narrow, web-enclosed tunnel that led the fish into a pot where they were penned until high tide spilled them into the "spiller." Then, a "jigger" or "apron" closed, trapping the salmon. Once in the spiller, the fish remained alive until tender crews "brailed" the silver horde into their holds, and transported the catch to the on-shore canneries. [67]



Old-timers at Pilot Point cannery, John Struck, Joe Oda, Brown, and an unidentified man, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

Although they employed different fishing methods, whether a cannery was built on the Ugashik or at Chignik, most canning facilities had basically uniform construction. The complex at the APA Ugashik Fishing Station is representative. It consisted of long narrow structures lined with large, rectangular windows that, according to federal inspectors, allowed in an adequate amount of light and ventilation for the cannery crews. Built upon pilings pounded into the shoreline, the dock and most of the processing area protruded out over the river so that tenders and fish scows could easily deliver their load. At the same time, fish heads, tails, fins, and entrails—parts of the fish that did not get canned—could easily be discarded in the rising tides.

All canneries maintained a building called the "fish house," which held the freshly caught fish in large bins. In 1900, cleaning crews still prepared the fish by hand, after which they sent the raw fish by conveyor belt to another building called the "cannery." The cannery was usually a long, relatively narrow, building that accommodated the canning line. The canning line was literally a line of machinery introduced in the 1880s, where empty cans could travel the length of the building uninterrupted, and come out at the end, filled with salmon. [68] At the turn of the century, the Ugashik canning equipment included two sets of can-making machines that quickly replenished the cannery's stock of cans. It included, as well, a cutter machine, or gang knife, that operated by a hand lever, and cut the salmon into steaks; three filler machines that automatically filled the cans with salmon and salt pieces; three clincher machines and two solder machines that, together, attached the lids onto the tin cans; and seven retorts that pressure cooked the canned salmon. [69]



Clarice Seybert (Orin's mother), date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

Technologically speaking, the Ugashik cannery was on the cutting edge of cannery innovation. [70] But as historian Duncan A. Stacey points out, "Sustaining technological change. . .is not simply a matter of importing new machines or processes." As he suggests in his study *Sockeye & Tinplate: Technological Change in the Fraser River Canning Industry, 1871-1912*, "If technology is to be successfully implanted in new territory, many aspects of the new setting, ranging from market opportunities to the essential back-up skills in a wide arc of support functions, must be favorable." Such conditions, according to Stacey, include: a surplus of the resource, a technology to develop the resource to the level of an exportable surplus, a source of capital, and a marker. [71] In 1900, canning facilities on the central Alaska Peninsula had begun to meet all of these conditions.

The industrial machines, as well as the canning methods employed, made it much easier to exploit the massive salmon runs in a short period of time, but the process was not nearly as efficient as pre-contact fish preservation methods. In these early years of the industry, the new technology remained in experimental stages, which resulted in a horrific amount of biological waste. The washing and cleaning of fish remained one section of the canning line that still presented a serious bottleneck in the canning process, a problem that was not resolved until the introduction of butchering machines between 1903 and 1906. [72] As a result, cannery workers had the nearly impossible task of cleaning fish as fast as tenders were unloading them. In 1900, Moser observed, "In front of every cannery in this district, and along the beaches for several miles, thousand of dead fish are seen. The investigator called

such decay a "testimony to the enormous waste during a canning season." [73] In many instances, neither men nor machine could process the large volumes of over-caught fish before it spoiled in the fish bins. The occasional warm weather during the summer months was also a culprit. Moser noted that waste not only occurred from holding the fish until they were unfit to pack, but wasteful practices "runs through the whole process, from the time the fish are captured until the last tapping test is made." [74]

Canneries squandered salmon in multiple ways. Many salmon were lost in passing the fish from fishing boats to the receiving tenders; others were lost in "pewing," as a cannery worker pitched the fish with a long steel hook from the tenders into the fish house. But the most distasteful source of environmental waste concerned the king salmon, what many thought to be the "finest salmon that swims the Pacific waters." [75]

Because the Bristol Bay fishery was driven by markets demanding sockeye salmon, if fishermen caught any of the remaining species of salmon, then the fish was considered a by-product. When canners received the Chinook, or king salmon, *(Oncorhynchus tshawytscha)* from their fishermen, superintendents instructed cannery workers to cut out bellies of the kings and salt them for private use, while the remainder of the fish—usually thirty to forty pounds of meat—was thrown away. As Moser remarked, "Great, beautiful fishes, weighing from twenty-five to forty pounds, from which the bellies had been removed, were seen at several places lying on the beach, to be carried away by the tide or consumed by the birds." [76] Surely, the Alutiiq fisherman who observed such a scene would have believed those fish had been offended by deep disrespect, and would never return again.

By the turn of the century, the new economic rules had significantly altered the traditional relationship between human consumers and the salmon in the Aniakchak region. [77] Although at times local environmental constraints limited commercial fishers, for the most part, any indication of a reciprocal relationship between the human and nature was gone. Capitalism was the now the single most important force driving activities that affected the salmon. Whereas Alutiiq fishers harvested for local use, and technology, population size, and cultural beliefs collectively resulted in moderate catches, the industry fishers had considerably fewer cultural or economic limits, and profligacy plagued the commercial fishery.

By all accounts, it appeared as though the canners were driven by greed and employed a flotilla of fishermen to catch as many salmon as they could, but as sociologist M. Patricia Marchak suggests, "The history of over-fishing is more complicated than a simple take of too many fishes." [78] Likewise, Arthur F. McEvoy in his study of the California fishery argues that it was not so much greed driving the industry, but competition. In his landmark book *The Fisherman's Problem: Ecology and Law in the California Fisheries, 1850-1980,* McEvoy addresses the issue:

> ... [Over-fishing occurs] primarily because fishery stocks are "common property" resources; that is, although many different individuals or firms may compete with each other for fish, no one of them owns the resource so as to keep others away from it. As a result, everyone has an incentive to keep fishing so long as there is any money to be made in the effort, whereas no one has an individual incentive to refrain from fishing so as to conserve the stock. Every harvester knows that if he or she leaves a fish in the water someone else will get it, and the profit, instead. This is what economists call "the fisherman's problem": In a competitive economy, no marker mechanism ordinarily exists to reward individual forbearance in the use of shared resources. [79]

Competition by fishers, then, was a consequence of the structure of the capitalistic marker. At

the time, the government refused to restrict economic activity. Thus, canneries had to increase production and reduce costs to remain competitive in a *laissez-faire* market, and fishers had to catch more fish to offset falling wages and quotes. Without restriction on participation or harvest, cutthroat practices were almost inevitable. [80]

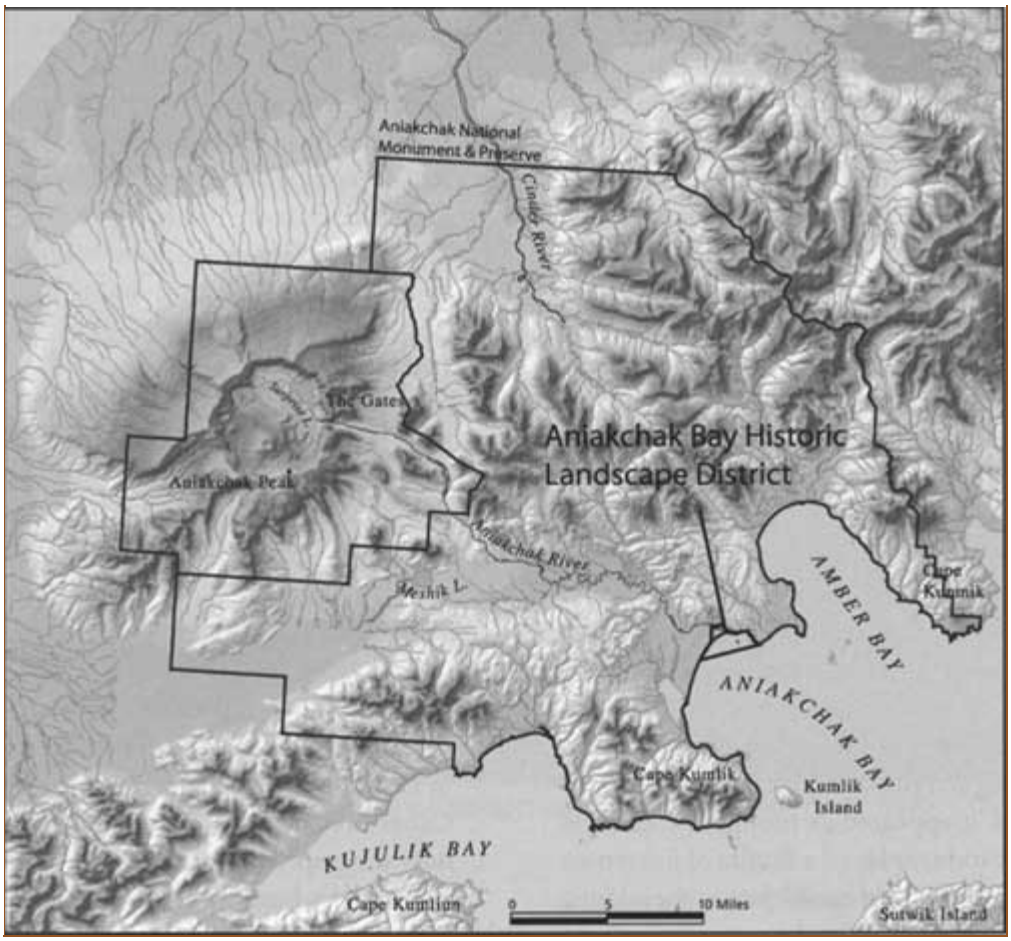
This was exactly the situation that developed in Chignik Lagoon. Just as canners introduced an efficient method of catching fish—the trap—to the fishery, two new fish companies entered the fray and, as historian Frank Norris points out, "the combined efforts of those companies began to test the ecological limits of the resource." [81] In 1896, the Hume Brothers and Hume Company and the Pacific Steam Whaling Company constructed new canneries along the shores of the lagoon, and by the following summer, twenty-three traps had been set in the lagoon. In 1897, while investigating the Chignik fishery, Moser described the stationary traps as "barricades", and in 1900, he described the lagoon as "studded with traps." [82] Canners, denying that their traps restricted salmon from migrating upriver, continued to pound a high number of traps in the lagoon. This resulted in more government warnings against over-fishing. In 1900, agent Howard Kurchin reported that those catching the fish knew the traps would eventually decimate the fishery, for "many of the best informed fishermen give the fishery but a brief lease of life, some putting the limit as low as ten years." [83]

Low fish returns in 1904 proved such warnings true, and that year the Hume Bros. cannery was forced to close. [84] Competition for trap space, coupled with declining runs, prevented new operators from moving into the Chignik Lagoon. In 1911, the Columbia River Packers Association (CRPA) constructed a cannery just outside of the lagoon at the head of Anchorage Bay. As Norris notes, the company staked a few traps in the lagoon, "but unlike its competitors it chose to diversify its trap sites." [85] By 1913, CRPA had established a trap in Hook Bay, the first trap site located beyond the lagoon.

The following year, CRPA entered into a communal contract with the two remaining Chignik operators: the Alaska Packers Association, and the Northwestern Fisheries Company, formerly known as the Pacific Steam Whaling Company. [86] This contract provided that the three companies would equally share the total catch. Renewed each year until 1930, the Chignik Fishing contracts gave the three companies a monopoly of the fishery for twenty years. [87] This self-regulatory agreement gave canners the security to remove two-thirds of the traps from the lagoon. With their elimination, a sense of stability emerged in the Chignik fishery. [88]

Still, equal catch totals did not necessarily mean equal territory. Considered the "new kid on the block," Columbia River Packers Association was pushed out of the lagoon. According to contract provisions, the two oldest packers in the Chignik area—Northwestern Fisheries Company and the Alaska Packers Association—retained their trap locations in the area. CRPA, on the other hand, decided to prospect new trap sites. Attracting the Oregon fish packing company was the only other large salmon stream on the Pacific Coast between Chignik Lagoon and the Katmai country, the twenty-five-mile-long Aniakchak River. [89]





Aniakchak Bay Historic Landscape District. By B. Bundy. *(click on image for a PDF version)*

Canneries Create a New Cultural Landscape On the Central Alaska Peninsula

As the canned salmon industry sprawled along both sides of the Alaska Peninsula from 1897 onward, industrialization became a doubled edge sword for Native peoples living in the Aniakchak region. Throughout the fur trade era, from the Russian to the early American period, the Alutiiq people had proven that they could adapt to and recover from both environmental and cultural change—even catastrophic change. But the commercial fishing industry relied on a system that depended on outside rather than local forces, and neither Native residents nor their exchange practices affected decisions made by the canners. If they did, those practices were manipulated to the advantage of the canner. By contrast, the cannery system drastically affected the Aniakchak region in terms of increasing ethnic diversity, movement of local settlements, wage-paying jobs, systems of credit, disease, and ultimately, change in the reciprocal relationship between Alutiiq people and the salmon. As ethnographer James Vanstone suggests, "Of all the agents of change. . .none had a greater or more lasting effect on the [Alaska Peninsula] region than the commercial fishing industry." [90]

In recent studies, some historians have suggested that the advent of commercial fishing resuscitated Native cultures and probably "saved the lives of many local residents who were suffering from the declining fur trade." As Merry Tuten remarks in her ethnographic study of the Aniakchak coast, "The canneries arrived just in time to replace the faltering marine mammal activities." [91] As early as 1900, Moser observed that for those people living in the "small villages scattered along the islands and hidden in numerous bays"—people who used to rely on the trade of sea otter pelts—"cod and salmon fisheries have become important." [92] In the early years of commercial canning, however, the industry was, at best, a mixed

blessing. Although evidence of starvation existed throughout the peninsula as the fur trade came to and end, until 1898 when Congress made it illegal to completely barricade a river or steam, fishing methods by the commercial fishers severely impacted traditional means of acquiring the region's most significant food source.

Moreover, although it is true that the canneries arrived just as the fur trade was collapsing, they did not employ the local people immediately. One might think that canneries would have hired local people living in Chignik or on the Ugashik River to either catch or process the salmon—activities the indigenous people in those areas knew well. Instead, employment in the canneries came slowly for most Natives. Salmon prices were far lower than the price of a sea otter pelt and it took some time before either canners or local residents themselves believed they should be working for canneries.

Indeed, hiring records reflect such attitudes. The Ugashik Fishing Station hired a mix of twenty European and American workers in 1889, but no Natives. A year later, twenty Natives were hired to assist 140 Chinese workers in the Fish House. [93] A decade later, a few Alutiit were hired to process fish, but were still excluded from fishing and fish trapping jobs. [94] Chignik followed similar, if not worse, hiring patterns. Many canners complained that Native laborers would work only as long as needed to secure a few possessions, then abruptly quit and return to their more traditional hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering activities. [95] Even Moser reasoned, "Why should he work? Hunger no longer worries him, his immediate wants are satisfied, and he has no others!" [96]

Like the wood to construct their buildings and the machines to can their fish, the canners imported a workforce to clean and process the salmon. And, because canning salmon demanded a huge labor supply, the commercial fishing industry attracted the first large-scale migration of non-Natives to the Alaska Peninsula. And, although most Alutiit were not working for the canneries, the industry still brought them into firsthand contact with many different races and nationalities. [97] Russian population numbers are a good example. The largest number of Russians ever in America at one time was a mere 823. [98] In 1890, there were 8,000 non-Natives in Alaska. [99] At one Bristol Bay cannery alone, canners employed three hundred Chinese shore-workers. By 1909, there were 1,069 Chinese working just in western Alaska. [100] Such cultural diversity caught the attention of a writer for *Alaska Life* in 1947:

> So it is that the cannery operation is composed of a diverse program of occupations. Equally as diverse are the racial types: From the Scandinavian fishermen to the Alaska natives, Indians and Eskimo, to the Filipino, there is a mixture of race, background, cultural standards, and technical skill. [101]

And, as with many late nineteenth-century American businesses, the canneries treated these workers of various backgrounds differently. In the cannery pecking order, the highest paid were the Scandinavian fishermen, or the "white crew." The Italian and Greek fishermen, or "dagos," as they were called, were paid less for basically the same work. For cannery work such as soldering the tins, cleaning the fish, and packing the cans, Chinese laborers (and later Japanese and Filipino), hired in San Francisco or Seattle and sailed north for the summer, were paid the least. [102]

The sheer number of ethnically diverse newcomers to the region directly shaped the cultural composition of Aniakchak. For the first time, non-Native immigrants, who sought wealth in the waters along the Alaska Peninsula, overshadowed the Alutiit and Creoles that lived there. [103]

Anti-Chinese attitudes originating in West Coast locales forced some canners to hire more

Natives to process salmon in the Alaska canneries. Beginning in the mid-1850s, a steady flow of approximately 5,000 Chinese men per year migrated to the United States, most of them to places such as San Francisco, Astoria, and Seattle. In 1868, the United States negotiated the Burlingame Treaty with China, which, as one of its stipulations, provided cheap labor for railroad construction crews. Thereafter, the annual influx of Chinese immigrants more than doubled. When the transcontinental railroads were completed, many Chinese laborers gained work in West Coast salmon canneries, and by the mid-1880s, they formed the basis of fish processing work from Astoria, Oregon to Bristol Bay, Alaska. [104]

Not surprisingly, canners embraced the cheap and efficient labor of the Chinese workers. Canners described these men as maintaining feminine qualities, for they were "short, relatively hairless, and required less food to maintain them than white men." [105] But in other areas of American industry, Chinese workers began to compete more with Euroamerican workers and resentment grew. When immigration numbers reached nearly 40,000 in 1882, protests hit such a peak that Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act. The Chinese Exclusion Act prohibited all Chinese immigration for ten years. In 1992, Congress renewed the legislation, extending the ban indefinitely.

Responding to the new laws, fish packing corporations like APA began to experiment with new technology. The so-called "Iron Chink" was invented to replace the dwindling human workers for which the machine was unapologetically named. [106] In spite of advancements in canning equipment, fish packers still needed a balance of men and machines to fully exploit the salmon runs. As a result, hiring contractors for the Alaska Packers Association introduced non-Chinese workers on a large scale for the first time in 1905, and retained only the most essential Chinese employees. [107] Many of these new workers were of Japanese heritage, while others were European Americans living in the vicinity of the canneries, or were immigrants from abroad. [108] Another new entrant into the cannery workplace, although remaining at the bottom of the labor tier, were Alaska Natives.

Cannery life was an entirely different world than the Alutiit life along the river at fish camp. The industrialized plant was generally dreary, damp and noisy. Belts whined, flywheels whirled and narrow pipes dropping from overhead brought a ceaseless stream of cold water to the work stalls. Alutiiq men and women worked in long rows as "slitters" and "washers," while they shifted from foot to aching foot at their slimy benches working methodically to the point of exhaustion. Steam and odorous fumes mingled with the stench of raw fish. The sound of clattering cans and the clanking of soldering machines pounded on the workers nerves. Accidents occurred with increased frequency, as fatigue prompted carelessness. [109]

Because cleaning fish was considered women's work, such conditions belied the identity of Alutiiq men, the traditional fishermen. As canneries became more mechanized, Alutiiq women moved from important decision-making roles to the lowest participants in the cannery organizational structure. In her book, *Cheap Wage Labour: Race and Gender in the Fisheries of British Columbia,* sociologist Alizja Muszynski contends that the level of power for female Native fish processors decreased with industrialization. With the transplant of an American maritime society to Alaskan coastal and riverine regions, fishermen—not processors—became the face of the industry—the frontier heroes or cowboys of the North. Muszynski suggests that the strong connection between fishing and masculine pursuits found in Western literary culture played a central role in devaluing the position of the fish processor, a role that traditional culture held in esteem. American fish stories, after all, center on "the one that got away," and rarely mentioned the not-so-romantic cleaners and preparers of fish.

Even though preparing fish for market is arguably the most important step in the commercial canning operation, when the factory system replaced the fish camp as the main center of

economic activity on most Alaskan salmon streams, the job was reduced in community stature. Muszynski convincingly points out that decreasing the value of labor legitimized lower wages paid to cannery workers, regardless of the overall value of the product. [110] This is, in part, the reason why canners, who hired Chinese men to clean fish in the early days of the industry, referred to their Asian workers as a "feminine race." [111]

Yet, as with the Russians, the Alutiiq people did their best to respond to the new economic reality. Prospects that this new industry would replace the dwindling fur trade attracted Native residents from all Alaska, who eventually settled near both the Ugashik and Chignik canneries. As mentioned in a previous chapter, in 1910, a group of Inupiaq from the Seward Peninsula seeking cannery jobs migrated to the Alaska Peninsula, where they carved out a life among the mixed Alutiiq/Euroamerican population. [112] Similarly, in 1898, the local priest noted, "The residents of Agishek are all Aleuts who have moved from Ugashek since construction of the canneries here." Not only did cannery jobs spawn new settlements, but the canneries also supplied building materials, albeit involuntarily, to the community. Again, the priest observed:

> Last fall high water from the sea washed many boards from shore at the cannery. The residents at Agishek recaptured part of them and used them to build a small house on the site where last year I celebrated the liturgy in a church tent and where the cross stood. [113]

In fact, the Alutiit even managed to resurrect familiar practices of exchange by developing a kind of underground barter system with the exotic cannery workers. Chignik resident, August Pedersen, remembered selling bear feet and bear gall bladders to the Chinese workers in exchange for leftover food from the cannery's mess hall at the end of the summer:

> My old man [Marius "Pete" Pedersen] used to cure the skins. Fix them all, stretch them all, and he'd give'em to some friends. He used to give the Chinamen the feet and the gall. They used it for medicines, and in the fall, they would be pretty decent, them years, you packed live animals. Pigs. They'd give you a pig, a live pig. Maybe old canned salmon. They'd give you them "dents" they called it, ten, fifteen cases, though, and maybe a couple hundred pounds of rice. [114]

This type of exchange was also conducted between Alutiiq fishermen and the canneries. But, unlike the fur trade where power was relatively balanced, in the fishing industry, it was the canners who called the shots. Since the industry's advent in 1895, canners generally omitted Natives from their payroll. However, many canners still purchased fish "under the table" from Native fisherman. This was done not so much for philanthropic reasons, but rather because each cannery was allotted a quota of between four and five boats per line of machinery operated. This meant that a cannery boss could purchase fish from a Native fisherman, and in turn, add to his total pack without adding the Native fishermen to either his quota or his payroll. [115]

In a 1925 report to the industry, Fish Commissioner Frank O'Malley brought attention to the fact that canners had been buying fish from Native boats in both the Ugashik and Egegik Rivers for some time. Although O'Malley discouraged the industry from outfitting Native boats, the Commissioner stated that he would not interfere with the methods pursued by the industry in buying fish from Native fishermen because he realized that "this was their only means of livelihood during the fishing season." [116]

The Fish Commissioner, however, outlined a few stipulations. First, he made it clear that a "Native" meant an indigenous Alaskan (and probably Russian Creole) and not a winterman or a local trapper, and warned the industry against transferring Natives from one fishing

district to another as canners commonly did with their seasonal fishermen. Moreover, the industry was not allowed to buy fish caught by Native fishermen in restricted areas. Thus, although Native fishermen were not employees of the canneries, they were nevertheless constrained by their rules. Another issue that concerned officials from both the industry and the agency was the prices paid to Native fishermen for their catch. During an impromptu meeting that took place in 1929, the industry and the regulating bureau came to an agreement:

> Whereupon, on motion of Mr. Friele of the Nakat Packing Corporation, it was agreed by all present, (with the exception of Mr. Witting of the International Packing Company of Ugashik), that Natives should be paid the same price for fish throughout Bristol Bay as we pay to White fishermen, that in addition, they should receive food and nets but not boats nor run money. Mr. Witting was of the opinion that fishermen supplying their own boats and nets should be given an advance over the price paid to men to whom the company furnished boats and nets. [117]

It would not be until the 1930s that resident fishermen became employees of the canneries, hired to catch fish under the same means as seasonal fishermen.

* * *

As more local people began to work at the Ugashik and Chignik plants, some attitudes towards Native workers once held by canners began to change for the better. In 1908, Father Kedrovskii of the Belkofski Parish suggested to the APA cannery superintendent that if he supplied wood and tile for a new Chignik chapel, then more people would settle down near the cannery. Father Kedrovskii reasoned that the superintendent would, "have at his disposal a large number of workers at any time, and would not need imported workers. [118] In fact, cannery superintendents found that Native workers fed and housed themselves, thereby freeing the cannery from that cost. Village proximity to the cannery made it possible for the foreman to hire by the day as needed. Perhaps most importantly, Native cannery workers became customers at the cannery mercantile store, thus allowing canners to recover paid wages.

Dr. Alan Boraas contends that receiving credit from the canneries was central to the incorporation of Alaska Natives into a market economy. According to Boraas, canneries gave Native laborers easy credit, which allowed them to buy such luxury items as guns, but then required them to work during the salmon season when they traditionally gathered food for their own use. By the end of the season, Native families had less food and no money. They used more company credit, and, as Boraas points out, Natives indentured themselves to the canneries for another season. Over time, fish processing outfits transformed the Alutiiq from a subsistence community that lived off the land into the American image of individualism and materialism. [119] Historian Chris Friday agrees, "Bringing Native Americans into a monetary economy through the canneries encouraged a dependency among Native American[s] that immensely benefited owners." [120]

Meanwhile, the arrival of international players to the central peninsula reconnected local residents to the outside world. Not only was that connection strengthened by the convergence of various ethnicities each summer, but it also grew with the advent of reliable and consistent communication. Canneries provided a means for consistent mail service for the first time in this region. Getting the mail to western Alaska had been previously conducted through private contractors, a practice that existed since the United States purchased Alaska from the Russians in 1867. As demand increased, various steamship companies such as the Pacific Packing & Navigation Company, Northern Commercial Company, and the Alaska

Commercial Company competed for the mail contracts. The contract required that mail be delivered once a month along a route that extended 1,300 miles, from Sitka to Unalaska. Between 1890 and 1898 and again beginning in 1905, the*SS Dora* was assigned this route, dubbed the Western Run. While the cannery ships provided the supplies and people for the canneries, the *Dora* brought their mail, spare parts, and news of the rest of the world. [121]

By 1910, the canneries had permeated all aspects of life on the Alaska Peninsula, but not everyone found the industry to be a positive influence. "A new fish cannery has been built next to the [Chignik] village this year," wrote Orthodox Priest Father Kedrovskii. "Little by little, the Natives are pulled into cannery work and wage labor. But not everybody uses his earning productively. People suffer from alcohol abuse." [122] Still, nothing tipped the balance more that the viral diseases transported aboard commercial fishing ships. As people from all over North America, Europe, and Asia came to the central Alaska Peninsula, newcomers, once again, brought diseases that proved far deadlier than volcanoes, famine, or wars.



The cannery hospital took care of local residents, especially during the Spanish fky pandemic, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

Spanish Flu Epidemic

In the spring of 1919, cannery ships transported the Spanish flu virus, which quickly swept through most native villages on the Alaska Peninsula and took its toll of human life, claiming adult victims from Pilot Point, Ugashik, and Meshik, while leaving their children orphaned and destitute. In the end, the pandemic nearly exterminated the entire adult population on the Peninsula. It is estimated that between 2,000 and 3,000 Alaskans died from the flu. [123] As historian Alfred Crosby points out, "In Alaska...isolation at first protected the Indians, Aleuts, and Eskimos; and then, when the isolation failed in 1918, they died in greater percentages than any other people in the American empire." [124]

According to Crosby, Alaska was connected to the outside world through a fleet of steamship vessels that plied the coastal waters between its harbors and Seattle and other ports of the Lower 48, and "carried fish southward, manufactured articles northward, and passengers in both directions." [125] In addition, the population of the territory had dropped in recent

years, along with physicians with special medical skills. Although Governor of Alaska, Thomas Riggs, asked steamship companies to examine all passengers bound north and to refuse passage to any with symptoms of influenza, the anti-flu policy failed, for anyone not yet showing symptoms could innocently carry the disease ashore. By October 14, 1918, Spanish influenza had reached Juneau, and in the spring of 1919, cannery ships not only imported seasonal gear and work crew, but they brought the flu as well. [126]

In 1919, the Territorial Government still had not passed any laws to provide Alaskans with health care. APA reports from Naknek show that the federal government was equally unresponsive to the crisis, for the reports tell of distress calls to U.S. Navy ships in the area that went unanswered. [127] The only available hospitals and medicine were located at the canneries. Some historians argue that APA dispensed free care to maintain a ready supply of healthy, productive workers. [128] Whether canneries aided Natives for altruistic or more selfish reasons is debatable. However, the epidemic occurred so quickly and was so widespread that it rendered the territorial and federal governments ineffective. Because few doctors were available, the canneries remained the only institution capable of dealing with the situation.

In May 1919, Superintendent Heinbockel of the APA Station in Naknek visited APA's sister cannery on the Ugashik River. His report painted a bleak picture:

> On May 30, I made a trip [from Naknek] to the Alaska Packers Association's Ugashik cannery, arriving there the same evening. It was found that the influenza had attacked the Ugashik natives that practically the entire native population was stricken, also six of the white wintermen, and that one native had died the previous evening. Orders were issued to treat the natives at Ugashik with the same care and attention as those at Naknek; also to forbid anyone to leave or enter the Ugashik village. [129]

Cannery doctors and nurses gave what care they could for patients. But, by the middle of July, mass graves held the canvas wrapped corpses of most of the Native population of the Ugashik River. [130] Cannery workers built caskets and even dug graves to bury the dead. [131] Canneries provided survivors with food and clothing. The following summer, canneries throughout Bristol Bay provided work to the survivors, and at a time when it was not required by law to compensate dependents of dead employees, the Association paid the amount of one-year's salary to the employee's family. [132]

The Alaska Packers Association also established a temporary orphanage for parentless children. In July of that summer, the APA steamer *Kodiak* transported twenty-eight native orphans from the Ugashik villages to Naknek and Dillingham where they received medical care. [132] Church records show that after 1919, the entire population of Agishik died out or moved away during the epidemic. Governor Riggs, in his annual report to the Secretary of Interior, expressed his frustration about the impact of the pandemic on Alaska, for those in high authority who should have helped were, he suggested, "all too much engrossed with the woes of Europe to be able to note outwards, seemingly protected by solemn treaty with Russia, dying by swarms in the dark of the northern nights." [134] By 1920, the population on the Ugashik River primarily consisted of newcomers, there to work in the now well-established fishing industry. [135]

Incorporating Aniakchak: 1914-1937

In 1914 a war that was waged thousands of mile away from Aniakchak caused the demand for canned salmon to increase significantly. [136] New markets had recently opened to fish packers when the United States Army and Navy purchased huge quantities of canned salmon

during World War I to feed troops fighting in the trenches of France. Even prisoners of war ate rations of canned fish. [137] Responding to the war effort, between 1914 and 1918, canners more than doubled the number of traps in Alaska from 240 to 552. In 1917, CRPA contributed to that number by driving the first trap in Aniakchak Bay. [138]

The trap was located at perhaps the most legally permissible site in the bay—approximately 2,000 feet southwest of the Aniakchak River mouth. [139] Aniakchak's rivers host primarily pink salmon with smaller runs of red, silver *(O. kisutch),* and chum salmon *(O. keta).* At the time, red salmon maintained the most significant commercial value, but by the 1920s, concerted efforts by the fishing industry opened markets for other species. In a letter to the superintendent of the Chignik plant, Bill Wootton, CRPA executive Fred Banker ordered his manager to strategically locate the Aniakchak trap so that it could catch an abundance of pink salmon:

> In any event, you are on the ground and use your own judgment. What we want is the fish. We want to get all the Pink and Chum salmon possible. Of course, naturally, we are out for the Reds, but we have to have a certain amount of Pinks in order to fill our orders for other grades, so anything you can do to getting a catch of Pinks we want you to do. [140]



View of CRPA cabin in Aniakchak Bay looking southwest, 1990. Frank Norris, National Park Service, Anchorage, Alaska.

In 1919, the CRPA moved the trap approximately one thousand feet southwest from its 1917 location. Together, the two traps blocked over half of the area surrounding the Aniakchak River mouth. One or both of the traps were renewed the following year, while catch figures show that the Aniakchak Bay traps were consistently successful. Each year through 1920, they caught over 48,000 fish of all species, and, in 1918, the total exceeded 235,000. To the delight of CRPA owners, pink salmon constituted the greatest single species captured, and, as may be expected considering their two-year life cycle, they predominated during two of the four seasons. During the other two seasons, reds and chums comprised a majority of the total salmon catch. [141]

Besides reflecting changes occurring in the industry itself, the establishment of fish traps in Aniakchak Bay brought even more outside attention to the Aniakchak region. The construction of traps created the first regular ship traffic along the Aniakchak coastline. As Norris suggests, "this traffic may have prodded the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey into an investigation of the area. [142] As late as 1922, government explorers recognized that the central peninsula remained largely uncharted and most seagoing boats avoided the area. [143] Interest in the area by the fishing industry resulted in new mapping efforts. The Coast and Geodetic Survey dispatched two ships into the area and from 1924 through 1926 they charted both bays. [144] By 1926, the *Coast Pilot* reported, "The channel between Kumlik Island and the mainland is apparently clear and is constantly used by the cannery tenders when running between Aniakchak Bay and Chignik." [145] Tenders arrived "every few days" in 1930, and within a few years, tenders such as the *Unga* and the *Semidi,* visited the trap sites every day. [146]



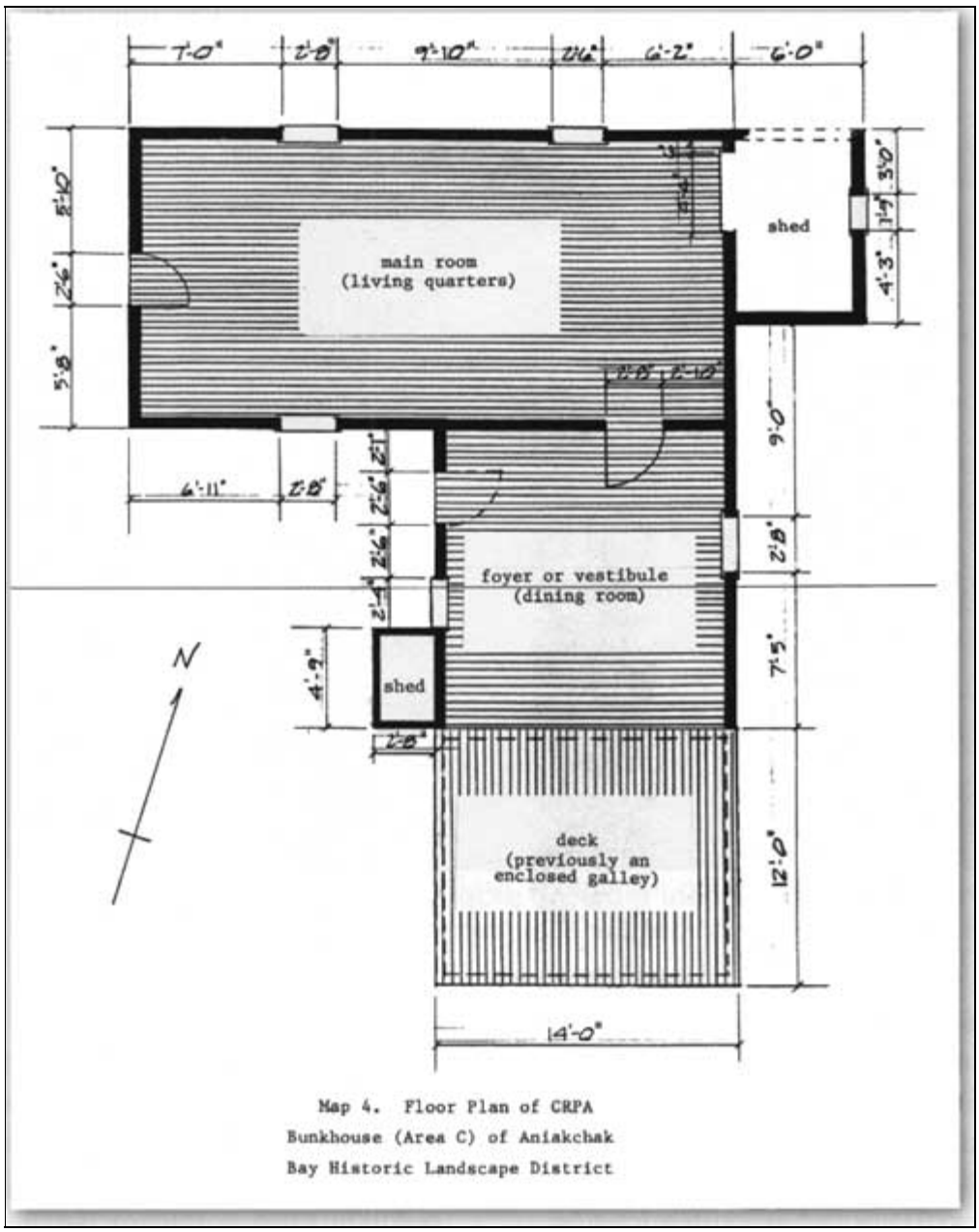
View of CRPA Cabin and adjacent machine shop and shed from the berm looking east northeast, 1990. Frank Norris, National Park Service, Anchorage, Alaska.

Additionally, the need to construct fish traps brought the first assortment of non-Natives to Aniakchak Bay since the Russian Period. The seasonal trap crews arrived at Aniakchak in May or early June. In the first years CRPA was fishing Aniakchak Bay, workers lived on a small bunk scow, which had been hauled onto an island known as Ark Island located near the Aniakchak River mouth. In the spring of 1924, CRPA workers erected a bunkhouse at the north end of Aniakchak Bay, which served as the center of operations in Aniakchak for many seasons. The bunkhouse was later taken over by APA and was used by local people long after trap fishing ended in Aniakchak. In fact, the discovery of a child's leather shoe tells archeologists a family called the bunkhouse home, as well. Today, the CRPA bunkhouse remains one of the few standing structures in the monument and is the largest building within a forty mile radius. [147]

Little is know about the men who lived in the bunkhouse. It is likely that they originated from the Pacific Northwest, specifically Oregon where the CRPA was headquartered. The men numbered between twelve and twenty men and were responsible for building the traps, maintaining them, guarding them from fish pirates, and unloading the collected fish into the

cannery tenders, aptly named the *Unga* and the *Semidi* [148] The men serviced the various traps with a five-ton gasoline-powered launch, which they moored at a dock on the sheltered west side of a small island in the bay known as Ark Island. Some days they would clear the traps of kelp and other debris, while on others they protected the traps from seals and sea lions hoping for an easy snack. The removing of fish, or brailing, from two to four traps kept the crew busy. As one former watchman recalled, "there is something to worry about every minute of the day." [149]

Due to intense over-fishing to fill government orders during World War I, the Alaskan salmon catch fell dramatically, and as a consequence, the number of territorial fish traps fell as well, from a high of 552 traps in 1918 to 180 traps three years later. The Aniakchak Bay fish traps that had been active from 1917 to 1920 were not renewed, and no known traps existed there for the next three years. Interest in fishing in Aniakchak Bay soon revived, but under a stronger regulatory structure.



Map 4. Floor Plan of CRPA Bunkhouse (Area C) of Aniakchak Bay Historic Landscape District

Floor plan of the CRPA Bunkhouse cabin. From the Aniakchak Bay Historic Landscape District Nomination, Frank Norris, National Park Service, Anchorage, Alaska.

The Reservation System

Fish packers had long been aware of the consequences of over-fishing, but until the 1920s they had successfully resisted all attempts by the federal government for stronger regulations. [150] The post-war fish bust hit the Alaska canners hard, and as a result, they agreed to join the government and the scientific community to find an answer to the problem once and for all. [151] Fearing that Congressional legislation and new fish hatcheries might take too long to help the declining salmon resources, Secretary of Commerce and overseer of the Bureau of Fisheries, Herbert Hoover, requested that President Warren Harding use his executive authority to create fishery reserves to temporarily conserve Alaska's salmon. [152] In 1922, the president established the Alaska Peninsula Fisheries Reservation, the first such reserves.

The Chignik District, including Aniakchak Bay, was one of five districts that made up the Alaska Peninsula Reservation. The reservation system prevented new packers from establishing canneries on the Alaska Peninsula, and prohibited established canners from catching salmon in one district and transporting the fish for canning in another. [153] Although Hoover created the reservation system with the best intentions, the organizing method was ultimately unfair, especially to the smaller, local interests, who maintained that the salmon fishery should be developed to encourage the settlement of Alaska by independent and self-supporting people. [154] To Alaska residents, traps were a costly form of gear that reached beyond their ordinary means. The reservation system did not allow Alaskan fishermen or independent companies equal access to either the fishery or the market. It essentially gave established canneries complete control over the supply of fish. On the other hand, the larger canneries such as APA and CRPA supported the reservation system because, as Norris points out, "they saw it as an avenue by which they could create a private monopoly—the so-called Fish Trust." [155]

Secretary Hoover soon recognized the inequalities of the system and turned to Congress. In June 1924, legislators passed a conservation bill called the White Act, which was designed to eliminate previous abuses. [156] The legislation gave the Secretary the power to regulate the fish catch, the types of gear allowed, and the length of fishing season. The Act repealed the reservation system, and established laws to protect the decline of salmon. But in the end, the White Act did nothing to actually prevent the decline of salmon. [157] As Cooley contends, "the welfare of people and not fish was the *raison d'etre* for a management program." [158]

Essentially, the Bureau of Fisheries supported the use of traps because, "they were stationary and could be inspected and regulated more easily...and were more desirable in the interests of the fish supply." [159] This support of fish traps, opposed to the more affordable mobile gear, caused resident fishermen and other Alaskans to increasingly resent the federal government, for they saw this support as a government alignment with the absentee capitalists—the Fish Trust. Alaskans' mistrust of the federal government led to nothing less than the battle for statehood and the eventual abolishment of fish traps as a means of fishing in Alaska. That mistrust remains a dominant, if misguided, attitude toward the federal government today. Like most settlers of the American west, Alaskan fishermen, and later Alaskan politicians, never tired of condemning the lawmakers in Washington D.C. [160]

At the time, it is easy to understand why residents became frustrated with the U.S. government. With the new conservation measures in place, ironically, Alaska's salmon industry began to actually build more traps and catch more fish. While Congressional leadership, fish biologists, and corporate salmon packers patted themselves on the back for passing the regulatory White Act, Alaska's salmon continued to decline. [161] This trend was reflected in the re-establishment of several new fish traps in Aniakchak Bay. The same year the White Act passed, CRPA drove the "Aniakchak" trap (later called the "Beach" trap) along

the western shore of the bay. The trap captured almost 150,000 fish that summer and slightly over 50,000 the following year. [162] It remained in operation until 1937.

Alutiit Move to the Background, American Politics and Culture Comes Forward: 1930s-1945

By the 1930s, the fishing industry began to show a decline, especially in the waters surrounding the Aniakchak landscape. As trap men struggled to catch the fish, the company they worked for struggled to keep ownership over their Aniakchak Bay traps. The Great Depression was hard on many of the salmon companies processing in Alaska, and in 1932, the Columbia River Packers Association succumbed. Even before the Stock Market crashed in 1929, CRPA had struggled economically and was forced under *de facto* management. In 1914, APA had purchased the CRPA cannery in Anchorage Bay. The consolidation left CRPA without a cannery, but the company maintained ownership of its Aniakchak trap sites. By 1932, the economic downturn had taken its toll, and CRPA, hard pressed for revenue, leased its traps to the Alaska Packers Association. On April 20, 1940, the Alaska Packers Association purchased the fish trap sites from CRPA outright, and continued to operate the traps until they closed them down in 1947. [163]

The Aniakchak Bay trap sites obtained by APA never saw the numbers that the contraptions produced in years immediately following the White Act. Beginning in 1930, one by one, the traps were removed. Some were closed for substandard catch numbers, but others closed due to governmental pressures to ration the number of trap sites. In 1935, territorial delegate Anthony Dimond submitted the first bill outlawing fish traps. For decades afterwards, a battle over the perceived power of absentee capital raged, and during that time, trap abolitionists won small victories. The result of the victories was a gradual decrease in the number of traps. As Norris suggests, "Considering that Columbia River Packers Association and the Alaska Packers Association had more productive trap sites in and around Chignik Lagoon, it is not surprising that the two companies gave up on Aniakchak Bay trap sites first." [164] Furthermore, fishermen strikes in the 1930s and World War II prevented fish trapping in Aniakchak Bay for most of those summers. Trap watchmen did eventually return, maintaining the traps during the summer of 1947. That August, they dismantled the "Beach" trap. The men stacked the pilings on the pile rack, and never returned. [165]

By 1950, the Aniakchak fishery had vanished, while the Ugashik and Chignik fisheries lingered, supported by the stronger fisheries of Bristol Bay and Kodiak. With runs dwindling to levels that could no longer support commercial canning operations, Alaskans continued to blame the decline on a greedy salmon industry that "desires to get everything they can out of Alaska and give absolutely nothing in return." [166] They also continued to blame the federal government, which they believed neglected to provide enough funds for sound science and strong enforcement of the Alaskan fisheries regulations. [167] Even though most Alaskans were fiercely against the device, canners still felt that traps represented the most important and productive type of gear used to catch salmon. By the 1950s, the issue over fish traps led to a fierce political battle between residents, the industry and the federal government. Almost immediately, the conflict dominated every other fishery-related issue in the Territory of Alaska. In 1954, Dr. Ernest Gruening, Alaska's ex-territorial governor, stated "No object in the daily life of Alaska has been so much in controversy and conflict from its first installation in the early days of the salmon history to the present." [168]

In his historical commentary, *Frigid Embrace: Politics, Economic and Environment in Alaska*, Haycox argues that over the decades, Alaska's non-Native community grew, as argonauts from across the United States came to the territory to strike it rich. With failure, some decided to stay, and when they did, they imported American political and legal systems, as well as the belief that the purpose of minerals, fish, flora, and fauna was to enrich

human independence and improve their material environment. [169] Viewing themselves as the embodiment of "rugged individualism," these American newcomers residing in Alaska resented their dependence on the canneries and the federal government. With increasing dependency, a common fear grew throughout the Territory that absentee capitalists were monopolizing Alaska's resources, while the federal government supported them. In the minds of Alaskans, the only way to establish civil equality was statehood. In examining the battle for statehood, it is important to remember that by providing a greater degree of self-governance, these new American settlers did not intend to preserve an exploited resource, but, instead, hoped to increase their slice of the economic pie.



Happy Abyo and Orin Seybert out fishing on the Ugashik River, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

Opponents of the fish trap advanced strong ecological arguments—so much so that even Alaskans who had never seen a trap branded canners as "fish killers." [170] But such arguments represented political rhetoric rather than environmentalism. Without doubt, economic reasons elicited the highest emotional responses to the trap issue. With salmon canners importing their own cannery crews from the Lower 48 and using traps to catch fish, the resident taxpayer felt that the salmon industry was putting local men and women out of work. As resident fishermen compared their empty fish holds with salmon-filled traps, they boiled with anger toward what they saw as absentee ownership of production and natural resources. They were equally angry with their federal landlord, who had broad resource management powers, but did nothing to prevent over-fishing.

Meanwhile, the Alaskan opposition, who had elevated their rhetoric to near hysterical levels, turned the trap issue into what economist George Rogers called "political currency." [171] Because most people believed that banning traps would create significant jobs and lead to population and economic growth in the territory, by the 1950s, the issue of fish traps moved from the rivers, bays and coastal areas into the political arena. Regardless of party affiliation, no Alaskan could support fish traps and expect to be elected to public office. The controversy was used as political capital, where clout was measured by "which politician was most strongly against fish traps and which one had done the most to bring about their demise." [172]

The canned salmon industry fought vigorously against statehood, fearing it would bring increased taxation and regulation. It had pinned great hope on developing hatcheries, but

unfortunately, artificial propagation did not work. [173] Although today's historians and economists argue that the federal government was not as neglectful of Alaska (nor were traps as damaging to the economy) as politicians boasted, [174] most would agree that Alaska's opposition to the hated fish trap provided the political fuel for the movement towards statehood and the transfer of fisheries management from the Department of Interior to the forty-ninth state.

When Alaska became a state on January 3, 1959, most canners supported an amendment to the statehood act "that the administration and management of fish and wildlife resources of Alaska should be retained by the federal government under the existing laws." The salmon industry and Alaskans alike were shocked when, on April 28, 1959, Secretary of the Interior Fred Seaton certified to Congress that Alaska was capable of managing its own resources, thus setting into motion the transfer of all fish and wildlife management from the federal to the state government. [175] The new managing agency, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (AD F&G), now determined where a fisherman could fish, when, and what type of gear he could use. The object for ADF&G biologists was to manage the fishery for maximum sustainable yields. From this point on, the mix of corporate and governmental institutions rather than rituals, rivers and the runs themselves controlled the pursuit of salmon.

* * *



Five posts are all that remains of the Alaska Packers Association cannery in Chignik Lagoon, 2004. Katherine Johnson Ringsmuth, Anchorage, Alaska.

Understandably, life in the Aniakchak area was changed drastically by economic, social, political, and especially, environmental change introduced by the American salmon canneries at the turn of the century. By the mid-1920s, a capitalist economic system in tandem with the introduction of deadly diseases, exerted a disintegrating influence on Native settlements scattered throughout the Aniakchak region and opened the door to American hegemony.

With a shortage in the labor supply due to World War II, some canneries opted to hire entire Native crews to process salmon. By the mid 1940s, Native peoples were fully engaged, either as fishermen or as cannery workers, in the commercial fishing industry, which had become the most significant economic activity on the Alaska Peninsula. According to a 1948 report in the industry's journal *Pacific Fisherman*, "the natives—mainly of Eskimo stock—are drawn from a large area, extending a considerable distance into the interior back of Bristol Bay and

along the Kuskokwim River." Accounting for this mobility was "modern air transportation" that made summer employment in the canneries available to Alaska Natives. [176] Indeed, the increased use of resident cannery workers after the war was in part due to the many modern airfields that were constructed throughout Alaska at the time. These airfields made it possible for Native cannery workers to be brought in easily and rapidly from previously isolated areas. [177]

As Alutiiq people, like other Alaska Native groups, moved from all parts of the Alaska Peninsula to work at salmon canneries during the summer, it appeared on the surface as though they had returned to a period characterized by mobility. But, their driving force was no longer seasonal change. Seasonality had been replaced with the constant need by individuals to make money. Villages near canneries like Chignik became economic and social centers, while others, like Kanatak, vanished. As Partnow points out, "this period of economic unrest saw a splintering not just of settlements, but of the Alaska Peninsula Alutiiq social structure itself." [178] Like the rest of American society, the Alutiiq family, rather than the village, became the primary economic unit. The sense of belonging to a larger group, which had evolved from pre-contact fish camps and was nurtured during the Russian days, had become overshadowed by modern American capitalism.

In many families, both parents, even children, worked for the cannery. But despite the comfort of kinship, Chignik resident, Christina Martin, explains that cannery work, like the shift to a market economy, was an alienating experience:

> I started working in the cannery maybe '36 or '37. I was fifteen. I was only fifteen. And when I first start to working too my dad went to the cannery and I went with him. And I was standing watching those other ladies working on the fish. And pretty soon this guy come, took me by my hand, and took me to the canning machine. And he showed me how to put those lids on the machine. And he walked away. [179]

An observer might point out that the capitalism that overtook the Alaska Peninsula was made possible by the salmon returning to the region's rivers and streams. But, in reality, it took a convergence of progressive technology, global cultural and historic events, and advancements in communication and transportation systems to drive the spread of capitalism on the peninsula. Had Frenchmen Nicholas Appert not invented a new method to preserve food in 1804, then canneries in Alaska would never have been able to extract salmon in such abundance. In that same vein, canneries would not have been able to send the highly perishable foodstuff to locales throughout America, Europe and Asia without effective food preservation techniques. For this type of large-scale exploitation of salmon to occur in places like Ugashik and Chignik, Scandinavian fishermen had to bring their fishing expertise; skilled carpenters, their knowledge of cannery construction; inventors, the cannery machines and equipment; and Henry Ford, the assembly line. Fuel had to be found, extracted and refined to provide energy to the canneries, and shipping routes had to be discovered and mapped to get the product to global markets. Finally, a huge population of consumers had to want to buy the inexpensive sources of protein from their local markets. Because all these events came together in the first few decades of the twentieth century, by World War II, Alaska's salmon no longer was the driving force on the Alaska Peninsula, but claimed an ascendant position, for nature no longer dictated the cultural norms of distant consumers.

Not surprisingly, then, the canned-salmon industry's relation to the surrounding environment was much different from that of the communal effort at fish camp. The cannery's sole purpose was for a hired workforce of fishermen or trap men to catch more fish than the cannery down river and to extract one of five species of salmon—the sockeye salmon—from the river. The salmon, which had been food for plants, bears, birds, fish, and people for 5,000 years, was at

times excessively wasted by the canners, and never consumed by those who caught them. Although some hardworking and courageous commercial fishermen, especially those from Scandinavia, conducted a kind of first salmon ritual that "thanked" the fish for returning, for the most part, the salmon's value was in its price paid per fish, not in its assurance that fishermen and their families might survive a harsh winter. To commercial fishers and canners, nature became something to catch, something to can, something to conquer.

The Alutiiq people, without much choice, became incorporated into this system of American capitalism. Native fishermen sold their fish to the canneries. Families, accordingly, lived near them. Many people were employed by the canneries and incurred insurmountable credit debt as a result of purchasing items like boat motors and soda pop at their cannery store. Some, especially the elders, died from diseases brought to the area by cannery ships. As these patterns and processes were integrated into traditional, social and economic systems, local residents, like the sockeye salmon Hubbard watched being brailed from the canner's fish trap, had become ensnared in the web of American culture.

But as destructive as the canneries were to the Alutiiq people and their traditional ways, as with the volcanic eruption of Aniakchak 3,500 years ago, or the Russian invasion a century before, neither the people nor their Alutiiq identity completely disappeared with the introduction of industrialized capitalism. They adapted to change, and in the end, like the Aniakchak landscape itself, the Alutiiq people recovered, and continued on. Practices subscribed to by the older Alutiiq-Russian ways made room for the culturally diverse, market driven, and non-Orthodox newcomers. Though many of these newcomers came only seasonally, some stayed. In fact, it was this relatively small group of men, seeking new opportunities on the central Alaska Peninsula, who helped create Aniakchak's contemporary cultural landscape—a mixture of Alutiiq, Russian, and Scandinavian heritage. As cannery worker, Gerald A. Estep, observed in 1938:

> When, at last, the cargo-passenger vessels laden with cased salmon and with those responsible for the catch headed from Chignik Bay in late September, there were hundreds of men on the decks to catch a final view of the beauty of the country. As well, there were several of those who had come to Chignik in the spring who remained on the dock when the ships pulled out. And beside each of them, the girl who was to help him make his permanent home in Alaska. [180]

NOTES

[1]Hubbard, *Cradle of the Storms,* 73.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Amos Burg, "The Packers Great Star Fleet" Alaska Fish tales and Game Trails summer (1982): 30-32.; Donald L. Guimary and Jack K. Masson, "Getting there was...er, half the fun" *Alaska Journal* (1981): 102-106.

[4]Alan Boraas, "Turning Point: Photo Exhibit illustrates how canneries changed the Dena'ina" *Peninsula Clarion,* November 21, 1996, 11.

[5]Ernest Gruening *State of Alaska* (New York: Random House, 1954), 246.

[6]Ibid 245.

[7]Partnow, 207.

[8]37 Stat. 512, Sec. 3

[9]J.C. Beaglehole III ed., *The Journals of Captain James Cook, Part I* (Halduyt Society, 1968), 397.

[10]Ralph W. Andrews and A.K. Larssen, *Fish and Ships: This was Fishing From the Columbia to Bristol Bay* (New York: Bonanza Book, 1959), 106.

[11]John M. Wright, Judith Morris, and Robert Schroeder, "Bristol Bay Regional Subsistence Profile," Technical Papers No. 114, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence (July, 1985) 15-16.

[12]Joseph E. Taylor III, *Making Salmon: An Environmental History of the Northwest Fisheries Crisis* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 6.

[13]Bruce Brown, *Mountain in the Clouds: A Search for Wild Salmon* (New York: Collier Books, 1990), 16.

[14]For a generalized description of the salmon life cycle see National Research Council's *Upstream: Salmon and Society in the Pacific Northwest* (Washington DC: National Academy Press, 1996), 30-31.

[15]Tom Jay, Brad Matsen, and Natalie Fobes, *Reaching Home: Pacific Salmon Pacific People* (Seattle: Alaska Northwest Books, 1994), 18.

[16]Troy Hamon, Scott A. Pavey, Joe L. Miller, and Jennifer L. Nielsen, "Aniakchak Sockeye Salmon Investigation," in *Alaska Park Science*, Volume 3, Issue 2 (2005) 35-40.; B.P. Finney, Eaves Gregory, M.S. Douglas, J.P. Smol, "Fisheries Productivity in the Northeastern Pacific Ocean Over the Past 2,2000 years,"*Nature* 416,6882 (2002 Apr 18): 729-33.; G. V. Hilderbrand, Thomas A. Hanley, Charles T. Robbins, C. C. Schwartz, "Role of brown bears (Ursus arctos) in the flow of marine nitrogen into a terrestrial ecosystem" *Oecologia* Volume 121, Number 4 (December 1999): 546-550.

[17]Bruce P. Finney, Irene Gregory Eaves, Jon Sweerman, Marianne S.V. Douglas, John P. Smol, "Impacts of Climatic Change and Fishing on Pacific Salmon Abundance Over the Past 300 Years" *Science* Vol. 290 October 27 (2000) 795-799.

[18]Taylor, 6.

[19]Jay, et al., 18.

[20]Jay, 21.

[21]Crowell, et al, 176.

[22]Charles Cutting, *A History of Fish Processing from Ancient to Modern Times* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 1.

[23]Lisa Frink, "Fish Tales: Women and Decision Making in Western Alaska" in *Many Faces of Gender* ed. by Lisa Frink, Rita Shepard, and Gregory Reinhardt (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2002), 94.

[24]Ibid., 101.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Jay, et al., 25.

[27]Crowell, et. al, 176.

[28]For discussion on the myth of the "noble Indian" see Krech III, 17-29.

[29]For a collection of interviews of Alutiiq elders conducted over two decades see *From Neqa to Tepa: A Database of the Tradition Knowledge about the Fish of Bristol Bay and the Northern Alaska Peninsula,* Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence (2003): O88-OEL-112302, 088-OZL-112302.

[30]Finney, et al., 796.

[31]William Robbins, "The World of Columbia River Salmon: Nature, Culture, and the Great River of the West" in *The Northwest Salmon Crisis: A Documentary History,* ed. Joseph Cone and Sandy Ridlington (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1996), 2-21; Courtland L. Smith, "Evolution of the Pacific Canned Salmon Fishery" In *The Fishing Culture of the World: Studies in Ethnology, Cultural Ecology and Folklore,* ed. Bela Gunda (Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1984), 951-965.

[32]Richard Cooley, *Politics and Conservation: The Decline of the Alaska Salmon* (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1963), 26.

[33]Because of Alaska's remote location and extreme environment Terrence Cole argues in the introduction to Morgan Sherwood's *Exploration of Alaska, 1865-1900* (Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Press, 1992), that federal management of Alaska's resources in 1890 was as difficult as NASA attempting to build a space program in the 19608.

[34]Cooley, 27.

[35]Congress passed an Act making it unlawful to erect dams, barricades, or other obstruction in any of the rivers of Alaska in 1889, Cooley, 73.

[36]Cooley, 27. Historian Arthur F. McEvoy makes a similar argument in his landmark study of the California fisheries in *The Fishermans Problem: Ecology and Law in the California Fisheries, 1850-1980* (Cambridge University Press, 1986); as does Taylor in *Making Salmon.* Other studies about the impact of commercial fishing include: Dianne Newell's *The Development of the Pacific Salmon-Canning Industry: A Grown Man's ame* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989); Geoff Meggs's *Salmon: The Decline of the British Columbia Fishery* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991); and Joseph Cone's *A Common Fate: Endangered Salmon and the People of the Pacific Northwest* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1995).

[37]Cooley, 71.

[38]Stephen Haycox, *Alaska: an American Colony* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 241.

[39]Ibid., 241.

[40]H.C. Scudder, "The Alaska Salmon Trap: Its Evolution, Conflicts, and Consequences," Alaska State Library, Number 1 (1970), 1-2.; James Vanstone, *Eskimos of the Nushagak River an Ethnographic History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964), 67.

[41]Hinckley, 33.

[42]Ivan Petroff, in Jefferson Moser, "Arctic Salmon Investigations in 1900 and 1901," Bulletin of the US Fish Commission vol. 21 (Washington D.C: GPO, 1902), 180.

[43]Moser, 180.

[44]Moser, 215.

[45]Apparently, a resident from the Native village commonly piloted vessels through the channel, hence the name Pilot Station, or the current name, Pilot Point, Moser, 214-215.

[46]Moser, 217.

[47]Petroff, in Moser, 180.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Morseth, 94.; Moser, 214.

[50]Michael Sullivan and Phyllis DeMuth, *A Guide to the Alaska Packers Association Records, 1891-1970 in the Alaska Historical Library* (Juneau: Alaska Department of Education, Division of State Libraries and Museums, 1983), 4.

[51]Lewis MacDonald, *Chronological History of Salmon Canneries in Western Alaska* (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Annual Reports, 1951), 58.

[52]Berg, 31.

[53]Moser, 216.

[54]Ibid., 217. MacDonald, 59.

[55]"Letter to Bristol Bay Salmon Packers From A.K. Tichenor, Acting APA Secretary to discuss meeting held on Nov 17, 1925" Season 1926, APA Corporate records. Center of Pacific Northwest Studies, Bellingham, WA. A copy is also located in author's personal collection; Moser, 216.

[56]MacDonald, 59.

[57]Moser, 165.

[58]Lewis MacDonald, *History of Central Alaska Canneries* (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Annual Report, 1951), 73.

Moser, 180, 216.

[60]Andrews and Larssen, 101.

[61]Bruce Weilepp, "Sailing Gillnets Boats of the Columbia River" *National Fisherman* (April, 1991): 44.

[62]Andrews and Larssen, 103.

[63]Ibid., 101.

[64]Moser, 180-183.

[65]Dan Strickland, "Egegik!" *Alaska Magazine* Vol. 62 (May-June, 1996): 37.

[66]Frank Norris, "Aniakchak Bay Historic Landscape District," National Register Nomination, (National Park Service, 1997), 6.

[67]A good description of the way fish traps work can be found in George W. Rogers, *Alaska in Transition: The Southeast Region* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1960), 4-15.

[68]Moser, 190.

[69]Ibid., 216.

[70]According to a study of technological change in the canning industry by Patrick W. O'Bannon, APA's Ugashik Cannery would have employed the most current technological innovation. Patrick W. O'Bannon, "Technological Change in the Pacific Coast Canned Salmon Industry, 1900-1925: A Case Study" *Agricultural History 56,* no. 1 (1982): 151-166.

[71]Duncan A. Stacey, *Sockeye & Tinplate: Technological Change in the Fraser River Canning Industry, 1871-1912,* Heritage Record No. 15, (British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1982), 1.

[72]Ibid., 7.

[73]Moser, 188.

[74]Ibid.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Ibid.

[77]Taylor, 45.

[78]M. Patricia Marchak, "What Happens When Common Property Becomes Uncommon," *BC Studies* (winter 1988-89), 12.

[79]McEvoy, 10.

Marchak, 14; For first-hand accounts of competition in the commercial fishery and its impacts, see R.D. Hume's *Salmon of the Pacific Coast* (San Francisco, 1893); D. Newell's *Development of the Pacific Salmon-Canning Industry;* and Roger T. Tetlow and Graham J. Barbey's *Barbey: The Story of a Pioneer Columbia River Salmon Packer* (Portland: Binford & Mort Publishing, 1990).

[81]Norris, "Historic Landscape District," 6.

[82]Moser, 218.

[83]Howard Kutchin, *Report on the Inspection of the Salmon Fisheries.* Department of Commerce and Labor, Bulletin 618 (Washington: GPO, 1906).

[84]MacDonald, 74.

[85]Norris, "Historic Landscape District," 7.

[86]MacDonald, 74-75.

[87]"Chignik Fishing Contract 1924-1930." Columbia River Packers Association Records, 85.55.439, Columbia River Maritime Museum, Astoria, OR.

[88]Norris, "Historic Landscape District," 8-7.

[89]Ibid., 8, 10.

[90]Vanstone, 63.

[91]Tuten, 25, Partnow also makes the same claim.

[92]Moser, 178-179.

[93]Moser, 216.

[94]Morseth, 96.

[95]Kutchin, 48.

[96]Moser, 186.

[97]Vanstone, 63.

[98]Haycox, *Alaska Colony,* xiv.

[99]Haycox, *Frigid Embrace,* 29.

[100]John N. Cobb, *Salmon Fisheries of the Pacific Coast,* Bureau of Fisheries Document 751 (Washington D.C., 1911), 68.

[101]Pat Conover, "Salmon Canning Industry: the Job that calls for a Thick Skin, Steady Nerves, and a Strong Back" *Alaska Life* (March, 1947): 27.

[102]Partnow, 136-137.

[103]Ibid., 207.

[104]For more information on Asian American labor history see Chris Friday's*Organizing Asian American Labor* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

[105]Alicja Muszynski, *Cheap Wage Labour: Race and Gender in Fisheries of British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 20.

[106]"Inside Facts about Saving Raw Material and Reducing Labor Costs," *Pacific Fisherman* (November, 1924): 23.

[107]Friday, *Organizing Asian,* 87.

[108]Ibid., 88.

[109]Huge W. McKirvill, *The Salmon People* (Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1967), 57-58.

[110]Muszynski, 12.; For other studies on race and gender relations in canneries, see Meggs, *Salmon: The Decline of the British Columbia Fishery* and Viki Ruiz's *Cannery Women Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1987); Friday, *Organizing Asian American Labor* (1994).

[111]Ibid., 20.

[112]Morseth, 141.

[113]V. Modestov, "Report to Nushagak Parish, 1897" Alaska Russian Church Archives R145/f120. Translations by Kathy Arndt located in ANIA Files 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[114]August Pedersen, interview by Lisa Scarbrough, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, in Partnow, 210.

[115]"Letter to Bristol Bay Salmon Canners: Purchasing Fish, Bristol Bay Season 1930, anonymous, San Francisco, California, November 26, 1929." Alaska Packers Association Collection, Center of Pacific Northwest Studies, Bellingham, WA. A copy is located at in author's personal collection.

[116]"Note: re: Fishing by "Natives" in Letter to Bristol Bay salmon packers from A.K. Tichenor, acting secretary Alaska Packers Association, San Francisco, November 17, 1925." APA Collection, Center of Pacific Northwest History, Bellingham, WA.

[117]"Letter to Bristol Bay Salmon Canners: Purchasing Fish, Bristol Bay Season 1930, author anonymous (probably A.K. Tichenor, San Francisco, California, November 26, 1929." APA Collection. Center of Pacific Northwest Studies, Bellingham, WA. A copy is located in author's personal collection.

[118]Kedrovskii, "Report to Belkovski parish from Vvedenski, June 26, 1909" Alaska Russian

Church Archives, R134/f251. Translations by Kathy Arndt located in ANIA File 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder, 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[119]Dr. Alan Boraas, personal communication.

[120]Ibid., 88.

[121]Goforth, 9 and 39.

[122]V. Kedrovskii, "Report to Belkovski from Vvedenski, June 25, 1910" Alaska Russian Church Archives R134/284. Translations by Kathy Arndt located in ANIA file 2089/008.01-01, Box 2, Folder 04, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[123]Ronald L. Lautaret, "Alaska's Greatest Disaster: The 1918 Spanish Influenza Epidemic" *The Alaska Journal* (Vol. 16, 1986): 238-243.

[124]Alfred Crosby, *America's Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 241.

[125]Ibid., 241.

[126]Ibid., 241-243 and 256.

[127]J.F. Heinbockel, Superintendent and Frederick B. Spencer, Medical Officer, "Report on 1919 Influenza Epidemic, Alaska Packers Association, Naknek Station, 5," (Juneau: Alaska Historical Library, 1919), 5.

[128]Friday, 90.

[129]Heinbockel, 3-4.

[130]Morseth, 76.

[131]"Service: The True Measurement of Any Institution Lies in the Service it Renders," (Published by the Alaska Packers Association, circa 1919), 5-6.

[132]Service, 7.

[133]Heinbockel, 9.

[134]Report of Department of Interior, 1919, vol. 2, 409; in Crosby, 257.

[135]Morseth, 75.

[136]Homer E. Gregory and Kathleen Barnes, "North Pacific Fisheries: with Special Reference to Alaska Salmon," Studies of the Pacific No. 3, American Council Institute of Pacific Relations, (1939): 99-101.

[137]"The Official Story of Canned Salmon in the Army," *Pacific Fisherman Yearbook,* (1919): 101-104.

138

Norris, "Historic Landscape District," 10.

[139]Ibid. 10.

[140]"Letter to Mr. W. B. Wooton, from Fred Banker, April 27, 1927," CRPA Records 85.55.444.

[141]Norris, "Historic Landscape District," 11.

[142]Ibid., 418.

[143]Smith and Baker, 168.

[144]US Coast and Geodetic Survey, *Annual Report* (Washington GPO for 1924) 53, 78; (1925) 58, 59, 74; (1926) 39, 55, Map 14.

[145]US Coast and Geodetic Survey, *US Coast Pilot, Alaska, Part II: Yakutat Bay to the Arctic Ocean, second edition* (Washington: GPO, 1926), 172.

[146]Norris, *Isolated Paradise*, 418.

[147]VanderHoek and Myron, 26.

[148]Ibid.

[149]Stan Lilian, "Fish-Trap Patrol," *Alaska Sportsman*, 6 (March 1940), 14.

[150]Norris, "Historic Landscape District," 12; several historians have looks at the history of conservation in the commercial fishing Industry. Both Taylor and McEvoy examine the issue in terms of the relationship between economy, ecology, and culture. Likewise, economists James A. Crutchfield and Giulio Potencorvo, in their study of the Pacific Salmon fisheries describe such conservation measures as "irrational." Crutchfield and Pontecorvo, "The Pacific Salmon Fisheries: A Study of Irrational Conservation," in *Interpreting Alaska's history: An Anthology* ed. Mary Childer Mangusso and Stephen W. Haycox (Anchorage: Alaska Pacific University Press, 1989).

[151]For more information on Alaska's fishing politics see Richard Cooley's *Politics and Conservation: The Decline of the Alaska Salmon* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963).

[152]Norris, "Historic Landscape District," 13, Cooley, 111-117 and 109.

[153]Norris, 66.

[154]Cooley, 97.

[155]Norris, 13.

[156]Cooley, 119.

[157]Cooley, 181.; Arthur McEvoy makes a similar argument in that the fisherman's problem of declining fish runs is as much a bureaucratic problem as it is an ecological problem, 14.

[158]This is the crux of Cooley argument in *Politics and Conservation.*

[159]U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Fisheries, Alaska Fisheries and Fur Seal Industries, 1913 (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1914), 45.

[160]Hinckley, 49.

[161]Cooley, 181; Crutchfield and Pontecorvo, 334.

[162]Norris, "Historic Landscape District," 14.

[163]Norris, *Isolated Paradise*, 417.

[164]Norris, "Aniakchak Bay Historic Landscape District," 18.

[165]VanderHoek, and Myron, 26-27.

[166]Delegate Wickersham's response during Congressional hearing in 1916. In Gruening's *State of Alaska*, 198.

[167]Ernest Gruening advanced the argument that the federal government had neglected Alaska during its territorial days in his monograph, *The State of Alaska,* published in 1954.

[168]Ernest Gruening, 169.

[169]Haycox, 30.

[170]Rogers, 13.

[171]Ibid, 15.

[172]Ibid, 4-5.

[173]For a history of the environmental impact of artificial propagation, see Taylor's, *Making Salmon.*

[174]Academics such as Steve Colt, Morgan Sherwood and Terrence Cole have made recent arguments against Gruening's Neglect Thesis.

[175]Rogers, 15.

[176]"Libby Cannery Uses All-Native Crew" *Pacific Fisherman,* January 1948, 51.

[177]Vanstone, 80.

[178]Partnow, 173.

[179]Christina Martin, in Partnow, 238

[180]Gerald A. Estep, "Chignik" *The Alaska Sportsman,* September, 1938, 20.

<<< Previous <<< Contents>>> Next >>>

hrs/chap6.htm
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ANIAKCHAK

Beyond the Moon Crater Myth
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape
A Historic Resource Study for Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

EARLY AMERICAN PERIOD (1867-1930)

CHAPTER SEVEN
The Knights of Woeful Countenance:
Fox Farmers, Local Trappers, and Clam Canners

> *Displaced from their places of birth, cheated in the states, unemployed hungry, thirsty, these knights of woeful countenance found and up to now find a warm and hospitable corner in cold Alaska; having set aside all sorts of dreams about family life, they unexpectedly find a warm family hearth, by marrying local creoles or Aleuts—and start with their progeny a new generation of Orthodox creoles while they themselves remain heterodox: Lutheran, Episcopal, Catholic, and other erring Christians.*
>
> from the *American Orthodox Messenger,* 1898

When Father Hubbard and his crew finally made it to Aniakchak in 1930, they encountered a mix of Alutiiq, Russians, and Euroamericans living together on the outskirts of the volcanic region. According to his assistant, Dick Douglas, it was the Euroamericans with whom the explorers identified. "The only other people who ever go near the mountain," observed Douglas, "are the few hardy men who make their living trapping for furs in winter, and when summer comes, go out in their fishing boats to net salmon in the Bering Sea." [1] These so-called "hardy men" were the same group the Russian Orthodox priest, Father Kedrovskii, described in 1898 as being displaced from their places of birth, cheated in the states, and unemployed. Because they had endured great hardships for most of their lives, the priest referred to these men as "the Knights of Woeful Countenance."

According to Russian Orthodox Church records, men with surnames such as Anderson, Johnson, Brandel and Erikson represented some of the many non-Orthodox males living in the Chignik Lagoon/Nikolaevskoe area between 1899 and 1914. [2] These Knights of Woeful Countenance were intimately linked to the experience of many nineteenth century immigrant Americans. In the years before 1899, if most Americans even thought of Alaska, they hardly considered the territorial acquisition a "last frontier," but rather, they saw it as nothing more than a frozen wasteland, or the popularized "ice box." During the decades marked by the Gilded Age, from approximately 1870 to 1900, interest in the wilderness frontier as a source of opportunity had diminished and was replaced with a heightened interest in technological frontiers. For many working class Americans, technological progress and rapid industrialization promised a better life. By the booming years of the early 1880s, as historian Morgan Sherwood put it, "the old dream that Alaska's 'free land' would serve the function of the Old West, in a Turnerian sense, all but vanished." [3]

As Americans entered the last decade of the nineteen century, however, the promise of a

good life began to falter. For years, political corruption controlled policy at all levels of government. Corporate industrialization and mechanization had begun to alienate workers. Those workers who unionized pushed numerous ethnic groups even further onto the margins of mainstream society. And, most significantly, economic depression, followed by the stock market panic of 1893, caused high unemployment and widespread misery throughout the nation.

By the late-1890s, the cold and lifeless image of Alaska had changed dramatically, especially after the advent of the enormously famous 1897 Klondike gold strike, which presented new opportunity for down-on-their-luck Americans. As stories of mother-lode finds filtered down into the Lower 48, writers of the time quickly began to link the Far North to the nation's frontier saga. Suddenly, as cultural studies scholar Susan Kollin notes, "Alaska was positioned to encode the nation's future, serving to reopen the western American frontier that [Frederick Jackson] Turner closed in the 1890s." [4] Inspired by stories spawned by gold panners, Alaska was thrust into its most potent role—it promised to provide a nation plagued by economic despair with opportunities for renewal.

Reflecting this new interest in the Far North, between the late-1890s and the 1930s, the Aniakchak region saw an increase of American newcomers, especially those with roots in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland, who sought a chance to begin anew. Unlike the newcomers who came to the Aniakchak region in short seasonal spurts to work for the canneries, these newcomers tended to make the Alaska Peninsula their home. They married local Alutiiq women and raised their children near cannery towns. In doing so, they founded families that today make up most of the populations of Chignik Bay and Chignik Lagoon. [5]



Small boat used by Chignik residents to access the Aniakchak coastline and nearby islands, ca. 1920s. Photograph courtesy of Alec (Teetum) Pedersen, Chignik Lagoon, Alaska.

The new "Scandinavian-Aleut" families, as they came to be called, settled into a lifestyle that Partnow describes as a "mixture of Alutiiq, Russian, and American practice." [6] The Knights of Woeful Countenance respected communal obligations to the village regarding shared subsistence resources, and as a result, Alutiiq villagers welcomed them into village life. Raised within the mindset of a Protestant work ethic, many of the Scandinavian-

Americans harbored strong feelings against lavish displays of wealth and, therefore, acculturated nicely into an inclusive and intense village social structure. [7] From their Alutiiq relatives, these Euroamericans learned the language, the most efficient ways to dress, and how to hunt for Aniakchak's numerous fur-bearing mammals. Chignik Lagoon elder, Julius Anderson, recalls how his Danish grandfather introduced aspects of his Scandinavian heritage to the village:

> You know, my grandpa used to have a sod house at the lagoon. They used fish traps way back then, when he first came. He was Danish. He came over on the *Star of Alaska.* ...I think a lot of the great grandfathers from around this area came from the old country. They introduced a lot of the Scandinavian ways of preserving fish, smoking it, salting it, rather than just buying it. Like lutefisk, my grandpa used to make lutefisk. He always did a lot of salted salmon, herring. [8]

Over time, however, the village's position as the basic economic unit began to slip as people moved from place to place looking for wage-paying jobs. By the first decade of the century, the single Scandinavian-Aleut family was actively engaged in occupations such as fox farming, trapping, clamming, and commercial fishing. Though rooted in Alutiiq economic lifeways, these activities were now occupations that had been incorporated into the American market system. As Partnow observes, the new economic reality had a large impact on social organization, for suddenly people's "lives revolved around economic pursuits especially suited to the nuclear family." [9]



Families on the central Alaska Peninsula reflected a blending at cultures. Tootsie Griechen, Gust Greichen (with pointed hat), and Bill Brown (flat hat), Alice and Aleck Griechen (babies on Tootsie's lap). The four others are unidentified, ca. 1920s. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

By the turn of the century, families were crisscrossing the peninsula to work at canneries in Chignik and Egegik in the summer. In the winter months, those same families would live solitary lives running trap lines. Many even lived on isolated islands off the coast of Aniakchak, managing fox farms year round. Though economic constraints forced many families to live independently, at some time during the year, many families returned to the village, re-entering a social community that was based on a combination of pre-contact and Russian-era practice. But, as the need for steady income increased, families moved farther

away from the village for longer periods of time and shared less and less with their Alutiiq cousins. Less sharing allowed some families to accumulate a degree of wealth. With the accrual of capital, a new socioeconomic class emerged in the Aniakchak region.

Thus, by 1917, when the Columbia River Packers Association moved into Aniakchak Bay, these men and their families were actively using the area on a seasonal basis. Though it was the fishing industry that originally attracted them, many Euroamericans were able to remain permanently in the region based on fox farming, fur trapping, and, to a much lesser degree, clam canning activities. These pursuits became important ways of life and a means of income.

Fox Farming

In 1930, while heading down the Alaska Peninsula en route to Chignik, Dick Douglas found it strange that the steamship on which he was sailing had stopped so late in the evening. As a faint light lay over the water, the ship dropped anchor in the lee of a little island and blew her whistle. Before the echo of the whistle died away, Douglas heard the creak of oars and then spotted the dark outline of a dory moving gracefully out to meet the boat. As the young explorer watched the single rower make his way across the bay, he heard foxes yapping somewhere on the island. In a few minutes the dory docked at the side of the ship. A Native boy who had boarded the ship at Seward slid down a rope into the dory, and without a word took the oars from the much older rower. Responding to Douglas's confusion, the first mate standing along side him at the rail, explained "the old fellow raises foxes on the island. The boy there, his son, has been in school at Seward all winter." [10] Although Douglas looked forward to exploring the primitive world of Aniakchak with Father Hubbard, he, nevertheless, was observing a people fully engaged with the modern world.

* * *



Tootsie Griechen, Sassa Blandov, Alice Greichen, and Aleck Greichen, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

In its last gasp to remain active in the fur trade, the Alaska Commercial Company initiated a new type of commercial enterprise—fox farming—which renewed market interest in fox fur. The first recorded introduction of foxes onto Alaska islands was made by a private entrepreneur on Popof Island in the Shumagin Islands in about 1880. One year later, the Alaska Commercial Company released Arctic foxes from the Pribilof Islands in the Semidi Islands, located just off the coast of Aniakchak Bay. [11] It is well known that both Alaska Natives and Russians introduced foxes to numerous islands in the region. Although it is unclear how these early ventures impacted island ecosystems, Steve Ebbert, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologist, notes "certainly the Aleutian Canada goose nested on many of these

islands, and to this day only nest on one Island (Kiiktagik) in the Semidi group." [12] This circumstantial evidence, Ebbert points out, is an example of a permanent change that could have occurred because of earlier, unrecorded stocking of fox on coastal islands.

The Semidi Islands seemed the perfect location for foxes, for at that time the fur trading company was still sending small parties of Natives from Sutkhum to the offshore islands to hunt seal and seal lions during the summer months. After removing the furs from their catch, hunters simply left the carcasses behind for the foxes to eat. [13] The system proved profitable, and as a result, the Alaska Commercial Company organized the Semidi Propagating Company in 1885. [14] This was the first successful fox farming operation in the region, and by 1900, the islands supported about 1,000 foxes. [15]



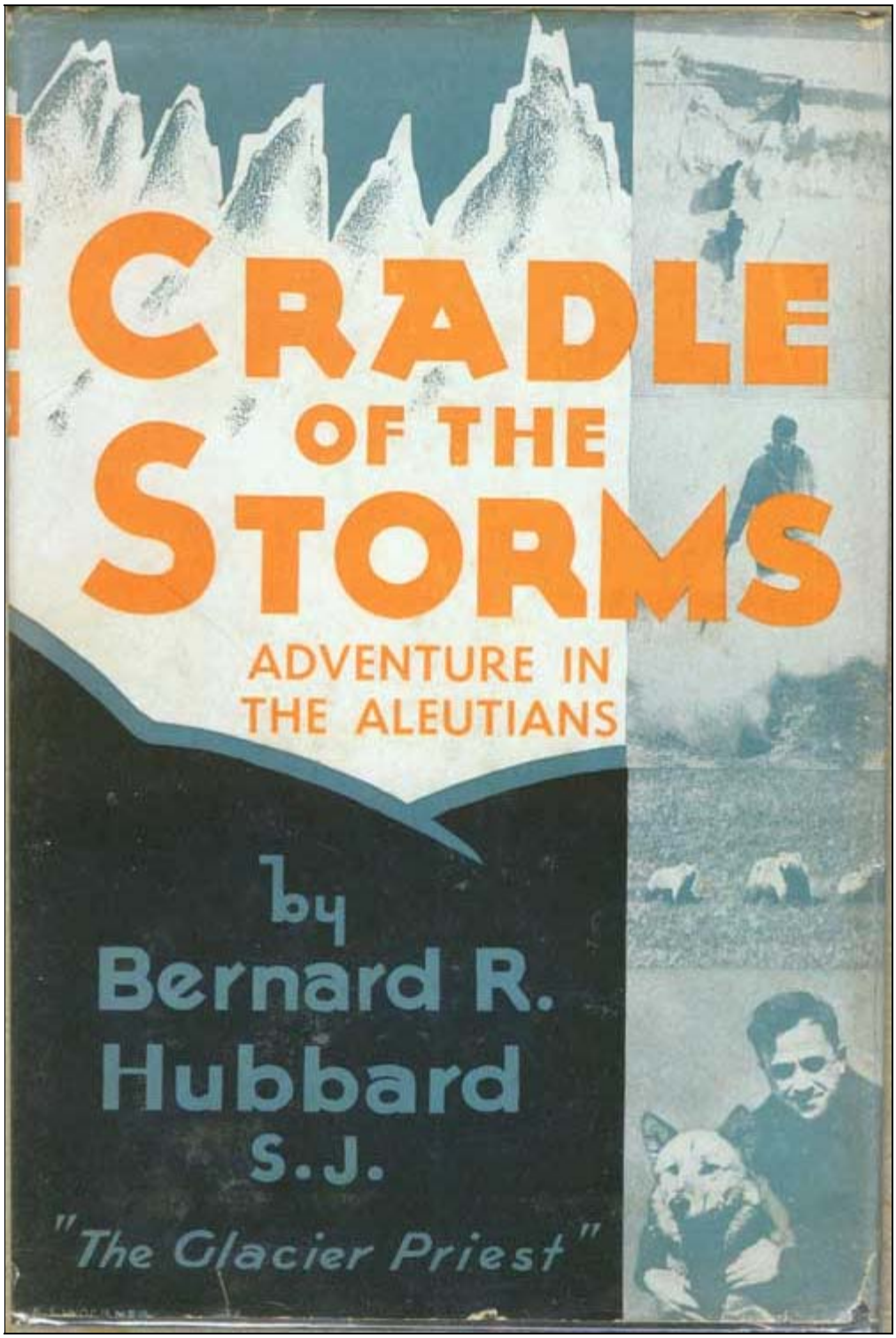
Chignik Lagoon elder, Julius Anderson. Anderson is a son of the "knights of woeful countenance"—his mother was from Wrangell Bay near Kanatak and his father was from Norway. 2004 Photograph courtesy of Katherine Johnson Ringsmuth, Anchorage, Alaska.

By the turn of the century, fox farming had grown rapidly, not only in southwest Alaska, but throughout the entire territory. With the increasing need to protect the dwindling fur seals and sea otters, President Taft signed an executive order in March 1913, which created the Aleutian Islands Reservation. The purpose of the reserve maintained paradoxical goals, for it was established to preserve breeding grounds for native birds *and* for the propagation of fur-bearing animals. With encouragement from the federal government, fox farming quickly escalated as an alternative commodity for the insatiable international fur market. Between 1890 and 1914, the Semidi Propagation Company alone harvested 5,100 Arctic foxes mainly in the Semidi Islands and the Kodiak archipelago. [16]

As with the pelagic fur hunters, regional fox farmers profited from growing fashion trends spreading throughout Europe and the United States. In the decade known today as the "Roaring Twenties," fashion trends especially for women were glamorous and sophisticated. To attend the theater or a trendy nightclub, women accented their silk dresses with draped furs, used furs as fringe for the popular wrapover coats, or if very wealthy, had entire outerwear made from the fox fur. Because furriers increased demand on both sides of the Atlantic, by 1925, a prime breeding pair could sell as high as $34,000. That same year industry experts valued 391 fox farms, with over 36,000 foxes, at $6 million. In a few noted cases, individual pelts of silver foxes sold for $2,800 in London. [17] In a fur trader's industry magazine published in the 1920s, reviewer Harriet Rossiter acknowledged that Alaska's fur farms were operated by the "keenest business men in the territory," but it was the

female consumer who made Alaska's fur industry a successful business:

> The feminine portion of Uncle Sam's big family has already shown an encouraging preference for blue fox skins, perhaps because their genuineness is guaranteed by their color, which no dye can reproduce. Or perhaps they realize how the fine, silky fur and beautiful soft color enhances their charms. [18]



Father Hubbard published three books that depicted his adventures in Alaska. In, *Cradle of the Storms: Adventure in the Aleutians*, the Glacier Priest includes chapters of his adventures in Aniakchak, specifically chapter one, "Flying the Lide of Hades," which described his flight into the erupting caldera in 1931. Published by Dodd, Mead & Company, 1935.



Satellite over Aniakchak, 1992. Photograph courtesy of Tina Neal, USGS, Anchorage Alaska.



The site of the 1931 crater with Vent Mountain in the background, 1992. Photograph courtesy of Tina Neal, USGS, Anchorage Alaska.



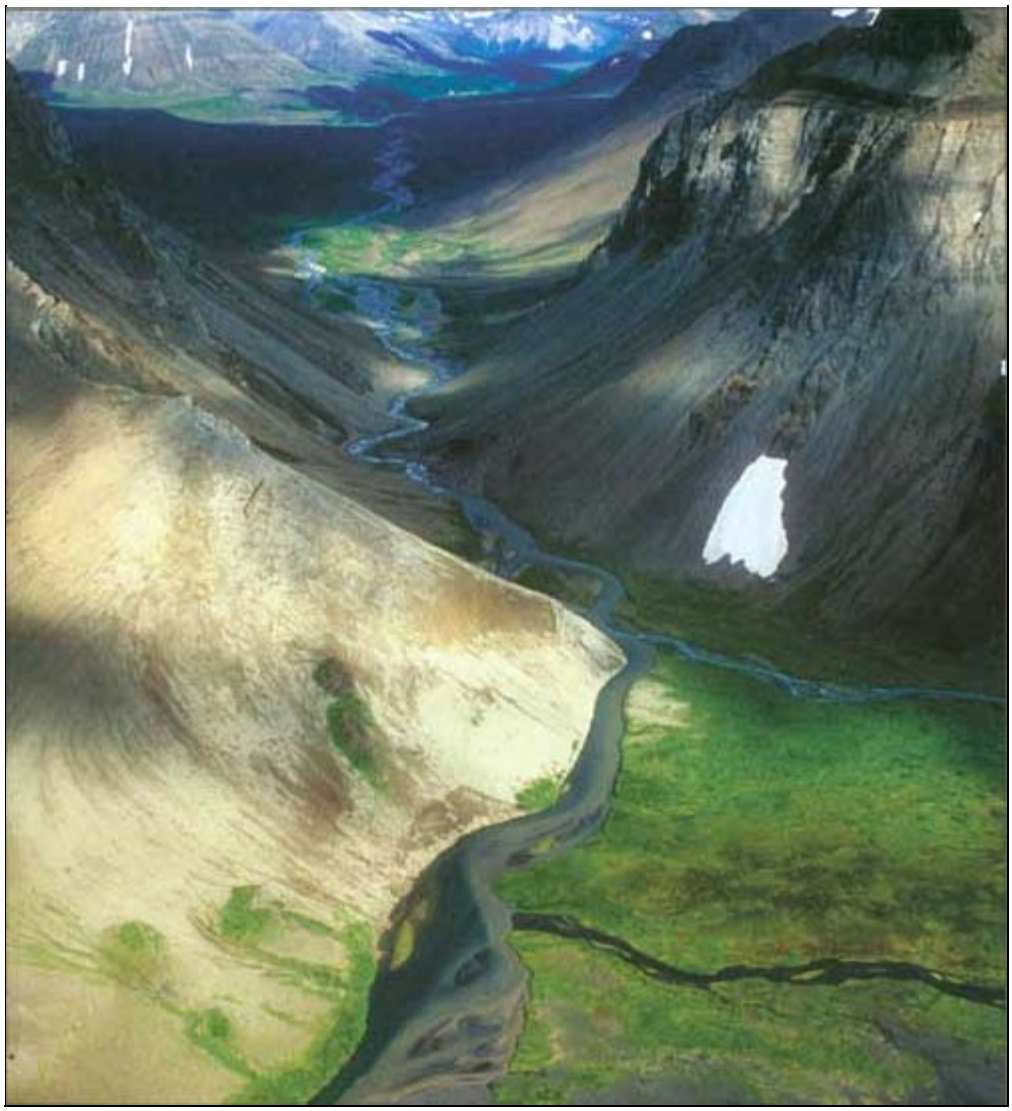
Aniakchak Caldera and Surprise Lake, 1933. Photograph courtesy of Game McGimsey, USGS, Anchorage, Alaska.



Hubbard Cove, west end of Surprise Lake, 1993. Photo courtesy of Game McGimsey, USGS, Anchorage, Alaska.



Peace in the Caldera. Photograph by Troy Hammon, NPS.



Aerial of the Gates of Aniakchak Caldera, ca. 1996. Photograph courtesy of Game McGimsey, USGS, Anchorage, Alaska.



A landslide block of the Gates, ca. 1996. Photograph courtesy of Game McGimsey, USGS, Anchorage, Alaska.



Aerial view looking NW up Aniakchak River shows the destructive force of the wave that drained the ancient crater lake years ago, 1994. Photograph courtesy of Game McGimsey, USGS, Anchorage, Alaska.



Pinnacle Peak, 1994. Photograph courtesy of Game McGimsey, USGS, Anchorage, Alaska.



The Gates. Alan Bennett, NPS Southwest Alaska Network, Anchorage, Alaska.



One of the "house-sized boulders" carried by the 1800 BP wave to the mouth of the Aniakchak River, 1994. Photograph courtesy of Game McGimsey, USGS, Anchorage, Alaska.



The greening tundra and bear tracks show that Aniakchak's Living World is thriving on the northern terrace adjacent to Aniakchak Caldera, 1994. Photograph courtesy of Tina Neal, USGS, Anchorage, Alaska.



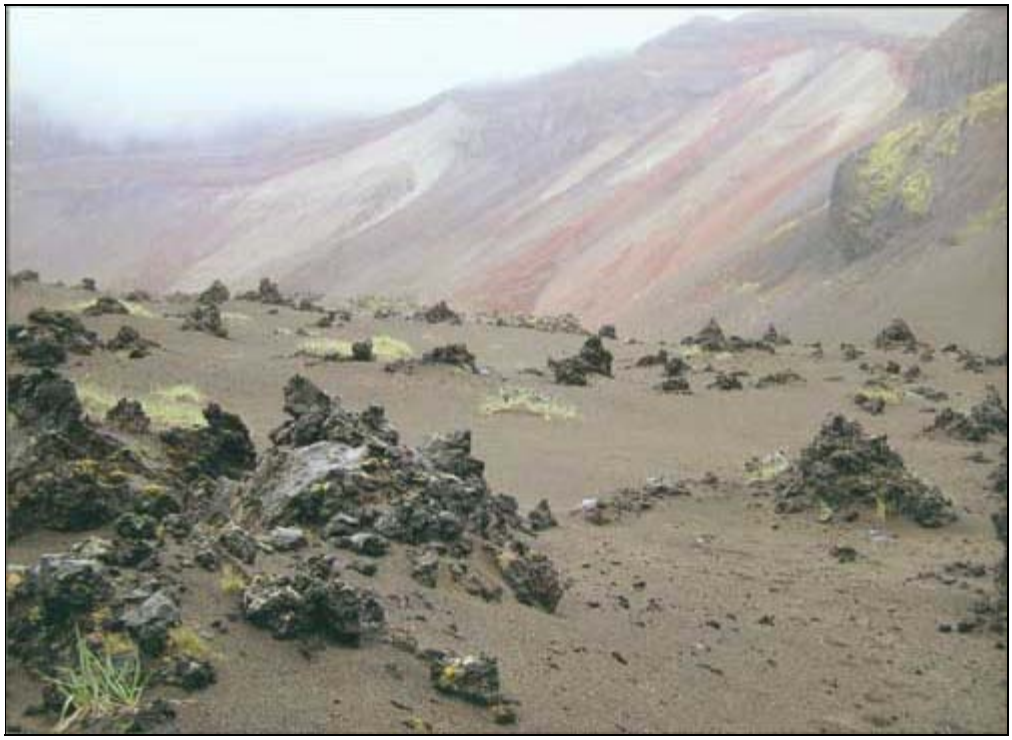
Waterfall. Alan Bennett, NPS Southwest Alaska Network, Anchorage, Alaska.



The Aniakchak River. Alan Bennett, NPS Southwest Alaska Network, Anchorage, Alaska.



USGS conducts research inside the caldera, ca. Photograph courtesy of Tina Neal, USGS, Anchorage, Alaska.



A catastrophic terrain. Alan Bennett, NPS Southwest Alaska Network, Anchorage, Alaska.



Geologist Tina Neal investigates a rock formation at Half Cone, 1933. Photograph courtesy of Game McGimsey, USGS, Anchorage, Alaska.

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Natural oil seeps near Kanatak, ca. 2004. Photograph Courtesy of Roger Blodgett, USGS, Anchorage, Alaska



Surprise Lake. Photograph by Troy Hammon, NPS.



Archeological excavation of a house floor in Aniakchak, 2005. Photograph courtesy of Brian Hoffman, Hamline University.



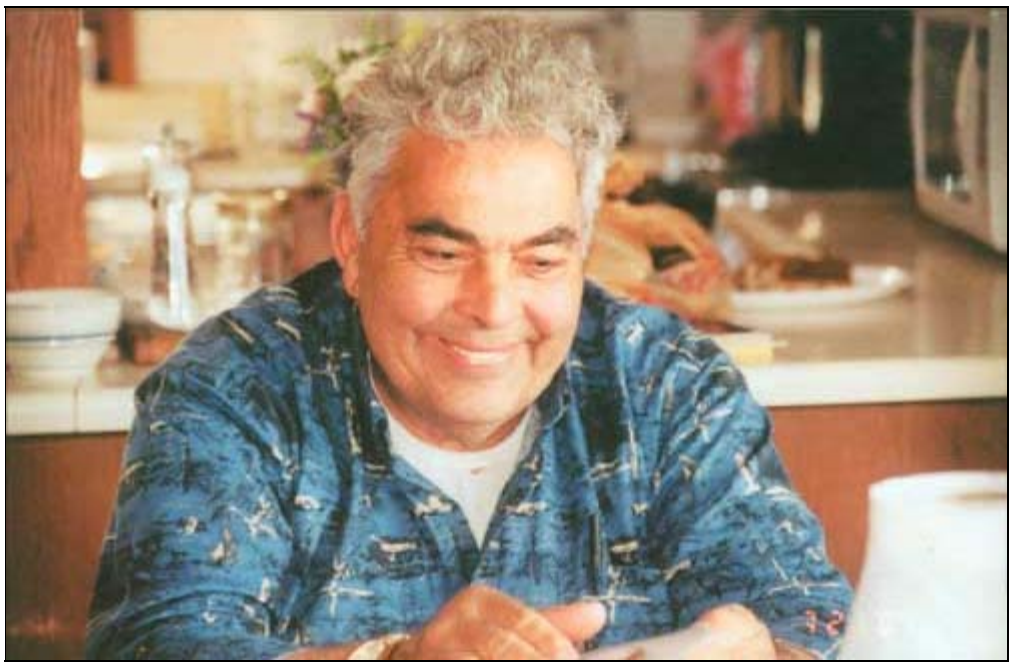
Barbed arrow point found by archeologists, 2005. Photograph courtesy of Brian Hoffman, Hamline University.



A small ivory maskette possibly made to be worn by a doll, 2005. Photograph courtesy of Brian Hoffman, Hamline University.



Bone knife found by archeologists, 2005. Photograph courtesy of Brian Hoffman, Hamline University.



Chignik Lagoon elder Clarence (Bobby) Erikson's family trapped in Aniakchak, 2004. Katherine Johnson Ringsmuth. Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, Alaska.



Village of Meshik, 1996. Photograph courtesy of Tina Neal, USGS, Anchorage, Alaska.



Rest in Peace (Soldiers Pause During Landing Operations), painting by William F. Draper, oil on board; 1942. Navy Art Collection, Department of the Navy, 88-189-AM.



Aleutian Interior, painting by William F. Drape, charcoal, 1942. Navy Art Collection, Department of the Navy, 88-189-U.



Aleutian Landing (Beaching a landing boat), painting by William F. Draper, oil on board; 1942. Navy Art Collection, Department of the Navy, 88-189-AN.



Supply Line's End (Supplies being brought up from the beach), painting by William F. Draper, oil on board, 1942; Navy Art Collection, Department of the Navy, 88-189-AO.

In addition to the decline of marine fur-bearers and the trendy fashion whims of distant markets, the economic importance of fox farming in the Aniakchak region was secured primarily due to the role of the federal government. Beginning in 1882, the United States Secretary of the Treasury oversaw the leasing of islands for propagation of foxes. Viewing fox farming as a way to increase population to the territory and expand Pacific markets, the government used its relationship with the media to advertise the economic potential of the industry. In a memorandum to the press, the Department of the Interior stated, "Foxes grown here in the far North have a heavy fur superior to that of those grown in warmer climates." According to the memo, "a most advantageous location of a fox farm is on any of the numerous small islands that fringe the coast of Alaska. On these islands fencing was unnecessary to prevent the animal from escaping and fish which is likely to be the chief food for the foxes is easy to procure." [19]

Not only did corporations like the Alaska Commercial Company lease islands, but also the U.S. government made the numerous islands off the shore of Aniakchak available to individuals. By 1920, many of the islands near Aniakchak were stocked with fox by Euroamerican men married to local Alutiiq or Creole women. [20] Frank Lowell, a regional trader for the Alaska Commercial Company, stocked Ugaiushak Island with blue fox in 1915, and in the 1920s, Ben Benson took it over and it became known as Benny Benson's Island. George Anderson, with his wife, Ocelena, started raising foxes on Chankliut Island near Castle Cape as early as 1910. His son-in-law, Lars Hanson, had the lease in 1920 when Anderson, five children and two grandchildren and Hanson were all living on the island. Charles W. "Charlie" Olsen, a Norwegian, and two Germans, Adolf Von Himmel and Charles Weideman, were living on Unavikshak in 1920, where Charlie Olsen had begun farming foxes. This island is locally known as "fat Charlie Olsen's Island." Olsen had good

access to salmon streams on Cape Kumliun where his *barabara* stood. Alex Carlson, Sr. stocked Kumlik Island in the 1920s. He lived in a large frame house on the island every fall and spring and had a *barabara* on shore from which he and his sons trapped in the winter. Pete Pedersen married Charles Brandal's daughter, Anne. They started a fox farm on Nakchamik Island in the 1920s. [21]



Pete and Annie Pedersen's cabin at Aniakchak Bay, ca. 1920s. Photograph courtesy of Alec Pederson, Chignik Lagoon, Alaska.

The government charged these individual fox farmers $200 per year to lease an island, which totaled up to $1,000 for the duration of a five-year lease. [22] The government even supplied farmers with blue fox from stocks held on the Pribilof Islands. Most of the men who applied for a lease had never run their own business. To overcome this hurdle, the government instructed fox farmers on modern principles of business practices. For example, the Department of Commerce published what the agency described as "a plan for success," which provided new fox farmers with a business formula consisting of "capital invested," "operating expenses," and "prices that skins will bring." The government advised farmers to be patient with this plan: for "the conservative man, who goes into the business after carefully considering all the conditions and who does not easily become discouraged, may

hope to meet with reasonable success." [23] Many residents—Alutiiq, Creole, and Euroamerican—took the government up on its offer. By 1922, there were over 150 recorded fox farms in Alaska, several of which were located off the coast of Aniakchak. [24] By 1930, when Hubbard and his crew passed through the region, fox farming was the third largest industry in Alaska, surpassed only by fishing and mining. [25]

Chignik resident, Helen Neilson, whose father was Scandinavian and mother was Native, lived on a fox farm with her family between 1925 and 1935. Neilson recalls, "Everybody had foxes, raised them on their own islands, but we had Nakchamik." The Neilsons, typical of most fox farming families in the Aniakchak region, brought a couple of foxes from a nearby island and the entire family participated in raising the foxes. [26] "We'd feed the foxes bran mixed with fish or sometimes meat, like seal meat, sea lion, and fish; mix it with bran and cook it," recalled Helen. "We'd always go fishing and bring home lots of fish for the foxes. We'd go seal and sea lion hunting also. The foxes ate anything wild. Sometimes we'd bake the fox meal into loaves of bread, then we'd slice it up and give the foxes so much each day. 'Course they ate that!" [27] In an interview conducted by Susie Pedersen, Nielson explained how her family killed the foxes:

> We'd set the box traps where we regularly fed them before, at the feeding places. The way we caught the foxes was we'd set a bait in the box trap, and the fox would get in and get the bait. When he gets the bait, he shuts the door, it automatically shuts him in. We'd go there every day, get them out of the trap, and kill em. We'd use tongs and get them around the necks, and haul them out through an opening at the top of the box. Then we laid them down and put our knees on their hearts until they died. I didn't like to do that, but we couldn't hurt the skin. [28]

Besides impacting the social and economic character of the Aniakchak region, such activities changed the physical environment. Although fox farming was fleeting and was conducted by a relatively small number of individuals, nevertheless, the enterprise caused significant changes to the island on which the farming took place.



Unidentified family at Pilot Point, ca. 1920s. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

Historically, those who depended upon sea birds for part of their subsistence lifestyle were quite aware of the impact of fox farming on sea birds. The indigenous islanders, as well as the Russians, felt the pinch when they had to travel to other islands to hunt sea birds for skins and feathers because of the scarcity of these birds on their regular hunting grounds. According to Ebbert, by 1812, many Aleuts had to switch from making clothing from bird skins to substituting with other materials. [29] Likewise, numerous biologists from William Dall to Olaus Murie documented years of ecological change after Alaska had become an American territory. In 1932, President Herbert Hoover created the Semidi Islands Wildlife Refuge, but frustrated many regional scientists by providing that the new sanctuary maintain dual and competing purposes—breeding both birds and fur-bearing animals. Because biologists had become convinced that island ecosystems could not support both foxes and birds, it was Murie who formally objected in 1936 to the incompatible uses of the islands as both fox farms and bird sanctuaries. Murie's warning fell on mostly deaf ears, and, as a result, in a report for the journal *Science*, today's biologists describe the introduction of predators to coastal islands during this time as possibly, "one of Alaska's worst ecological disasters." [30]

On most islands, fox farmers fed the animals fish and marine mammals. When fox pelt prices plummeted in the 1930s and sale of salmon to canneries generally became more profitable, consequently foxes no longer were fed by their keepers. The foxes, then, preyed upon the millions of nesting seabirds that used the islands as rest stops during their long, continental and ocean spanning migrations. The foxes preyed upon the seabirds' nests, eating their eggs, which devastated reproduction success. Before the foxes died out due to starvation or eradication, these efficient predators nearly drove the Aleutian Canada Goose to extinction and decimated other species, but according to biologists, the damage went even further. The recent study compared eighteen similar sized islands—nine that supported fox farms and nine that did not. The study revealed that that those islands without foxes maintained a very different ecosystem than those that had foxes.

The treeless island ecosystems of southwestern Alaska widely depended upon the guano dropped by millions of seabirds to fertilize the islands' shallow soil. As foxes killed the unprotected nesting seabirds, the islands lost the capacity to support what had been lush grassland. According to Vernon Byrd, supervising biologist with the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, "What once was an ocean of beach rye and other dense growth transformed into a scruffy tundra dominated by dwarf shrubs and leafy plants." [31] By removing a key species from the isolated island habitats, fox farmers caused the food chain to unravel, affecting everything from the microbes in the soil to the winged creatures overhead. [32]





Alec and his dog "shep" head out to hunt birds, ca. 1920s. Photograph courtesy of Alec Pederson, Chignik Lagoon, Alaska.

Decline of the Fox Farms

Due to the declining sea mammal numbers, as early as 1902, the Alaska Commercial Company had closed most of its trading posts on the Alaska Peninsula, and in 1907, Omar J. Humphery and W.J. Erskine of Kodiak purchased what was left of the company's holdings. [33] Although the sale meant an unceremonious end of fur trade, one thing was for sure, the Alaska Commercial Company, with its vessels, capital, and employees, had put the Alaska Peninsula on the map for industries to come and paved the way for a new American era.

While one strand of the fur trade, fox farming, continued on in piecemeal along the peninsula coast, by the 1930s, it too had come to an end in the Aniakchak region. The first few years of the decade saw a sharp decline in fur prices brought on by the Great Depression. Although 431 fur farm licenses were issued in 1931, the value of furs shipped from Alaska declined more that fifty percent from the previous year. In 1929, the zenith of fox farming, 9,300 blue fox pelts valued at nearly $900,000 were exported from Alaska, but by 1931, this value had fallen to less than $200,000. Arctic fox pelts dropped from an average of $108 in 1929 to $65 in 1930 and only $32 in 1931. Commercial fur endeavors largely collapsed during the Great Depression and never recovered. [34] Although the collapse of the international fur market ended the commercial fox farming industry, fox farmers were only on the cusp of change that was occurring across the Alaska Peninsula.



Waiting for snow! Note the Ugashik Cannery in the background. Photograph courtesy of Ace Gretchen, Pilot Point, Alaska.

Trappers

The popular image of the frontiersmen in the early decades of the twentieth century was one of rugged individualism, a timely image that Father Hubbard with his Moon Crater myth was glad to incorporate. But by the explorers' own accounts of Aniakchak, the people whom they encountered there were anything but stoic loners living off the land. For example, when Hubbard's team ascended into the Caldera on their second trip in 1931, they began their trek by staying one night at Alec Brandal's cabin, which is still located on Kujulik Bay. "We took a look around us after we had carried the equipment up to the cabin," recalled Douglas:

> It was much better than the average winter cabin of a trapper. It's one big room and small outer room, where hung traps and drying frames, were sturdily built and had double windows on the ocean side. Apparently the owner lived there with his wife and children, as we saw an old dress hanging on the wall and a pair of child's shoes under the bed in one corner. [35]

Most of the families who maintained fox farms in the Aniakchak region almost always supplemented their income by trapping in the winter. Trappers mainly pursued fox, but they also trapped mink, ermine, land otter, wolverine, and occasionally wolves. Their trap lines extended along the region's numerous creeks, rivers, and into Aniakchak's open areas and bear trails along the coast. [36] In the mid-1890s, early trappers like Brandal's father, Charles; George Anderson; and George Morris sold or traded their pelts at local Alaska Commercial Company trading posts. [37] By the 1940s, when families like the Ericksons, Pedersens and Grunerts were still trapping in Aniakchak, trappers sent their pelts off to markets through the U.S. mail. [38] Over time, trapping proved to be a viable strategy for cashing in on the lucrative but capricious fur market.

When Hubbard arrived in 1930, the Aniakchak landscape was definitely not a wasteland void of people. A number of trapper families made their home along the Alaska Peninsula coast, many of whom lived within the boundaries of the current monument and preserve beginning as early as 1920, until World War II. In about 1925, Alec Brandal built a cabin on the North Fork River on Kujulik Bay, the same cabin used by Hubbard and his crew to access the Caldera in 1931. According to Douglas, the cabin was situated in the perfect environment:

> The cabin was built on a little grassy mound at the edge of the beach. Not twenty

> yards from the door, a small stream that ran from the mountains down to the lagoon gave us plenty of good water. The lagoon made an ideal place to moor the plane. Sheltered from the ocean by a long sand dune, it was always calm. At the head of the lagoon was a wide expanse of mud flats fringing the marsh, but when the tide was high the flats were covered and ducks came in their from the ocean. [39]

But not all Aniakchak residents lived so well, for only those who could afford it brought lumber in and built framed homes along the treeless coast. Many homes were, in fact, modified *barabaras*, which included sod roofs, timber floors, and perhaps small windows or wooden doors. Trappers used whatever material was available. Discarded cotton webbing from fish traps, driftwood, and willow and alder branches served as suitable material to build homes, caches to protect food, or sheds to protect boats hauled up on the ways. [40]



Dog sledding the hard way! Virginia Hanson is sitting in sled, Florence Hanson is standing, Virgil Hanson is standing on runners of sled on China Lake, ca. 1930s. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

Most trappers lived in Aniakchak during the long winter months—when the mountains blocked the winter sun in Chignik but still reached their homes and trap lines on the south coasts of Amber, Aniakchak and Kujulik bays. Besides his fox farm on Kumlik Island, Axel Carlson maintained a cabin along with several *barabaras* on Cape Kumlik from which he and his brother could trap in the winter. Charlie Olsen had a similar situation on Unavikshak Island where he ran a fox farm. On the mainland, Olsen not only had a cabin on Cape Kumliun, but also had built other trapping cabins on the south end of Kujiulik Bay, and on Meshik Lake at the head of Meshik River. Charles Weideman's maintained several trap lines, which extended up the Aniakchak River, where he had at least one cabin. After the collapse of the fox farm industry, the Pedersen family took over Weideman's trap lines and lived in Aniakchak Bay from 1934 until 1943. Pedersen's many children expanded Weideman's line up the Aniakchak River drainage and to Meshik Lake. Albert Johnson maintained a cabin on the aptly named Albert Johnson Creek, a tributary of the Aniakchak River. Fred Gungas had a *barabara* on the south coast to Cape Ayutka where he trapped. Adolph Von Himmel trapped the east side of Aniakchak River and Main Creek in Amber Bay and maintained both a cabin and boat haulout there. John Hillborn bought Von Himmel's cabin, boat, and traps in the 1930s when Von Himmel returned to Germany after the war in Europe began. [41]

Instead of a long single procession, Hillborn organized his newly acquired trap lines in the form of a fan, with his cabin as the apex. "I get as many furs by laying several short lines," explained the trapper, "this is probably because I can give my traps closer attention, covering an entire wing each day." [42]

Trappers worked lines on the Bristol Bay side as well. Whereas Chignik was a hub for the Pacific side, Port Heiden became the point of access for many of the trappers working the tundra-covered slopes of the north and west side of the Aniakchak Caldera. George "Scotty" Irons and his wife, Mabel, built a large cabin on Scotty's Island in the Meshik River. Sam Supsook, another Bristol Bay trapper, was one of the many Inupiaq who had moved his family to the Alaska Peninsula from the Seward Peninsula. Supsook had a cabin on the North River, which flows from the northwest side of Aniakchak Crater. [43] Supsook's son, Valentine, and his wife, Pauline, trapped near Cinder River in the 1930s. They had a small cabin on the river. The couple met when Valentine helped Pauline's father, William Zunganuk, corral his reindeer at Reindeer Creek. [44]



Trapping cabin on the upper King Salmon River, located just north of the Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

It was during these years that Hubbard and his crew noticed Native people trapping along the flanks of Aniakchak:

> Today the younger men of the Aleuts set traps on the slopes of the mountains and laugh at their elders. But the old men cling steadfastly to their fantastic beliefs and refuse to go near the volcanoes. [45]

Though Douglas probably exaggerated this observation, it is important to point out that the "Aleuts" encountered by Hubbard were probably either descendants of Inupiaq from the Seward Peninsula, or persons of mixed Alutiiq, Russian, and Scandinavian heritage, and therefore, were affected by an array of influences that shaped an individual's relationship with the surrounding landscape. Chignik elder Julius Anderson trapped both sides of Aniakchak and never thought too much about the volcano. Still, Anderson never approached or entered the Caldera: "Why should I?" asked the aged trapper, "it's nothing but a big hole in the ground." [46]

Olaf Matson, born in Larvik, Norway, married Annie Abyo from Chignik and together they maintained several trapping cabins. One cabin was built on the Meshik River at a place called Ameguduk; another was located somewhere along Tunangapuk (Birthday) Creek. In a recent interview, an elder from Port Heiden remembered how Matsen used to trap, travel, and trade throughout the entire region:

> He came from Norway, and he used to walk over there...he was trapping. He'd walk across—bring caribou meat over there, and go get some Codfish. And, this guy, he had an old friend over there. Another Norwegian, I guess—come over—trade meat for fish.

When asked if Matsen traveled on foot or by dog team, the informant recalled a story that illustrates how the volcanic landscape often served as an obstacle for the Bristol Bay trappers:

> On foot. He had no snow there, little ways you know. But, he got into a big storm, blowing those big boulders—pumice stone, you know—those big rocks. He had a tough time. Another guy too—he hiked across there—he had to turn back. Almost got the best of him—rolling rocks. [47]

Aniakchak's fierce pumice storms were not the only threat trappers had to overcome. As John Hillborn described in an article he wrote for the *Alaska Sportsman* in 1937, "I've been trapping in Alaska for fourteen years, now—all of them in the open county between Chignik and Aniakchak. During that time I've had some hair-raising experiences." [48] Most of those "hair-raising experiences" included encounters with the coastal Alaskan brown bear. "I didn't notice Old Bruin until she was nearly on top on me," recalled Hillborn. "She kept coming, and snorted as she came. I could see that she was hungry, and the she didn't intend to be cheated out of her meal." Though the bear was killed by a lucky shot, Hillborn knew that luck in the bush was brief at best. Consequently, Hillborn taught his children to be observant, to always scan the country for bears, and never to surprise one. [49]



The Pedersen's fox farm, ca. 1920s. Photograph courtesy of Alec (Teetum) Pedersen, Chignik Lagoon, Alaska.

The risks involved in living the trapper's life threatened not only the trapper, but his family as well. For instance, while Olaf Matsen was out trapping the line one winter in 1917, his son, Henry, was delivered solely by his mother, alone at their cabin on Birthday Creek. [50] Matters were worse for the Carlson family when Axel Carlson Sr.'s wife, Evelyn, died of tuberculosis in 1926. With no one to raise the children while Carlson trapped, the children were sent to orphanages until Carlson remarried and began his fox farm on Kumlik Island a year and a half later. One elder from Chignik Lagoon remembers those times as a hard way to live: "Most the elders started farming foxes, the blue foxes, on the islands around here. Lot of them used to go out east and go trapping. You would get to trap and hunt. That's the way they lived. Then if you built a house you would have to come up with materials to build it with. It was tough—no kidding." [51]

As hard as life was for the trapper and his family, it was also what many remember as being a good life. A new generation of Aniakchak trappers was raised along the monument's rivers and bays and many are still alive today. Although this generation of Aniakchak trappers grew up outside of the communal life of the village, none recall living a life of isolation, either. As Michele Morseth points out, "the families in Aniakchak and Kujulik bays not only established working trap lines, but social paths as well." [52] Running between their houses were local routes, trampled by bears and men in the early decades of the century. Some routes were so popular that the trappers named them. For example, the most used trail was "The Boulevard" which went along Aniakchak Bay from the river mouth to the lagoon. Axel Olsen Jr. remembers a communal cabin that nearly all trails reached. The local trappers called it the "halfway shack:"

> It was a halfway shack they called it you know you go up there and stay for one night. Then he goes on from there the next day camp up and come back to that cabin again, whatever he gets and takes care of it then he goes home the next day. That's what his routine was and then he takes a day or two off when he gets home and then start the whole thing over again (laughs) go back up. [53]



On the fox farm even the kids had chores like

feeding the pigs, ca. 1920s. Photograph courtesy of Alec (Teetum) Pedersen, Chignik Lagoon, Alaska.



Remains of the razor clam cannery, 2005. Photograph courtesy of Ross Smith, NPS.

Trails, which connected houses, cabins, and *barabaras*, extended from Amber Bay to Aniakchak to Kujulik Bay and all the way to Chignik Lagoon. Trails from Aniakchak and Kujulik Bay that accessed the interior met at Albert Johnson Creek and went all the way down the Meshik River to Port Heiden. A strong trapper could make the trip in seventeen hours. Because foot travel was the best way to get from place to place, a walk from Chignik to Aniakchak Bay might take eight days. And along the way, a trapper might stay with as many friends and relatives. [54]

The trapping lifestyle continued in Aniakchak until the 1940s. During the years consumed by World War II, fur prices dwindled even further and young men went off to work for the war effort or join the armed forces. For many, the war put an end to the lifestyle that dominated the first four decades of the twentieth century. In Port Heiden, where the U.S. Army built a base and airstrip, the advent of World War II particularly changed local lifeways. "Yeah, it changed quite a lot after the military came in here," recalled an elder from Meshik:

> I think it was '43 they came in here—a lot of roads and stuff. Yeah. Then we quit going trapping after about '43, I guess. My brother went into the service. Then we kind of stayed over at Port Heiden and never trapped. The people quit trapping after that. . .I guess the main reason was the price of fur went down and wasn't feasible anymore. Just to go out and trap, you couldn't make much money. [55]

Other notable influences brought about the end of trapping. As Michele Morseth suggests, "the post-war life style included neither the hardship nor rewards of moving families to remote cabins to run trap lines." She notes that the establishment of wintertime schools, the impact of the influenza epidemics, and more centralized economic opportunities also brought about change. [56] As Chignik Lagoon elder recalls, "We salted [fish] a lot, hunted, and

trapped, but trapping was a losing battle." [57]

After World War II, commercial fishing finally offered enough income to support a family, and opened up the door for local people to enter. After statehood in 1960, fish traps were outlawed. This increased local participation in the commercial fishery, as more and more families traded in their trap gear for fishing nets, seiners, and gillnetters. Instead of fox farmers and trappers, the Knights of Woeful Countenance became fishermen. Family life became far more sedentary, as many moved to year-round villages, situated next to one or more of the numerous salmon canneries, served either by the Bristol Bay or Chignik fishery. By the 1950s, most people were living in the fishing villages of Chignik Bay, Chignik Lagoon, Pilot Point, Ugashik, and Port Heiden, and had left their cabins in Aniakchak to the elements.

Razor Clamming

Local fisherman could not access the fishery during the first few decades that the canned salmon industry operated their canneries and traps on the Alaska Peninsula, with this prohibition remaining in place until the watershed years of World War II. By the turn of the century, the trend to consolidate fish companies made the canned salmon industry in Alaska more stable, but it also meant that it was more difficult for a new generation of companies and fishermen to enter the fishery. To compete, many of these newcomers looked to diversify their product. Consequently, a few canneries exploited the rich razor clam beds of the Alaska Peninsula in hopes of expanding their markets. These now well-known beaches included the rich clam beaches of Tuxedni Bay on the coast of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, Swikshak Lagoon on the coast of Katmai National Park and Preserve, and Aniakchak Bay in Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve. Though the latter was the least significant to the Alaska Peninsula clam canners, it still, nonetheless, reflected aspects of the larger clamming industry, as well as the ingenuity and perseverance maintained by so many of the clamming entrepreneurs in the decades of the twentieth century.





The retort was used to cook the canned clams, 2005. Photograph courtesy of Ross Smith, NPS.

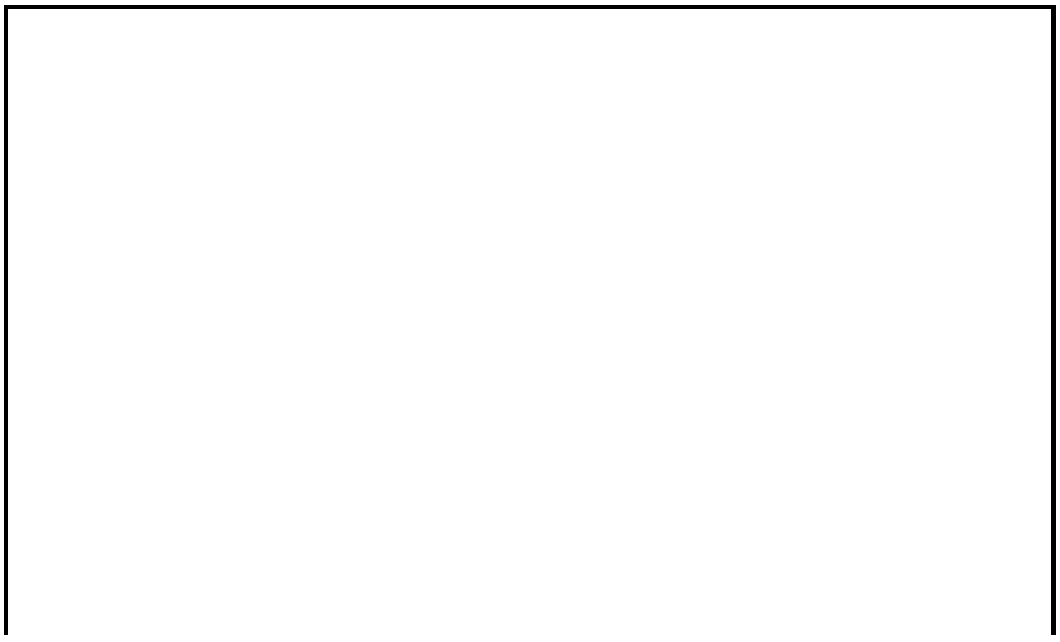
The Pacific Coast canned clam industry expanded to Alaska in 1915, when the Lighthouse Canning and Packing Company prepared the first northern pack of razor clams in Cordova, Alaska. G.P. Halferty's Pioneer Packing Company, the most successful clam canner of the day, soon followed. The rich clam beds of the Alaska Peninsula, though used extensively by indigenous Alaskans for centuries, were discovered for commercial purposes when Washington state clam canner, Elmer Hemrich, came to Alaska to prospect sites for a cannery in 1917. Beginning his quest in Chignik, Hemrich traveled north along the coastline, and thusly opened the clam beaches of Swikshak Lagoon and Tuxedni Bay to commercial

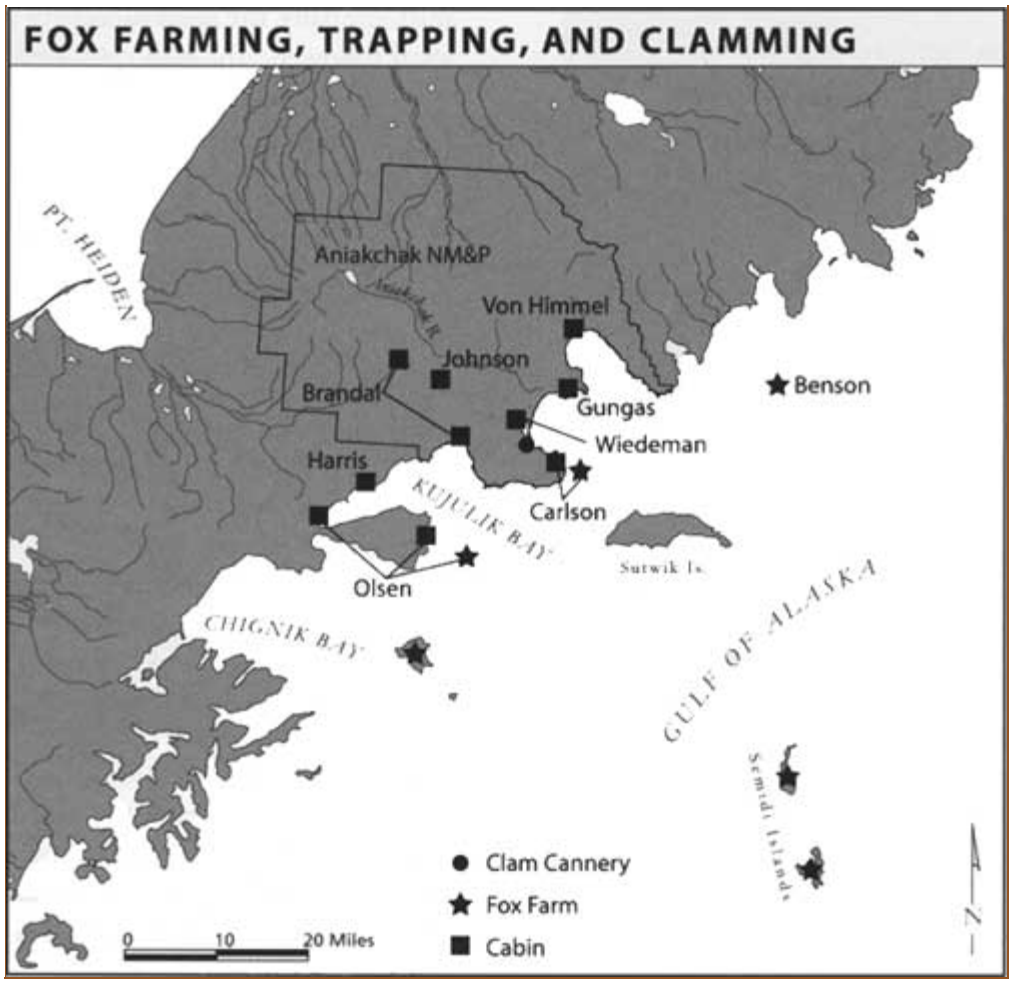
interests. [58] Only two years later the Surf Packing Company from Aberdeen, Washington built the Snug Harbor cannery on the southwestern end of Chisik Island, just off the coast of the current Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. [59]

When the clam canning process proved to be less profitable than the salmon canning process in Cook Inlet, in 1923, Hemrich moved the Surf Packing Company to Kukak Bay, located in what is today Katmai National Park and Preserve and operated there under the newly reorganized company, the Hemrich Packing Company. [60] Despite poor clam seasons, strong competition from East Coast clammers, even a fire that burned down the cannery in 1936, Kukak was the most successful razor clam operation on the Alaska Peninsula, running off and on, under the direction of four different companies, until 1951. [61] The successful diversification of the seafood industry made it possible for at least one entrepreneur to exploit the abundant razor clams found in Aniakchak Lagoon in the early 1930s. On July 20, 1932, Axel Olsen filed a "Notice of Location" at the Unga Peninsula District's recording office with the intent to establish a clam cannery on the southwestern end of the bay. [62]

It comes to no surprise that Olsen jumped on the razor clam bandwagon in 1932, for the industry produced one of its largest packs in Alaska that year. Alaskan clam canners produced 69,147 cases, nearly twice the amount of clams packed the previous season. [63] Olsen contributed 12,948 pounds of clams to the Alaskan pack that same season. [64] Besides numerous clam beds, Aniakchak Bay offered Olsen a favorable location for his cannery because the beach provided easy access for anchorage and the Lagoon protected his structures from fierce southerly winds.

Olsen likely began harvesting Aniakchak razor clams in April before the first minus tide of May. He continued to collect his prey throughout the minus tides of summer. Olsen had no commercial competitors in Aniakchak, so the clammer could work at his own pace. Still, clamming was anything but leisurely—digging for clams was extremely labor-intensive. The clammer dug the clams from the black volcanic sandy beaches, using a shovel, and filled one wooden Blazo Box at a time. Like the cannery operations at Swikshak and Tuxedni, Olsen hauled clams from the beach to the cannery by automobile. Though the cannery exists today as a pile of rusted machine parts and wooded rubble, archeological evidence shows that the cannery probably consisted of one, or at the most two, buildings. Also found among the rubble was a deep heavy sink, where Olsen probably cleaned the clams and checked cooked cans for "floaters, or tins filled with contaminated air. In addition, a sole retort, which Olsen could have brought up from Chignik, was used to cook his entire pack. [65]





Fox farm, clam cannery and cabin sites. By B. Bundy. Source Morseth, 2003. *(click on image for a PDF version)*

There is no indication that Olsen hired employees to either dig or can razor clams. He never incorporated his business into a company. Olsen's cannery was probably similar to the family run, hand-pack outfits that were operating at Polly Creek about the same time. Because these canners operated on such a small scale, they belong to a category of canners who more resembled the subsistence operations found in Russian and Native settlements than the complex, commercial operations of the Snug Harbor and Kukak plants. These small hand packers may have devoted countless hours of hard work and perseverance to their clamming operations, but invested little capital. [66] Olsen, like other small hand-packers, simply added canning clams to his repertoire of hunting, fishing, and trapping activities in Aniakchak.

According to local sources, Olsen's cannery eventually failed because the clams were too sandy, transportation costs too high, and that the clam population declined under heavy harvesting pressure. [67] Industry reports show that this was the case throughout Alaska, for the razor clam production curtailed in all districts after 1932. The drain on the Alaska beds was so heavy that year that regulators imposed packing quotas in some districts by 1932. By 1935, those quotas reached western Alaska beaches. [68]

Although the clamming industry rebounded by 1938, it appears that Olsen gave up trying to make his cannery a commercial success. After his death, his three sons, Edwin, Axel Jr., and Rudy Carlson, moved into the clam cannery, making living quarters out of one end and using the rest for storage. In the end, the clam cannery became a base camp for trapping, another occupation facing its waning years. Over the decades, the structure has been dismantled for

its more valuable material. Some have recycled the material for other practical uses, whereas others have simply vandalized the site. Further archeological investigations focused on Olsen's clam cannery may provide valuable information concerning a unique industry in Alaska's history. [69]

* * *

The activities conducted by these men and their families back in the 1920s continue, in some capacity, in contemporary times. As Pat Partnow notes in her study of the peninsula, "This pattern of seasonal contraction and expansion continues today, as families eagerly await the freedom and relative solitude of fish camps each summer, then return to group activities each fall." [70] Though only a few ramshackle cabins are all that remain from this time period, many people who still identify with the region continue to fish, hunt, or pick berries in Aniakchak.

Today, the many residents from Chignik and Port Heiden who can link their family heritage back to the era of fox farming and trapping are products of the long continuing history of the Knights of Woeful Countenance and their association with the Aniakchak landscape. As fox farmers were unknowingly transforming island ecology, and trappers and clam canners were linking Aniakchak to larger patterns of industry, most Americans had no idea such activities even existed. To most people, if they ever even thought about the Alaska Peninsula, they saw the northern appendage as a blank space on the map.

It wasn't until May 1931, when the mountain woke, that the rest of the world discovered Aniakchak. And, if it weren't for the timely return of Father Bernard Hubbard to the region that spring, there is a good chance that few Americans, including National Park Service personnel, would ever have heard of Aniakchak. Although Alaska had been a part of the United States since 1867, the general public saw the Far North as a foreign land of igloos and polar bears—nothing about the place resembled America. During the 1930s, however, when Hubbard began to alert the federal agency, as well as the American public, to Aniakchak's natural worth, the Glacier Priest put the Caldera and the entire central Alaska Peninsula on the American map. While Father Hubbard dispelled the notion that the Alaska Peninsula was a foreign icebox, he downplayed images of it as a home to local families, preferring to stir his audiences with the sense that this was the place where a man could test his courage and conquer nature on America's last frontier.

NOTES

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[4]Susan Kollin, *Nature's State: Imagining Alaska as the Last Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University North Carolina Press, 2001), 5.

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[8]Julius Anderson, interviewed by Katherine Johnson 7/20/2004.

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[18]Harriet Rossiter, "Alaska's Fur Industry: Its Decline and Rise,"*Fur Trade Review*, circa 1920s: 174.

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[22]H.M. Smith, Commissioner of Fisheries, Department of Commerce, Bureau of Fisheries, Memorandum Regarding Fox Farming, August 1, 1913. Microfilm reel 144, Alaska and Polar Regions, Rasmussen Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

[23]H.M. Smith, 1913.

[24]Although over 150 islands were recorded as fox farms, many were stocked illegally without leases. Bailey, 9 and 11.

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[33]Alaska Commercial Company Director' Meeting Minutes, Dec 26, 1906, Correspondence of the Kodiak Post, Alaska Commercial Company Record, 1868-1891, Microfilm. University of Alaska Anchorage Archives.

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[37]Ibid., 114.

[38]Clarence Erickson, interviewed by Katherine Johnson 7/19/2004.

[39]Douglas, 37-38.

[40]Morseth, 114.

[41]Morseth, 116-118.

[42]John Hillborn, "Chignik Trapper," *Alaska Sportsman,* December, 1937, 12.

[43]Ibid, 123-124.

[44]Morseth, 144.

[45]Douglas, 8.

[46]Anderson, 7/20/2004.

[47]*From Neqa to Tepa,* Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 283-OAM-081501.

[48]Hillborn, 12.

[49]Morseth, 122.

[50]Morseth, 124.

[51]*From Neqa to Tepa,* Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 087-OJA-112002.

[52]Morseth, 122.

[53]Axel and Alva Carlson in Chignik Lake, 25H98-04-02, Box 1 Folder 10, Lake Clark

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[56]Morseth, 111.

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[58]Katherine Johnson, *Buried Dreams: the Rise and Fall of a Cannery on the Katmai Coast* (Anchorage: National Park Service, 2002), 15.

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[62]Norris, *Isolated Paradise*, 431.

[63]"Pacific Clam Canning," *Pacific Fisherman Yearbook*, 1937.

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[68]Richard Nickerson, *A Critical Analysis of Some Razor Clam Populations in Alaska* (Juneau: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 1975), 2-3.

[69]VanderHoek and Myron, 89.

[70]Partnow, 206-207.

<<< **Previous** <<< **Contents**>>> **Next** >>>

ANIAKCHAK

Beyond the Moon Crater Myth
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape
A Historic Resource Study for Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

ANECDOTES

"On the Kanatak Trail"

Excerpt from Paul Boskoffsky and Lloyds Mattson,
Alaska: A Man From Kanatak, the Story of Paul Boskoffsky
(Duluth, MI: Arrow Printing, 2002).

My best memories of Kanatak go back to our hike over the mountain and boat trip down big Becharof Lake to Egegik. Each May, men, women, kids, and dogs would leave the village for jobs in the fishing industry, their only source of income. Some went to Chignik, Ugashik or Kodiak. We were among the families that traveled on foot and by boat to Egegik on Bristol Bay, about a 90-mile trip. That is how I came to be born there on July 10, 1935, in the small cabin provided by the cannery where my dad worked. I was the first of seven children—one baby sister died.

Excitement always ran high as we packed for the trip. We had to carry on our backs everything we would need for the summer. The trail began at the steep shale slope leading up from the village, then through alpine meadows past Lake Ruth to Fish Village, a year-around settlement the old-timers called *Marratuq.* That is where we kept our boats. Grandpa Ruff had a cabin there.

Here and there piles of stone marked the trail for winter travelers. It had been the main route between the Pacific and Bristol Bay for longer than anyone knows. Eskimo and Aleut traders followed the trail in the old days. Later, dog mushers and oil prospectors hauled their loads over the trail, and for uncounted generations, families like ours hiked the trail on the way to Egegik and summer fishing.

The trip was always fun for us kids. At one place lay a big boulder with a hole in it where we kids would put small stones for good luck. It always seemed like a long walk, but we looked forward to reaching Fish Village, where a few friends and relatives would be waiting. We would sit over tea and tell stories of our hike and then load our boats and wait for safe weather to head down the lake.

Becharof Lake is big, over fifty miles long and twelve miles wide in places. It is noted for sudden storms and dangerous winds. Sometimes we had to wait several days until Grandpa Ruff, who had the best weather eye, would say, "It's time to go now."

In the early years, families traveled by oar and sail. When we got our first ten-horse Johnson, we thought it was a miracle. Each year we kids looked forward to reaching Egg Island. We would stop to gather seagull eggs. We would race to see who could pick the most. Our mothers preserved the eggs in brine of some kind and they kept all summer, saving us buying costly fresh eggs in Egegik. Fried or boiled, seagull eggs taste strong. Mother used them mainly for cooking.

People often ask how we could tell which eggs were fresh. If a nest held one or two eggs, we

were pretty sure they were O.K. If a nest held more than two eggs, we would leave them all. Sometimes we put them in a bucket of water. Those that floated, we would return to the nest. That way, there were always plenty of baby seagulls and we were reasonably sure of fresh eggs.

From Egg Island we faced 50 miles of dangerous open water to the Egegik River. For the first half-mile the river curled around huge boulders, some of them hidden. It takes skill to get through those rapids with a powerful engine. Imagine running them in a skiff with oars or a small kicker!

Once beyond the rapids, we breathed a sigh of relief. The rest of the trip was easy except for a wide place we called the Lagoon. There the ever-changing channel led through shallow tidewater, which could be hard to follow. At the Lagoon, we often saw caribou traveling south. Why they always headed that direction was not known. My guess is that they headed south to drop their young away from the bears that favor higher country.

As the river left the lake, the water was crystal clear, but at the Lagoon milky silt from the inflowing tide clouded the water. That always brought excitement for we knew we were getting close to Egegik and friends were hadn't seen since the summer before.

What a great life! Tourists pay big money to enjoy the trip we took for granted year after year. I still go up river and over to Kanatak every chance I get. I built a small cabin on my Native land claim near Fish Village.

"Pieces of the Wind"

by
Wendy Erd
Excerpt from Leslie Leyland Fields (editor), ***Out on the Deep Blue: Women, Men, and the Oceans They Fish***
(New York: St. Martin's Press, 200]).

"Stories of Pilot Point begin and end with wind. Wind so steady that when it quits, you look up suddenly at as though someone's missing.

At night, there are ghosts in the abandoned cannery, Chinamen rising up from their laundry chores at China Lake, fishermen wisping in on the fog. At the base of the green bluff below the village, throwing shadows across Pete Hansen's shack, history sprawls in a huge complex of corrugated red tin: warehouses, crew quarters, canning rooms, net lofts, and the mess hall with its MUG UP sign over a boarded—up door. We creep into the sprawling catacombs of memory by inching our way through a broken six-pane window. The crunch of glass underfoot echoes up two stories to the tall ceiling beams; fir 2x12xfifty feet long that Alaska Packers shipped in by schooner in the 1890s when the river still ran deep by the dock out front, before the mud filled in and shut the whole place down. We're trespassing on both property and time.

Upstairs, wire-mesh lockers sag open, cages that once over-wintered fishermen's gear now drain old cotton web, soggy life rings, rusted Coleman stoves. In one corner wooden corks are scattered like tiny torpedoes in the dust. The stories of the fishermen hang in the air like

moonlight through dusted glass. The wind lifts a loose piece of roof tin and bangs it over and over with just the same rhythm as the river; water and wind relentless, silting over men and history and fortunes made and lost again.

"Helen Neilsen: Life on a Blue Fox Island"

by
Susie Pedersen
Excerpt from The ***Cama-I Book: Kayaks, Dogsleds, Bear Hunting, Bush Pilots, Smoked Fish, Mukluks and Other Traditions of Southwestern Alaska*** (England: Anchor Books, 1983).

Papa started building the fox farm around 1925, but as the years passed, the prices dropped so low that we couldn't keep the fox farm going. Everybody had foxes, raised them on their own islands, but we had Nakchamik. Living on the island was nice, I liked it. We had some fun on the island, not just caring for foxes. Wintertime we would go skating, sliding. That was fun.

When we started, we bought a pair of foxes from another island, and they increased fast. I've never seen a lot of foxes, but there were quite a few around. I've never seen a litter of baby foxes either, but my papa has. We never could catch the kittens running around, cute, but I've never seen them myself I'd say the female fox had about six or eight pups, something like a dog you know, and they had babies only once a year. We didn't keep the foxes in pens or anything, they would run wild on the island. It wasn't very hard caring for foxes. We did a lot of walking, but it was okay.

The foxes weren't real tame, but they were planted and fed by us; you couldn't go out and pet them or anything though. Some of the foxes were tame on other islands, but ours never got tame. I don't think you can really tame a fox; they don't get that tame. If we had a fox for a pet, I wouldn't trust it; it probably would bite. We never kept any as pets; some people did, but we didn't. We had other pets, like chickens, pigs, and cats—no dogs, but lots of cats and chickens. The foxes never bothered the chickens or anything; they were so wild they never came near the house. We never had any problems with the foxes as far as I knew.

While my brothers and I went to summer school in Chignik, my mama and papa stayed on the island and cared for the foxes. In the winter, they would come and get us and bring us back to the island. The foxes survived real good in the winter; we'd see them sitting outside their burrows, just sitting there, watching. They would burrow into the ground, under the rocks, or into a bank or something. Sometimes they would walk the beaches and look for food along the waterline. They would find dead fish and clams and things like that—they ate all that. Sometimes the foxes would burrow in on the beach, in the cliffs, under the rocks, and the tide would wash in there and would wash them away. A few got lost like that. We would see where they had been and the water had gotten up to them. There was no real danger to the foxes, animal wise. Only the eagles, I think, carried the little ones off if they were out in the open. Other than that, we didn't have anything else on the islands except squirrels and mice, no big animals.

We enjoyed feeding the foxes, taking care of them, raising them; that was pretty nice, easy to do. The killing part wasn't very nice, but we had to do that because that was our living. We

had no one helping us raise and care for the foxes, just my brothers, me, and my papa, that's all. While my brothers, my papa, and I cared for the foxes, my mama cared for the family, like cooking and caring for the younger children. She also helped cook food for the foxes when she had time.

The foxes depended on us for their food; we had to feed them to raise them. We carried lots of food with us when we'd go to feed them. I guess it was hard, but we were young at that time so it didn't matter. We'd take our sled, load it up, and take off. We had a bucket of food for each place we went to; there was a group of foxes in each feeding place. The foxes would sneak around so they saw us, and they would come and eat as soon as we'd take off. They knew when we'd come, they'd be waiting around. We could walk past them while they were eating, but they didn't let us touch them or anything.

Everyday we'd go around the island to every feeding place and feed them. I'd say there was about a dozen places we had to go each day. Some of the places we didn't go to everyday; we'd go maybe once a week 'cause we had to go far away to the other side of the island. The feeding places around our big lake we'd go to every day cause we could cross the lake on a sled over the ice and bring the food.

We'd feed the foxes bran mixed with fish or sometimes mean, like seal meat, sea lion, and fish; mix it with bran and cook it. We'd always go fishing and bring home lots of fish for the foxes. We'd go seal and sea lion hunting also. The foxes ate anything wild. Sometimes we'd bake the fox meal into loaves of bread, then we'd slice it up and give the foxes so much each day. 'Course they ate that!

Once a year, in the fall, we had to go into Chignik and load up with bran and stuff, and take it back to the island. The bran wouldn't last if we didn't mix it with wild food. We had this meal, it's a fox meal with all kinds of grain and bran in it; we mixed it with wild food to make it go further, that way we'd have enough food. I can't remember us ever running out of food for them—we always had some.

When it came time to kill them, we'd set the box traps where we regularly fed them before, at the feeding places. The way we caught the foxes was we'd set a bait in the box trap, and the fox would get in and get the bait. When he gets the bait, he shuts the door, it automatically shuts him in. We'd go there every day, get them out of the trap, and kill 'em. We'd use tongs and get them around the necks, and haul them out through an opening at the top of the box. Then we laid them down and put our knees on their hearts until they died. I didn't like to do that, but we couldn't hurt the skin, we couldn't hit them or anything. This was the way the places that brought them wanted them killed; we couldn't damage the skin. I didn't mind trapping so much because most of the wild animals were already dead when I came to trap. I didn't have to kill 'em. But when you fox farm, you have to take the fox out and kill it, that wasn't very nice. That was the bad thing of fox farming.

The foxes were full grown when we killed them, but I really don't know what age they were or anything. We didn't kill the very young ones; they had to be maybe a year or so. I don't know how my papa could tell, but he used to know. I think we could kill them about December; I'm not sure but it was in the middle of the winter sometime. I think my pap killed about fifty foxes each time, once a year. I think it was around that much.

I didn't do much of the cleaning on the foxes, my papa did that. I had to kill the foxes, but I didn't help clean them. My brothers and Papa did that. After we skinned the foxes, we just threw the carcasses in the dump; my papa had a place to throw them. The eagles and crows would eat them.

We sent the furs in and would get a check back from the company who bought 'em. At

different times, we got fifty dollars for some furs, and I guess forty. I think they went as high as seventy-five dollars a fur. We got a good price, I know! Some were better than others, thicker fur. The heavier the fur, the more they cost. We sent our furs to, I think, Seattle Fur Exchange and to New York. We sent some to New York, but most of them went to Seattle Fur Exchange. It wasn't very easy at that time to get a check back; we would get mail maybe once a month. I'd say it was about two or three months before we heard from the fur company since we had sent the furs out.

Before we sent the furs out, we had to clean them, stretch them, and dry them perfectly dry. Then we turned them fur side out, folded them up nice, put them in burlap bags, and sent them out. When we quit fox farming, we just left the rest of the foxes on the island. There was a few foxes on the island when we left, and right now there is still some, but they haven't increased too much, I don't think!

<<< **Previous** <<< **Contents**>>> **Next** >>>

hrs/anecdotes4.htm
Last Updated: 03-Aug-2009

ANIAKCHAK

Beyond the Moon Crater Myth
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape
A Historic Resource Study for Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

HUBBARD'S EXPLORATION (1930-1932)



Site of 1931 eruption, 1932, Bernard Hubbard, S.J. Alaskan Photograph Collection. Photograph courtesy of Santa Clara University Archives. ACK-35-262.

CHAPTER EIGHT
Exploring the Moon Crater of Alaska:
From Foot to Flight

Oh, Father Hubbard. I remember that one plane would come around and. . . we would say, "Look there's a plane," my aunty... or my dad would say, "oh, that's Father Hubbard." We didn't know who Father Hubbard was; we just see the plane flying around.

Christine Martin, resident of Chignik Lake

Father Hubbard's Aniakchak drama unfolded in the early 1930s when he and his team of collegiate explorers made three famous visits to the central Alaska Peninsula. The first came in 1930 when Hubbard and his students spent two weeks in June exploring what they called a

"geological wonder world." The second visit followed Aniakchak's timely eruption on May 1, 1931. For two months that summer, the team explored a world that contrasted greatly with the world they had observed the previous year. Then in 1932, on his third trip to Aniakchak, Hubbard and pilot Frank Dorbandt made a historic first landing of a floatplane on Surprise Lake.

The 1931 eruption of Aniakchak received scant attention in local and national press. As historian Frank Norris notes, "The eruption would doubtless have slipped into ignominy had it not been for the efforts of Father Bernard R. Hubbard." [1] While exploring the Aniakchak Caldera. Hubbard concerned himself more with scaling and filming the active cinder cones inside the crater than conducting scientific experiments. By the late 1930s, when Hubbard was making the lecture circuit rounds, the press began to cover his previous adventures in Aniakchak, praising the Glacier Priest for his daring achievements there. His actual contribution to science, although mentioned time and time again in popular books, articles, and films, rarely appeared in the scientific literature itself. In fact, controversy over Hubbard's claims and the true level of his expertise pursued him for much of his career. [2]

As Hubbard's Glacier Priest became increasingly popular on the lecture circuit, stories of his exciting feats became littered with falsities. *The American Catholic,* for instance, noted that Hubbard's party was the first to scale Aniakchak. [3] Likewise, the *New York Times* declared, "Father Hubbard Tells of Trips of Exploration of Huge Bowls Never Before Invaded by Man." [4] In his best-selling book, *Mush, You Malamutes!,* Hubbard explained why people chose not to live in the Aniakchak region: "Native and white men [Russians] alike avoided the forbidding interior with an almost suppositious dread." [5]

Although the Glacier Priest suggests that his team represented the first "white people" to have ascended into the crater and claims that Aniakchak was "a place nobody knows" in the popular accounts, the historical record shows that both professional and armchair explorers knew about the central Alaska Peninsula for at least a full century before Hubbard visited the crater. During the Russian Period, we know that at least one Russian explorer visited Aniakchak Bay and had spoken to local residents. Von Krusenstern's atlas, published in 1827, noted both "Baie Amah-chack" (Aniakchak Bay) and "C [ap] Koumlick" (Cape Kumlik). [6] Shortly thereafter, Russian surveyors entered the bay. From 1831 to 1832, Ensign Vasiliev of the Imperial Russian Navy mapped the Pacific Coast from Cook Inlet to Cape Kumliun. The results of his work were published in 1836. His survey work was corroborated in the 1840s by the expeditions of Lindenberg and Kashevarov. By 1850, most of the prominent coastal place names, including Kujulik Bay and Amber Bay, had already been recorded. [7] Moreover, by 1895, Russian Orthodox priests knew Aniakchak was a volcano, for that year Father Kedrovskii, while describing his voyage down the western side of the peninsula, noted that "Between Ugashek and Inangashek is Mashkhik [Meshik] Bay, located at the foot of an extinct volcano." [8] That "extinct" volcano was undoubtedly Aniakchak.





Aerial view to northeast over Birthday Pass, the 1931 cone is at the lower left, ca. 1931. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., Alaskan Photograph Collection. Photograph courtesy of Santa Clara University Archives. ACK-00-1 67.

American trappers and fishermen were also aware of Aniakchak long before Father Hubbard explored the region. It was well known that local trappers—both Native and non-Native—traversed the land surrounding the crater as they hunted for the region's fur-bearing animals. The Alaska Commercial Company operated at least one trading post at Sutkhum, and by 1917, the commercial fishing industry had established the first fish traps in Aniakchak Bay. Despite Hubbard's claims, the scientific community knew of Aniakchak as early as 1919. The famed Katmai explorer, Robert F. Griggs, identified the Caldera and called the formation the "old Crater." Then, in 1921, oil prospector W.W. French actually entered the Caldera. However, it was not until 1922 that the Aniakchak Caldera was officially placed on the map by USGS surveyors. That summer, a party of six men headed by R.H. Sargent, a topographer, and Walter R. Smith, a geologist, surveyed the eastern portion of the peninsula from Kanatak southwest to Chignik, looking for commercial-size oil deposits. Three years later, another six-man party, headed by Sargent and geologist Russell Knappen, surveyed both sides of the peninsula from Mr. Chiginagak southwest to Mt. Veniaminof. Sargent and Smith's expedition found no oil, but it did report the discovery of a large "extinct" volcano," the Aniakchak Caldera, located midway between the Bristol Bay and Pacific coast. By 1930, then, Aniakchak had been well known by corporate, federal, and international interests for several decades.

* * *

Father Hubbard, as his famous moniker "the Glacier Priest" implies, first came to Alaska to study glaciers. His initial field explorations concentrated on the Juneau Icefield, but a visit in 1929 to the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes in the Katmai region shifted his intellectual interest. The "terrible grandeur" of the devastated landscape intrigued the priest to such a degree that his research activities for the next several years were dedicated to the volcanoes of the Alaska Peninsula. [9] As Hubbard explained in 1930, "I saw the Valley of the Smokes

and Katmai's crater last year. I was convinced Alaska had nothing further in the way of surprises to offer. But on my return from that trip I learned of the Moon Craters." [10]

By a stroke of luck, Father Hubbard's timely visits to the central Alaska Peninsula in 1930 and 1931 documented Aniakchak "before and after" a relatively small eruption occurred during the late spring of 1931. Hubbard, with typical flair for the dramatic, labeled the eruptive landscapes "Paradise Found" and "Paradise Lost." According to scientists, Hubbard's fortuitous findings—especially the photographs he took of them—are his most significant contribution to science, for the photos document life in the crater before and after the eruption and provide an important benchmark by which to judge the rate at which vegetation and wildlife would return to the devastated Caldera. [11]

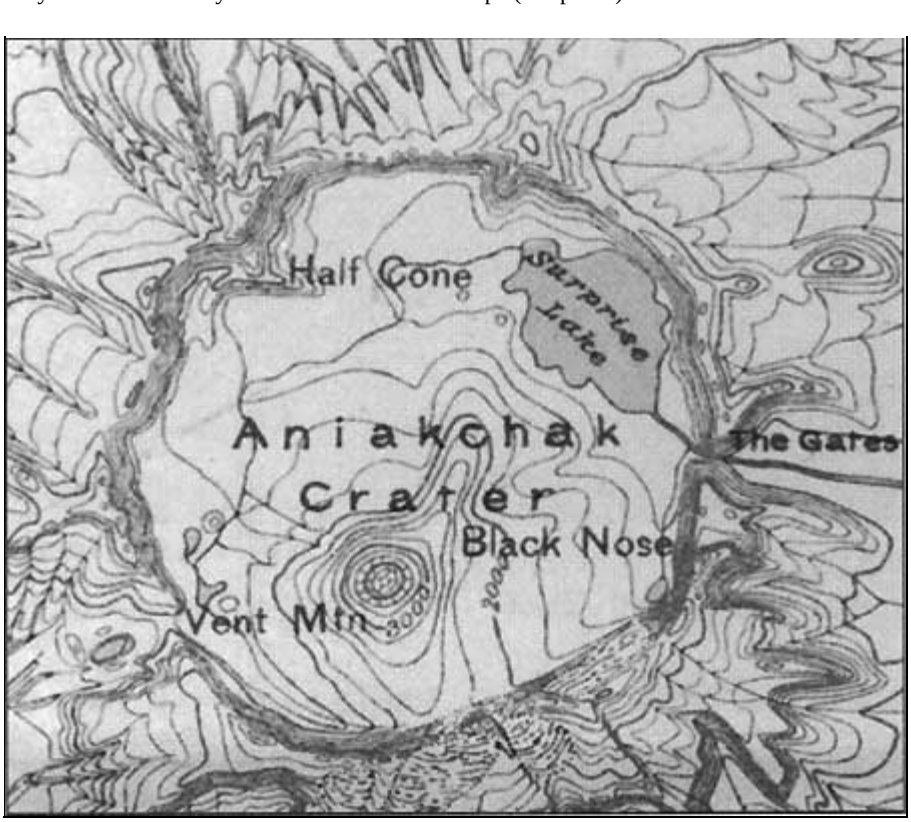
Although such data remains significant to modern scientists, in 1931 Aniakchak had made the Glacier Priest genuinely famous for far different reasons. An article that appeared in *American Magazine* in 1935 declared, "Father Bernard Hubbard is the world's most daring explorer: [He is] the first man to paddle a canoe in a lake in the fiery pit of Mt. Katmai in Alaska. He has singed his whiskers flying in a plane over boiling lava beds. [He even] Took the first pictures inside a volcano." [12] Similarly, *Current Biography* noted in 1943 that Hubbard was a true celebrity because the Glacier Priest "flew over Aniakchak, the Alaskan 'moon crater,' which had been giving the greatest eruption of modern times." [13] And, *Literary Digest* in an article entitled "They Stand Out From the Crowd," noted that "Father Bernard R. Hubbard, the 'glacier priest,' climbs into the craters of live Alaskan volcanoes and calls it fun." [14] Indeed, whether ascending the crater on foot or in daring flight, Hubbard knew that Aniakchak would be his crowning achievement and claim to certain fame.

1930: A World Inside a Mountain

In June, 1930, Hubbard arrived at Chignik on a steamer that had set out from San Francisco earlier that May. He arrived at the cannery town with four student assistants: Roderick (Red) A. Chisholm; Rod's younger brother, Kenneth Chisholm; James Barton; and Charles L. Bartlett. Hubbard referred to this group as his "usual quartet of Santa Clara athletes." Each one was in "perfect physical condition" and topped Hubbard's own six feet by two or three inches. [15]

Instead of recruiting companions on site as he had done in Juneau, Hubbard assembled his team from Santa Clara University. The first of these, Roderick Chisholm, was Santa Clara's All-American football star. [16] As Price points out, choosing Chisholm was a clever publicity stroke for Hubbard. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Santa Clara was a national football powerhouse. Football had catapulted Catholic colleges into the national spotlight at that time and had sent their name recognition skyrocketing. "For Hubbard to travel with Chisholm," suggests Price "was for him to hitch his star to an already famous name." [17]



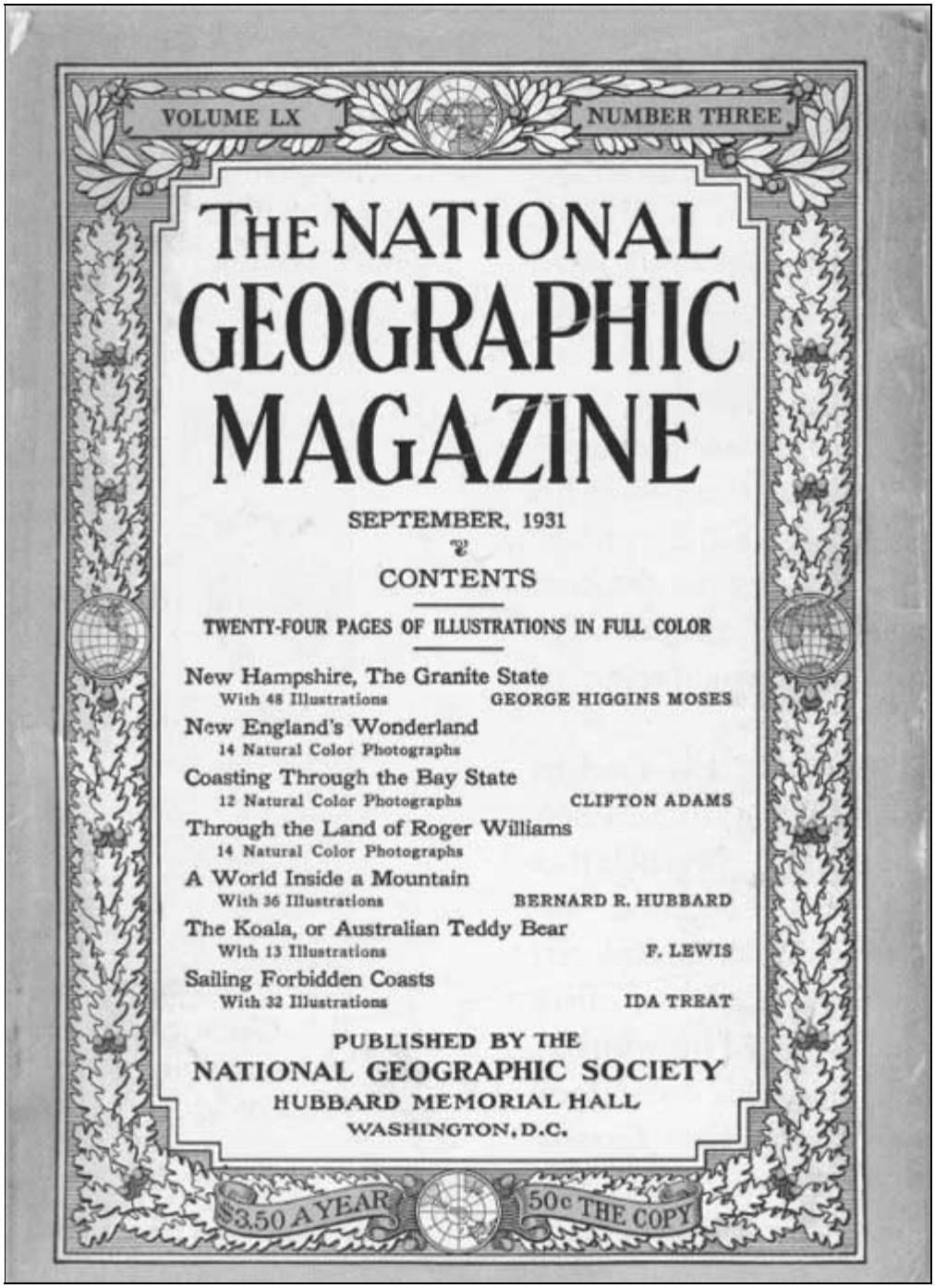


U.S. Geological Survey, 1927, Reconnaissance topographic map of the Aniakchak District, Alaska, Scale 1:250,000, unnumbered.

Another famous name Hubbard hoped to link with his own was the newspaper tycoon, William R. Hearst. The Glacier Priest confidently believed that Hearst would sponsorhim with $25,000 in equipment "for merely the privilege of publishing my scientific findings." [18] When no windfalls from Hearst materialized, Hubbard arranged his transportation directly with the Alaska Packers Association, which operated a cannery in Chignik and maintained fish traps in Aniakchak Bay. According to Price, this was the beginning of a mutually beneficial arrangement between Hubbard and the Alaska Packers Association. While Hubbard secured transportation and field support from the fish canners, in return, Alaska Packers acquired Hubbard's Glacier Priest persona as a voice of support for its commercial enterprises in Alaska. In his 1935 account of his Alaska travels, *Cradle of the Storms,* Hubbard devoted an entire chapter entitled "Salmon" to the fishing industry. During the statehood debates, the priest spent time lobbying in Washington D.C. on thepowerful salmon packers' behalf. Hubbard even made a documentary about the canned salmon industry called *Alaska's Silver Millions,* which highlighted the fish canners economic contribution to the northern territory. The commercial-ridden film integrated scenes of Aniakchak Caldera with images of a mechanized, modern salmon cannery. While narrating the film, Hubbard claimed:

> The Bureau of Fisheries was wisely established in 1924 to study the question [of salmon conservation] thoroughly and to use the necessary means to preserve this great national asset. Most people do not realize how valuable this asset is. Secretary of State Seward, when he purchased Alaska in 1867 from Russia, paid $7,200,000 for it, in spite of much uniform criticism—such as has lasted even to this day—to the effect that Alaska is an icebox only fit for Eskimos in igloos. Even if this ungrounded criticism were true, even if the whole territory of Alaska —instead of being a magnificently forested land full of minerals and agricultural wealth—were actually only an ice cap, it would have been worth its purchase

price for the value of its adjacent waters alone. [19]



National Geographic Magazine, "A World Inside a Mountain," September, 1931.

With a deal made and agreements struck, on a sunny June day in 1930, an Alaska Packers tender dropped off the explorers and their gear onto a beach at the mouth of the Aniakchak River. Quickly the quartet loaded their equipment, weighing a total of 1,020 pounds, onto a fifteen-foot-open boat, powered only by a much-overextended outboard motor, and began the slow chug up the Aniakchak River. As the Santa Clarans ascended, the river became much more crooked and gray with ash. They noted salmon swimming up river to their spawning grounds and gulls and eagles soaring overhead, waiting for their moment to catch dinner. While moving further inland, Hubbard began to notice the strange beauty of the volcanic landscape:

Presently we were bucking rapids, struggling on a crest of whitecaps between canyon walls of ash pumice and honeycombed lava. These strange pallid gorges were more than 100 feet deep and shut out every surge of vegetable and animal life. Low in their walls were tunnels through which subterranean steams poured into the river. [20]



Trek into the Caldera, 1930. National Geographic Magazine, "A World Inside a Mountain," September, 1931.

For two days, the explorers chugged their way up the river. At the junction of the Aniakchak River and Albert Johnson Creek, about halfway to the crater, the boat could no longer navigate the winding rapids. There, the team drew out the boat; spent the night along the edge of the river; and set out with one-hundred-pound packs the next morning on foot. As they trekked up the foothills flanking Aniakchak, the men observed the grand beauty of the surrounding countryside, highlighted by the triangular-shaped Pinnacle Mountain. They tramped through meadow after meadow of wildflowers, and were surprised by the region's active wildlife. The men saw numerous ptarmigan and grouse, foxes trotted along their path, while marmots whistled as they went by. "We were in an Eden," recalled Hubbard, "inhabited by birds, nesting water fowl, and the tamest wild animals." [21] At a creek Hubbard knew as Plenty Bear, the party encountered several brown bears fishing for salmon. Unfortunately, these bears were not as tame as the wild critters the team had met previously. "On the night before we reached the crater," Hubbard explained, "a big bull bear charged our tent and I was forced to shoot him." [22]

For three days, the men hiked towards the crater, growing weary under the weight of heavy packs. Then, as they neared a large gouge in the crater wall, the Gates of Aniakchak, the

party was struck by the first major storm of the trip. In Hubbard's words, "a heavy wind had risen, and peculiar, disk-shaped clouds came rolling in from the Bering Sea." [23] Although they set up their tent in the lee of the winds, they still had to pile rocks around its edges to keep it from blowing away. The following morning, Hubbard, Chisholm and Bartlett followed the tracks of a mother bear and cub through the Gates and entered the Caldera for the first time. Although the winds had ceased outside, the three men found a terrific storm raging inside the walls of the crater. Hubbard likened the Caldera to a "caldron of boiling clouds." [24] Describing this phenomena, he noted, "A dark, lowering mass of clouds covered something immediately in front of us. Cloud Niagara's flowed over the 3,000-foot rim to fill the floor of the crater, while the wind tore the vapor billows to pieces and sent them hurtling across the crater floor to swoop up to the rim on the farther side, more than six miles away." [25] Forced to turn back, the three men reluctantly returned to their tent until the next day.

The following morning proved to be a much better day. The party woke to sunny skies and hurriedly packed their gear. They entered the Caldera for the second time and immediately viewed its most prominent feature. Climbing a six hundred-foot cliff near the Gates to obtain a wider outlook, Hubbard and his party observed for the first time the majestic snow-covered Vent Mountain, "a volcano," Hubbard noted with awe, "within a volcano!" Volcanic ejecta washed from Vent Mountain's slopes formed a long alluvial fan, which Hubbard suggested "resembled a giant spider web lying in wait for prey." They then noticed that reflected in the calm waters of a two-and-a-half-mile lake was a mirror image of Vent Mountain. According to Hubbard, this lake, known today as Surprise Lake, "looked as if a child had colored it." Half the lake was a deep robin's egg blue with crimson shores and the other half was bright orange with yellow shores. They confirmed that Surprise Lake was the headwater of the Aniakchak River. In its escape, the lake water flowed past two cinder cones, one four hundred feet high and the second eight hundred feet high, and then made a mad dash through the Gates on its journey out to sea. [26] That night the party camped at the head of Surprise Lake, where coves provided some shelter from any foreseeable storm.

For the next two weeks, Hubbard's party explored the world inside the Caldera. "We had expected to find nothing but sterile wastes inside the volcano" recalled Hubbard, "and the amount and variety of life astonished us." [27] The party encountered numerous songbirds, eagles, ravens, ducks, seagulls, salmon, foxes, rabbits, and bears. Hubbard was especially impressed by the variety of flowers, particularly the local orchids that grew in the gullies near Surprise Lake. Besides wildlife, Hubbard and his companions were amazed by the geological features encased in Aniakchak. The party scaled and studied Vent Mountain; they photographed a wall of volcanic glass; and they even discovered fossils embedded in the sedimentary strata of a distinct feature known as Black Nose.





"Airplane and camp in the crater of an active volcano" Bernard Hubbard, S.J., Alaskan Photograph Collection. Photograph courtesy of Santa Clara University Archives. ACK-00-121.

Still, their most important discovery by far came when the explorers noticed that in a multicolored crescent sub-crater, Aniakchak puffed out fumes of super-heated steam. Apparently the floor, between the high ridges of lava, was dotted with fumaroles. The formations were brilliantly incrusted with crimson, orange, and blue and smelled strongly of sulfur. "Naturally we were enthusiastic over our latest find, recalled Hubbard. [28] "Joyful over this wonderful discovery, we ran forward shouting at the top of our lungs: She's Active! She's Alive!" [29]

During the winter of 1930-1931, Hubbard began to bring Aniakchak into the public spotlight. National exposure of the 1930 summer exploration included articles in the *Saturday Evening Post* and the *New York Times.* Hubbard even prepared an article for the *National Geographic Magazine*, which included numerous photographs he had taken inside the crater. Meanwhile, he planned an ambitious itinerary to the Interior Alaska missions, to begin in January 1931, and a return to Aniakchak in early June of that year. Nearing the time of departure, Hubbard dramatically predicted to the Associated Press that an eruption in the Aleutians was imminent. Accordingly, the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* carried his announcement on the front page. [30]



Orchids in Aniakchak before the 193 eruption. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., Alaskan Photograph Collection. Photograph courtesy of Santa Clara University Archives. ACK-00-119.

1931 Aniakchak Erupts

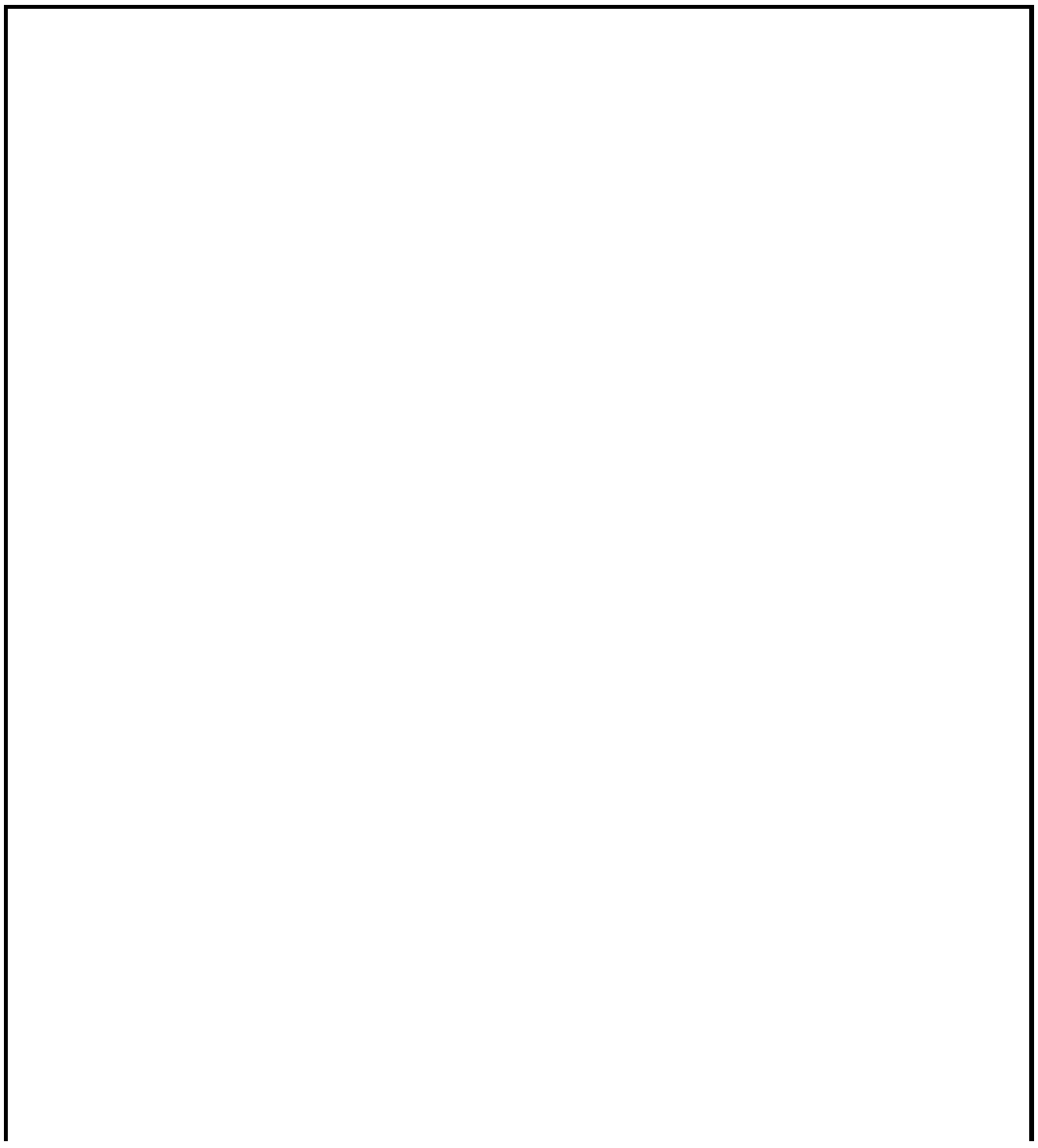
> *He predicted that Aniakchak was going to erupt, well, it hadn't erupted in 250 years, but if you can picture that volcanic rift, which is the Alaska Peninsula, it's a series of volcanoes, one into the other, and it was popping like a calliope, so I think Father Hubbard said, "It's got to be Aniakchak's turn."*
>
> —Bill Regan, interviewed by Julie O'Keefe on February 8, 1985.

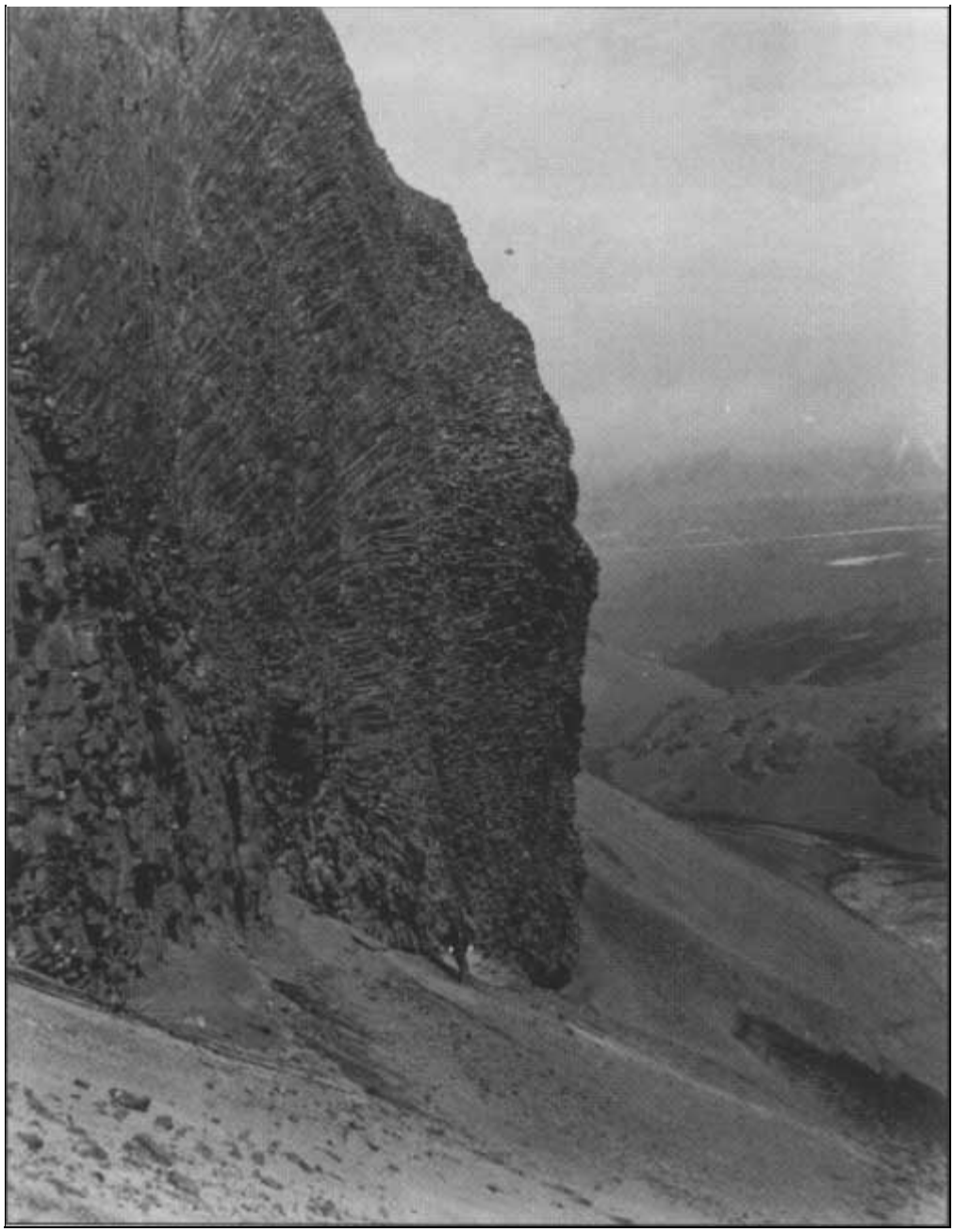
On Friday, December 19, 1930, the *New York Times* announced, "Father Hubbard Off Today on Trip to World's Largest Moon Crater in Alaska." According to the *Times,* the trek to the "land of perpetual ice and snow" would take Hubbard to a dozen isolated missions and finally to a "volcano crater inside of which he will live for two months." Hubbard's plan was, indeed, ambitious. "When the ice begins to break up next spring," reported the *Times,* "Father Hubbard will arrive at the Alaskan peninsula, where he will meet Professor R.A. Chisholm, former football star, and others, and a second expedition will begin to a region where 'geology is in the making.'" They will go to the "largest living crater in the world, the 'moon crater' of Aniakchak, and for two months will live inside this stupendous creation of rock, lava, glaciers, and hot mud." Hubbard explained to the press that he hoped to be repaid for the dangers and hardships his party will undoubtedly encounter by obtaining the "first complete record of the interesting scientific features of the crater so that a report may be made to the Federal Government at Washington." [31]

That winter, Hubbard took the Alaska Railroad to Nenana where he met up withFather

Joseph F. McElmeels, S.J., and journeyed to Nulato by way of thirteen sled dogs. From Nulato, Hubbard traveled to the Bering Sea coast at Unalakleet, and then back to the Interior to Holy Cross mission, a small Yup'ik village perched along the banks of the Yukon River. By April, just after the Easter holidays, Hubbard reached his destination, having survived weeks on the trail with a strong-headed dog team, a race against the spring thaws, and even a bout with the flu. Still, thanks to nothing more than pure luck, Hubbard's most thrilling adventure was about to begin.

While Hubbard spent the spring sledding through Alaska's interior, his team of explorers left Seattle on May 9, 1931, en route to Chignik on the steamer *Starr*. Similar to the previous summer, the 1931 team consisted of very young students. Repeating his adventures with Father Hubbard was Ken Chisholm, Rod's brother, now a nineteen-year-old freshman at the University of San Francisco. The second was another nineteen year-old, a Santa Claran named William (Bill) Regan. Rounding out the exploration quartet was Richard (Dick) Douglas, of Georgetown University, who was also the great grandson of Steven A. Douglas, the famous Illinois senator. Douglas, who had previously been to Alaska on a hunting trip to Kodiak, had met Hubbard while the priest was on one of his lecture tours to the Georgetown campus. Impressed with the young man's knowledge of Alaska, Hubbard invited Douglas to join his Aniakchak team. The youngest members of the party, Chisholm and Regan, especially bonded on the trip. Years later Regan recalled, "We really became buddies, and we both had our nineteenth birthdays inside the volcano, which is kind of interesting." [32]





Ancient lava flow in wall at Half Cone, 1931. Bernard Hubbard, S.J. Alaskan Photograph Collection. Photograph courtesy of Santa Clara University Archives. ACK-00-102.

As the young adventurers sailed down the Alaska Peninsula coastline, they began to notice that the mountains looked very gray—even for early May. "I strained my eyes," recalled Dick Douglas. "A glacier that filled a cleft between two peaks looked almost black. In another half hour we knew something was wrong. The light was fading, but even though the mountains were dim in the dusk, they should not have looked as black as they did. Then, as the *Starr* carried us farther down the Peninsula, we realized that the mountains were covered with ashes! Obviously, some volcano was in fresh eruption." [33]

When the *Starr* docked at the Alaska Packers cannery in Chignik on May 20, the party found out which volcano had blown. Indeed, on May 1, 1931, at 10 a.m., a dense column of steam had shot up from the Aniakchak volcano. This rose for two hours in billowing clouds, followed by a big blast at noon. A dense black cloud rose over 20,000 feet, spread out like a mushroom, and started to descend. The earth shook and from the central region, and there

was a fiery display of lava bombs making trajectories. Lightning and thunder added to the clamor of incessant detonations from the volcano, accompanied by the crash of falling rocks. Then came light cinders, at first the size of peas and then larger. According to Captain Halveorsen, the APA cannery's superintendent, the fall of ash at Chignik, located forty-five miles south, southwest of Aniakchak, was reported to be a pound per hour for each square foot of land. At Ugashik the ashfall was heavier, and in the country between Kodiak and the head of Bristol Bay, a mantle of ash a quarter-inch-deep formed. Light ash fell in the interior of Alaska at a distance of three hundred miles. Showers of pisolitic mud balls fell like raindrops and buried the neighboring snow-covered country and the glaciers under a gray pall.

On May 2, 1931, the radio operator at Kanatak, ninety miles northeast of Aniakchak, reported ashfall there. On May 13, the ash from Aniakchak was more than a half-inch deep and very black, falling continuously at Squaw Harbor in Unga, approximately 140 miles southwest of Aniakchak. The ash that fell at such great distances was fine as flour.

Eruptions continued until May 11, when a large blast made it pitch dark for several hours at distances sixty miles away. On May 12, a freighter at sea off the Aleutian Islands received a fall of sand during a storm. On Bristol Bay, located north of the volcano, witnesses reported a field of floating pumice five miles in diameter. Dense clouds of gas and smoke continued to rise from the central peninsula. Then, on May 20, another eruption caused an explosion that was heard two hundred miles away. For several days more, the Ugashik cannery, fifty-three miles north, northeast from Aniakchak, reported rumbling like distant surf. [34]

Shocked and in disbelief with the eruption of Aniakchak, Douglas recalled, "Our summer plans were probably completely 'shot'!" [35] Hubbard, on the other hand, had telegraphed his waiting companions. His message stated a more optimistic and ambitious plan for the summer:

> HURRAH FOR ANIAKCHAK STOP
> WE WILL SEE WHAT IS INSIDE STOP
> WILL JOIN YOU WHEN ICE BREAKS ON YUKON STOP
> WAIT FOR ME. [36]

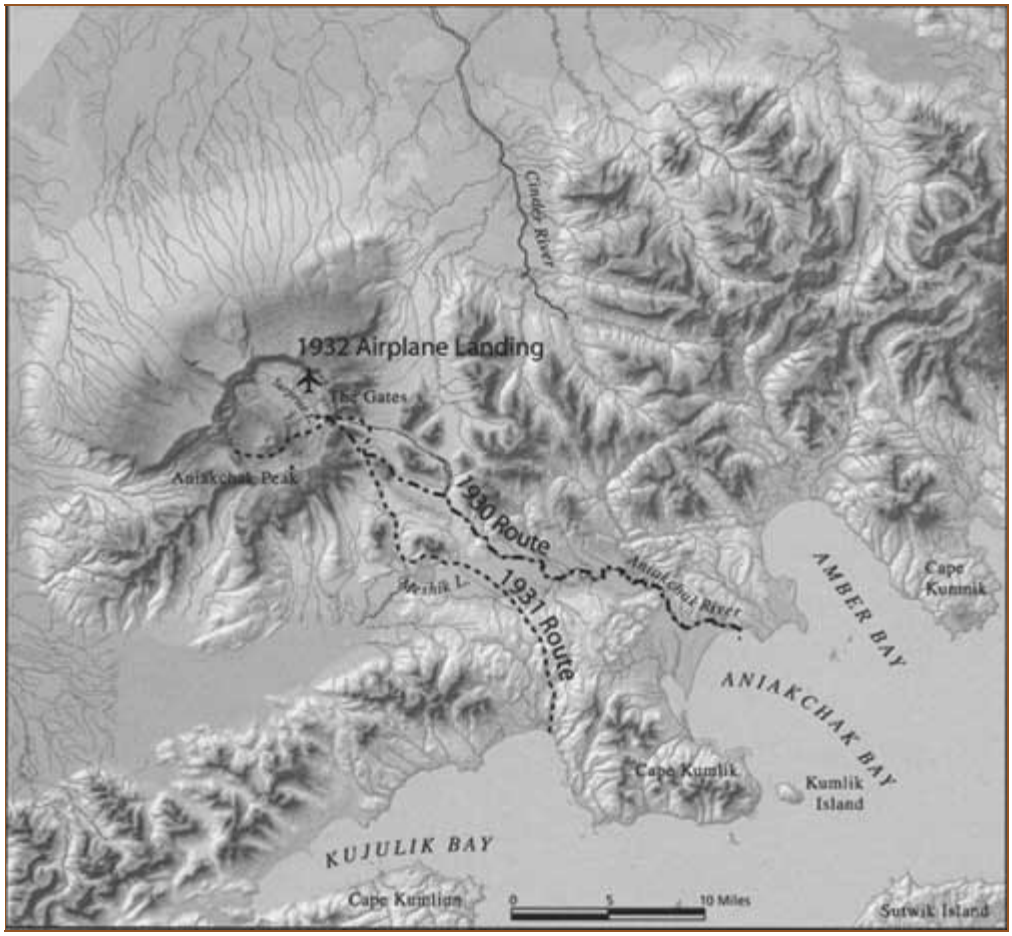
The First Recorded Flight Down the Alaska Peninsula

On June 2, 1931, Harry Blunt, chief pilot of the Pacific International Airways, his co-pilot, Al Monson, and Father Hubbard left Holy Cross on a historic floatplane flight to Chignik [37] Although pilots like Russell Merrill and Ben Eielson pioneered air travel across Alaska in the 1920s, none had flown farther southwest than Kodiak. [38] According to Hubbard, not only was this his first airplane ride, but this was also the first flight ever made along the Bering Sea. "I will never forget that second of June, 1931," wrote Hubbard. "To be perfectly candid—I was scared half to death!" [39]

By 1931, airplanes were a significant form of transportation in Alaska. Ever since James V. Martin flew a Gage-Martin tractor biplane for a few minutes over Fairbanks in 1913, the airplane has proven to be uniquely suited to the northern environment. Pioneering pilots like Blunt found their niche hauling freight and people to the hundreds of islands and roadless communities that dotted the region. While docked for a short time in Seward that summer, Hubbard's companion, Dick Douglas, observed just how "air minded" Alaska had become:

> Planes come and go, hopping off for Fairbanks, Nome, the Yukon or anywhere the traveler may wish to go. In Alaska, a trip over mountains that would cause most fliers to hesitate, with hardly any landing fields and with fog that rolls over the peaks without warning, is just another flight and nothing unusual. Nowhere, I

believe, does air travel mean more of a saving in time and effort than in Alaska. A white mid-winter trial, with its miles of lonely mushing over snow and ice, stretching into weeks of hardship, becomes a six-hour journey in swift planes that take off after gliding over the snow on skis. In summer pontoons take the place of skis and the planes land on the lakes and rivers that dot and streak the territory.



Hubbard's 1930, 1931, and 1932 visits to Aniakchak. By B. Bundy. *(click on image for a PDF version)*

On this particular historic flight, the crew and their famous passenger sped down the Yukon River, headed over the divide to the Valley of the Kuskokwim, and then made their way towards the Bering Sea. They skirted the capes and headlands of the rugged shoreline, passed over the reindeer herds grazing near Togiak Bay, and refueled in Dillingham. As they crossed Bristol Bay, weather became so thick that they had to land in Ugashik Bay. Weather again forced them down in a lagoon, and while Blunt and Hubbard slept in a lone trapper's cabin, Monson spent an all-night vigil protecting the plane from harsh winds. The next day, Blunt decided to drop off some of the heavier gear at the village of Port Heiden to ensure safe passage over the mountains to Chignik. It was there that Hubbard settled on his plan for exploring the erupting volcano: "I was convinced that an airplane could land on the bottom of the crater floor," he declared. "[I] expected to make the first landing of a plane inside an erupting volcano a climax to my year's exploration." [40]



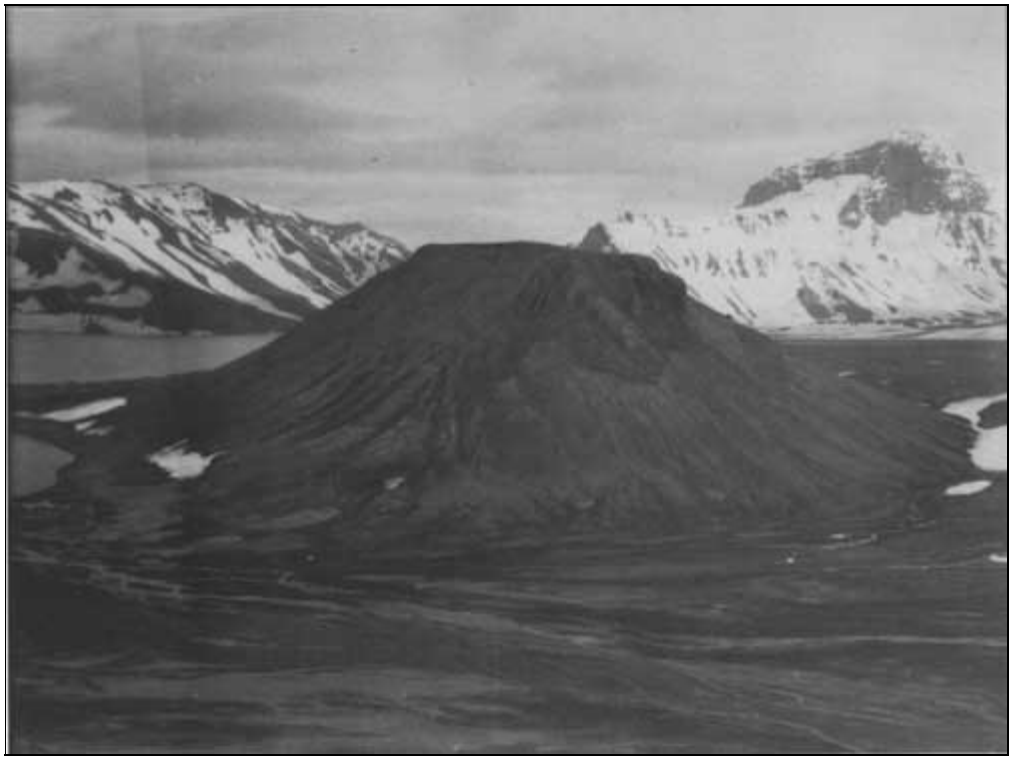
Hubbard's base camp at Kujulik Bay, 1931. Bernard Hubbard, S.J. Alaskan Photograph Collection. Photograph courtesy of Santa Clara University Archives. ACK-00-141.

Exploring Aniakchak: From Above and Below

The original plan was for Harry Blunt and Al Monson to fly the entire crew and their gear into the crater by landing on Surprise Lake. On a sunny June 10, Douglas, Regan and Chisholm departed Chignik on the cannery tender *Dora*, bringing with them the gear and food. They made a trapper's cabin, situated along the North Fork River in Kujulik Bay, their headquarters where they would await Father Hubbard and the pilots, and begin their adventures into the erupting volcano. The cabin in which they waited belonged either to Alec Brandal or Frank Grunert, both of whom had trapped in the region for years. Meanwhile, Hubbard took off on the plane with Blunt and Monson to film Aniakchak from the air, and to survey a good site to land later with the equipment. [41]

Once in the air, the plane headed directly towards the Aniakchak Crater. According to Hubbard, the countryside appeared more desolate as the crater, looming black in the distance, neared. As the plane roared into the Aniakchak River Canyon and toward the rift in the rim, the pilots and passenger alike began to note the intensive odor of sulfuric gases. As they climbed directly above Black Nose, the highest point of the rim, the crater opened up before them. Hubbard described the fiery scene:

> The awfulness of the sight stunned me. It was the most terrible prelude of hell I could ever imagine. Last year it was a plant, fish, and animal world inside of a mountain where color and variety abounded, in the thirty-square-mile area closed in by 3,000-foot walls. Now it was the abomination of desolation with everything blotted out. Glaciers and snowfields all around the twenty-one-mile rim were black. Vent Mountain rising in the crater's center opened up its top like a huge black maw to swallow us. Steaming bulges, and cracks and hills of lava covered the southern area of the crater floor and a huge three-mile-circumference hole was blown out of the side. From it were curling brown gases, and a bluish haze, indicative of tremendous temperature, rose into the air. This last great pit was the cause of all our trouble and nearly proved our undoing. [42]



Bolshoi Dome from Vulcan Dome, Black Nose is in the background, ca. 1930. Bernard Hubbard, S.J. Alaskan Photograph Collection. Photograph courtesy of Santa Clara University Archives. ACK-00-147.



"Dancing the Devil's Mazurka," Alaska Odyssey.

As they flew over the erupting crater, the plane became caught in a down draft. Hubbard

suddenly realized that the volcano was pulling the plane into the steaming crater. Instead of struggling against the force of gravity, to regain air speed, a quick-thinking Blunt drove straight down towards the crater and was able to right the plane. As quickly as they entered the crater, the plane exited through the Gates. Hubbard later remarked, "Aniakchak was not yet fit for aerial exploration....It was not to have been the climax." [43]



At the bottom of the 1931 pit, ca. 1932. Alaskan Photograph Collection. Bernard Hubbard, S.J. Photograph courtesy of Santa Clara University Archives. ACK-32-270.

Blunt's narrow escape from the crater forced the group to abandon any hope of landing inside Aniakchak. A new plan was devised: Blunt would land the party on Meshik Lake, located only fifteen miles from the rim and then fly over to Port Heiden for the supplies cached there before he, Monson and Hubbard had reached Chignik. After the Meshik Lake drop-off, Blunt and Monson would return to Anchorage, to return in mid-July to pick up the explorers. This meant that the team, instead of flying into the volcano, would spend much time hauling gear to the crater on foot.

Bright and early on the morning of June 12, Father said Mass at the Kujulik Bay cabin. Then, while Blunt and Monson worked on the plane, the quartet loaded their packs and headed inland, into the coastal-barrier mountains on their first reconnaissance trip to the crater. The men proceeded towards the Aniakchak River valley, with sunshine pouring down upon them. "We soon wished that it would change to rain," explained Hubbard. "Every time our feet descended on the mossy tundra, clouds of volcanic ash rose up, filling our eyes and ears and throats, and making our hair like wire brushes." [44] Douglas had a difficult time navigating the grassy hummocks. "As I struck the moss, it gave way beneath my feet and I sank to my hips in the cold black muck beneath the green surface." [45]

Though Pinnacle Mountain still marked the way, the meadows of wildflowers had been replaced by fields of ash. Hubbard described the landscape as "more like a scene in the Great American Desert than an Alaskan landscape," but even so, the group encountered numerous ducks, ptarmigan, and herds of caribou along their route. They even spotted bear tracks

crisscrossing the valley floor. "We saw seventeen Kodiak bear, and lots of caribou and we killed them and ducks," remembered Regan. "We had permission to live off the land, kill any animals or birds that we saw." [46] They decided to set up camp, which they named Caribou Camp, in honor of the animal Ken shot for dinner that night. They were a day's journey from the crater rim.



Surprise Lake, Courtesy of the Southwest Alaska Network, National Park Service.

The next day, after several hours of hard work, the party made it to the crater's edge. They ascended under the shadow of Black Nose, a feature that thrusts its dark shape higher the any point on the rim. Looking upon Aniakchak for the first time, Douglas noted, "Near the center of the crater floor rose Vent Mountain. . .there was a huge crack down its side where the mountain had torn itself nearly in two [and] where the earth had shook and moved a month before. But it was not Vent Mountain that had darkened the sky all along the Alaska Peninsula and rained ashes two hundred miles away. . .the cause of the destruction was far away, nearly five miles from us across the crater floor. There near the rim was a new pit, two miles wide, spitting up columns of white smoke and steam." [47] According to Hubbard, "There was the new Aniakchak, but [it] was the abominations of desolation, it was the prelude of hell." [48] That night the party made their way back to Caribou Camp. The next morning in a "southeaster" rainstorm, they began the trek back to Kujulik Bay to collect the heavier equipment. They then returned to the crater for what Hubbard described as a more "thorough exploration of the inside of Aniakchak." [49]

On June 16, Blunt and Monson flew Chisholm to Meshik Lake with the gear. The weather, however, turned stormy, and Hubbard, Regan and Douglas were forced to wait it out for several days at Kujulik. With the weather only worsening, the stragglers were forced to hike to their Meshik Lake base, eighteen miles away, where Chisholm had pitched camp. On June 21, the first day of summer and the longest day of the year, the three men followed a trapper's winter trail leading from the cabin, as rain pounded down upon them. Instead of following the route of their first trip, they headed farther west, where a long, tundra-covered plateau led the way towards Meshik Lake.

Meshik Lake is considered a divide lake. Johnson Creek flows from one end of the lake, joins the Aniakchak River, and empties into the Pacific Ocean. From the other end of the lake, Meshik River descends a long tundra slope until it reaches the Bering Sea. The lake is fed by steams from Pinnacle and Wedge mountains, two peaks rising four thousand feet from the valley floor. The lake lies close to the foot of the mountains, separated by a small stream. The stream, called Hidden Creek, crosses into flat tundra, which lies at the foot of the ridges that run up the volcano's rim. "The lake itself is very blue and will be a fine place to land the plane," recalled Regan. [50] Each man felt that this was an excellent spot for their new headquarters.



Returning from historic flight into the Aniakchak Crater, from left to right: Father Hubbard, Ken Chisholm, Peterson, Rod Chisholm, Levin, Father Galtes, 1932. Bernard Hubbard, S.J. Alaskan Photograph Collection. Photograph courtesy of Santa Clara University Archives. ACK-35-263.

When Hubbard, Douglas and Regan arrived to the Meshik Lake camp, Chisholm filled them in on his experiences over the past few days. Not only did he kill three bears in four shots —"a plenty good record," according to Regan—but he also managed to burn "the roof off" a Native *ha ra ha ra.* [51] As Douglas retells it, Chisholm had pitched the tent near the small dwelling made from alder polls and blocks of sod. According to Douglas, "The hut had been abandoned for the summer by its trapper owner. The stove made the *barabara* more comfortable in the dreary weather than his drafty tent, so Ken slept in the*barabara."* Apparently, Chisholm had fallen asleep during the afternoon, forgetting the fire in the stove. He awoke to find one wall blazing and the roof on fire. Although the party did not repair the *barabara,* they did leave the trapper their tent and quantity of supplies. [52]

The next day, the party loaded their backboards with movie cameras, several thousand feet of film, still cameras, film packs, tent, dehydrated food, and a change of clothes. As Regan recalled, "We had to carry everything with us. We had Father's Mass kit, we had our

photographic equipment and our cameras, we had our guns, and we had powder eggs, powder vegetables, powder soup, dehydrated things." [53] Chisholm even carried a five-gallon can of fuel, for the men believed there would be no wood in the crater.

They hiked all day and set up camp near the Gates and then returned to Meshik Laketo retrieve the rest of their gear. On the morning of June 26, Chisholm, Regan and Douglas hiked back to Kujulik Bay to get the specimen box and camera they had accidentally forgotten in Chignik, and made arrangements for the cannery tender to drop them off at the cabin there. Reaching the cabin, the tired men realized that the cannery had not received their message, and hiked the long eighteen miles back to Meshik empty-handed.

The next morning, the party set out for a week in the crater. Along the way, the men, to their surprise, encountered wildlife near the still steaming crater. They were amused by the antics of several ptarmigan chicks and were startled by the presence of two big brown bears digging in the hillside for ground squirrels. One apparently charged the party, and was shot for dinner that night. By nightfall, they had reached their camp near the Gates and the next morning entered the Caldera. As the sun finally completed its long descent that evening, Regan recorded in his diary a description of a peaceful landscape: "The moon was full tonight and was the most beautiful I have ever seen. The ash in the air made it appear to be solid gold; and as it rose above the peaks and clouds in the east, it made a golden path across the lake." [54] But, once again, bad weather moved in and kept the explorers in camp for three long and grueling days. On the morning of June 30, the men picked their way along the riverbank through the Gates and finally entered the crater. Once inside, the explorers recognized little of the "geological paradise" they discovered the previous summer. Rather, the crater's desolation was as Hubbard described, "Paradise Lost." [55]

"It was like a dream of walking on the moon," recalled Douglas. "Over little mounds of moist black ash, across short stretches of dry gray dust, over small ridges and pits where bits of hot lava had fallen with the ash and burned their way into the snow; with not a sound but the crunch of our feet on the snow beneath the ash." [56] Hubbard especially noted the change from last summer: "Where streams that teemed with spawning salmon had wound to Surprise Lake, where flower-strewn meadows had smiled, where birds and beasts had found food and sanctuary, and pleasant coves along the lake had made inviting camp sites—now all was blotted out in one mighty cataclysm." [57]

With clearing skies above, Hubbard and his crew investigated the volcanic world. One of the first things they noticed was a mass of broken rock that had shaken loose from the stratified cliffs near the Gates. Imbedded in the rocks were fossilized clam and oyster shells, evidence of a time when the central Alaska Peninsula was covered by the Pacific Ocean. Over millions of years, the same subducting forces that created the Aniakchak Volcano had lifted the layers of hardened sea floor, turning it into limestone as it rose, and capturing the ancient sea life in stone for centuries to come. Fossilized animals, however, were not the only evidence of unexpected life in the crater. According to Hubbard, the team unexpectedly observed three more brown bear. According to Bill Regan, "the entire interior of the crater is cobwebbed with them [bear tracks]." When Regan rhetorically asked "What in the world is a bear doing up here?" Hubbard did his best to answer, "It is a surprise to me, but I suppose that bears are curious too, and he wanted to see what Aniakchak was doing." [58]

Leaving the rocks and the bears behind, the explorers chose a path that led to Surprise Lake, which followed the lakeshore all the way to its headwaters. Near the two cinder cones that had been built by much older eruptions, the team discovered a sulfur spring. At the confluence where the mineral-rich spring entered Surprise Lake, the waters were invitingly warm. Without giving it a second thought, the men, especially the more youthful members of the party, decided to strip off their dirty clothes and plunge in. Dick Douglas fondly recalls

the swim as one of the finest experiences in the crater: "[We] rejoiced in our first warm bath in a month." [59]

Fun and refreshment, however, were not what Father Hubbard came to the crater to find. The Glacier Priest wanted to observe the source of the summer's eruption. Thus, it was on July 1, that the explorers reached the climax of their trip—"when we looked into the new smoking crater for the first time." [60] That morning the party set out on a route that made a half circumference of the crater around Vent Mountain. There they found two explosive pits, or what Regan described as "gashes" in the side of Vent Mountain. [61] Lava flows surrounding the pits formed strange shapes, which the men called "Aniakchak's circus." [62] Upon the slopes of Vent Mountain they found their first fumarole. From there they could see the source of the May eruption, nearly three miles away.

With a closer look, it became clear that approaching the explosive crater would be hazardous at best. The eleven-day series of eruptions in May had built a high black wall around the mile-wide pit, which steamed furiously with hundreds of vents and fumaroles. What was marked as a small glacial river on the map, failed to appear at the site; apparently the eruption covered it in several feet of ash. As the team approached the black steaming wall, a blue gas rose into the air accompanied by a great wave of heat. When the men caught the burnt smell of carbon, they scrambled to their feet and tried to run away from the crater. A cloud of carbon dioxide, however, brought them to their knees. Spots blurred their vision and the desire to sleep stole over them. Then, in a moment of good fortune, it began to rain. With the torrents came wind, which cleared the air of the carbon dioxide.

The air that morning was reported "chilly" and luckily for them, rain clouds coming from the Bering Sea poured upon them for most of the day. But, as their strength returned, the rain slackened. Relieved at first, the men began to notice that their clothes dried very quickly—a bit too quickly. As they moved closer to the activities in the large pit, Bill Regan exclaimed, "Hey, what are we getting into? These ashes are hot!" [63] With extreme caution, the men gingerly approached the edge of the still steaming hole. "We gasped!" recalled Douglas:

> Colors—green and yellows and reds that took our breath away! The bottom of the pit was scarcely a hundred feet below us, a gigantic plug of red lava, in tumbled, broken blocks. Around the edge of the plug yellow masses of sulfur boiled and seethed, sending up gases too heavy to rise to the top of the pit; but swirling about over the lava plug like the surf on a coral reef. [64]

The men stood at the edge of the crater for some time. They filmed the explosive pit, but the black and white images could not capture the ongoing drama inside the crater, which Regan described as "a big slag heap of steaming lava, colored red, yellow, green, and brown." [65] Remaining at the pit for as long as possible, at dusk the party victoriously returned to their camp.

After a well-deserved day of rest, the men returned to the crater on July 3rd. As they approached the explosive pit, they encountered a second eruptive pit, almost as large as the crater discovered the previous day. On the day before the 4th of July, Regan realized that they were witnessing Aniakchak's own private fireworks display:

> They called me the "chief chemist," only because I'd just finished taking chemistry from Father Duffy....Here we did make one little mishap. . . Wefirst climbed to the top [of the black wall], it [the steaming pit] was still erupting and we were, obviously..., in it, and we look down and here were these upward coming "greaaat" clouds of purple, brilliant purple gas, and then pretty soon up came a kind of gray-green, and then a bronze and then a brown and I announced

> pontifically to my associates that we were looking at the halogen family, and interestingly enough, it was the halogen family: chlorine, bromine, fluoride, and iodine.

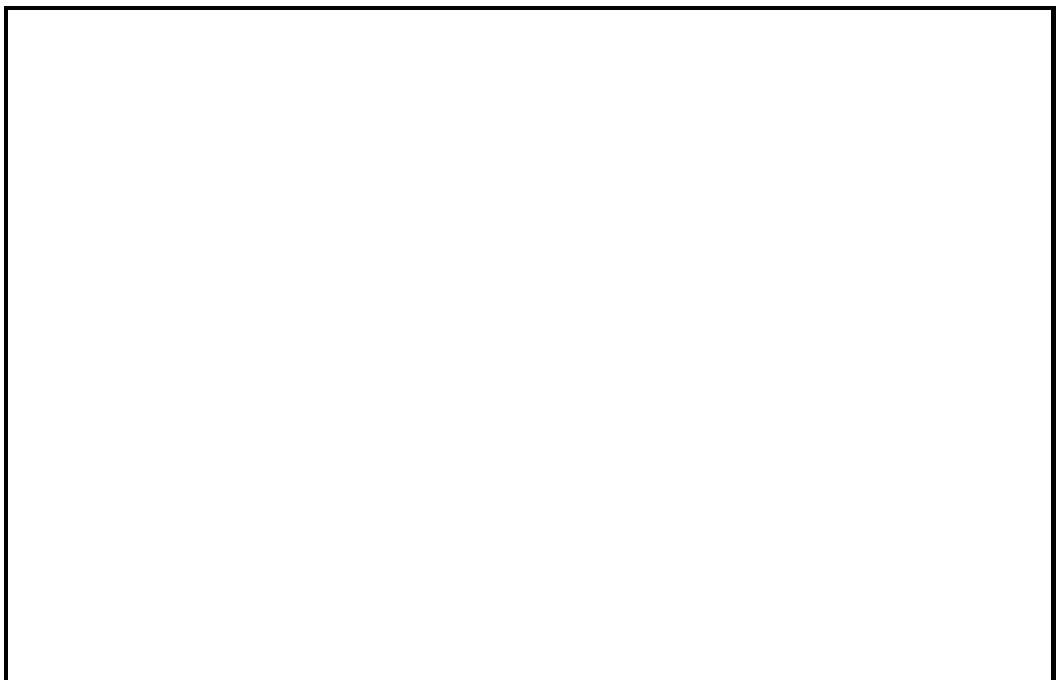
On July 4, the explorers slept soundly until 11 am, rose to a hardy breakfast, and prepared their packs for the long journey back to their Meshik base camp, where they were to meet pilot Harry Blunt the next day. After a frustrating trek through Aniakchak's quick-growing summer vegetation, the men made it to camp at Meshik Lake on time, but Blunt was nowhere to be found. When July 7th went by without sign of the aviator, the men began to worry that something terrible had happened. As food supplies grew slim, the quartet not only grew anxious, but hungry as well. Douglas recalled:

> First we tried the ducks.... [But] they had suddenly acquired a liking for the middle of the lake...We tried in vain to hit the tiny snipe that whistled above the marsh...Every ptarmigan apparently had vanished. Not a single fish would notice our hooks set in the lake. So we ate beans for breakfast and rice for supper; rice for breakfast and beans for supper. [66]

By July 8th, the men began to feel desperate. The lack of food and no sign of the plane were minor considerations compared to the torment that attacked them at night. At sunset, millions of mosquitoes moved into camp and forced each six-foot-sized man to retreat into the small rent. Douglas remembers the horrible sound of buzzing at night:

> The persistent hum of the mosquitoes bothered me more than the bites. To hear a tiny buzzing in the darkness a few inches from your ear, rising to a higher pitch and suddenly ceasing, while you lie still and wonder where you will feel the sting of the mosquito that has lit somewhere on you, is enough to try anyone's patience. [67]

On July 10, just as the hungry crew felled their first caribou in weeks, they heard a more welcome buzz—the roar of the plane's engine landing on the lake. Blunt brought with him a new companion, a young man named Jinx Ames, who served as the flight's mechanic. Blunt also brought the explorers a box filled with lettuce, cantaloupe, and homemade bread. That night, Father Hubbard, Regan, Douglas, and Chisholm feasted on bread, lettuce, and their first fruit in weeks, while Blunt and Ames enjoyed the caribou steaks.





Frank Dorbrandt and Larson have lunch at the north shore camp site on Surprise Lake. Note the 1931 tephra is underfoot, 1932. Bernard Hubbard, S.J. Alaskan Photograph Collection. Photograph courtesy of Santa Clara University Archives. ACK-00-41.

Discussions over dinner revealed that the party's lost equipment arrived a day after they had made the useless thirty-five mile hike to Kujulik Bay and back. There was no other choice but to make the trek once again. The next morning Father Hubbard and Dick Douglas set out for the cabin at Kujulik, while Chisholm, Regan and the aviators flew to Chignik for extra supplies for one last trek into the Aniakchak crater.

On July 10th, the group reassembled at Meshik. Although his knees were bad, Blunt decided that he wanted to join the explorers. The extra backs were a welcome addition to the weary explorers. So with Blunt and Ames tagging along, the group set out over the snowfields above Hidden Creek and followed the Aniakchak River to their campsite near the Gates. On July 11th, the party made their final trip to the pit inside the Aniakchak Crater. One their way towards the built-up crater, the men first took time to climb an ash-covered hillside, and noted that beneath it, lava, accompanied by gas-laden steam, was being pushed up from the depths below. Douglas compared the escaping gases to buckets of colorful paint that "relieve Aniakchak of her blackness after the first rain of ashes." [68] The party tried to take the temperature of one of the smaller fumaroles with one of their Carnegie thermometers. In three minutes, the thermometer burst at 200 degrees centigrade. After another gaseous cloud full of chlorine briefly showered them, the party made their way toward the crater. "This was Aniakchak," recalled Douglas, "this was its terrible, mighty heart." [69]

The final trip into the Aniakchak crater seemed to be almost too much for the men. They were tired when they reached their Gates camp site that evening, but instead of resting for the long journey ahead, at nine o'clock Father Hubbard asked his crew, "Who feels like walking back to Meshik tonight?" [70] With a hesitant "Let's go!" the party extended their already long day, minus Blunt and Ames, who decided to stay at the Gate's camp and sleep. Loaded down with heavy packs, the men climbed through alder-filled gullies, were drenched by rain squalls, and consumed by shoulder-deep grasses. When they finally made it to Meshik Lake, they had been going for twenty-two consistent hours. "We were completely exhausted when

we arrived at camp in broad daylight at three o'clock [a.m.]," recalled Regan. Apparently, Father Hubbard was almost "hysterical from fatigue" and for the first time all year, missed saying Mass. [71]



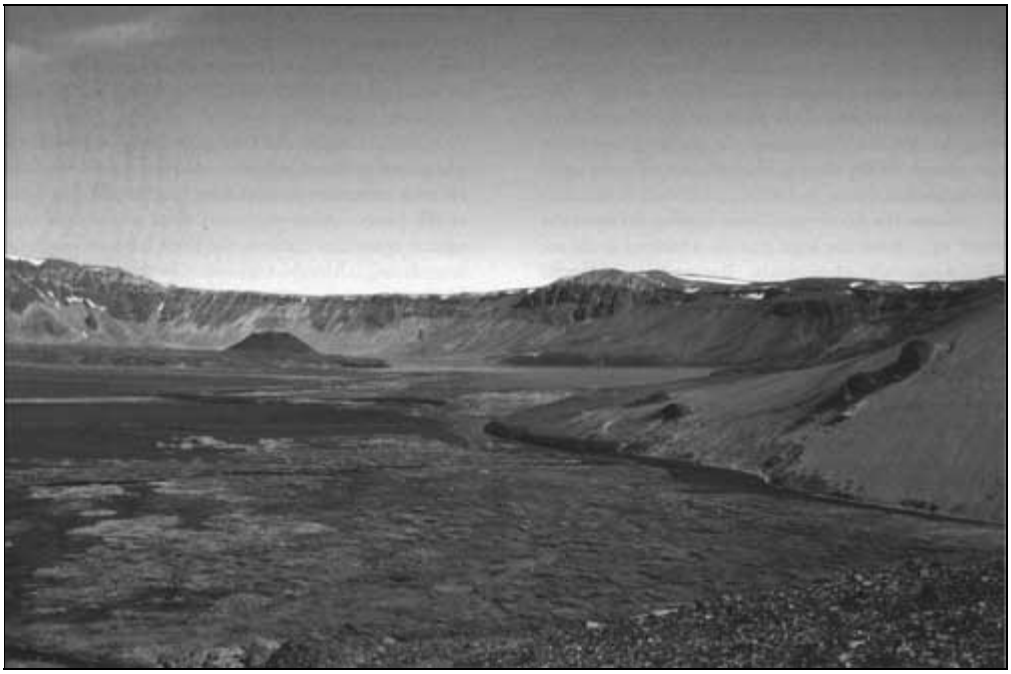
Hubbard filming from terrace on south side of the Gates, ca. 1932. Bernard Hubbard, S.J. Alaskan Photograph Collection. Photograph courtesy of Santa Clara University Archives. ACK-32-278.

The next day, Blunt and Ames arrived at camp, and in the afternoon, flew Regan, Douglas and the equipment back to Chignik. As the plane took off, it made a few circles around Meshik Lake, giving the tired passengers a final look at Pinnacle and Wedge mountains. As they ascended into the fog, only the black walls of Aniakchak loomed above them. "From the center of the black circle arose a tall pillar of steam," recalled Douglas, "Aniakchak was bidding us goodbye." [72]

During their thirty-three days of exploring Aniakchak, Hubbard and his young companions hiked 350 miles of tough country—235 were under heavy packs and for the remainder they carried burdensome photographic equipment. Along the way the saw and observed many things. They saw nineteen bears, seventeen caribou, and hundreds of ducks, ptarmigan, and grouse. They described, in great detail, the numerous geological features that exist within the Caldera, But without a doubt, the most lasting and impressive image was the active and eruptive crater. "There was our great moon crater," wrote Hubbard, describing his final gaze into the explosive pit, "active in its terrible anger, destructive in its fearful rage, inspiring in its terrible beauty." [73]

1932 "Flying the Lid of Hades"

> *Such evidence would tend to convince even the man from Missouri of the genuineness of our exploit.*
>
> Father Bernard Hubbard,



View from Hubbard's photo site, 1997. Photograph courtesy of Game McGimsey, USGS, Anchorage, Alaska.

In the summer of 1932, Father Hubbard made one last historic trip into the Aniakchak crater. The Glacier Priest, his old friend, Rod Chisholm, Ken Chisholm, and new assistant, Jack Morton, had just climbed Shishaldin Volcano on Unimak Island. The team had assembled at the Harris Cannery at False Pass, and while telling stories of their adventures to the local cannery crew, a big red-haired pilot named Frank Dorbandt said, "Say, Pop, I'm going to land you in Aniakchak crater. Get your stuff and let's go!" [74]

Frank Dorbandt's reputation as a pilot was well known throughout the territory. Friends and fellow aviators described him as "one of the ablest of the pioneers" but he was also known as being "reckless and impulsive." According to NPS historian Sandra Faulkner, Dorbandt was best known for his association with Alaskan aviator Ben Eielsen. In 1929, he and Eielsen flew routes back and forth between Teller and Siberia. [75] Hubbard, who called Dorbandt the "noted daredevil Alaskan aviator," considered the pilot the perfect choice to make the first successful landing inside an active volcano.

In wind, rain, and clouds—typical weather for the Aleutians—Dorbandt, with Hubbard and mechanic, Herb Larison, took off from False Pass for Aniakchak. They approached the volcano from the Bering Sea side of the Peninsula. According to Hubbard, "The Bering Sea has a habit of forming compact, concentrated storms. It tightens them up like a coiled spring until all their fury is leashed, then throws them into space." Indeed, the Bering winds hurled the plane about, and at times, they were forced to an altitude of only twenty feet. Just as Hubbard was wondering if Dorbandt would have to land to wait out the storm, the pilot answered his thoughts: "Strap yourself in your seat," Dorbandt told his passenger. "It's going to be rough." [76]

Once out of the main storm, the plane "rocketed past" Port Moller, which, at the time was the only port within hundreds of miles. As they flew up the coast line of the central Alaska Peninsula, the subarctic sun shone overhead causing the myriad lakes and meandering

streams of the Bering tundra to glisten below. Visibility was good around Veniaminov Volcano, second in size to Aniakchak and only sixty miles away. But as the plane neared the looming crater, they realized that Aniakchak was blanketed by clouds. Hubbard recalled that the Caldera "looked like a huge wash-tub filled with soapsuds running over and down its sides." [77] Unable to find a hole, they decided to wait it out at Meshik Village. The next day, however, the weather turned worse instead of better, A new gale blew in and lasted for two days. The storm bent the rudder of the plane and ripped part of the wing tip. But the damage was not disabling, and when the weather finally cleared, they started off once again for Aniakchak.

To test the air currents, Dorbandt flew far above the crater rim. From the high altitude, Hubbard could see all of Aniakchak in one glance. The inspiring and awful landscape brought back unsettling memories of his first attempt to land in the crater:

> In such moments as these, of intense concentration, vivid impressions come quickly and in great number. We were right over the Pit of Hades, blown out of the crater just a year past almost to the day. Ominous clouds of steam and lethal gases still curled from its black, gaping depths. A glance showed the white cup of Vent Mountain, the rent in the crater walls called the Gate, and the lake tucked under the northern cliffs of the rim. All was as when I had last beheld it, save that the beautiful white shows of winter had covered the unsightly black pall of erupted ashes and restored to Aniakchak part of its one-time beauty.

After checking out the different directions of air circulating around the Caldera, Dorbandt chose his course of action. The pilot approached the crater at top speed, diving low inside the crater at 135 miles an hour. "With a thrill I realized that we were inside the volcano," exclaimed Hubbard, "and the plane was under perfect control." [78]

Once inside, Dorbandt measured the distance around the rim using his speedometer. The aviator calculated that the crater circumference was twenty-one miles and the length of Surprise Lake was two-and-a-half miles, In what amounted to a few minutes, the flight accomplished what had taken the U.S. Geological Survey a period of two years to explore and map. Then, in a stunt that revealed his daredevil showmanship rather than his need to pursue scientific knowledge, Dorbandt dove the plane into the explosive pit—the source of the 1931 eruption. Hubbard, with enthusiastic assent, wound up the spring of his camera and yelled, "Go to it!" [79] Although the plane buzzed harmlessly through the rising steam coming from the hole in the earth, the unpredictable air currents moving through the Gates nearly threw the plane into the precipitous cliffs. Turning back into the crater, Dorbandt aimed the plane towards Surprise Lake. With a simple bank and sideslip, the pontoons splashed into the water, making this the first successful landing inside an active volcano. Once on shore Dorbandt turned to Hubbard and stated, "Well, Pop, I told you I'd land you in Aniakchak." [80]

While Larison and Dorbandt ate lunch, Hubbard spent time gathering evidence of their historic landing. He took numerous pictures from various vantage points of the plane. After the pilots filled themselves with canned beans and crackers, the three men explored the surrounding landscape together. On their return, Dorbandt noticed that the gas gauge showed only about twenty minutes of gasoline left. Frowning, the pilot surmised that it would take thirty minutes to spiral out of the Caldera. After such a glorious achievement—landing a plane inside a volcano—Hubbard later commented that it would have been a humiliating climax to have had to remain there for a lack of gas. [81]

Without revealing his plan, the pilot ordered his passengers into the plane. Once in the air, Dorbandt headed straight for the opposite wall near the steam rising from the active pits. As

the plane neared perilously close to the jagged rocks along the crater wall, Dorbandt found what he was looking for—an updraft. With a surge, the plane shot almost straight up a few hundred feet. When the gust of wind they rode died, Dorbandt turned again into the column of steam, which eventually blew the plane right out over the top of the crater, "The volcano itself had literally thrown us out," exclaimed Hubbard, "and we still had seventeen minutes of gasoline left." [82]

Father Bernard Hubbard: The Ansel Adams of Aniakchak?

According to geologists and biologists working in the field today, a significant contribution Hubbard made during his three popularized visits to Aniakchak is the numerous images of Aniakchak's geological and environmental features that he captured on film. Hubbard's observations, photographs and films of the volcanic landscape before and immediately after the 1931 eruption offer today's scientists an unparalleled opportunity to measure the adaptability of organisms and ecosystems as they existed in this dynamic and unstable environment. Although this study argues that Hubbard captured those images primarily to serve as a backdrop to his own Glacier Priest persona, today's scientists are looking beyond the foreground, and concentrating on the images behind the explorer.

Recently, NPS researchers have begun to study how the volcanic landscape of Aniakchak has contributed to the local adaptations of plants, fish, and fauna. To determine the rate of ecological succession that followed the 1931 eruption, these researchers are comparing Father Hubbard's photos with photographs of the same geological and biological features taken by Bureau of Land Management during a Wild Rivers Study, and similar photographs taken by NPS researchers during the 1972-1976 study of the Caldera. In the summer of 2001, park biologists spent a summer in Aniakchak retracing the steps of Hubbard and other past researchers to photograph the same features. By arranging each series of photographs into a chronological timeline, biologists hope to determine how the volcano has shaped this ecological world over time, and perhaps more impressive, how the ecological world has responded to such violent and cataclysmic events.

In the past seventy years, vegetation has made subtle changes—where orchids have disappeared, other plant species have returned and thrived. Snowfields have vanished, and the lakeshore has moved and changed. Most interesting to scientists are the adaptive differences of the sockeye salmon population that returned to the Aniakchak River almost immediately following the 1931 eruption. They have noted that the fish adapt as they move from sea, to the stream, to a lake inside a volcano—a vast array of habitats. Such studies will help NPS managers identify the role of geological events in creating species diversity and promote management actions that protect ecosystems and resources. Perhaps Hubbard never foresaw his data employed in such ways, but as an explorer-scientist, he would undoubtedly be pleased.

Still, in the end, Hubbard chose to spend his time in the Caldera filming volcanoes rather than fussing over scientific scrutiny and detail. This has made it very difficult for researchers to interpret and ultimately use the data he gathered to its full potential. According to Troy Hamon, who serves as Chief of Natural Resource Management and Research Katmai National Park and Preserve and Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve, "Most of Hubbard's research seems so poorly documented that we are unable to make inferences about what we see today in relation to what he saw." Unfortunately, too many of Hubbard's photographs are poorly documented as well. As Hamon points our, "We [NPS researchers] struggled in many cases to identify which year photos might have been taken." [83]

Perhaps Hubbard may not have maintained meticulous discipline, but as some scholars argue, he left his mark on Aniakchak as an artist and storyteller. Today, it is difficult to discuss

Aniakchak without Hubbard's images and stories coming to mind. Though he exaggerated facts, exploited his own adventures and experiences for personal gain, and, at times, either ignored or exploited indigenous cultures when it was convenient to his narrative, Hubbard understood contemporary trends in Arctic exploration and publicity. For example, Hubbard's artistic *tour de force,* the 1933 commercial film *Aniakchak,* tied together the elements the public expected from an Alaskan picture—snow and ice, dogsleds, and traditional Eskimos—with his own volcanic interests and Glacier Priest persona. Although it was never profitable to its distributors at Fox Films, *Aniakchak* played in twenty-four countries everywhere from Europe to South America to Asia. [84] For the first time, Alaska and the Glacier Priest received international attention on the silver screen. Historian Kathy Price agrees, for she insists that the Glacier Priest's most significant contribution to Aniakchak was what he captured as photographer and filmmaker:

> "I don't think his artistic skill as a photographer has been fully recognized," explains Price, "partly because he didn't portray himself as an artist but as an 'adventurer in the name of science.' But when you look at the literally thousands of things he left behind: letters, ephemera, books, articles, photos, etc, it is the visual images that strike you. Their power and immediacy still resonate, unlike the products of his quest for celebrity, which have become quaint or amusing after the passage of time. Maybe, if he'd been able to step away from his need to create and sustain the 'Hubbard Mystique,' his visual legacy would have been more apparent; it would not have been obscured by his drive for publicity and the controversies he generated. After all, this was hardly a man pursuing art for art's sake." [65]

Yet whatever his motivation was, Price points out that toward the end of his life, the Photographers Association of America recognized Hubbard for his contributions to photography as a medium, and placed the Glacier Priest in the same company as Ansel Adams, Margaret Bourke-White, and others. Ironically, instead of arctic explorer, geologist, or famed lecturer, Price suggests that Hubbard bequeathed his eye for artistry to Aniakchak. "If someone were to call him the unrecognized Ansel Adams of Aniakchak," offers Price, "I don't think I would argue with them." [86]

NOTES

[1]Norris, "Isolated Paradise," 424.

[2]Price, "Adventuring with the Glacier Priest," 46.

[3]*The American Catholic Volume III,* "Who's Who, 1938-1939" (Detroit: Walter Komp and Co., 1940), 198.

[4]*New York Times* "Priest Said Mass in Alaskan Crater," (November 16, 1930), 27.

[5]Hubbard, *Mush,* 69-70.

[6]Norris, "Isolated Paradise," 412-413.

[7]Ibid, 413.

[8]Report Vladimir Modestov, Nushagak, to Dean of Clergy of the Unalaska District. Aleksandr Kedrovskii, 29 July 1895 (f393-401), Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, Alaska.

[9]Hubbard titled his chapter on his visit to the 10,000 Smokes as "the Terrible Grandeur of Katmai," *Mush You Malamutes,* 69

[10]Willoughby, "Moon Craters" 10.

[11]Larry Rice, *Gathering Paradise: Alaska Wilderness Journeys* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1990), 265; Joe L. Miller, personal communications, 3/15/2002.

[12]*American Magazine,* "Fire-Eater" (January, 1935), 35.

[13]*Current Biography, 1943,* "Hubbard, Bernard (Rosecrans) Father" 320-323.

[14]*Literary Digest,* "The Stand Out From the Crowd," (August 19, 1933), 11.

[15]Willoughby, "Moon Craters of Alaska", 10-11.

[16]*New York Times,* "Football Star in Party," (November 16, 1931), 27.

[17]Price, 28-29.

[18]Ibid., 38.

[19]*Alaska's Silver Millions,* circa, 1935.

[20]Willoughby, 48.

[21]Ibid., 12.

[22]Ibid., 11.

[23]Hubbard, "A World Inside a Mountain," 323.

[24]Willoughby, 13.

[25]Hubbard, "World," 328-329.

[26]Willoughby, 13; Hubbard, "World," 329-332.

[27]Hubbard, "World," 332.

[28]Ibid., 340.

[29]Willoughby, 51.

[30]*Seattle Post Intelligencer,* "Alaska Volcanic Eruption Seen," January 30, 1931, 1.

[31]*New York Times,* "To Live Two Months in Active Volcano" December 19, 1930, 19.

[32]William Regan, interviewed by Julia O'Keefe, 8 Feb 1985, transcript of tape recording, Hubbard Collection, Michel Orradre Library, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, California

Interview, 2-3.

[33]Douglas, *Land of Thunder Mountain,* 15.

[34]"The Eruption of Aniakchak" The Volcano Letter, No. 375. Hawaiian Volcano Observatory, National Park, Hawaii, March 3, 1932, 2-3; *Seattle Times* 5/2/31 "Alaskan Volcano Eruption Almost Blankets Radio Kanatak station 100 miles north of Chignik"; *Seattle Daily Times Sunday* May 4th 1931 "Alaska Volcano still Erupting: Sky Obscured unidentified volcano, believed Aniakchak."

[35]Douglas, 17.

[36]Ibid., 19.

[37]Sandra M. Faulkner, "Father Hubbard, the Glacier Priest: Aviation in Alaska's Past" paper delivered at the Alaska Historical Society Symposium, Fairbanks, Alaska, October, 1987. l.

[38]*Alaska Geographic*, "Frontier Flight," (Volume 25, Number 4, 1998), 32-35.

[39]Hubbard, *Mush*, 38.

[40]Ibid., 39.

[41]Regan's Diary, June 10, 1931, page 19, copy on file at the Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[42]Hubbard, *Mush*, 49.

[43]Ibid., 50.

[44]Ibid., 49.

[45]Douglas, 42.

[46]Regan, interview by O'Keefe,

[47]Douglas, 56.

[48]Hubbard, *Mush*, 61.

[49]Ibid., 63.

[50]Regan's Dairy, June 21, pg. 27.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Douglas, 102.

[53]Regan, O'Keefe Interview.

[54]Regan's Diary, June 28, pg. 13-32.

[55]Hubbard, *Mush*, 64.

[56]Douglas, 116.

[57]Hubbard, *Mush*, 64.

[58]Ibid., 62.

[59]Douglas, 123.

[60]Regan's Diary, July 1, pg. 33.

[61]Ibid., June 30, pg. 33.

[62]Douglas, 124.

[63]Ibid., 130-131.

[64]Ibid., 131.

[65]Regan's Diary, July 1, pg. 34.

[66]Douglas, 136-137.

[67]Ibid., 143.

[68]Ibid., 152.

[69]Ibid., 157.

[70]Ibid,, 158.

[71]Regan's Dairy, July 11, 42.

[72]Douglas, 160.

[73]Hubbard, *Mush*, 68.

[74]Hubbard, *Cradle*, l.

[75]Faulkner, 5.

[76]Hubbard, *Cradle*, 5.

[77]Ibid., 8.

[78]Ibid., 11.

[79]Ibid., 12.

80

Ibid., 13.

[81]Ibid,, 15.

[82]Ibid., 16.

[83]Troy Hamon, personal communication, 1/6/2006.

[84]Price, "Adventuring with the Glacier Priest," 69.

[85]Kathy Price, personal communication, 1/7/2006.

[86]Ibid.

<<< Previous <<< Contents>>> Next >>>

hrs/chap8.htm
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ANIAKCHAK

Beyond the Moon Crater Myth
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape
A Historic Resource Study for Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

ANECDOTES

Account of the 1931 Aniakchak Eruption

As told to Father Bernard Hubbard by Meshik resident Frank Wilson. From "Aniakchak Explodes" in Father Bernard Hubbard, ***Mush You Malemutes!*** (New York: The American Press, 1943).

Aniakchak, with its huge base a hundred miles in circumference, spreads all over the central section of the Alaska Peninsula. The nearest Native village is Meshik, at Port Heiden on the Bering Sea, and from its cluster of deserted *barabaras* and shacks, the volcano rises to an unobstructed view. The first of May dawned quite clear and bright on the Alaska Peninsula. Winter had departed from the shoreline and the snows had begun to retreat up the lower slopes of the mountains, but winter still maintained its icy grasp on the interior. The trapping season was over and the handful of hardy mean who seek a livelihood from the furs of this section were preparing their fishing boats for the summer run on Bering Sea. Among their number was Frank Wilson, one of the few white inhabitants of Meshik. He was scraping and caulking his boat when Mabel, his little daughter, who was playing in the sand nearby, uttered an exclamation of surprise, claimed his attention. She was pointing excitedly at the peak of snow of Aniakchak, fifteen miles away, whence a dense column of white steam was shooting miles high into the sky.

Wilson noted the time. It was 10 a.m. There were none of the preliminary symptoms that are usual with volcanic eruptions. No earthquake shook the ground, nor were any rumbles heard from the nearby mountain. For two hours the white smoke rose in billowing clouds. It was probably steam generated from some fissure in the volcano floor that allowed water to reach the smoldering, buried rocks below. Then, at twelve o'clock, came a terrific explosion. A dense black cloud of incandescent gas and ashes rushed more than 20,000 feet into the air, spread out like a tremendous mushroom and started to descend rapidly. Wilson and his family rushed to their cabin, as did the few fear-stricken Aleuts of Meshik. The earth shook, flame and smoke rose thousands of feet high, and the pyrotechnic display of individual lava bombs hurtling through the air combined with the lightning forming in the cloud to make a truly fear-inspiring sight. Thunder added its din to the almost constant explosions of the erupting volcano, and the sides of the mountain reverberated to the crash of the falling rocks.

A close sound soon aroused the already terrified people of Meshik, when cinders, first the size of peas, then as large as eggs, beat a tattoo on their houses. The eruption lasted uninterruptedly until 11 May, when a final terrific explosion shook the surrounding country and sent into the air rocks and ashes which descended in such great masses as to make it pitch dark for several hours at distances more than sixty miles from the volcano. Wilson left Meshik after the explosion of 1 May, and on the way to Bristol Bay, where he met the author and narrated the story of the eruption, had the paint scraped off his boat and engine ruined, pushing his way through more than five miles of floating pumice the size of water buckets.

The volcano was quiet only for a few days, breathing dense clouds of gas and smoke. Then

explosive activity heard two hundred miles away culminated in another major eruption on 20 May. For several more days, the detonations of the volcano sounded like the beatings of distant surf from Ugashik, more than sixty miles away. Lava then welled up intothe new vents and another phase of activity began.

The most distant sufferers were the reindeer in the interior back of Nushagak. It was fawning time, and when volcanic ash covered the feed the reindeer started to migrate, leaving the helpless young to perish. Reindeer and caribou ground their soft teeth down to the gums from the grit in their food and died. Dead swans and geese floated down the rivers from lakes on the tundra of the Alaska Peninsula, and cutting them open revealed the cause of their destruction—entrails full of volcanic ash. Hibernating bears, squirrels, and small game living inside the crater probably were consumed in the first great explosion...So much heat suddenly liberated, as well as millions of tons of powdered ash filling the air, caused an interesting phenomenon shortly after the eruption. Clouds condensed rapidly all over the region and rain drops, which had formed about the tiny ash bits, started falling. Turning the ashes to mud, it literally rained mud balls the size of walnuts for hours at a time, making the snowfields and glaciers black as ink and causing the surrounding country to look as though covered by a huge funeral pall. The ash mud was sticky, too, and insisted on getting into every crack and corner and penetrating the closest-woven fabric.

<<< Previous <<< Contents>>> Next >>>

hrs/anecdotes5.htm
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ANIAKCHAK

Beyond the Moon Crater Myth
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape
A Historic Resource Study for Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

WORLD WAR II AND COLD WAR PERIOD (1935-1960)



Aleck Abyo Jr., Mike Abyo, and Andrew Abyo, ca. late 1940s. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

CHAPTER NINE
From Wilderness Frontier to Wartime Front

"If we would provide an adequate defense for the United States, we must have Alaska."

—William A. Seward

After Father Hubbard and Frank Dorbandt's famous landing of a floatplane inside the Aniakchak Caldera in 1932, the Glacier Priest began to look beyond the Moon Crater for adventure. He and his collegiate crews spent the rest of the decade exploring other regions of Alaska, including additional volcanic wonders in the Aleutians, the remote King Island located in the Bering Sea, and the geological features that attracted him to Alaska in the first place, the glaciers of the Southeast. Although the Glacier Priest never returned to Aniakchak,

the Moon Crater was always one of his favorite topics, especially while promoting his films or speaking to auditoriums full of excited listeners on the lecture circuit.

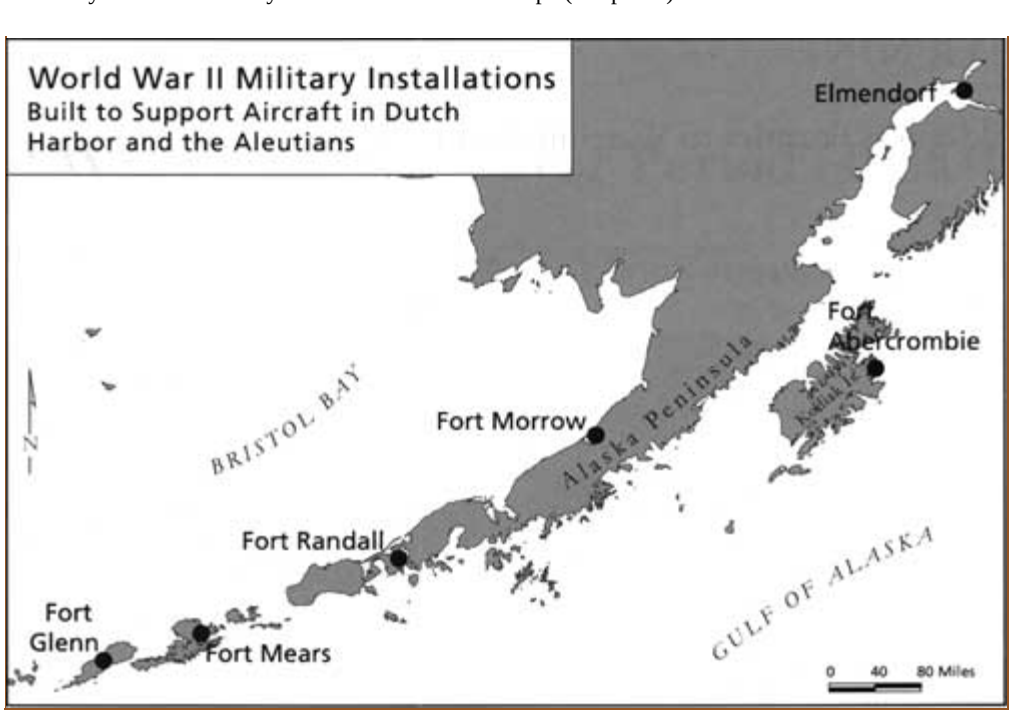
Throughout the 1930s, Hubbard commanded a diverse audience consisting of scientists, National Park Service personnel, and ordinary Americans seeking adventure vicariously through the Glacier Priest. After 1942, however, the U.S. military became interested in what Hubbard had to say about Alaska, especially the Aleutians. According to Hubbard, Washington D.C. had called the self-proclaimed Alaska expert to advise General Henry Harley "Hap" Arnold, commander of the Army Air Corps during World War II, and even President Franklin Roosevelt on Aleutian defenses, after the Japanese first attacked the islands of Attu and Kiska. [1] Hubbard corresponded regularly with military dignitaries such as Generals A.C. Wedemeyer, George S. Patton Jr., Air Force General Hoyt Vandenburg, Lt. General Curtis LeMay, and General Omar N. Bradley on behalf of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. [2] After the United Stated joined the war in late 1941, Hubbard offered his collection of photographs and film to the armed forces and was asked to provide information to the Army on Aleutian topography and weather. Hubbard even placed his duties as a Jesuit over his Glacier Priest persona during the war and served as an auxiliary chaplain to the Sea Bees on Attu in the Aleutian campaign during 1943-1944.

Although Father Hubbard never returned to the Moon Crater, the Aleutian Campaign of which he was a part did much to link the wilderness of southwest Alaska to the nation's wartime front in the Pacific. And like Father Hubbard and the handful of visitors who had explored the central Alaska Peninsula before him, the Army quickly discovered that the volcanic landscape was a formidable foe. As one patrol leader quipped, the defense of the region was "no Sunday-after-dinner pleasure stroll... for the jagged volcanic rock can slash the boots right off your feet." [3] Indeed, Aniakchak wilderness did far more to impede military operations on the central Alaska Peninsula than the enemy ever did.

The Air Bridge to the Aleutians

Since the United States purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867, the Aleutian Chain, consisting of nearly three hundred islands, has always been perceived by American political and military leaders as a strategic key in a long-term and potentially bitter struggle to both defend and dominate the North Pacific. [4] Charles Sumner, in a speech to the U. S. Senate on the purchase of Alaska, referred to the islands as the "stepping stones to Asia." Many military strategists, including Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914), suggested that because of its proximity to Asia, the United States should make the island of Kiska a naval reservation, and, indeed, in 1904, when Russo-Japanese war broke out, the army-navy Joint Board ruled that Kiska's retention would be vital in a major war with Japan. [5] After World War I, however, American military policy was shaped by intense public isolationism, even though Japan had been showing signs of Pacific expansion since Theodore Roosevelt's administration. Responding to anti-armament sentiments, the United States, Britain, Japan, France, and Italy negotiated the Washington Naval Treaty in 1922, which among other naval restrictions, banned new bases and forbade the improvement of existing Pacific facilities controlled by the signatories. The mainland of Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Hawaii, however, were exempted from the treaty—Alaska and the Aleutians were not. Thus, any realistic plan to place the Pacific Fleet in Alaska became obsolete, while Pearl Harbor became the center of operations for the U.S. Navy in the Pacific theater.





Military bases. By B. Bundy. *(click on image for a PDF version)*

In the first decades of the twentieth century, Alaska continued to be a sparsely settled territory of the United States. The population of 72,000—roughly divided between Alaska Native peoples and European-Americans—was concentrated in coastal towns, such as Anchorage, Juneau and Ketchikan, with Fairbanks being the only sizeable town in the interior. For twenty years, the Washington Treaty had limited American military interest in Alaska, and the only military-related role the federal government actually played in Alaska between the World Wars was the Coast Guard's patrol of commercial fisheries.

In 1934, however, military interest in Alaska began to heighten. That year Japan notified the Untied States that it would no longer uphold the Washington Treaty, as of December 1936. As tensions between Tokyo and Washington increased, the State Department understood quite well that the Aleutians were not only stepping stones to Asia, but also stepping stones from Asia, which could well lead the Japanese Navy across the ocean, into British Columbia and directly into the heart of the Pacific coast of the United States. Such a threat to our national security led many American leaders to believe that Japan was "our dangerous enemy in the Pacific." Aviation experts like Brig. Gen. William "Billy" Mitchell reasoned that the Japanese "will come right here to Alaska." He testified to the Committee on Military Affairs in February 1935 "Alaska is the most central place in the world for aircraft" and therefore, "he who holds Alaska will rule the world." [6]

When Japanese planes attacked Pearl Harbor in December 1941, and commenced American's entrance into World War II, many believed Alaska was Japan's next step toward their goal to dominate the Pacific. And, indeed, in 1942, Japan launched a bloody invasion of the Aleutian Islands. Responding to the eastern threat to Alaska, the U.S. Army built seven airfields, ranging from Cold Bay on the Alaska Peninsula to Metlakahtla south of Ketchikan, immediately after Pearl Harbor. One of those airfields was Port Heiden, located near the village site of Meshik. Almost instantly, World War II transformed the Alaska Peninsula from an isolated frontier to a strategic American military front in the North Pacific.

In the first days after Pearl Harbor, planning by the Army was set into motion quickly. Area engineers based in Anchorage recommended to leadership in Washington D.C. that an airfield should be constructed and accommodated by a garrison at Port Heiden, to support

military aircraft flying to and from bases stationed in the Aleutians. While awaiting a decision on which construction agency would be selected, Army engineers sent a reconnaissance party to the vicinity of Chignik Bay. In a letter to the commanding General of the Alaska Defense Command at Fort Richardson, B.B. Talley, a Major in the Corps of Engineers, wrote:

> It is expected that a reconnaissance party will go to the vicinity of Chignik Bay to explore a possible tractor route from Chignik or Kujulik to Port Heiden for the purpose of moving in construction machinery to be used on the airfield together with the necessary supplies and other equipment for their purpose. It is not at this time considered feasible to undertake a tractor haul of building materials for a garrison, and if it should be determined that the garrison is necessary at Port Heiden in advance of the opening of Bristol Bay in the spring it is suggested that the men be housed in tents. [7]

As orders directed, the party was sent to the central Alaska Peninsula to explore a possible tractor route from Chignik or Kujulik Bay to Port Heiden for the purpose of moving necessary supplies and construction machinery to build the airfield. [8] Alec Peterson of Chignik Lagoon recalled that "a captain, a lieutenant, and about eight other guys" took a bulldozer up the Aniakchak River, where they proceeded to get stuck. According to Peterson, "the machine was there for about a month." In a second attempt, the reconnaissance party investigated the North Fork River, up which they traveled by dog team, but again failed to find a proper route. With Aniakchak Volcano as a formidable obstacle, the party did not discover an appropriate overland route from either Kujulik or Chignik Lagoon. As a result, troops and construction supplies were forced to come by way of Bristol Bay. A few days later, the Adjutant General to the Chief of Engineers authorized the Army Corps of Engineers to construct the Army base, which was officially named the Fort Morrow Air Base, in Port Heiden.

Building Fort Morrow on America's Newest Front: June 1942-1945

Orders provided for the construction of a new garrison and staging field, which was to be built within six months. The program called for containment buildings, docking facilities, and storage of aviation gasoline in drums. Housing, hospital facilities, warehouses, cold storage, and a Kodiak "T" hanger with the technical facilities to provide Air Corps operations and maintenance were also provided. [9]

On June 17, 1942, 2nd Lt. Oral B. Dold and fifty enlisted men of Company B, 807th Engineers arrived at Port Heiden with their mission to make plans for the construction of roads and to find a suitable site for the airport. [10] According to an engineer who experienced the initial landing, entering Port Heiden was as treacherous for the U.S. Army as it was for the Russian Orthodox priests:

> Upon approaching Port Heiden from the Bering Sea side, a string of islands appears, stretching across the mouth of the bay. The entrance to the bay is very difficult to locate if one is unfamiliar with the locality. The entrance is located between the northeasternmost point of the string of islands and the mainland itself. The water depth in the channel varies from approximately two to eleven fathoms at low tide and the water within the bay itself is very shallow being non-navigable except in channels at low tide. Upon the arrival of troops at Port Heiden there were no buildings or structures except for the saltery, an old church, and a few sod huts at Meshik Village. [11]

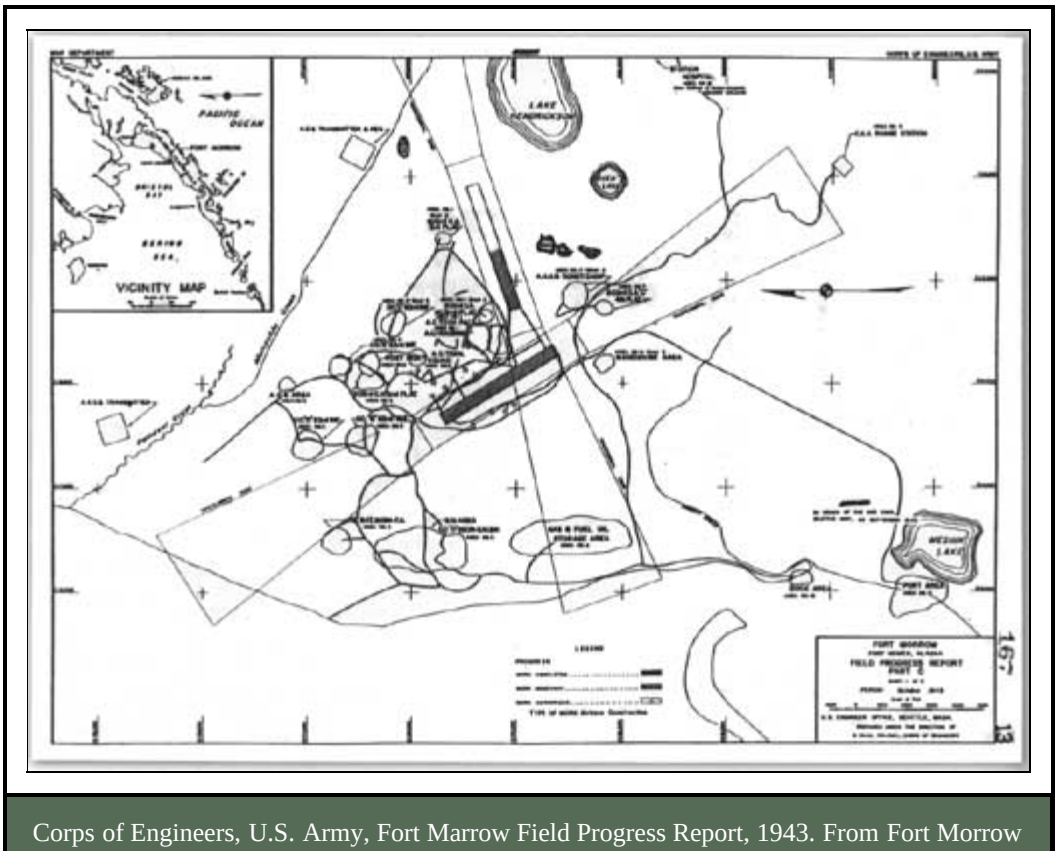
Because of extreme tides and dangerous shoals situated beneath the shallow waters of Port

Heiden, all ships had to anchor in the open sea approximately four miles off shore. Lighters unloaded troops and supplies. As soon as the troops reached shore, some were immediately employed in setting up a temporary campsite, while others were employed in unloading barges. Because no barge dock or mechanized equipment was available to the troops for unloading operations, all cargo was "man-handled." According to one witness, the troops experienced typical Aniakchak weather, for it was "blustery, wind and fog prevailed and the water very choppy, making the loading of barges a most difficult task." Moreover, the men were at the mercy of other natural forces, for "the loading and unloading of supplies [was] governed by the tides." [12]

The temporary campsite was established approximately three hundred yards northeast of Meshik village, with the Russian Orthodox Church substituting as the first Army Headquarters. [13] For the first few days, the troops endured the personal discomforts of living in tents and unloading by hand. The permanent campsite they would construct was necessary for the refueling and servicing of airplanes on their flights to and from the Aleutian Islands. Moreover, if an attack came from the Pacific, the men needed to be prepared as soon as possible. Fort Morrow was constructed so that it could also serve as a tactical operating base at a moment's notice. [14] Therefore, personnel were immediately engaged in preparing defense positions such as gun emplacements, foxholes, slit trenches and barbed wire entanglements along the Port Heiden beachfront. [15]

Two days later, Chaplain Joseph Applegate of the 1st Battalion 53rd Infantry held his first services at Fort Morrow, Alaska. According to an observer, "there were seven services during the day, the most inspiring service being held on the beach. The men working, unloading barges, moving material, stopped and assembled among oil drums and supplies to listen to the word of God in the wilderness of the north." [16] Apparently, an artist, Cpl. Warren Leopold, caught this scene in one of his paintings, which as one officer noted, depicted the life of the men forming a post on America's newest front. [17]

* * *



Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army, Fort Marrow Field Progress Report, 1943. From Fort Morrow

Project Report. Courtesy of Elmendorf Air Force Base, Anchorage, Alaska.

After investigating the surrounding landscape, engineers determined that Fort Morrow would be built on a site five miles from Meshik Village, and on July 22, 1942, construction personnel broke the first ground. To accommodate transport vessels, troops built a temporary unloading ramp from materials obtained from the saltery at Meshik Village. [18] While the airfield was still under construction, the first military aircraft was able to land at Fort Morrow exactly one month to the day after the building of the runway began. At 10:45 a.m. on July 22, an Army transport plane touched the partially completed North-South runway. This runway, which was five thousand feet long and five hundred feet wide, was completed in November 1942. It was then decided to construct an East-West runway of the same dimensions, and then extend both runways to 7,500 feet. [19]

Construction of roads and runways, not to mention the completion of simple daily tasks, was always an arduous proposition for the Army regulars stationed on the Alaska Peninsula. Several historians have noted that the Aleutian campaign of World War II was a three-sided battle fought between the United States, the Japanese empire, and a force that proved to be more powerful than either Washington or Tokyo: the weather. [20] On the central Alaska Peninsula, not only did troops endure rain, dense fog, thick mists, and the severe gale-force winds, the *williwaws*, but Aniakchak's volcanic landscape served as a logistical and strategic obstacle as well. In an Army report, an engineer matter-of-factly described the immediate surroundings:

> The terrain, commencing at the beach, consists of rolling dunes joining the beach with a shelf of small hills running parallel to the shoreline. As the shelf moves inland, it levels off away from the rolling hills and declines into a surface of tundra, swamps and volcanic ash. Although the landscape surrounding Fort Morrow is relatively level land, intermingled swamps and small streams continue for approximately ten miles inland. It is at this point where engineers attempting to build roads and runways encountered a first gradual, and then steep incline towards Aniakchak. [21]

Engineers, however, found the materials underlying the tundra—a mixture of pumice rock, of pebbles size, and volcanic ash—to be "an excellent building material, compacting easily and not softening appreciably during rainy weather." [22] Nevertheless, blizzards and below zero temperatures caused the ground to freeze to a depth of thirty feet, retarding the progress of runway construction. The unloading of supplies and equipment from transport vessels some four miles distant from shore and ongoing lighterage operations continued to be handicapped by frequent high winds and low temperatures. Transports arriving during the fall season often could not unload, due to the freeze-up of the bay. Sea-going freight could only be delivered during six months of the year. Due to the floating ice blown in from Bristol Bay, the small dock made from materials gathered from the old saltery was destroyed and had to be rebuilt during the summer of 1943. According to fort commanders, Aniakchak's volatile climate considerably delayed construction of the entire project. [23]

Despite the environmental obstacles, between 1942 and 1943, the Army had transformed the Aniakchak landscape surrounding Port Heiden into a working air base. By the end of summer, 1942, the Army established a weather reporting station. During September and October, the Civil Aeronautics Authority (CAA), the predecessor to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), made a survey for a radio range, control tower, radio station, and hangar — facilities that contributed to the safe landing of Army personnel, including Major General Simon Buckner and Colonel Lawrence Castner, who visited Fort Morrow on September 4, 1942. [24] By February 5, 1943, the range station was completed. On the same day, the Army Airways Communion System commissioned a point-to-point and air-to-

ground facility, further improving the control over planes in the area after the control tower was commissioned on November 15, 1943. On the same day, the hangar was also completed. In late 1943, the installation of runway boundary marker lights was finished. [25] That year, Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia of New York City, who arrived with Brigadier General Frank L. Whittaker, visited Fort Morrow. Apparently, they stayed for one hour. [26]

Fort Morrow's Major Battle: The Aniakchak Wilderness

The first Air Force personnel to arrive for duty at Port Heiden were two weathermen. Their main duties were to collect and disseminate weather data to other weather reporting stations. Early in October 1942, Captain Ralph F. Gandy arrived with nine enlisted men. These men formed the nucleus of the Air Base and were responsible for base operations. By mid 1942, forty-three officers, nine medical officers, one chaplain, one warrant officer, and 1,353 enlisted men were stationed at Fort Morrow. By 1945, that number increased to 1,895 enlisted men and eight additional officers, a medical officer, and a chaplain. [27]

Despite duties, which included refueling and servicing airplanes going to and from the Aleutians, personnel at the Port Heiden base apparently felt frustrated, and, at times, even disconnected from the rest of the war. Certainly several embarrassing military blunders, including the anti-climatic invasion of Kiska in 1943, produced feelings that the Aleutian campaign "tied down enormous resources that could be better used elsewhere." [28] Adding to their discontent was communal gloom caused primarily by the inclement weather that seemed to cloak the region. In his history of World War II, historian Samuel Eliot Morison called the Aleutian campaign the "Theater of Military Frustration" and claimed, "Servicemen sent to the Aleutians regarded an assignment to this region of almost perpetual mist and snow as little better than penal servitude." [29] Likewise, such disillusionment was felt at Fort Morrow, as troops struggled to adjust to a foreign environment.

In early October 1944, the base was hit by a heavy storm, in which the wind velocity reached eighty-eight miles per hour. One warehouse and the generator hut were blown down, leaving the area without power for two days. Hangar doors were blown off or buckled, tarpaper was ripped off many roofs, and oil drums were distributed over the landscape. One drum was even carried through a window into one of the barracks. Fortunately, no one was injured in the storm, but, thereafter, "strict discipline has been enforced due to the effects of isolation on morale." [30]

One Chignik Bay resident, Emil Artemie, recalled an episode in which he encountered potential deserters from Fort Morrow. His recollection clearly illustrates the loneliness and discontent, spawned particularly by the unfamiliar surroundings experienced by the troops. According to Artemie, he encountered several young enlisted men, who approached him with questions:

> You'd be surprised the kids that were in the service during the war. Just kids, some of them. Eighteen years old. And some of 'em had never seen an ocean in their lives. We could tell. They used to stop down the Bay and they ask[ed] me one time... a couple of them came ashore and I was at the beach working on a skiff or something. "Can we walk to Seattle from here?" I suppose you could, [I said], but it's going to be a very long walk, (Laughs) I figure they thought there might be a highway out on the other side of the mountains, maybe. Anyway, there was four or five of them. [They] took off. Seen them packing their gear [in an] old skiff they got holed up under the dock in the afternoon. But they took off, pretty soon I seen them, there at the ridge of the mountain down the Bay.

Evidently, the young men did not get far. "They come back in the evening," recalled Artemie.

"Their skipper" [probably their commanding officer] just say, 'Welcome back, boys.'" [31]

Not all of the enlisted men felt isolated by the Aniakchak landscape, however. According to base records, four twelve-gauge shotguns were made available to the enlisted men, with which they were allowed to hunt local birds and game. Apparently, the men enjoyed many feasts on duck, goose, or ptarmigan. Fresh caribou was also obtained, increasing the attractiveness of some of the meals at the mess hall. [32] Although rain and wind discouraged most outdoor activities, many enlisted men enjoyed fishing the local steams, encouraged by "occasional catches of fair-sized Dolly Varden or rainbow trout." [33] Fresh salmon for the mess hall were caught on several occasions from nets tied to barges by the dock. [34] On days that brought a welcome break in the usual gray skies, a spell of excellent weather encouraged activities such as softball, volleyball, and beachcombing for "ivory and Japanese glass net-floats." [35]

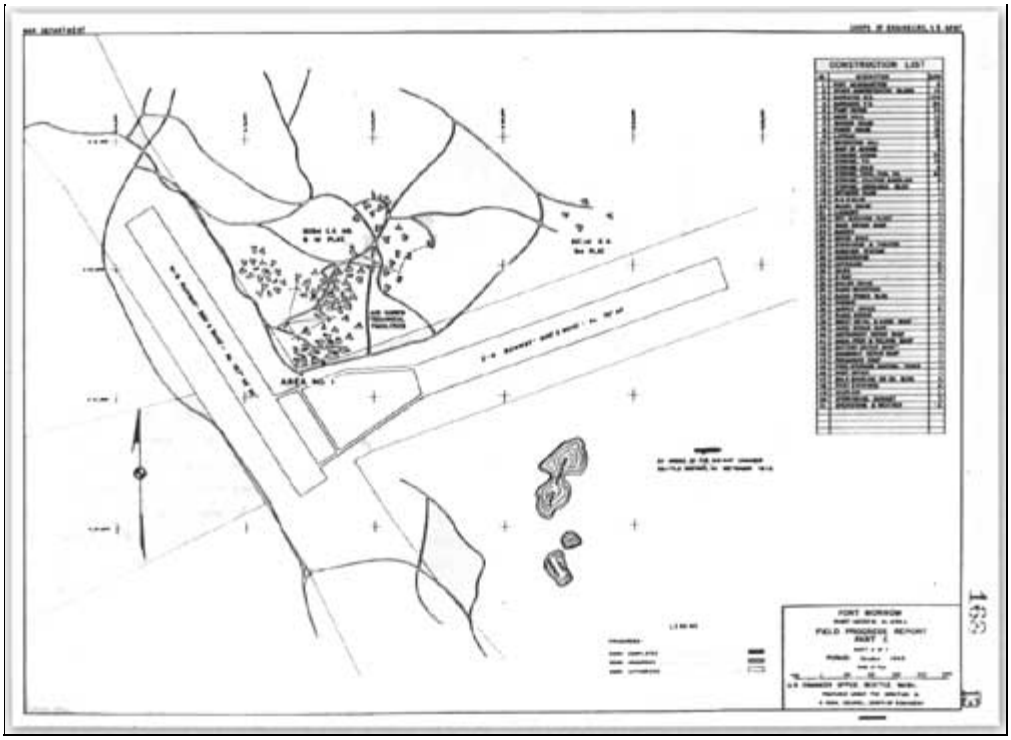
The Army also tried to improve morale with better living and recreation facilities. From 1943 to 1945, enlisted men enjoyed facilities such as a complete mess hall, recreation hall, a barbershop, and a local "miniature" radio station, which used the call letters WSIO. Enlisted men watched movies at the base theater and read books at the base library, which according to the historical officer was "tastefully decorated, well lighted, and replete with comfortable overstuffed furniture." In 1944, a USO troupe arrived at Fort Morrow and put on four performances for the enlisted men stationed there. Another troupe arrived the following year with "skilled magicians, singers, even Joe Louis." [36] USO dances were not only popular among the enlisted men, but local women from Port Heiden and Chignik attended them as well. According to Pat Partnow, "During and immediately after the war a number of romances and marriages occurred as a result of these meetings, the aftermath being the departure of many young women from the peninsula to destinations to the south." [37]

When news reached Fort Morrow that allied troops had gained victory in Europe during the spring of 1945, the day was celebrated as a special holiday with free beer and buffet lunch all day at the mess hall. [38] Then, on September 4, 1945, less than a month after the American B-29 *Enola Gay* dropped an atomic bomb over Hiroshima, Japan, and effectively ended World War II, Brigadier General Paul E. Burrows returned to Fort Morrow for a brief visit. At a meeting with all base personnel in attendance, he informed Fort Morrow's officers that it had been decided that the base would be closed as an Army post. As one witness recalled, "though there was no demonstration at the time, everyone was overjoyed at the prospect of returning to a more cheerful part of the world." [39] On October 7, 1945, orders arrived, officially inactivating the Army Air Base, Fort Morrow. [40]

The Impact of World War lion the Aniakchak Region

Aniakchak's surrounding landscape clearly had an impact on the daily lives of the soldiers stationed at Fort Morrow, but World War II also had a reciprocal effect on the everyday lives of the residents who called the central Alaska Peninsula their home. Many of today's elders, who were children during the war, consider those four years as the watershed between the old rural lifestyle and modern American culture. [41] Afterwards, as Partnow points out, "transportation, communication, and American cultural influences expanded in unforeseen directions and dimensions." [42] Perhaps the most significant outcome of World War II was that peninsula communities would forever be tied to the rest of the territory (the state after 1959) and the rest of the world.





Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army, Fort Morrow Field Progress Report, Part C, 1943. From Fort Morrow Project Report. Courtesy of Elmendorf Air Force Base, Anchorage, Alaska.

Between 1941 and 1945, local people seemed not to worry about inland volcanoes as much as a looming threat from beyond the waters of the Pacific Ocean. As a result, Aniakchak residents played a patriotic role in Americas war effort, whether it was supporting the U.S. campaign to buy bonds, leading blackout drills at home villages, or joining America's armed forces. In 1943 it was reported that Kanatak elders convinced the village's younger generation to support the American war effort:

> Mrs. Alta C. Wilder, schoolteacher at Kanatak, gives us a dramatic insight into the depth of the Aleut's [Alutiit] devotion to the country. She called a meeting and explained about the bonds. After she had finished, an old man took the floor, then an old women. . . . After length monologues, the old people sat down. Deep silence followed. ... Mrs. Wilder asked the young interpreter what they had said. "The old man and the old woman say they know the government is good." ... "And," asked Mrs. Wilder, "what do the younger ones reply?" "The youths' answer was brief. 'They say, we agree.'" [43]



Landing Strip at Fort Morrow, circa 1950s. Photograph courtesy of Elmendorf Air Force Base, Anchorage, Alaska.

The *Alaska Life* article was clearly written as a wartime propaganda piece. Still it shows the degree of Alaska Native participation during World War II, and speaks well of the patriotism and hopefulness of that generation of Alaska Natives. [44] Admittedly, it was a fearful time for Alaska Peninsula residents, especially for the young. Chignik Lagoon resident, Peter Lind, who was a child during World War II, remembers how nervous villagers were during the war and how quickly rumors spread about the possibility of a Japanese invasion:

> One time we were down the lagoon. We were all sleeping. And my uncle, used to live next door, all of a sudden I wake up, somebody was hitting the windows real hard. Ask Mary this, she probably still remember that. Real hard, she said "Japanese. Japanese. It's on the beach." I jumped up and was half asleep and mom... We had a kerosene lamp and it was on, I jumped up and turned it down you know. Momma would turn it up, I turn it off. She was still hollering in through the window, nighttime. The door was locked. And we woke up. This was really scary. And we could hear the boats down the beach. Making noise. Then, they hit the beach, the tide was high. We lived a little ways from the water, you know, down the lagoon. They even stopped. That lady said there's Japanese down the beach, you know. Holy man, I was scared! I was almost half kinda hanging onto mom. I was small. And we were sitting down in the house and pretty soon somebody knock on the door. Dark nighttime you know my mom want to go answer it. I told her not to, I was hanging on to her. When she opened the door you know you it was? My brother Skipper. He came to Chignik to go check on us, see how everybody was doing. [45]

Rumors of invasion were indeed rampant, but for many Alaska Peninsula residents, the war was all too real and played an enormous role in shaping their lives. Young people from all over the Alaska Peninsula served in the armed forces throughout the territory and other parts of the world. Peter Lind's older brother joined the war effort. "My brother, Andrew, they took him in a tug boat to Cold Bay. And, boy, my mom used to worry. He was the oldest one, you know. They took him to be a ... deckhand in tugboat. Hauling equipment." [46] Moreover, as with civilians from Europe or the West Coast of the United States, the residents of the central

Alaska Peninsula knew that if the enemy did attack, they would come by way of an airplane.

> Every time we hear airplane me and my brother used to hide in the bushes it was so bad. Just the time they were coming, Japanese was invading from down there. [Dutch Harbor]. We used to play boat in the creek. And we hear airplane, I'm not kidding, it got so bad, we would run in the bushes and wait. One time we were picking berries with my mom, and Jr's mom. Us kids. And the men were fishing. We were picking berries up the hill. And we look, and we seen two little dots coming, getting closer and closer and closer. And my mom took us and threw us in those holes. Threw us in there to hide us. And we were watching there those two fighter planes. You could even see the people inside there with guns. But, they were our own airplanes. Boy, I was scared. Holy Cow! [47]

Just the sound of an engine stopped people in their tracks. "When we hear airplane, the whole village would run out and watch it." [48] Similar to protocol everywhere, villagers in Chignik implemented blackouts, which were broadcast over the local radio. "No lights," recalled Lind. "The houses. Even in the sod houses. Turn all the lights off." [49]

Besides representing a threat, real or imagined, the role of aviation on the Alaska Peninsula changed significantly during the war years. Local pilots, for example, were incorporated into the war effort. At first integration was sporadic, with local flyers primarily used for search and rescue operations. As one incident illustrates, on April 20, 1945, a fighter plane had to make an emergency crash belly landing some forty miles north of Fort Morrow. The pilot was uninjured, but was in a spot inaccessible by foot or land vehicle because of the surrounding lakes and muskeg. Two days later, the Air Base commander called in a civilian pilot, who was able to bring his light float-plane down on a swamp near the wreck. The pilot was then able to land on Meshik Lake near the Base, returning the Lieutenant to "civilization" soon afterward. [50]

As the war progressed, commercial aircraft, like those used by Frank Dorbandt and Harry Blunt to fly Hubbard around the Alaska Peninsula, were pressed into military service. By 1943, the Army began to utilize most local pilots on a daily basis, to fly personnel from base to base and to transport repair parts that were immediately needed. One of those pilots was Bob Reeve, the famed Glacier Pilot, who made his first flight out to Cold Bay soon after Pearl Harbor. Before World War II, most Alaskan flyers considered the Alaska Peninsula "a piece of rock—nothing surrounded by nothing." Before flying for CAA, Reeve had flown down the Alaska Peninsula only as far as Bristol Bay and Port Heiden. "To us in the old days, both the peninsula and the Aleutians were considered 'nowhere.' No one went out there except on rare occasions." [51]

Once they were flying for the military, civilian pilots made the trip down the Chain so often that personnel stationed at their various stopping points quickly welcomed them and considered the flyboys as one of their own. As biographer Beth Day notes, "Reeve made a practice, as he had done for the miners, of bringing out personal items they needed or simply wished for: film for their cameras, cigarettes, magazines, liquor. Frequently fogged in at the Chain bases, Reeve spent many a night helping the boys pass time over bull sessions at poker tables." [52]

The integration of Reeve and other civilian pilots into the U.S. Army during the war years not only helped to bring the peninsula into the American fold once and for all, but it changed the character of aviation on the peninsula. In a sense, Father Hubbard's flight down the Alaska Peninsula in 1931 initiated a short ten-year span representing the so-called "golden age" of pioneer aviation in the Aleutians, the Alaska Peninsula, and the Aniakchak region, which the bombing of Pearl Harbor abruptly ended. According to aviation historians, "the influx of

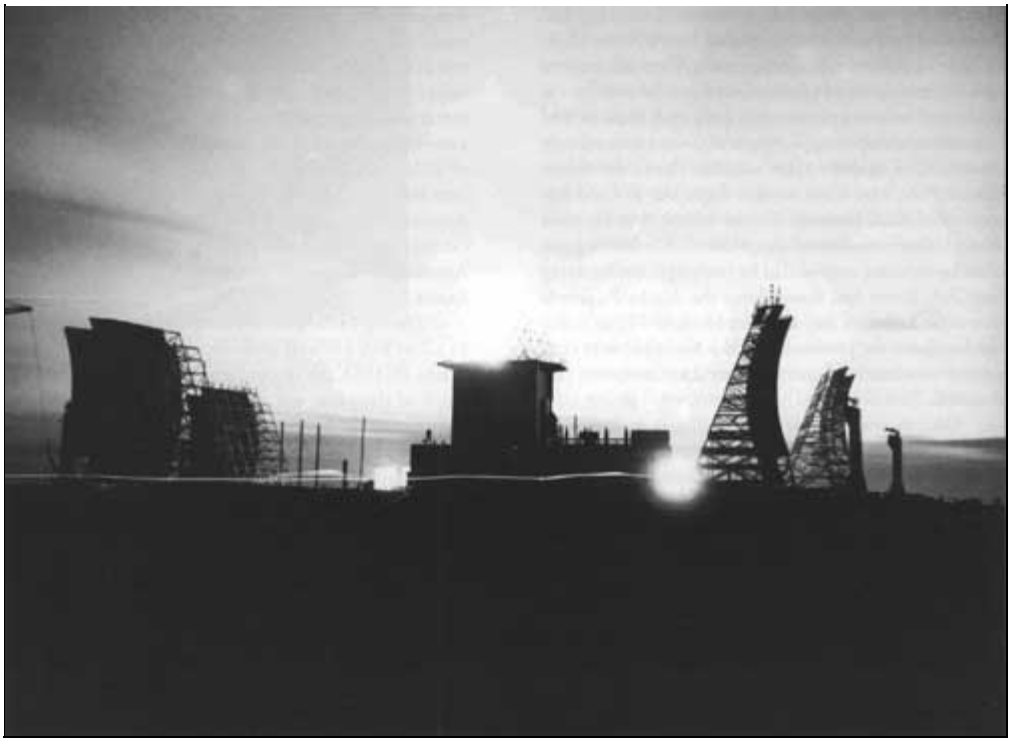
military activity in Alaska led to construction of modern airfields, and to the improvement of communication and navigation aids throughout the territory." [53] The four-year period that encapsulated World War II brought a massive increase of people to the central Alaska Peninsula. When it was over, the military scaled back to a skeleton crew in Port Heiden, but the commercial aviators, who took advantage of the infrastructure that had been put in place by the military, eventually merged and consolidated their small air services into larger conglomerates, thus, bolstering a successful commercial air industry that exists to this day.

"Air Highway that Americanized the Village"

Although it lasted less than four years, World War II left an indisputable mark on the Aniakchak region. Besides ending Alaska's "golden age of flight, changes in world politics provided the Aniakchak region with a new role in national security. As the "Hot" War turned "Cold," military strategists were more than aware that the next threat to the United States—the Soviet Union—sat only a mere 60 miles across the Bering Strait from Cape Prince of Wales, near Nome. The realization thrust Alaska back into the national defense spotlight, and thusly, linked Aniakchak to a federally controlled long-line communications system in Alaska. Not since Bering's landfall had Americans been more aware of Alaska's proximity to Russia.

During the Korean conflict, Congress appropriated $11.7 to $14.4 billion annually to support the military's needs. By 1953, the amount jumped to $50.4 billion, and much of the purse was spent on the defense of Alaska. The increase in funding allowed the Alaskan Air Command to begin to build a permanent aircraft control and warning system to improve communications in Alaska's remote sites. [54] The Air Force base at King Salmon, for example, became a radar site as the military began to centralize control of advanced warning. The Air Force placed King Salmon on a standby status and authorized it to respond to any hostile activity initiated by the Soviets in U.S. air space. [55]

In addition to the Alaskan aircraft control and warning systems, the Air Force embarked on a program to build a system of distant early warning radar sites across the Canadian arctic and northern Alaska. In his study, *Top Cover for America: the Air Force in Alaska 1920-1983,* military historian John Haile Cloe states that the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line, as it became commonly known, "would provide early warning against bomber attacks coming over the polar regions." [56] The Air Force began to work on the DEW Line in northern Alaska in 1953. In January 1957, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the extension of the DEW line into the Aleutians. The main site was at Cold Bay with auxiliary sites at Nikolski, Port Moller, Cape Sarichef, Driftwood Bay, and Port Heiden. Work was completed in early 1959, and the sites were turned over to Alaska Air Command control on May 1, 1959. Unlike the northern sites, AAC retained responsibility for the operations and maintenance of the sites. Also, unlike the contractor-manned northern sites, military personnel manned the Aleutian sites. [57] About one hundred people maintained the Port Heiden Dew Line site.



Port Heiden became part at the defense line know as White Alice during the Cold War era. Photograph courtesy of Elmendorf Air Force Base, Anchorage, Alaska.

The central Alaska Peninsula became even a tighter link in the military chain when military leaders extended a communications system known as White Alice into the region. To improve communications between Alaska's radar sites, the military contracted AT&T to develop a reliable communications system for Alaska. According to Cloe, the communications firm decided on a new system called troposphere scatter, which bounced radio signals off the troposphere. [58] In 1955, The Western Electric Company began to build several "tropo" and microwave sites which would connect Alaska's air defense sites. In the 1960s, the communications system was extended down the Aleutians to support the Dew Line segment, and Port Heiden became part of White Alice as a repeater station. As communication technology improved, commercially owned satellite terminals replaced all the tropo sites by 1981 and, the tropo sites, like the one at Port Heiden, were eventually terminated.

* * *

World War II and the years that followed brought enormous change to the Aniakchak region. The Alaska Peninsula's geographical proximity to both Japan and the Soviet Union gained attention from the U.S. Armed Forces, which ultimately transformed its perspective of the appendage from a wilderness frontier into a strategic military front. For its inhabitants, the threat from the Far East made the villagers of Chignik far more aware of the outside world, and indeed, the Aleutian Campaign brought the outside world directly to the Alaska Peninsula. New communication and aviation systems were constructed, thus reestablishing the peninsula's older role as a "bridge to the Pacific." Perhaps most significantly, World War II enhanced Alaska's visibility and transformed its economy. As historian Dan Nelson notes, "Spending for bases, supplies, and salaries became the engine for a new boom and revived [Alaska's] get-rich-quick spirit of the gold rushes." [59] War activities brought people to Alaska, as the gold rushes of the previous century had done. The territory's population rose from 73,000 in 1939 to 233,000 in 1943. And instead of a peacetime bust, the Cold War inspired a new wave of federal spending that totaled more than a billion dollars in the 1950s.

[60] As government jobs increased both for military and civilian personnel, people remained in the territory.

Thus, it was the Air Force base at Port Heiden that brought many local people back to the central Alaska Peninsula. Scott Anderson, who runs an environmental program at Port Heiden, points out that the village of Meshik was for the most part, abandoned following the 1919 Spanish Flu epidemic until World War II. After 1941, the military not only brought people back, it brought people together: "It made the first schools and medical facility available to local residence. It built roads and the airstrip and fostered positive community relations." [61] Anderson went on to say that Army personnel often carried small pieces of candy in their pockets for local children.

Similarly, King Salmon-based pilot, George Tibbits, recalls that the DEW-line site station at Port Heiden was very nice." According to Tibbits, it was a place where residents could purchase everything from "fuel to food, even watch Hollywood movies." As a pilot, Tibbits had no problem recognizing the role that the string of Army bases played in the history of the Alaska Peninsula. When asked about the importance of the military presence at Port Heiden, the pilot responded without hesitating: "It built a highway that Americanized the Alaska village." [62]

NOTES

[1]Price, "Adventuring with the Glacier Priest," 117.

[2]Hubbard kept a binder featuring correspondence from highly placed military officials. CPA collection; Price, 117.

[3]Press Release, Headquarters United States Army, 401-07 23rd Infantry, file FRA PAO, APO 949, July 2, 1962.

[4]Galen Roger Perras, *Stepping Stones to Nowhere: The Aleutian Islands, Alaska, and American Military Strategy, 1867-1945* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2003), xi.

[5]Ibid., 9.

[6]Ibid., 30; John Haile Cloe also discusses Alaska's strategic position in his classic study *Top Cover for America: The Air Force In Alaska 1920-1983* (Anchorage: Air Force Association and Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, 1984), 1.

[7]B.B. Talley, Major, Corps of Engineers, Area Engineer, to the Commanding General, Alaska Defense Command, Fort Richardson, Alaska. Fort Morrow File, Elmendorf Air Force Base.

[8]Eugene Barbie, "History of the Air Base Fr. Morrow Port Heiden, Alaska," December 1941 to 31 May 1944, 3. Document located at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Anchorage, Alaska.

[9]"Bush Report," Fort Morrow Project, pg. 165-166, in the Fort Morrow File at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Anchorage, AK.

[10]Eugene Barbic, "History of the Air Base Fr. Morrow Port Heiden, Alaska," December 1941 to 31 May 1944, pg. 3, located at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Anchorage, Alaska.

[11]"The History of Fort Morrow from its inception on 17 June 1942 to 1 July 1944," Historical Report, pg. 2, located in the Fort Morrow File at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Anchorage, AK.

[12]"History of Fort Morrow Alaska," 2

[13]Historical Report, 2.

[14]Barbic, "History of the Air Base Ft. Morrow Port Heiden, Alaska," December 1941 to 31 May 1944, 1.

[15]Historical Report, 2,

[16]"A History of Fort Morrow, Alaska," pg. 2, from the Fort Morrow File located at the Elmendorf Air Force Base, Anchorage, AK.

[17]"History of Fort Morrow Alaska," 2

[18]Historical Report, 3.

[19]Barbic, 4.

[20]Ira F. Wintermute, "War in the Fog," American Magazine, August 1943, 9; also see Terrence Cole's depiction in the foreword to Brian Garfield's popular history, *The Thousand Mile War: World War II in Alaska and the Aleutians* (Fairbanks, University of Alaska Press: 1995), xi.

[21]Historical Report, 1.

[22]Ibid., 1.

[23]Fort Morrow Project, "Bush Report," 166.

[24]"History of Events" pg. 4, Fort Morrow History on file at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Anchorage, AK.

[25]Barbic, 4-5.

[26]Ibid., 6.

[27]Post Headquarters Fort Morrow Alaska, History of Fort Morrow, Alaska Period Ending Dec 31, 1942;???

[28]Perras, x.

[29]Samuel Eliot Morison, Aleutians, Gilberts and Marshall's June 1942-April 1944, in *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II (Vol.* 17), (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951), 3-4.

[30]Commanding officer Reginald Bowles in the forward to John Shield's, "History of the Army Air Base, Fort Morrow, Port Heiden, Alaska, 1 October 1944 to 31 July 1945." 1. Elmendorf Air Force Base, Anchorage, AK.

[31]Pat Partnow's interview with Emil Artemie. January 24, 1992. ANIA File, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[32]John Shields, "History of the Air Base Ft. Morrow Port Heiden, Alaska 1 June 1944 to 30 June 1944," 12.

[33]Shields, 1 August 1945 to 31 August 1945, 4.

[34]Barbic, 4.

[35]Shields, 14.

[36]Ibid., 13-15.

[37]Partnow, 261.

[38]Shields, 14.

[39]Shields, 1 September 1945 to 30 September 1945, 2.

[40]Shields, 1 October 1945 to 7 October 1945, 2.

[41]Partnow, 261.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Bess Winn, "Alaska Natives in the War" *Alaska Life* (July, 1943), 7-11.

[44]For information about Alaska Natives at War see Paul Ongtooguk's work at www.Alaskool.org.

[45]Peter Lind interview with Partnow, ANIA File, Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center, Anchorage, AK.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Shields, 1 October 1944 to 31 July 1945, 5.

[51]Beth Day, *The Story of Bob Reeve Glacier Pilot* (Sausalito, CA: Comstock Editions, Inc., 1957), 190.

[52]Ibid., 194.

[53]*Alaska Geographic*, "Frontier Flight," 38.

[54]John Haile Cloe, *Top Cover for America: the Air Force in Alaska 1920-1983* (Anchorage Chapter Air Force Association and Pictorial Histories Publishing Company: 1984), 160.

[55]Ibid., 161.

[56]Ibid., 170.

[57]Ibid., 171.

[58]Ibid., 172.

[59]Daniel Nelson, *Northern Landscapes, the Struggle for Wilderness in Alaska* (Washington D.C.: Resources for the Future, 2004), 24.

[60]Ibid., 25.

[61]Scott Anderson, personal communication, 2004.

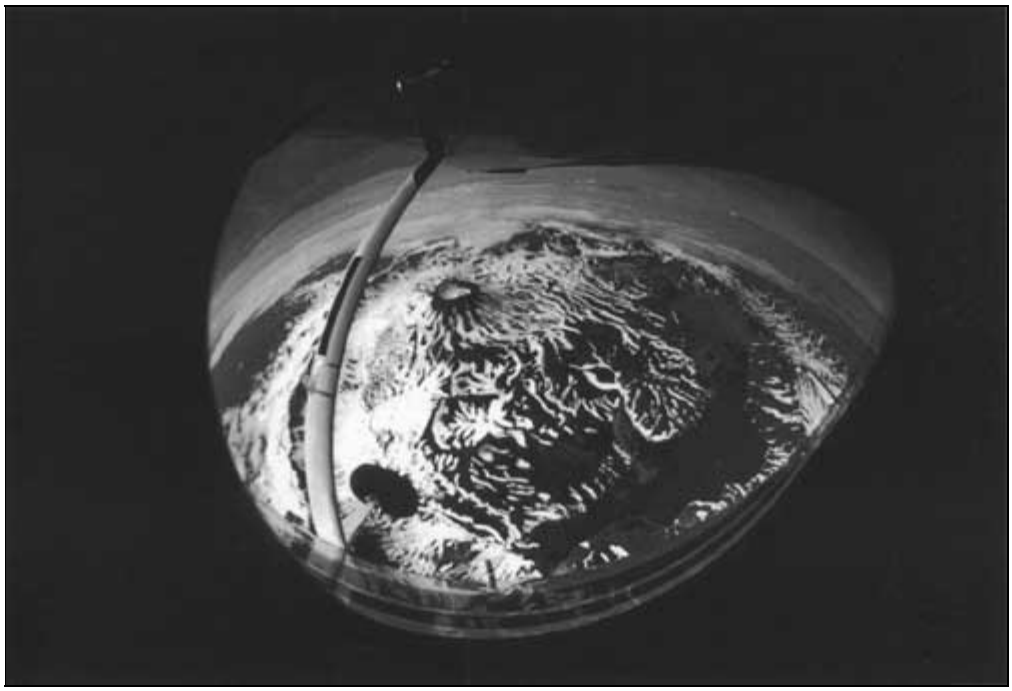
[62]George Tibbits Jr. personal communication, 2004.

<<< **Previous** <<< **Contents**>>> **Next** >>>

ANIAKCHAK

Beyond the Moon Crater Myth
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape
A Historic Resource Study for Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

MODERN ANIAKCHAK (1950s-PRESENT)



Aniakchak Caldera from the air, National Park Service, Anchorage, Alaska.

CHAPTER TEN
Hubbard's Aniakchak Legacy

> *Like a moth singeing its wings on the world's biggest candle, our tiny plane is lost in this new world inside an erupted volcano... we were tiny pigmies exploring a world unreal.*
>
> Father Bernard Hubbard,
> *Cradle of the Storms*

The popularized 1930, 1931, and 1932 explorations of Aniakchak by Father Hubbard and his various companions left their imprint on the region in many ways. Certainly, Hubbard's biggest achievement was to bring this relatively unknown part of Alaska—at least temporarily—into the American consciousness. If catastrophe can ever be viewed as fortuitous, Hubbard, in his ability to bring his Alaska Peninsula adventures to the public eye, was aided and abetted by two: a timely volcanic eruption and the Great Depression. In the case of the former, relatively few people were adversely affected regionally by a natural

disaster. The Depression, however, profoundly impacted Americans on a national scale. At the time, many people lost their jobs, their savings, and perhaps most significantly, a sense of control over their own lives. For the thousands who attended Father Hubbard's lectures about Aniakchak, the Glacier Priest represented just the opposite—he was rugged and strong, he maintained a deep faith in God, and most importantly, he seemed to always be in control of his destiny, especially in his conquest of a volcano, a timeless metaphor for power and unpredictability. Hubbard was a new kind of hero for an America facing anxieties of a modern world.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, especially the period proceeding Hubbard's Alaskan journeys—the 1920s—modern America rejected traditional heroes who represented an image that was, to most, simply outdated. Americans newest icons were the giants of the business world, men who conquered Wall Street rather than wilderness. During this decade, Americans favored technological innovation over rugged exploration, enabling corporate leaders who understood the economic potential of the country's vast natural resources to realize fortune and status. Extractive industry had transformed the western frontier into a land of businessmen, who, as historian Morgan Sherwood notes, preferred "to carry a briefcase, instead of a long rifle." [1] As stories and headlines of the Klondike Gold Rush faded to the back page and were later omitted from newspapers altogether, most Americans forgot about Alaska and nineteenth century notions of the frontier. The stock exchange had replaced "open land" as the new frontier of opportunity. Charles Lindbergh had just made his famous crossing of the Atlantic Ocean in the *Spirit of St. Louis,* conquering oceanic distances and celebrating the idea that by melding man and machine, individual accomplishment could be achieved. Even Alaska, with its industrialized salmon canneries and absentee capitalists, became associated more with big business than a pioneering spirit.

The collective calamity experienced during the Great Depression, however, shook many Americans to their core and many began to wonder, if over-industrialization was a failing of the democratic system and brought about the economic crisis. Such sentiments renewed popular interest in the frontier, which, according to both popular and academic belief, was the genesis of American hallmark qualities, such as rugged-individualism, self-determination, and the democratic way of life. By the beginning of the 1930s, a back-to-the-land movement swept across urban America, creating a self-conscious nostalgia for a life that individuals—not industrialists or politicians—could control. The idea that the frontier once gave past generations of Americans a second chance and new opportunity began to increase and national attention became focused on the country's northern frontier. According to Orlando Miller, author of *The Frontier in Alaska and the Matanuska Colony,* "An idealization of rural life, and a nostalgia for the vanished frontier and the opportunity associated with it" had a profound impact on how Americans once again viewed Alaska's role in the American experience. [2] Without doubt, many people perceived the charismatic Glacier Priest as the embodiment of that American dream.





Aleck Griechen's T-craft, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

Despite these powerful images, the perception of Father Hubbard as frontier hero was not simply a throwback from a previous century. On the contrary, Hubbard was considered a scientist, who employed the most advanced innovations of the day. Although he glibly referred to civilization as "chiseledization," Hubbard unhesitatingly used whatever technological and modern instruments he could acquire to achieve his goals. Whether those instruments were a motorized boat to get his gear up river or a salmon tender owned by the commercial fishing industry to transport his crew, Hubbard was a man of progress and used technical advances to accomplish many of his so-called conquests in Aniakchak. Father Hubbard may have viewed himself as a journeyer into a primitive nature, and on one level, especially at dangerous moments inside the Caldera, that perception was accurate. He and his fellow explorers did, in fact, journey into nature. But rather than escaping the modern world, Hubbard brought modernity to Aniakchak.

Ironically, Hubbard's frontier appeal, which brought him national notoriety, was cemented by his utilization and promotion of the most advanced technological innovation of the day—a machine that epitomized the modern world. This machine was the airplane, and with this tool, Hubbard brought a virtually unknown region to the notice of the outside world. By underscoring in 1931 the utility and scope of the airplane on the Alaska Peninsula, Hubbard drastically altered life there. The arrival of the airplane increased the outside world's utilization of the peninsula—especially during World War II—while at the same time, the ominous threat from above that the airplane posed increased resident's awareness that they, in fact, were directly affected by that larger, outside world, which could literally arrive at one's village in a matter of hours. In later years, the arrival of the airplane increased sports hunting, transformed subsistence patterns and village life, improved mobility that attracted new adventurers cut from the "Hubbard" mold, and inspired a new generation of scientific explorers. By introducing modern flight in the best frontiersman fashion, Hubbard facilitated the notion of air travel to and around the Alaska Peninsula, and by so doing, left his most influential mark on Aniakchak.



Father Hubbard posing with his dog over his caribou kill, ca. 1932. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., Alaskan Photograph Collection. Photograph courtesy of Santa Clara University Archives. ACK-00-290.

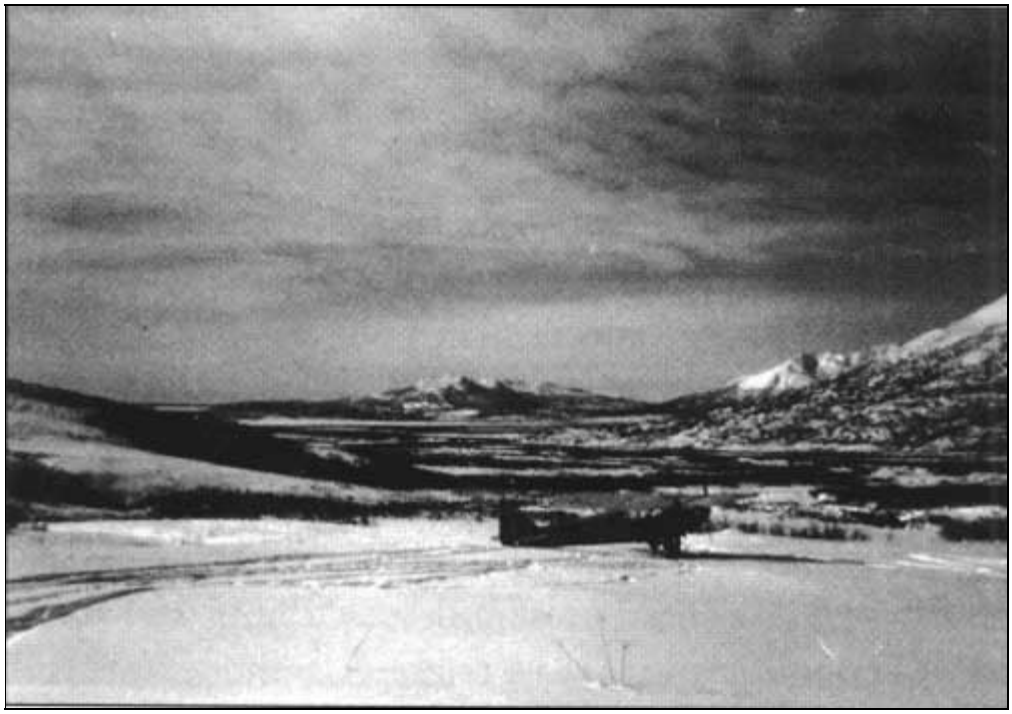
Sport Hunting and Subsistence

One example of how modern aviation and frontier nostalgia combined to drastically affect the Aniakchak region during the mid-to late twentieth century was the increase of sport hunters to the region. As a force that impacted traditional lifeways, the far more involved commercial fishery has historically overshadowed big game hunting on the Alaska Peninsula. Nevertheless, it can be argued that by popularizing Aniakchak as the "Great Moon Crater of Earth"—an exotic, primitive, and sparsely populated place where Hubbard and his team of explorers lived off the land, hunted for food, and shot giant, threatening grizzly bears—the Glacier Priest resurrected an image of the Old West and indirectly opened Aniakchak up to big game hunters, who hoped to relive such moments in an idealized American wilderness.

In their writings, Hubbard, Regan, and Douglas each told numerous stories of encounters with Aniakchak's brown bears. These were no simple recordings of fact—their anecdotes added drama and danger to their exploits and, in doing so, linked their adventures to those of other American frontiersmen like Daniel Boone and Lewis and Clark. Indeed, such tales are deeply rooted in the American experience. In his landmark study, *Big Game in Alaska: A History of Wildlife and People*, historian Sherwood Morgan argues that in its history of its contact with man in North America, the grizzly has maintained a reputation of indestructibility and ferocity. One politician in 1814 referred to the animal "the ferocious tyrant of the American woods." But the tyrant fell far too easily to humans with long rifles and quickly disappeared from the southern half of the continent. In Alaska, however, especially along the southwestern coast, the animal thrived, a surviving symbol of the Old West—the Last Frontier. [3]



Pen Air's commuter plane that provides service to the central Alaska Peninsula, 2004. Photograph courtesy of Katherine Johnson Ringsmuth, Anchorage, Alaska.



Planes provided access to remote regions on the Peninsula, ca. 1970s. Photograph courtesy of Orin Seybert, Anchorage, Alaska.

Although Hubbard never mentions territorial hunting laws in his popular writings, with the passage of Alaska game legislation in 1902, hunting in the northern territory was regulated by the federal government. When the Katmai Monument was created in 1918, it was popularly believed that bear hunting was illegal throughout the Alaska Peninsula. But when accounts of the Aniakchak explorations were published in the late 1930s, the descriptions of great shots, numerous kills, and manly companionship unanimously suggested that frontier life was still intact in Alaska.

As previous chapters have shown, Aniakchak has been a destination for hunters for centuries.

The Russians who came wanted mainly the sea mammals, and therefore, remained along the coast. Those who hunted interior game were mainly local residents, who came from Chignik, Meshik, or Ugashik. But by the 1950s, hunters and guides were coming from Outside to hunt moose, caribou, and especially the Alaska Peninsula brown bear, which accounted for twenty-five percent of all brown bear harvest in the state. [4] As sports hunters commonly traversed the entire peninsula in search of game on foot, by air, or with off-road vehicles, it became clear that commercial hunting significantly affected Aniakchak's physical landscape. As Merry Tuten concludes in her study of subsistence activities along the Aniakchak coast, "Subsistence hunting in the Aniakchak region is incidental when compared to sports hunting." [5]

In the early 1950s, a trapper and hunter named Jack Lewis established the first hunting base camp on the western side of what is now Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve. Lewis's camp consisted of a trailer that had large tundra wheels and a boat hull as the base. When crossing rivers, the wheels could be removed and the trailer floated across the river. [6] King Salmon resident, Joe Klutsch, began working for Jack Lewis in 1976 and acquired an interest in the camp in 1979. Klutsch paid Lewis $50,000 for the camp, which included all personal property, the trailer, all camp gear, sheds, and a pantry. That same year Gary W. "Butch" King, who had grown up in the sports hunting business in the Wrangell Mountains, established the Cinder River Lodge. [7]



Runway at the center of Chignik Lagoon. 2004. Photograph courtesy of Katherine Johnson Ringsmuth, Anchorage. Alaska.

It was the airplane, popularized by Hubbard and Alaska bush pilots that made commercial hunting feasible in the Aniakchak region. In fact, there were far more sportsmen than Klutsch and King hunting in the area. Tuten estimated that by 1977, thirty different permanent camps had been established near Aniakchak. [8] However, that number was only presumed, for even Alaska Department of Fish and Game could not say for certain how many guides and hunters utilized the Aniakchak region since so many flew into the area for short periods of time.

The airplane not only increased access to commercial hunters, but airplanes introduced new ways for local residents to get both food and supplies to their one-time isolated villages. As

more villagers acquired planes, subsistence patterns changed. Like sports hunters, local residents could fly into isolated areas, shoot a moose, and bring the meat home, all in one day. After Hubbard introduced the airplane, as resident Valentine Supsook noted, "Everybody got planes at that time." Chignik Lake resident Christina Martin remembers that in early 1930s she took her first airplane ride to go with her father to sell furs the family had trapped locally:

> Oh, that's when I had my first plane ride up in ilnik where there were only three or four houses. It wasn't a city! [laughter] And that is where I had my first plane ride. It was—a little plane... They called it "Fur Buyer." Some guy come there to buy their fur, like foxes and minks, and some other fur... [9]

As more local residents used planes to gather food and expand commercial options, others felt that the new authorities brought in to regulate hunting pushed them away from traditional areas and patterns of gathering food. By the 1970s, the regulatory line between sport hunting and subsistence hunting had blurred, and local communities were more susceptible to bureaucratic management structure. In 1976, a Chignik Lagoon resident complained to Merry Tuten about how game—their food—was being managed:

> There's too much red tape. I used to hunt bears, no more. Used to hunt seal commercially too but not anymore. Too many regulations. Aniakchak is busy with hunters...I like to hunt and I go whenever I need meat. I used to hunt up there a lot but no more, now the headhunters compete. The moose season was unfair. It doesn't matter if WE want an area open or not. Too much red rape. Too much bureaucracy. [10]

Moreover, peninsula residents no longer needed to hunt regularly to get their food and other goods. In 1955, nineteen-year-old Orin Seybert of Pilot Point started Peninsula Airways, one of the first air taxi businesses to serve communities throughout the central Peninsula. According to Seybert, "In the summers, I fished and made money. I got my pilot's certificate in high school and bought an airplane. I had one of the few planes in that area. People were always wanting to go along when I was flying somewhere.... Somebody'd say, "I'll give you $30 if you'll take me along." [11] Taxi services like Pen Air, Reeve Aviation, and Northern Consolidated Airlines began to fly in everything from fresh vegetable to fishing gear, while offering residents air service to destinations such as King Salmon, Dillingham and Anchorage daily. Ever since Father Hubbard and the pilots for Pacific International Airways made their famed flight down the peninsula in 1931, aviation has remained the most utilized form of transportation. Quite symbolically, positioned at the center of most peninsula villages, is an airstrip.





Tina Neal and Andy Lockhart discuss geology in Aniakchak. 1997. Courtesy of Game McGimsey, USGS, Anchorage, Alaska.

The New Adventurer: Cut from the Hubbard Mold

Another example of how modern aviation and frontier nostalgia combined to drastically affect the Aniakchak region during the mid-to late twentieth century was the increase of new adventurers to the region. By the mid-1970s, aviation companies like Pen Air and Reeve Aleutian Airways were regularly flying passengers across the Alaska Peninsula and, occasionally made a landing inside the Aniakchak Caldera. [12] Few non-hunting recreationalists were known to have visited the area after Hubbard's expeditions in the 1930s, but as the environmental movement gained momentum after the passage of the 1964 Wilderness Act, a new generation of adventurers left the comforts of home to seek a kind of primitive frontier experience in America's last wilderness—Alaska. With improved local transportation systems, places like Aniakchak Caldera became ideal destinations for these new adventurers.



GPS receiver in operation in Aniakchak. 1994. Photograph courtesy of Game McGimsey, USGS, Anchorage, Alaska.

Although Hubbard's Moon Crater depiction inspired man to conquer nature, it also spoke to those who sought a spiritual experience within nature. From Hubbard's viewpoint, a natural wonder such as the Aniakchak Caldera was clear evidence of God's plan. For example, on the summer evening in 1930 that inspired the "Moon Craters of Alaska" article, while the men of the expedition sank into slumber at their campsite near Surprise Lake, Father Hubbard, so excited by "the events of the afternoon and the promises of the morrow" lacked the desire to sleep and decided to see what the crater was "doing in the starlight." [13] Within the Caldera walls stood Aniakchak's volcanic landforms and accretions washed in moonlight. "Looking up at the moon high in the silvered blue," recalled Hubbard, "I had one of those wondrous moments of translation that come sometimes to one in the wilderness ..."

> I felt myself at home in the cosmos; at home up there on that bright lunar surface where, faintly discernible, the old seabeds spread out among the shining table-lands. [14]

Hubbard's imagery of Aniakchak melded notions of rugged individualism and incredible, yet primitive, scenic beauty. Such images, then, translated into a very powerful and multifaceted image of man and his relationship to the natural world. This frontier image was not only consistent with the 1963 Leopold Report that stated that the purpose of NPS management should be to make each national park "represent a vignette of primitive America," [15] but this image also attracted those seeking isolation, mystery, and spirituality in nature, just as Hubbard experienced and expressed forty years prior.

Between 1974 and 1977, the NPS did what it could to gather new information about the proposed Aniakchak unit. Most of it was gained through the efforts of Ralph Root, the so-called "keyman" for the park. It was Root's job to inspect the proposal area and consult with other task force personnel to set priorities for proposed studies. [16] On an investigative trip out to the Caldera in August 1976, Root encountered one of Aniakchak's first non-hunting visitors since Hubbard, a mycologist and former hunting guide named Ben Guild.

Root described Guild as "very pro-park" in his 1976 report. He also noted that Guild had exchanged his rifle for a camera. [17] Guild had spent six weeks in the Caldera three years earlier and apparently encountered more than he had bargained for. That year, photographer and free lance writer M. Woodbridge Williams met up with Guild who told him his story:

> [Guild] told me that he had been dropped in the caldera by a commercial float plane from King Salmon and that he had spent six weeks in the crater. During this time, in the microclimate of the 30-square-mile caldera, his camp was blown down more than once by hurricane winds. Once he was forced to squeeze into a shallow depression in a bluff in order to wait out a hurricane that sent the wind gauge off its top. He also photographed cloud niagaras as Father Hubbard had described. From exposure to such bad weather, he developed a deep ear infection that upset his equilibrium. Finally a government plane that had brought a federal interagency study team on to float the wild Aniakchak River lifted him out. [18]



A hotspring located on the central Alaska Peninsula, ca. 1970s. Photograph courtesy of Orin Seybert, Anchorage, Alaska.

In spite of his seemingly horrifying experiences, Guild loved the Caldera. According to historian Frank Norris, "To show others its beauties, he took photographs, shot extensive movie footage, and wrote a book on the area's vegetation." [19] Root also made note of Guild's feelings, stating that "his interests in Aniakchak are deep and long-lived." [20] Guild had hoped to run a concession in the Caldera that would provide food, shelter, and interpretive tours that were "tailor-fitted to the visitor's interests." [21]

In 1976, Guild returned to the Caldera, and this time constructed a relatively substantial rent-cabin. According to Root, the cabin was ten by twelve feet, maintained a wood floor, had two-foot high boarded walls, and was framed with two by four inch ribbing. Guild encouraged Root and the rest of his NPS party to stay with him in his rent-cabin shelter, which Root admitted, "made our week of being weathered in much more pleasant than it might have been." [22] Although the NPS appreciated his knowledge of the area, local residents in Port Heiden found it odd that anyone who was not there to hunt or trap would choose to live under such extreme conditions. Because of his apparent devotion to wilderness, local villagers called Guild the "Wild Man of Aniakchak." [23] Guild, however, was not the only outdoor enthusiast enamored with the Caldera to publicize his experience there. Another was Larry Rice, a wilderness activist who called Alaska "a place mythical in proportions, so immense that its size and the architecture of its landscape are difficult to comprehend." [24]



Archeologist Ross Smith watches as the Branch River Air floatplane taxies across Aniakchak Lagoon, 2005. Photograph courtesy of Brian Hoffman, Hamline, University.

Nearly ten years after Guild spent his summers in Aniakchak, Rice and a group of five friends floated two inflatable rafts, aptly named the *Father Hubbard* and the *Hail Mary,* from Surprise Lake, down the Aniakchak River to Aniakchak Bay and the Pacific Ocean. While floating the river, Rice was very aware of Father Hubbard's journeys into the Caldera in the 1930s. "We were retracing history," exclaimed Rice about a portage around the rapids near the Gates. "This was the same trail Father Hubbard had used when he first entered the Caldera." [25] Not only was Rice aware of Hubbard's explorations, he seems to also espouse Hubbard's description of Aniakchak—as an exotic, empty wilderness landscape that demands self-determination, rugged individualism, and modern technology to survive:

> Above everything else, I had learned that wilderness is a reality in Aniakchak. No modern structure stands within its 600,000-acre expanse. No human road or track can be seen within or even approaching its boundaries. Access to the interior is only by aircraft or arduous overland backpacking, or from the Pacific Coast by boats that must travel fifty miles or more through difficult waters. A park service pamphlet warned that "weather is a frequent and even life-threatening challenge to the unwary or unprepared; the need for self-reliance and self-sufficiency in Aniakchak is extremely high." [26]

Like Hubbard in 1932, Rice, his party, and gear were flown into the Caldera by aircraft, specifically, Pen Air's twin engine Goose. After landing on Surprise Lake, the adventurers set up camp and set about exploring the Caldera, always aware of the presence of the Glacier Priest: "I smiled to myself," writes Rice. "Once again I was following in the steps of Father Hubbard." [27] Rice, a biologist by training, made note of the wildlife, which had returned since the 1931 eruption. He observed red algae floating in pools along Surprise Lake's shoreline, as well as Lapland larkspurs growing near its edge. Numerous plovers, snow buntings, bald eagles, ravens, red fox, voles, lemmings, and caribou were also viewed inside the Caldera. Rice and his companions climbed Vent Mountain and Half Cone, investigated

the site of the 1931 eruption, and re-examined the pile of fossil rocks described by Hubbard in 1930. They even encountered what both adventurers—Hubbard and Rice—deemed the icon of frontier wilderness, the Alaska Peninsula brown bear, or what Rice dramatically called "the Griz." [28]

But unlike Hubbard, for these new adventurers, Aniakchak was not an abomination of desolation. Although Rice identifies with Hubbard, especially in terms of Aniakchak's overwhelming remoteness and isolation, Rice does not view the Caldera as an alien world, but rather, as part of an ecological system of succession that is reflective of life here on earth. When looking down into the eruptive crater discovered by Hubbard in 1931, Rice observed:

> With Aniakchak's crumbly walls half-hidden in the swirling, parting, closing clouds, and the yawning gape of the doughnut-shaped hole below, I imagined myself a space voyager; this pitted landscape was as naked and lifeless as the surface of some distant planet. Then I looked closer and realized how wrong I was. At the bottom of the crater, growing in areas bare of old snow and puddles of ice, a mass of lichens embroidered the rubble with flecks of black, orange and green. The primitive plants marked the beginning of the slow and complex process of succession that, unless thwarted by another eruption, will eventually result in the garden spot Hubbard first found in 1930.

While floating the Aniakchak River, Rice noted even more wildlife, including moose, caribou, bears and many new birds: magpies, long-tailed jaegers, arctic terns, bank swallows, northern shrikes, warblers, rough-legged hawks, falcons, sandhill cranes, tundra swans, northern harriers, short-eared owls, and numerous ducks. Silver salmon squirted out from under the *Father Hubbard*, and three Dolly Varden made for a good dinner. The adventurers also made note of landmarks made popular by Hubbard: Pinnacle Mountain, Hidden Creek, Mystery Creek, North Fork, Elephant Mountain, and Cape Horn. After drifting through scenic low hills that surrounded the mouth of the Aniakchak River, Rice and his flotilla exited the mouth and eased into Aniakchak Bay.

The ensuing days formed the last part of their Aniakchak trilogy—from Caldera to river, to the coast. On the coastal leg of their trip, the adventurers stayed at the Alaska Packers Association's old bunkhouse, which by that time, was managed by the NPS. While describing the "weathered and neglected" structure, Rice makes the only passing reference to a cultural past that was not related to Father Hubbard. Like Hubbard, Rice seemingly chose to downplay the role people have played in shaping the history of the area. And, as he and his party waited along the Aniakchak coast for their airplane pick-up from King Salmon, Rice remembered Charles Darwin's lament: "It is the fate of most voyagers...no sooner to discover what is most interesting in any locality than they are hurried from it. Had Rice spent more time in Aniakchak, perhaps he, unlike Hubbard, might have realized that Aniakchak's human story is as complex, arguably just as interesting, and completely intertwined with the geological wonder world from which Rice had just descended.

A New Generation of Scientific Explorer: Solving Aniakchak's Mysteries, and Beyond

The magnitude of the Aniakchak landscape—its raw beauty, isolation, and seemingly primitive nature—convinced Father Hubbard that its secretive past would remain a mystery and, in his words, "history would remain silent." Although it is now apparent that Hubbard painted a mysterious picture of Aniakchak's past for his own public image, it can be argued that Hubbard's passion and awe of Aniakchak contributed in important ways to science or, at least, scientific inquiry about the region's natural and cultural past. Hubbard's copious writings, photographs, and film, coupled with his historic landing in the Aniakchak crater, paved the way for a new generation of scientific explorers who began to ask the question:

"What exactly happened here?"

In the early years of exploration on the Alaska Peninsula, however, it was oil—not volcanoes—that provoked investigation of the Aniakchak Caldera by the United Stares Geological Survey, the agency that was responsible for exploring and evaluating the mineral potential of Alaska lands. [29] In 1922, R.H. Sargent and Walter R. Smith surveyed the area from Kanatak to Chignik. Three years later, Sargent returned to the region with geologist Russell Knappen. Their efforts succeeded in revealing the topography and resources of Aniakchak for the first time. [30] The discovery of the giant Caldera helped explain why so many valleys as much as thirty miles away were entirely blanketed by volcanic ejecta. When the geologists reported their findings, they could not repress their awe of the landscape with technical prose, for in their report they suggested that Aniakchak was worthy of preservation in a national monument. [31]

As a result of the USGS findings—or more precisely with what the geologists did not find—the Alaska Peninsula's oil boom came to a bust and as a result, between the 1920s and the 1960s, USGS paid relatively little attention to the region, concentrating their efforts in other areas of the Pacific Rim. Besides a reconnaissance survey conducted in the early 1970s, [32] it was not until the early 1990s that USGS began to actively monitor Aniakchak. That attention was due in part to a joint effort between USGS, the Geophysical Institute of the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and the State of Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys to form the Alaska Volcano Observatory (AVO). AVO was established with three goals in mind: to monitor and study Alaska's hazardous volcanoes, to research and predict eruptive activity, and to mitigate volcanic hazards to life and property. [33]

In 1994, AVO geologists conducted an initial survey to establish a monitoring program to detect potential signs of restlessness at Aniakchak. They installed a network of five benchmarks on the Caldera floor and four additional benchmarks high on the Caldera rim. According to geologists, the benchmarks will be retrieved sometime in the future to determine whether any change in ground elevation has occurred—in other words, the retrieved data will tell scientists if magma is moving to the surface floor of the Caldera. [34] Seismic data are telemetered into nearby Port Heiden where AVO personnel change paper on helicorded drums daily and forward the records to AVO in Fairbanks every week. Although Aniakchak has remained silent, geologists know that it is only a matter of when—not if—Aniakchak's monitors will show such activity.

It was under AVO's umbrella that USGS geologists Christina Neal and Robert "Game" McGimsey began their geological investigations inside Aniakchak's Caldera—seventy years after USGS researchers R. H. Sargent and Walter R. Smith first surveyed the area in 1922. [35] Their objective: to chronicle the eruptive history of the volcano since the Caldera formed nearly 3,500 years ago. Between 1992 and 1994, McGimsey and Neal spent several weeks each summer living and working inside the Caldera. The NPS issued special-use permits for each operation, which in both 1992 and 1994 included use of a helicopter to mobilize and demobilize camp, expedite installation of seismic and geodetic equipment, and move geologists efficiently across the rugged landscape. [36] Like Hubbard, one of AVO's most significant research instruments is the one that allows them to view Aniakchak from above.

"It wasn't until I had an aerial view" noted McGimsey, "that I came up with the theory of Aniakchak's catastrophic flood." According to McGimsey, the scientists had just been picked up by a helicopter and were on their way home when McGimsey looked down the landscape. As he observed the massive land disturbance that originated at the Gates and proceeded down the length of the Aniakchak River to the sea, "it became obvious." [37]

Meanwhile, other experts with the National Park Service were beginning to inquire about the living world of Aniakchak. Aided by USGS's geological findings, NPS archeologists, ethnographers, and historians were beginning to better understand how the land itself played a major role in shaping the region's human history. In February 1990, Frank Norris began some of the first historical work on a localized area of the monument. Norris exhaustedly gathered a wide variety of information on Aniakchak's history, much of which had been previously obtained by Sande Faulkner, who had made an earlier attempt to write a nomination to the National Register of Historical Places for the area surrounding the Columbia River Packers Association bunkhouse. Norris's research found the area to be rich in cultural and maritime history. His work made the site eligible for nomination, which was designated the Aniakchak Bay Historic Landscape District in 1994.

In 1997, Michele Morseth began work on *Puyulek Pu'irtuk! People of the Volcanoes, an Ethnographic Overview & Assessment of Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve.* The report identifies groups of people in the past and present with cultural affiliation and traditional associations to the lands encompassed by Aniakchak. Morseth incorporated an extensive list of sources, many of which came from Russian materials that uncovered a great deal of new knowledge about the region. Morseth also conducted many interviews with people living in the shadow of the Aniakchak, places such as Pilot Point, Ugashik, Port Heiden and the Chigniks.

At the same time the ethnographic study was funded, park researchers were conducting the first archeological survey of the central portion of the Alaska Peninsula. Richard VanderHoek and Rachel Myron compiled the comprehensive data of the four-year study, which culminated in a confidential publication titled *Cultural Remains from a Catastrophic Landscape.* [38] Both the cultural resource projects were designed in tandem to document the human history of the monument and preserve. According to cultural resource manager Jeanne Schaaf, "a spirit of communication worked well between the two projects, with the archeological survey 'ground truthing' many of the oral historical data." [39] Both studies have brought to light a rich cultural history of the Aniakchak region, extending back at least two thousand years.



Dinosaur footprint found at Aniakchak. National Park Service, Anchorage, Alaska.

Aniakchak's secret past was revealed even further when a discovery was made that would have made Hubbard envious. During a four-year NPS-sponsored survey of the fossil resources in Aniakchak, Dr. Anthony Fiorillo, a paleontologist from the Dallas Museum of National History, discovered a 70 million-year-old footprint made by a hadrosaur, a large duck-billed, plant eating dinosaur. [40] The discovery occurred in August 2001, two years after Fiorillo began the survey. On that summer day, the scientist had no reason to believe the day would be any different than the others he had spent on the peninsula. His team had just completed a four-day raft trip through the monument. As they reached the Aniakchak coast, Fiorillo thought he had struck out again: "I just kept thinking—gee, it's too bad we didn't find what I'd hoped we would," recalled Fiorillo. "So when we got to the coast, we had about three hours before the float plane was to pick up, and I said I'd like to walk to the beach. I wandered over to the next point...and it was at this next point that I looked down and saw this thing staring at me." [41]

The "thing" Fiorillo saw was the first evidence of a dinosaur in southwestern Alaska—a three-large-toed footprint that looked as though it was made by a "giant chicken." [42] The print was made by a forty-foot, three-ton, young hadrosaur, which paleontologists believe stood up right like a chicken, and could walk or run on its large muscular hind legs, but probably used all four legs while grazing for food. Current theories also suggest that hadrosaurs roamed the earth in giant herds, which is why paleontologists affectionately call these dinosaurs the "cows of the Cretaceous." Other fossilized evidence suggests that mothers cared for their young rather than laying eggs and leaving the young to hatch and grow on their own. Fossils discovered in other locations have revealed parent dinosaurs sitting on a nest of eggs. [43]

Fiorillo describes the footprint discovery as a "significant find" because it "documents the existence of an extensive high-latitude terrestrial ecosystem capable of supporting large-bodied herbivores." [44] It is believed that such an ecosystem stretched for hundreds of miles over a region roughly composed of present day Alaska and supported non-migrating herds of hadrosaurs, such as the one which left his footprint behind in Aniakchak. This finding also has other important scientific implications, which help us to understand Aniakchak's role as a bridge rather than as a frontier in Alaska's history. As Fiorillo points out:

> Most of the dinosaurs groups in North America during the Cretaceous appear to have originated in Asia and migrated to the American continent across a land bridge. In the much more recent Pleistocene, such a land bridge has been referred to as Beringia. The footprints in Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve, in conjunction with the discoveries in the northern part of the state, suggest that the antiquity of Beringia is rooted in the Cretaceous. [45]

Given the abundance of important fossil-bearing rocks in these and other parks, there are likely many more exciting dinosaur discoveries waiting throughout Aniakchak and the larger Alaska Region.

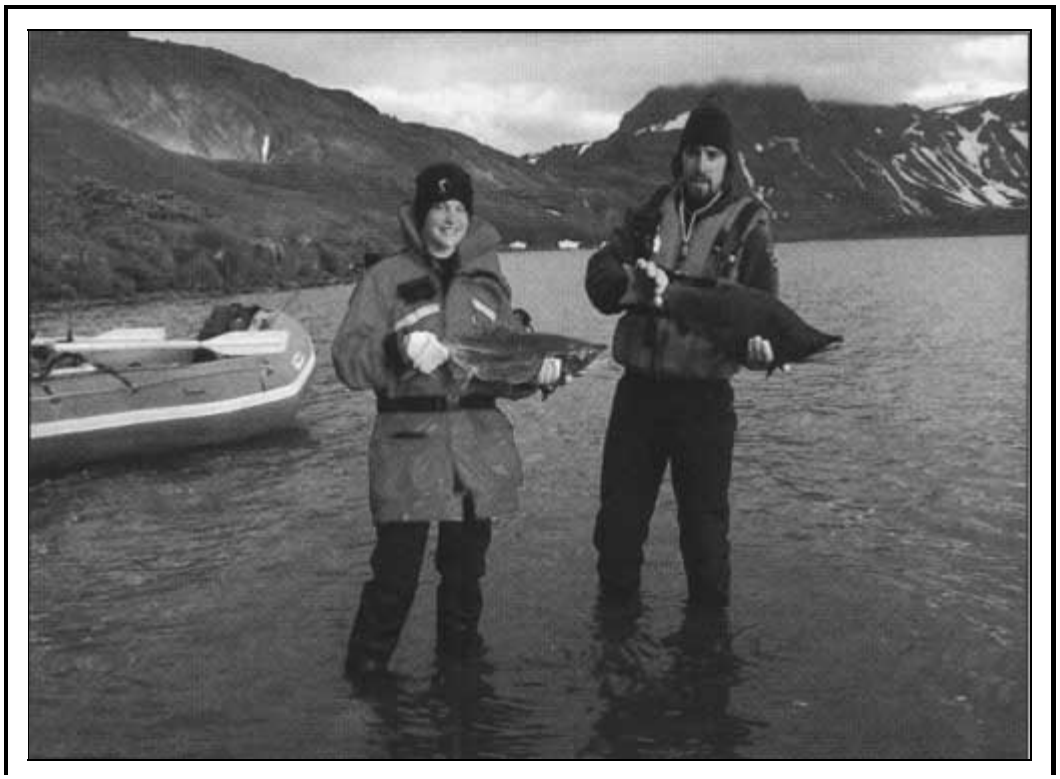
* * *

While his approach might have been flawed, Father Hubbard understood Aniakchak, in terms of both science and spirituality. His devotion stemmed from his love in God, but also from his knowledge of geology. Hubbard was keenly aware of the volcano's place in the earth's long history. He knew that the crater maintained the power to "bring no end of trouble upon us," [46] and at the same time, Hubbard understood that his geological wonder world inspired a creativity grounded in scientific wonder. "Suppose men like ourselves could live on the moon," marveled the priest:

> "They would, in the brilliancy of an earth lit night, train their telescopes on our planet, searching for crater formations like unto their own. And they'd find one—perhaps the only one—right where I stood looking up inside the ring of Aniakchak." [47]

Like Hubbard, many of today's outdoor enthusiasts, adventurers, and scientists are seeking new frontiers. Some, like University of California professor, Jack Green, are using scientific knowledge discovered at Aniakchak to unlock even bigger mysteries. For example, instead of viewing the moon as a dead spinning sphere, Green sees the earth's satellite as a biological preserve for the genesis of life. At the National Space Society's 20th Annual International Space Development Conference held in 2001, Green argued that the permanently shadowed areas on the lunar surface may be massive craters, created not by collisions with asteroids, but through the same processes that created Aniakchak—volcanism. [48] Although the moon's internal heat escaped over a billion years ago, Green contends that long ago the moon was tectonically active and its extinct volcanic calderas might be celestial cemeteries where fossils of tiny organisms that lived in extremely hostile conditions await discovery. [49] Although Green's theory remains a minor view in lunar science, the astrobiology community believes that if extra-terrestrial life is indeed found in our solar system, it most likely will be microscopic, single-celled creatures living perhaps in the ice covered, and possibly volcanically active, moons, not so unlike the primitive plant life returning to Aniakchak described by Rice. [50] In fact, in making his case that protolife could be lurking in dead volcanoes on our moon, Green has studied similar calderas here on earth, including the young volcanoes building inside Aniakchak. [51]

Many summer evenings have passed since Hubbard made his Moon Crater observations, and ironically, his words and his activities in the Caldera have inspired scientists like Jack Green to look beyond the Moon Crater, and to keep looking up. Likewise, on a similar evening nearly sixty years later, Tina Neal and Game McGimsey concluded their day of surveying and paused to watch the moon cast illuminating shadows across a landscape shaped and crafted by volcanoes. Neal remembers, "At that moment, universal time, geological time, and human time intersected." As had Hubbard, she observed, "Aniakchak became a perfect planetary link."



Conducting salmon research along the Aniakchak River. Tray Hamon, NPS.

Neal concedes that Hubbard was an undisciplined scientist and that he used Aniakchak as a backdrop for his frontier drama rather than a place to fully understand in terms of sound science. He brazenly promoted Aniakchak as an isolated, alien world, where one could escape civilization, but, at the same time, he explored the Caldera using the most progressive technology civilization had to offer. On the other hand, it was Hubbard's Moon Crater interpretation—an interpretation in which he both conquered and communed with the Caldera—that inspired the world to see volcanoes as geological marvels rather than agents of violence and destruction. Neal, who probably knows Aniakchak better than anyone, sees Hubbard's contradictory approach to Aniakchak as his legacy there. In Neal's words, "Hubbard popularized across the country the science of volcanology, the geography and activity of Alaskan volcanoes, and shared the sense of adventure that goes with exploratory science." [52] And, indeed, it is Hubbard's legacy of contradictions that continues to shape perceptions of Aniakchak to this day.

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ANIAKCHAK

Beyond the Moon Crater Myth
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape
A Historic Resource Study for Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

ANECDOTES

A Dinosaur Discovery in Aniakchak National Monument

by
Anthony R. Fiorillo
Dallas Museum of Natural History

"...It was the abomination of desolation, it was the prelude to hell," is how the Jesuit priest, Father Bernard Hubbard, described the inside of Aniakchak Caldera shortly after its eruption in 1931. Dramatic description aside, when I first learned of an opportunity to head to the Alaska Peninsula to look for the remains of dinosaurs, my attention seemed to focus immediately on a place called Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve, home of the famous Aniakchak Caldera. As goofy as it might sound, looking at a map, Aniakchak seemed to be beckoning to me. However, to the relief of who ever might read this, I should clarify that the beckoning wasn't due to some premonition of great paleontological discovery; rather it was simply the remoteness of the spot.

Descriptions like the one provided by Father Hubbard only served to enhance my curiosity. To echo the great conservationist Bob Marshall's sentiment, expressed in his book *Arctic Village,* blank spaces on maps have always fascinated me. Questions about those blank spaces cover everything from the geology to wondering how cold the water in the rivers might be. Somehow I was equating the remoteness of Aniakchak with blank spaces.

Though Mesozoic rocks can be found throughout much of Alaska, dinosaur-aged vertebrates in this vast region are limited to only a handful of localities. Along the Colville River in the northern part of the state is where many fossil bones have been found. There is a lot of uncharted paleontological territory in Alaska and it seemed Aniakchak afforded an opportunity for discovery because previous geologists had left clues in their notes when they mapped the rocks in the park. These clues suggested Aniakchak was capbable of producing new dinosaur localities.

When I arrived in King Salmon to get started on a paleontological survey of the park, a storm front had also arrived. Anticipation around town was that the storm might last a couple of days, so my colleagues at the National Park Service office said that for now, we would stay put. Later in the day, the winds in King Salmon dropped and the rain stopped, but no one in town could be committal about a weather forecast for the next day or so. It was easy to become anxious with the waiting.

As each day passed, waiting for the weather to clear, my thoughts were becoming more and more philosophically based. One very real thought that remained however, was the story of Father Hubbard's first flight to Aniakchak Caldera. The winds were extraordinarily tricky that day and flying in a Fairchild over the freshly erupted Caldera, Harry Blunt and Father Hubbard were caught in a downdraft. Their only option for escape was for Blunt to take the

Fairchild into a nosedive, with the hope of gaining the needed speed to clear the crater wall. As hair-raising as the story is, Hubbard confessed that he was too busy taking photos to worry, something he left to Blunt to do instead. Regardless of who actually woried, I was not eager to reenact the adventure. So the waiting continues.

The third day, I awoke with some less-than-kind words for the weather. Despite the beautiful blue sky, I could see the treetops moving, letting the presence of the wind be known. The clouds moving in quickly from the mountains just off in the distance spoke of how high off the ground the winds were. In a bleak mood, I wandered over the headquarters where the NPS confirmed my fears: the flight was scrubbed again. It seems that the pilot believed he could get into the Caldera, but it was the getting out due to the tricky air currents that concerned him the most.

Another day, but this time there was no wind! The call came in early that we were set to fly out at noon. Patience, patience, patience. And now it was time to go!

We left King Salmon about noon in a Cessna 185 floatplane flown by C-Air. On the approach to the Caldera, the lack of wind allowed us to take a flight around the inside of the Caldera before landing and see the splendor of the Caldera from the air. Leisurely climbing over the crater wall, we turned over the Aniakchak River and entered back into the Caldera at a much lower elevation through the Gates, a break in the rim where the river flowed out of the Caldera and headed for the Gulf of Alaska. At this much lower level, Surprise Lake seemed choked with salmon. "Paradise Lost after having lived in Paradise Found the previous year" was Father Hubbard's description of Aniakchak when he viewed the crater a month after the eruption. But after all these years, the ecosystem here has achieved a rich sense of recovery and seems to be once again Paradise Found.

With no wind, the landing on Surprise Lake was smooth and we taxied into a cove along the shore of the lake where we offloaded our gear. After a quick snack, it was time to go to work and get ready for our float trip down the Aniakchak River. The first step was to learn how to get into a dry suit, an extraordinarily tight, waterproofed outfit. The dry suit was so tight that it seemed one had to just about dislocate a shoulder to get into the suit. Eventually, though, I found myself secure in my dry suit.

After getting through the Gates, we spent what felt like a leisurely day sampling various exposures of rock next to or near the river. We made camp that evening. With all those fish in the river, it seemed a shame not to try for a Dolly Varden dinner, so once camp was set up, other camp needs took over and it didn't take long to catch enough fish for dinner.

In contrast to this euphoria, a sense of melancholy took over as we neared the end of the river and the beginning of the estuary, because the estuary marked the end of the float trip. We made our way around a point of land into the open water of the Gulf and moved a short ways along the coast to a National Park Service cabin. Here we'd break down the rafts and wait for our floatplane to show up and take us back to King Salmon.

As our schedule seemed to indicate that we had some time before the plane would arrive, I continued by foot down the coast. I wanted to take a look at the Chignik Formation, a promising rock unit that included ancient river channel and floodplain deposits. Along the way, there was an assortment of fossil clams and plants eroding out of the cliffs. The leaves of ancient flowering plants and the branches of old redwoods seemed almost to be offering encouragement to continue looking. I scrambled over boulders to peer around one last corner before I would have to return and wait for the floatplane, and then, literally, at my feet was the three-toed impression of a dinosaur footprint.

After I started breathing again, I started to think of all the reasons why it might not be a

dinosaur footprint, but everything about it matched up well with other footprints I had seen elsewhere. The spacing of the toes was right for an ornithopod dinosaur and given the size and age of the rocks, the track was likely made by the hind foot of a duck-billed dinosaur. Near this footprint were two smaller depressions, slightly curved or crescent shaped that appeared to be made by the animal's hands. The footprints are contained in a rock unit called the Cretaceous Chignik Formation. Named by W.W. Atwood in 1911 for rocks exposed in the vicinity of Chignik Bay, southwest of what is now Aniakchak National Monument, the Chignik Formation is a significant part of the geologic story at the park. The Chignik Formation represents shallow marine to near shore marine environments, as well as continental environments. These tracks represented a brand new record of dinosaurs in Alaska. The next closest locality of the same age was almost a thousand miles away, more than the distance between New York and Chicago.

What to do with this discovery? The block the tracks were on weighed several hundred pounds. A few field sketches, some notes, and lots of photographs would have to do for the moment. Being perhaps particularly paranoid, I took photographs using two different rolls of film in the event one roll got lost. Realizing I was alone, I ran back down the beach to get one of the other team members. In case I couldn't return here for some reason, I wanted someone else to know where these tracks were located.

The window for flying out was closing due to weather coming from back up river.We radioed back to the National Park Service dispatch in King Salmon and they advised we fly out this night rather than risk getting stranded at the cabin for several days, waiting out the incoming storm. It seems the river trip was squeezed in just right between two storms. There was a scheduled flight in the air already to drop off a supply of lumber for repairs at the cabin and the dispatch office recommended we take that flight back to King Salmon.

After awhile we could hear the throaty roar of the engine of the incoming Beaver and it was time to go back to King Salmon and then home. But what a ride home! The magnificent scenery outside the plane played second fiddle to the images of dinosaurs dancing in my head.

<<< Previous <<< Contents>>> Next >>>

ANIAKCHAK

Beyond the Moon Crater Myth
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape
A Historic Resource Study for Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

CONCLUSION
Aniakchak:
The Place People ***Do*** Know, and Have Known, For A Very Long Time!

> *Ten years ago, when I first began with my loyal young college men and faithful dogs annual trips of scientific exploration to the North, I thought that Alaska was just a worthless knob of land on top of America where Eskimos lived in igloos amid desolation of snow and ice. I was certainly surprised to find that it was anything but this. Popular notions of Alaska are for the most part all wrong. It is the least understood of any United States territory. Its size, its extent and its great variety are by no means comprehended. It is truly the land that nobody knows.*
>
> Father Bernard Hubbard, excerpt from the short film *Alaska's Silver Millions*, directed by Beverly Jones, narrated by Father Bernard Hubbard. Carousel Films, 1936.

It is said that a good academic sets out to challenge established popular and scholarly ideas put forth and presumably confirmed by previous generations. To his credit, the Glacier Priest declared that he had come to the Far North to disprove a myth—a myth created by publishers, professionals, and politicians about Alaska after the United States purchased the territory from Russia in 1867. This, of course, was the icebox myth, Seward's Folly. This view assumed that Alaska was nothing more than a frozen wasteland, stuck in a primitive time. Through his journeys into the Caldera, Hubbard proved to the rest of America that Alaska was anything but a desolated waste land of ice and snow. He used the Aniakchak landscape as his laboratory to demonstrate that the Far North was dynamic, active, and alive. But as the Glacier Priest became caught up in the world of publicity stunts and sensationalistic media, he tailored the presentation of his Aniakchak experiences to conform to the expectations of non-Alaskan audiences, already accustomed to the high drama of exploration, who wanted entertainment, not scholarly discourse. As Kathy Price notes, Hubbard's instant fame compelled the Glacier Priest to "succumb to the temptation to exaggerate." [1] As one Alaskan Jesuit missionary observed, Hubbard's writings were, "subjectively true, objectively false." [2] Thus, in Hubbard's attempt to maintain the interest of his audiences by molding an image of a scientist-explorer, instead of debunking a popular myth, the Glacier Priest created one of his own.

For far too long now, the interconnected environmenral and cultural relationships associated with Aniakchak have been overshadowed by Hubbard's Moon Crater myth. For twenty-five years, a large portion of the Aniakchak region has been protected by the federal government as the Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve—a legacy of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980. On the surface, there seems little reason to doubt that much of the region—inside and outside the parklands—meet the legal criteria specified by the 1964 Wilderness Act. Most visitors erroneously experience this portion of the central Alaska

Peninsula "as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." [3] Those that see only pristine wilderness experience nature from the outside looking in and they fail to understand the complex human story that unfolds in Aniakchak, a place known by many for a very long time.

At first glance, evidence that an enduring, intimate historical relationship between man and nature took place here is not apparent, for most of the cultural items that the NPS manages in the actual park unit are scattered archeological sites, a few trapper cabins, and a deteriorated cannery bunkhouse. Most historic artifacts are often so subtle that many visitors see them as "eyesores" or fail to notice them at all. With only 154 recreational visits made to the Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve in all of 2003, it is easy to understand how visitors can feel as though they had just entered a large and lonely universe. [4]



Geologists enroute to Vent Mountain, 1992. Photograph courtesy of Game McGimsey, USGS, Anchorage, Alaska.

Still, the intent of *Beyond the Moon Crater Myth* was to dig deeper into the past. It aimed to show that while the Aniakchak region possesses an extraordinary natural landscape, it is also a land that has maintained a 9,000-year-old human history—a history profoundly intertwined with the "untouched" natural world that visitors to Aniakchak often hope to find. To fully understand the significance of this story, rather than thinking of Aniakchak as a place forgotten by time, visitors need to begin by thinking of the region as a physical and environmentally dynamic place, affected by and connected to larger historical trends. Instead of a primitive frontier that exists on the edge of North America, they must look outward from this place, looking both to the east and to the west, viewing it as a geological, ecological and cultural bridge that brought enormous change to the region.

If they look out beyond the alien Moon Crater image and the vast volcanic landscape, they will begin to see that Aniakchak has more in common with its North Pacific Rim neighbors than differences. The ongoing forces of plate tectonics subducted massive oceanic plates beneath the North American plate and lifted an entire landmass, including Aniakchak. Such processes fuel the region's volcanic activity—of which Aniakchak is representative—circling the entire Pacific Ocean with a "Ring of Fire." Thousand of years ago, numerous ice ages lowered ocean levels and connected North America with Asia. Alaska was the bridge that allowed animals, plants, dinosaurs, and humans to cross back and forth, and the Aniakchak region was part of that corridor.



The Aniakchak Caldera floor. Photo by Tray Hamon, NPS.

In the eighteenth century, Alaska continued to serve as a continental and cultural link, when Russian *promyshlenniki* arrived, seeking rich sea otter pelts. At first, encounters between the Russians and the Alutiiq peoples were confrontational and frequently violent, due to the fact that the Russians failed to master the skill of hunting the animals from kayaks and attempted to coerce the Aleut and Alutiiq hunters to obtain their furs. In accommodating the Russians, the indigenous peoples, who outnumbered the Russians substantially, gained a modicum of power to wield within the exchange process. With Russian military and naval forces far from the Alaska Peninsula, the Russians understood that they could never fully dominate Russian America, and with consolidation of the Russian American Company, the business of trade commenced and common ground was forged between the two groups. The common ground that emerged reflected a combination of Alaska Native, Russian, Asian, and even Siberian Native traditions. Together, these various worldviews merged and from the synthesis, a new cultural world developed on the Alaska Peninsula, especially in enclaves such as the Russian *artels*, where exchanges of furs, food gathering skills, customs and rituals, medicines and vaccines, and even loving relationships between Russian men and Alutiiq women took place.



Aleck Abyo Sr. on right, Aleck Jr. on left, Andrew Abyo in black hat, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

Another important enclave was the Russian Orthodox Church, where Russian priests and Alutiiq villagers formed a kind of alliance that protected their common interests and staved off encroachment by American capitalists and competing Christian churches. Interaction between the Orthodox priests and the Alutiit and Creoles within the nineteen-century villages brought to the region a sense of accommodation that through literacy, environmental views, and the sharing of Church leadership duties with Natives, not only converted most people to Russian Orthodoxy, but molded Orthodoxy into a form of Native religion.

With the spread of American hegemony across the North American continent, Alaska's role as a bridge became even stronger. In 1867, U.S. politicians saw Alaska and its numerous Aleutian Islands as stepping stones across the vast Pacific Ocean to Asian markers. When exploration proved that Alaska and its resources were significant in their own right, American capitalists, with ties to shipping companies and railroads, began to link the Alutiiq hunters to places like Seattle, San Francisco, Chicago and New York City.



Happy Abyo and Orin Seybert out fishing on the Ugashik River, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

The first of these American capitalist interests was the Alaska Commercial Company, which sent its agents to the Alaska Peninsula to replace the Russian American Company traders. Because the peninsula remained on the periphery of the American fur trade, ACC agents, at first replicated the local system of trade developed between the Russians and the Alutiiq hunters. But as fur-bearing resources began to decline, the ACC began to employ more efficient business strategies and quickly ended the century-old, partner-building trade practices that had evolved between indigenous hunters and Russian traders. Conditions resulting from credit debt and racism began to deteriorate relations between hunters and the agents, while the basic economic unit among Native peoples was gradually shifting from the community to the single family.

As myriad historical forces joined together in the late nineteenth century, American capitalism dramatically began to replace prior economic systems that developed in and depended upon the natural environment of the Alaska Peninsula. Not only did the American system begin to break down a system of trade and exchange that had existed for nearly 150 years in the Aniakchak region; it also began to reshape relationships forged between people and the volcanic landscape that had managed to exist in some form or another for 9,000 years. Pools of oil attracted the interest of prospectors from the Lower 48 to the Native and Creole village of Kanatak in 1901. And, in attempts to socially and environmentally engineer the Alaska Peninsula, missionaries and the federal government teamed together to instill the spirit of entrepreneurialism in local residents by incorporating them into an artificially constructed reindeer industry.

Although the oil industry never found commercial-sized oil deposits in Kanatak and the reindeer industry failed to turn local residents into capitalists, another industry struck gold—red gold—for American businessmen. Canneries established an industrial complex, and imported American-made goods like boat parts and trapping equipment that appealed to local residents. They imported a work crew made up of people from places such as Scandinavia, Italy, Greece, China, Japan, and the Philippines, who interacted on varying levels with the

local communities.



Clarice Seybert, Anna Tracy and Josie Irons on sled, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Pilot Point Tribal Council, Ace Griechen Collection.

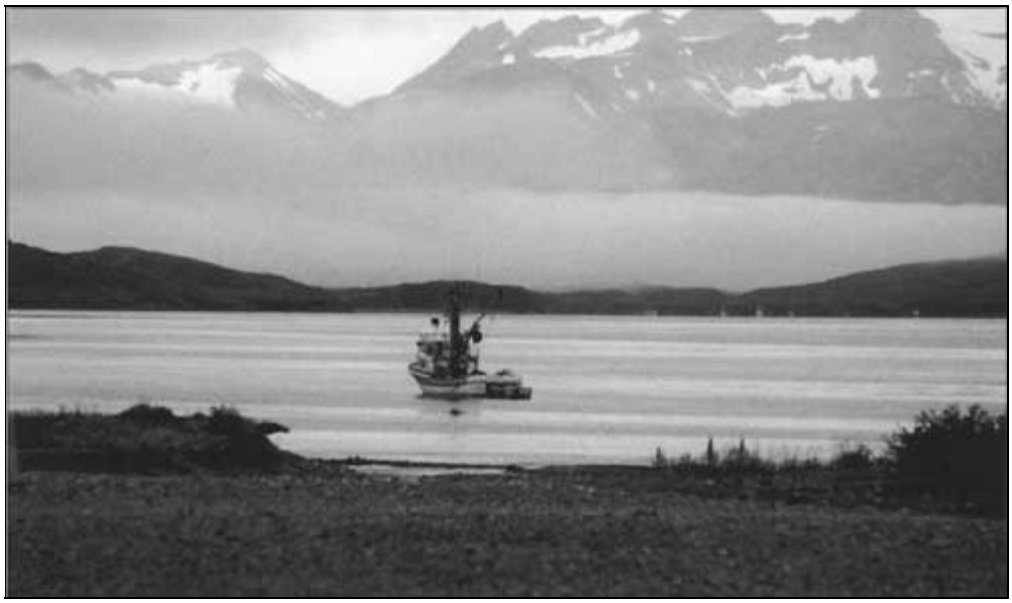
Although most of these newcomers came to the Aniakchak region only seasonally, some remained. They married local women and supplemented fishing and cannery work with fox farming, trapping, and even a brief attempt at commercial razor clamming. Sadly, cannery ships brought infectious disease, as well. The Spanish Flu pandemic proportionately killed more people in Alaska than any place in the world. World War II introduced a new threat to the Aniakchak region—invasion from the Far East—first by the Japanese, and later, the Soviets. That threat catapulted the region onto the world stage, thus transforming the so-called fringe of North America into it newest geopolitical front.

* * *

Initial encounters with the Russians were destructive to Alutiiq culture. Some encounters were violent, others brought disease, and some brought new spiritual views that rivaled shamanistic practice. Most harsh was the decimation of the fur mammal populations, and ultimately, the Alutiit traditional relationship with the animals. Still, as unsettling as the massive slaughter of sea mammals must have been to Native hunters, much of the Russian fur trade in Aniakchak was conducted in patterns familiar to resident hunters, and moreover, remained basically within the local system. In other words, the Russians, who were too far from their homeland to bring conveniences, were assimilated—they were living off the land almost as much as the Alutiiq people were.

Most Alaska Native societies formed around relationships based on an egalitarian structure. Individuals worked together to gain what they needed from the surrounding environment—and the fish camp is a perfect example of such an economic structure. As long as trade relations between Alutiiq people and Russians traders were conducted in this mode, as they were in the Russian *artels,* then most activities—from hunting to trade to religion—remained essentially "Native" activities, which had been conducted by the Alutiiq for several hundred

years. [5] Thus, the commercial-oriented relationship with nature developed side by side with more traditional views. Although some levels of alienation from traditional relationships resulted, most Alutiit managed to respond to the demands of the fur trade without entirely abandoning their older spiritual relationship with the world around them. This was most evident when the fur trade declined in the late nineteenth century, forcing many people to use pre-contact skills and knowledge to survive.



Chignik seiner, 2004. Photograph courtesy of Katherine Johnson Ringsmuth, Anchorage. Alaska.



The past and the future, Chignik Lagoon, Alaska, 2004. Photograph courtesy of Katherine Johnson Ringsmuth, Anchorage, Alaska.

This ability to deal with the advancing newcomers continued several decades after the United States purchased Russian America in 1867. American corporate interests, however,

fundamentally altered traditional Alutiit system of exchange—in terms of both production and distribution. Canneries still made use of familiar 'Native' activities such as fishing, cleaning, and preserving salmon, but because the new industrial mode were a part of a system that existed entirely apart from the surrounding environment, the Alutiiq people no longer associated these activities with their traditional subsistence lifestyle. Still, change was a matter of degree. Because Native people were able to make the distinction between the cannery system and the traditional subsistence system, they were able to eventually engage in an American economy and culture without having them replace their own entirely.

Despite enormous economic changes that disrupted the interplay between culture and nature in the beginning of the twentieth century, many of the old ways continue. Language, for example, is being kept alive in classrooms. Most the inhabitants on the Alaska Peninsula remain members of the Russian Orthodox Church. Though they have limited access to grocery stores, most villagers still receive a major portion of their foodstuffs from the land, rivers, and oceans. And, while most people make their living as commercial fishers today, Alutiiq elders continue to teach their children how to show respect for the life force, the *sua*, of the salmon so that the fish will return the following year. [6]



Surprise Lake in Aniakchak Caldera. June 2003, NPS photo.

Today we can understand the history of the central portion of the Alaska Peninsula as a convergence of diverse people. It is a place where Alutiiq shamans, Russian *promyshlenniki*, Orthodox priests, American traders, fox farmers, oil boosters, Inupiat reindeer herders, salmon packers, Army soldiers, scientists, park rangers and tourists interacted at various points in time. It is also a place that people did know, and have known for a very long time.

* * *

Father Hubbard generally ignored Aniakchak's human history and presented Aniakchak as an alien Moon Crater. Moreover, by introducing Aniakchak to the outside world, Hubbard brought that world to Aniakchak. Through his famed journeys into the Caldera and the writings, lectures, photographs and films that followed, the Glacier Priest made a truly profound contribution which still resonates today: Hubbard's activities and observations remind us that it is in places like Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve where we may go to ponder our relationship to a universe much larger than ourselves.



Children of Port Heiden, 1996. Photograph courtesy of Tina Neal, USGS, Anchorage. Alaska.

NOTES

[1]Price, 46.

[2]"The Hubbard Expeditions to Alaska," [Fr. McElmeel, ca 1954], copy in collection of Fr. Louis Renner, S.J., Fairbanks Diocese.

[3]Wilderness Act, 1980

[4]Information provided by Becky Brock, chief of concessions for ANIA.

[5]For theories on how Alaska Natives made the transition from a subsistence to a market economy see James A. Fall, Molly B. Chythlook, Janet C. Schichnes, and Judith M. Morris, "An Overview of the Harvest and Use of Freshwater Fish by Communities of the Bristol Bay Region, Southwest Alaska" Technical Paper No. 166. Alaska Department of Fish and Game (1996): 70-71.

[6]Partnow, 3.

<<< Previous <<< Contents>>> Next >>>

ANIAKCHAK

Beyond the Moon Crater Myth
A New History of the Aniakchak Landscape
A Historic Resource Study for Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

APPENDIX
HISTORIC PROPERTIES SUMMARIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

HISTORIC PROPERTIES SUMMARIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Pre-Contact Period (pre-1741)

The following sites are prehistoric properties listed on the National Register or are identified as situated within the Aniakchak Bay Historic Landscape District, and therefore, should be considered as contributing sites to the National Register district. Other archeological sites that are associated with the pre-contact period are listed in *Cultural Remains from a Catastrophic Landscape: An Archeological Overview and Assessment of Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve* (VanderHoek and Myron). Due to culturally sensitive materials, however, this NPS document is not available to the public.

SUT-016 Packers Cabin Complex

This site consists of several subterranean depressions. Archeological testing suggests that these depressions are the result of at least five periods of occupation since 1500 BP. The site was evaluated against the criteria for the National Register and is significant because it was used during prehistoric times up through mid-1900s. Moreover, this site maintains the potential to yield information on the cultural affiliation and lifeways of the people of central Alaska Peninsula in the prehistoric past (VanderHoek and Myron).

SUT-013 Spire Village

Although this site is located within the Aniakchak Bay Historic Landscape District, it was only recently discovered, and is therefore not documented on the 1991 district nomination form. The site offers excellent views of the lower Aniakchak River Valley and the northern part of Aniakchak Bay. Northeast of the center of the site, fresh clean water flows out from the hillside. According to archeologists, the site is significant for three principle reasons: First, the ages of radiocarbon samples collected at this site place it as one of the three known former villages along the Meshik River-Aniakchak River corridor, occupied from approximately 1400 until after 1300 BP, with one feature dated to approximately 1000 BP. This site potentially holds evidence that can test Don Dumond's hypothesis that the Meshik River-Aniakchak corridor was a travel route between Bristol Bay and the Pacific coast during the 1300 to 1400 BP period. Second, SUT-013 is one of only three sites in Aniakchak in which clay-lined pits were encountered. Third, the total absence of pottery suggests that this region lies beyond the southern range of Norton tradition sites, supporting Dumond's placement of that boundary at the Cinder River. SUT-013 has the potential to yield considerable information on the cultural affiliation and movement of people on the Alaska Peninsula from 1400 to 1200 BP (VanderHoek and Myron).

SUT-014

The prehistoric component of this sight is also situated within the Aniakchak Bay Historic Landscape District, but was not included in the 1991 Nomination. The site contains four slight surface depressions, multiple house floors, and lithic material. SUT-014 has the potential to yield information concerning settlement patterns, subsistence patters, warfare, and cultural affiliation of perhaps the first people to occupy (or reoccupy) the region after the 3400 BP Aniakchak eruption (VanderHoek and Myron).

SUT-051

Lying within the boundaries of the Aniakchak Bay Historic Landscape district, this prehistoric camp has the potential to yield information on the cultural affiliation and lifeways of the people of central Alaska Peninsula in the prehistoric past (VanderHoek and Myron).

SUT-052

This site also lies within the boundaries of the Aniakchak Bay Historic Landscape District, but was not listed on the original nomination form. It is a late prehistoric camp located above the Aniakchak River. It has the potential to yield information concerning the cultural affiliation, settlement patterns, household organization, and subsistence practice of people in late prehistoric time in Aniakchak region (VanderHoek and Myron).

Russian American Period (1741-1867)

To date, only one historic site has been discovered in Aniakchak that may reveal information about the Russian American period on the Alaska Peninsula. This number appears quite low, for written sources suggest that significant historical events occurred between Russians and Alutiit on the central Alaska Peninsula at this time. The fur trade and hunting practices extended to the mainland, Russian Orthodox priests traveled extensively up and down both coastlines to visit parishioners, and perhaps most significantly, a new cultural identity emerged from the relationships formed between Russian and Alutiiq peoples. It is highly recommended that further archeological and historical research be conducted that will help us to better understand the impact of Russian America on the Aniakchak region. Further investigations have the potential to yield important cultural information of this little known historic period. Other sites may be found on adjoining USFWS land and, therefore, developing a study in cooperation with the agency may lead to the discovery of more Russian American sites.

SUT-041 Russian Artel

Archeological evidence suggests that this site may have been a Russian sea otter hunting camp occupied after the establishment of the Suthum artel by the Russian-American Company in the 1790s. The historic remains at this site offer the best available archeological evidence for occupation of Aniakchak during the Russian period. The site may offer information on Russian-Alutiiq trade, social relations and subsistence (VanderHoek and Myron).

HISTORIC PROPERTIES SUMMARIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Early American Period (1867-1930)

The historical period known as Early American should actually be described as a cultural

collision between Alaska Natives, Russians, and Euroamericans. It is a time period that reflects a great deal of cultural borrowing, yet, at the same time, cultural dislocation. By the turn of the century, the Aniakchak region had been incorporated into an American capitalistic system. It is this period that had the most profound long-term affects on both the region's economy and environment. Connecting Aniakchak to the modern American industrial network was the fur industry, the oil industry, the canned salmon industry, and the commercial reindeer industry. Local enterprises that perhaps occurred to a lesser degree but nevertheless reflected American commercialization included fox farming, trapping, and razor clam canning.

Most of the known historic properties in Aniakchak are associated with this period of Americanization. It is recommended that more studies are conducted that help explain the transition from subsistence to an exchange economy and finally to a capitalistic system, and how that transition shaped the cultural world that exists today. Moreover, the people associated with this period are characterized as frontiersmen. However, this study suggests that in fact, most people lived rather communally. A cultural landscape study is recommended to help better understand the distinct lifeways that took place in Aniakchakat this time.

SUT-042 Alaska Commercial Company Post

This is the remains of a historic hunting camp that existed during the late 1800s to the early 1900s. It is possible that the site may be one of the locations of trading posts operated by the Alaska Commercial Company during the 19th century (VanderHoek and Myron). Since this is the only site that represents early American trade activities in Aniakchak, further historical and archeological investigation is highly recommended.

STU-009 Adolph Von Himmel's Camp

This site has been destroyed over the years by erosion. It had unobstructed views of the lower reaches of the two creeks and the northwestern section of Amber Bay. The site consisted of two cache pits and three house depressions, one of which had partially eroded into West Creek. Two of the three rectangular features had small side rooms and breaks in one wall of each of the depressions indicated possible doorways or connecting trenches. Squared timbers were used as posts in house depression walls. The location of this site corresponds to that identified as the camp of Adolph Von Himmel, who trapped in Amber Bay during the 1920s (VanderHoek and Myron).

STU-010 Historic Trapping Cabin

Located on the southern bank of Main Creek, this site is believed to have been the trapping cabin first used by Adolf Von Himmel and later by John Hillborn in the 1920s and 1930s. The site is on the navigable lower section of the river and is now sheltered from winds from the south by an extensive alder thicket. The site consists of the remains of a semi-subterranean house with two square connected rooms, currently nestled in the alder. The site is currently undisturbed but is potentially susceptible to erosion and damage from visitor use and vandalism (VanderHoek and Myron).

SUT-032 Historic Boat Ways and Boat-house

A historic ways and boathouse is located on the east side of Main Creek. Remains of the boathouse include several vertical timbers, a series of timers and logs lying parallel to and at right angles to the stream, and fragments of cable buried in the brush. The location of this site corresponds to that of a boathouse used by John Hillborn in the 1930s-1947. John Hillborn used the boat, Wayne, to ferry his family from Chignik to Amber Bay in the fall for the trapping season. The boat and Hillborn reportedly survived a tidal wave in 1938 while at the

ways at Main Creek. The site is undisturbed but is potentially at risk to erosion or vandalism (VanderHoek and Myron).

SUT-033 "Hillborn Main House"

This historic Trapping Cabin Complex is located on Main Creek and provides a view that overlooks the flat lowland to the northwest. It is near the upper limit of tidal influence in Main Creek and can be reached by skiff or dory from the boathouse on the lower river. Larger vessels can reach the site when seasonal high tides raise the level of the steam several feet above normal.

Nine of the 12 features at the site are historic. These include the remains of one framed house, three small plank outbuildings (one of which is still standing,) three small possibly sod-walled huts or semi-subterranean houses, and a scatter of historic artifacts. The house and several plank building are nestled into vegetated blowouts on the south side of the berm. The remains of what may have been an outhouse rest on the edge of the berm about 100 feet north of the house. The frame house is earth-sheltered on the east, west and north sides, with most of the roof and wall timbers above ground level fallen or missing. A metal bedstead and stove are still visible inside the remains of the dwelling. Items visible around the house include the remains of a winch and water pitcher. The Hillborn family lived at this site during the 1930s-1940s. It is threatened by extreme erosion and has been disturbed by artifact collectors (VanderHoek and Myron).

SUT-015 Historic Trapping Cabin

This Historic Trapping Cabin is located in a relatively sheltered cove. The site consists of four depressions and associated plywood and modern dimensional lumber. The largest feature is a collapsed wooden structure in a depression. The collapsed structure forms a mound in the center of the feature. A plank affixed to a spruce pole with galvanized nails was found east of the other features, and apparently served as a paddle. Given the state of preservation of the structural material at this site, it likely dates to within the last 30 to 60 years. The site is undisturbed, but susceptible to potential damage from visitor use and vandalism (VanderHoek and Myron).

SUT-049 Fred Gungas Base Camp

The historic trapping Cabin Complex was probably used by Fred Gungas as a trapping base camp during the 1920s. The steam mouth serves as a "catcher" for driftwood. The site consists of a three rectangular depressions stretching along the northwest edge of a low bluff. The small, semi-subterranean rooms on the upper edge of the bluff are connected, with access to the outside through the middle room. Several pieces of milled lumber are evident in the walls of these rooms. The site is undisturbed and undisturbed but is susceptible to visitor use or vandalism (VanderHoek and Myron).

SUT-014 Historic Steam Launch Moorage and Bunk Scow

The steam launch moorage lies on Ark Island, which falls within Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge land. However, the site lies within the boundaries of the Aniakchak Bay Historic Landscape District. Norris describes the other historic property as the collapsed remains of a bunk scow. Historic remains include an iron pipe driven into the ground just above the western beach, several timbers lying on the surface near the southern rip of the island, and a sea mammal bone driven into the ground. It was historically used by employees of the fishing companies, who watched over and maintained the early fish traps in Aniakchak Bay. These men lived on the bunk scow from 1917-1919. The island was also used historically as a moorage for the steam launch that serviced the fish traps in use along the

shores of Aniakchak Bay (VanderHoek and Myron).

SUT-016 Columbia River Packers Association (CRPA) Cabin," "APA Cabin," or "Packers Cabin"

This historic Cabin complex is the largest and most complex site within the Aniakchak Bay Historic Landscape District. As of 1977, it was the only site listed on Alaska Heritage Resource Survey in Aniakchak. The site consists of the cabin or bunkhouse along with its associated remains as well as the remnants of several historic semi-subterranean dwellings. The bunkhouse is constructed of platform, dimensional wood framing. According to Norris, the bunkhouse has retained a considerable degree of integrity due to the high quality construction materials, the durability of the wood foundation, and excellent workmanship. The most significant attrition is at the end of the south wing, where the roof and walls have been removed. Outbuildings are in poor condition.

The cabin was built in the spring of 1924 by the Columbian River Packers Association to house workers tending the commercial fish traps located in Aniakchak bay. It was later taken over by the Alaska Packers Association until the 1940s. Later, it was used by local people throughout the 1940s, and then as a NPS ranger cabin. It was rehabilitated by NPS in 1998. The site is historically significant due to its association with regional salmon fishing history. However, early trappers are also known to have occupied dwellings here. For example, Shurka, a Native trapper, is believed to have lived in one. Adolph Von Himmel occupied another. John Hillborn 1925-1936 live at the site before he and his family moved to Amber Bay in 1937. Henry Erikson and his family probably occupied one of the houses in 1937-1943, and Clemens Grunert Sr. from 1948 to 1949.

Because of its easy access, the site is susceptible to damage from visitor use and vandalism. Such vandalism has already been noted. For example, wood has been removed to feed woodstove and graffiti has been carved into and written on the surface of interior walls. This site is a popular destination for groups of adventures and the end of raft trips down the Aniakchak River (VanderHoek and Myron).

SUT-034 Historic Boat Ways

Although this site lies within the boundaries of the Aniakchak Bay Historic Landscape District, it was discovered in 1997, and therefore, not described in 1991. It is believed that the site is associated with the salmon trap operation and possibly used by John Hillborn from 1925-1937. Much of the site has been destroyed by erosion (VanderHoek and Myron).

SUT-035 Historic Fishtrap Piling Storage

Remnants of a historic fish trap piling storage area located in a cove on the north shore of the Aniakchak river estuary. The site consists of a stack of 30 timbers, held in place with both chain and cable. Timbers like these were driven every spring and pulled every fall, supported the fish traps used by the canneries from 1917 throughout the 1940s. The site is undisturbed thought the timbers themselves are decaying. Because it was not noted in the 1991 nomination, the site should be considered a contributing site to the National Register District (VanderHoek and Myron).

SUT-031 Pederson"s Historic Trapping Cabin Complex

This site lies on the western side of Aniakchak Lagoon. All that remains are remnants of a wood-frame house and tree timber outbuildings. Corrugated metal sheeting is evident on the east side of the structure facing the lagoon. Tarpaper is evident on some fragments of the roof and outside walls. Because of its proximity to a "catcher" beach, it served as a prime

location. The location of the site corresponds to that reported by the Pederson Family, Chignik residents, who lived in the lagoon in the 1930s and 1940s. Although the site is undisturbed, it remains susceptible to potential damage from visitor use and vandalism (VanderHoek and Myron).

SUT-054 Pete Pederson's Historic Boat Ways and Boat-house

Because this site is located at the current limit of navigable waters in the lagoon, it is the ideal location for a boat haulhout. Drinking water is available in a freshwater pond to the west and from a season stream to the east. The site corresponds to that of a boat ways and boat house used by Pete Pederson and his family when they lived in their house at the head of the lagoon from 1934 to 1943. Axel Carlson also hauled his boat out in this vicinity. Prior to Pederson, this site may have been the trapping base camp of Chris Wiedermann and partner Charlie Olson (VanderHoek and Myron).

SUT-026 Clam Cannery

This site is the remains of a clam cannery founded by Axel Olsen in 1932. The operation only lasted for a short time. It is historically significant because it is the only known remnant of a clam cannery within Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve. Rudy Carlson and his brothers, Alex Jr. and Edwin, moved into the clam cannery after their father died and used it for a residence only. Further investigation may provide valuable information concerning its association with the larger claming industry that took place along the Alaska Peninsula during the first few decades of the twentieth century (VanderHoek and Myron).

SUT-028 Axel Carlson's Historic Trapping Cabin Complex

This site is located on the south shore of Aniakchak Bay. The site consists of two house depressions and a cache-pit. This site may be one of the semi-subterranean houses used by the Carlson brothers in the 1930s when they ran winter trap line on Cape Kumlik (VanderHoek and Myron).

SUT-029 Carlson's Historic Trapping Cabin Complex

This historic site is a possible trapping cabin complex located in southern Aniakchak Bay. It appears to be one of two semi-subterranean houses used by Carlson and his sons for trapping in the late 1920s and 1930s (VanderHoek and Myron).

SUT-044 Axel Carlson's Fox Farm

This site is a historic fox farm on land managed by the Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge. NPS investigators noted a standing frame house east of a small stream. The house was probably built by and used from 1928-1934 as part of a fox farm. Although the house is in poor condition it represents the only known fox farm remnants within or near Aniakchak. It is a unique representative of the fur farm industry that flourished in Alaska during the early 1900s (VanderHoek and Myron). It is highly recommended that NPS conduct more research pertaining to fox farms on the central Alaska Peninsula, especially to determine if foxes caused ecological damage as recently revealed in studies conducted by USFWS in the Aleutian Islands.

SUT-036 Alex Brandal Jr.'s Historic Trapping Cabin Complex

The site is on the Alec Brandal Jr. 1906 Native Allotment claim (#AA-11774). Historic features include the two frame structures that were associated with the Grunert family. George "Bobbin" Grunert and his wife, Florence, lived in one of these two houses. The other

set of five historic features are associated with the Brandal family. Further investigation will likely contribute significant information concerning the lifeways of individuals and families involved in the trapping industry during the early 1900s in Aniakchak. They may also yield information on settlement patterns, household organization and subsistence practices during this period (VanderHoek and Myron).

SUT-023 Meshik Lake and the Upper Meshik Valley Historic Trapping Cabin Complex

This site consists of 2 house depressions, one cache pit and a scatter of fuel cans. This was the general location of the trapping cabins used first by Alec Brandal Sr. and by George "Bobbin" Anderson, Clemens Grunert, and Julius Anderson during the 1920s and 1930s (VanderHoek and Myron).

"The Boulevard" and the "Halfway Shack"

Running between many of the trapper's cabins were local routes, trampled by bears and men in the early decades of the century. Some routes were so popular that the trappers named them. For example, the most used trail was "The Boulevard" which went along Aniakchak Bay from the river mouth to the lagoon. Oral records also indicate that there existed a communal cabin that nearly all trails reached. The local trappers called it the "halfway shack." Such historic resources reflect the connectivity among the local trappers, debunking the common notion that trappers lived a life of isolation. Further investigation may reveal more information about the lives of trappers in the early twentieth century.

Reindeer Herding

In a paramount attempt at social and cultural engineering, the federal government sponsored reindeer herding throughout western Alaska. Reindeer herding was introduced as far south as the Bristol Bay side of Aniakchak beginning in 1910. By providing subsistence-dependent Alaska Natives with a specialization, the program endeavored to instill the Alutiiq population there, along with the Inupiaq in-migrants, with an entrepreneurial spirit, and ultimately, to incorporate the Aniakchak region into the America's capitalistic culture. Currently no historic site has been discovered inside the park boundary associated with reindeer herding. Very little is known about this period. Only a few people are left who remember the reindeer herding days. Further investigation is highly encouraged to determine if indeed herding extended into Aniakchak. Studies should also be conducted to document the Inupiaq and Saami migration to the Peninsula.

Exploratory Science

At the turn of the century, oil seeps off the peninsula coast attracted exploratory drillers, who staked their first claims in 1901, and within two decades, companies like Chevron and Mobil had transformed the village of Kanatak, located up the Pacific Coast from Aniakchak, into a booming frontier town. USGS conducted several surveys in the Aniakchak region looking for rumored oil seeps. Further research may provide information to the long history of exploratory science conducted by the federal government on the central Alaska Peninsula.

HISTORIC PROPERTIES SUMMARIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Hubbard Explorations (1930-1932)

Father Bernard Hubbard's explorations in Aniakchak allowed him and his colligate companions the opportunity to leave behind a long historic account of their expeditions, documented by photographs, films, articles, popular non-fiction, and journals. Still, as

important as Hubbard was to the history of Aniakchak, no historical site, property, trail, or object exists that documents his explorations there. As far as we know, no evidence of cultural material has been recovered inside or outside the Caldera that reflects any of his three expeditions. Because Hubbard is a central figure associated with Aniakchak, it is recommended that additional research is conducted to document his famed routes into Aniakchak Caldera to determine if 1) any material items have indeed been left behind, and 2) to gather information for a cultural landscape nomination that would provide more information as to the historical significance of these expeditions.

HISTORIC PROPERTIES SUMMARIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Post World War II Period (1950-present)

Document Hunting Sites

Not since Merry Tuten's 1977 report of hunting along the central peninsula coast has NPS conducted a comprehensive study of hunting in Aniakchak. Recent interviews with residents from Port Heiden and Chignik tell us that many areas of the Aniakchak continue to be used as traditional fishing/gathering places for local families and may qualify as Traditional Cultural Places. Moreover, according to researchers who have recently worked in the region, permanent impacts due primarily to off-road vehicles used by hunters to access their camps have had the largest affect on park resources. It is recommended that a comprehensive study on both subsistence and commercial hunting be conducted to locate hunting camps, permanent trails made by off-road vehicles, and other adverse impacts so that such activities may be assessed and mitigated.

Document History of Scientific Study

Historically, the cultural presence in the Aniakchak region—whether it was prehistoric villages or salmon canneries—has generally occurred beyond the caldera walls. History has shown that most people had little interest in the geological formation. However, since the first few decades of the twentieth century it has been the Caldera itself that has drawn the most attention to the region, specifically from the scientific community. Because scientific study remains an important activity in Aniakchak, it is recommended that a comprehensive study be conducted that places archeological, biological, and geological research into a historic context. This study would 1) identify who the major scientists who worked and are still working in the field; 2) show how the such research compares to research conducted in other national parks; 3) provide summaries of scientific findings for a general audience and; 4) explain how such research might affect Alaskans living outside the park boundaries and their communities.

Document History of Tourism in Aniakchak

According to NPS records, tourist Ben Guild constructed a semi-permanent structure in the Aniakchak Caldera. Currently, no evidence exists that suggest where this structure might have been located or if anything permanent remains. Beyond finding structural remains, however, Guild's activities in the Caldera can be associated with America's changing attitudes towards natural spaces and reflect the larger environmental movement that took place in the late 1960s. From Hubbard to Guild, numerous people have visited Aniakchak, each of whom came with varied expectations and carried with them the values of their generation. A comprehensive history of tourism in Aniakchak not only would document visitation to Aniakchak over time and provide important information for the park's Gateway Communities such as Port Heiden or Chignik, but a history of tourism would provide a historical context

for changing attitudes toward nature and ultimately how people view national parks, especially those dominated by wilderness such as Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve.

<<< Previous <<< Contents>>> Next >>>

hrs/app.htm
Last Updated: 03-Aug-2009

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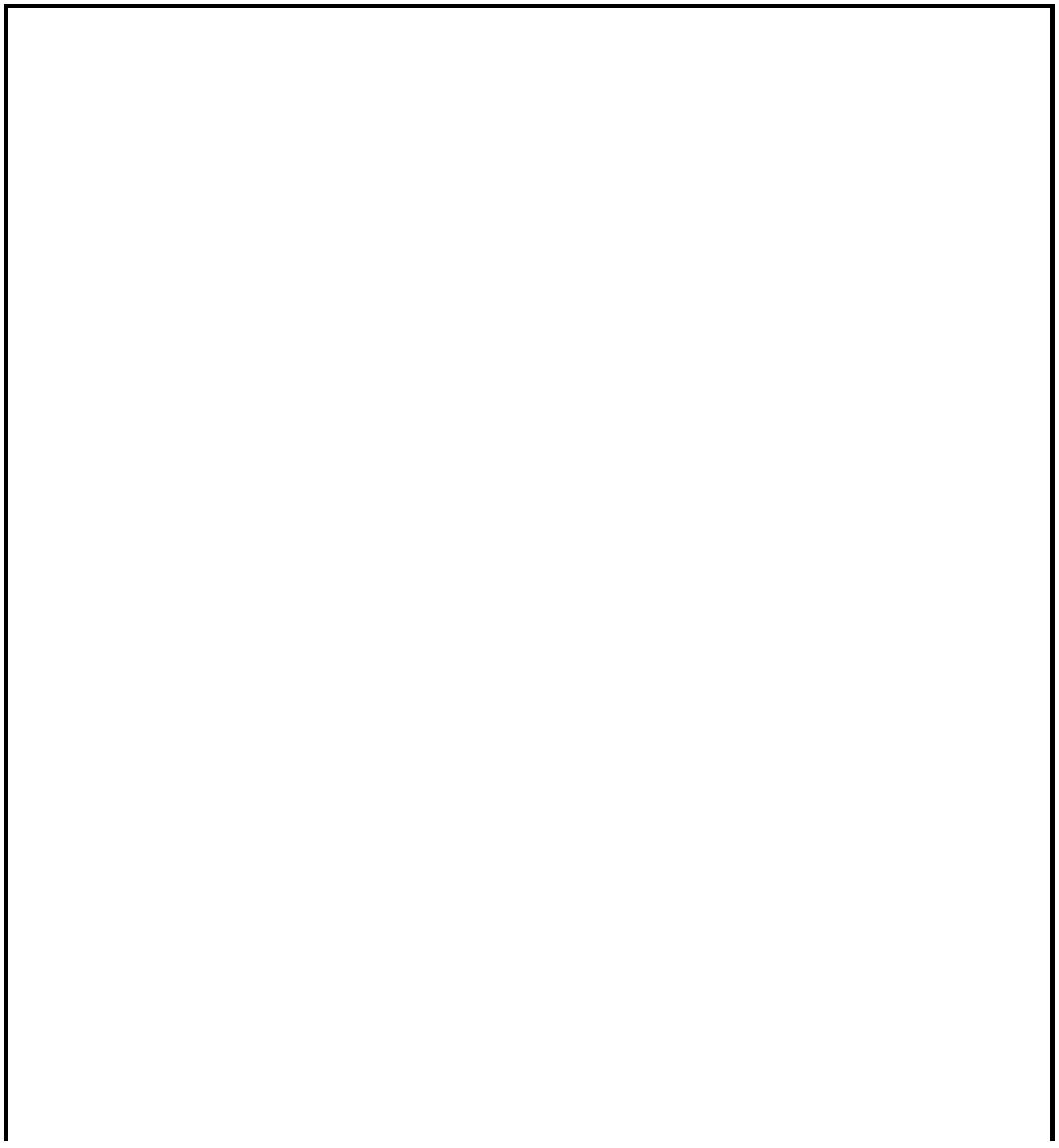
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Michael Grunert, 7/20/2004
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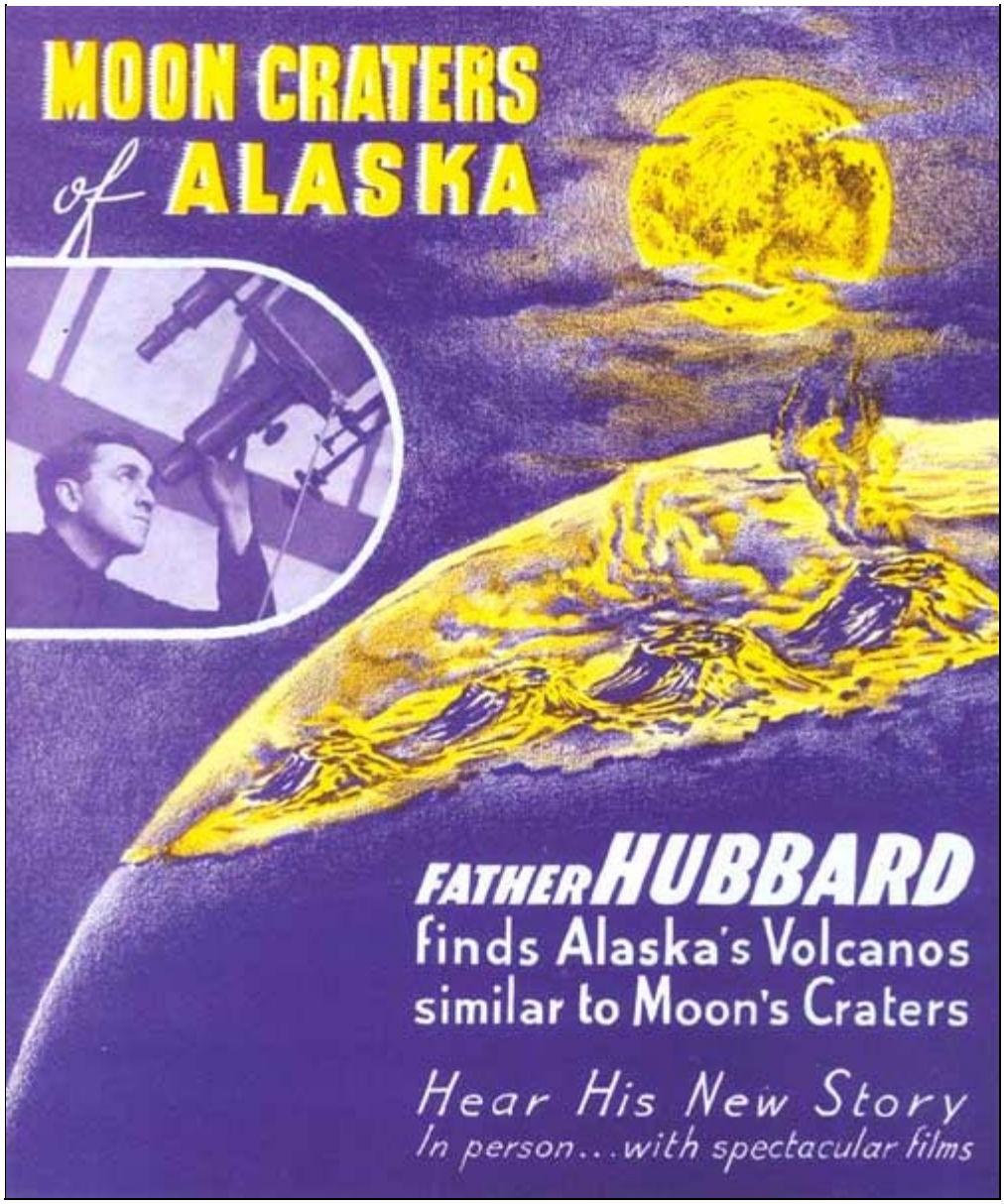
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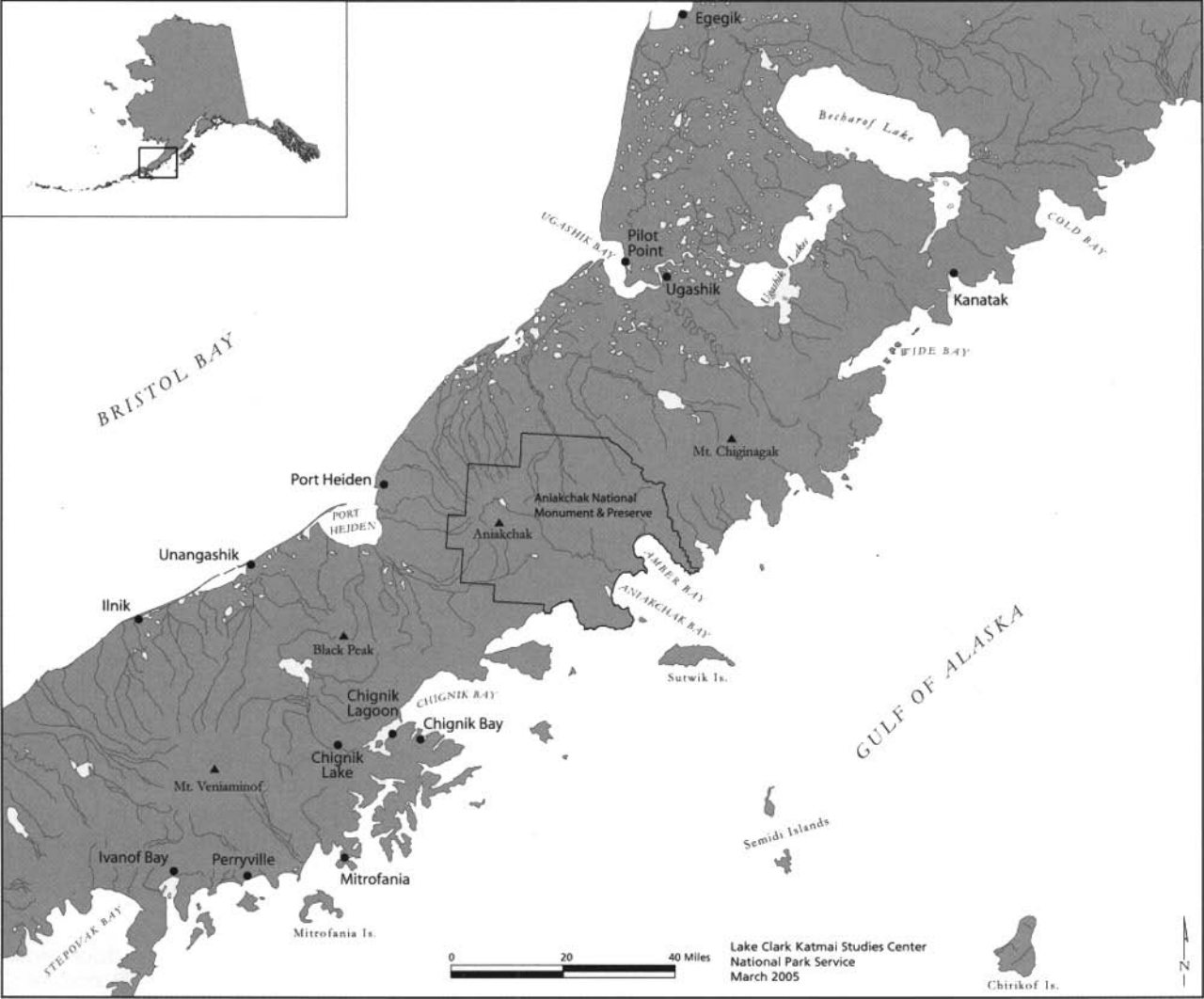


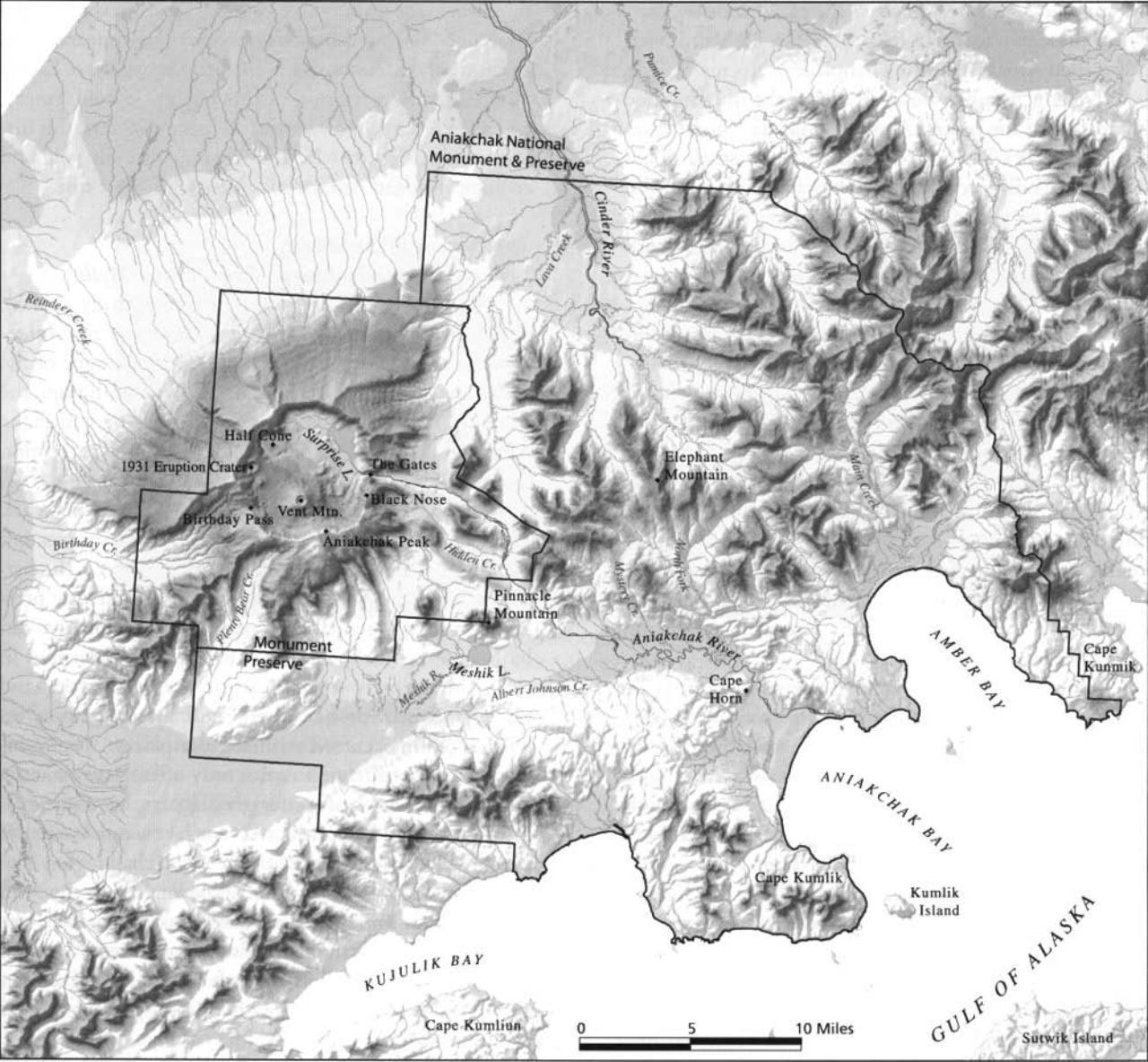


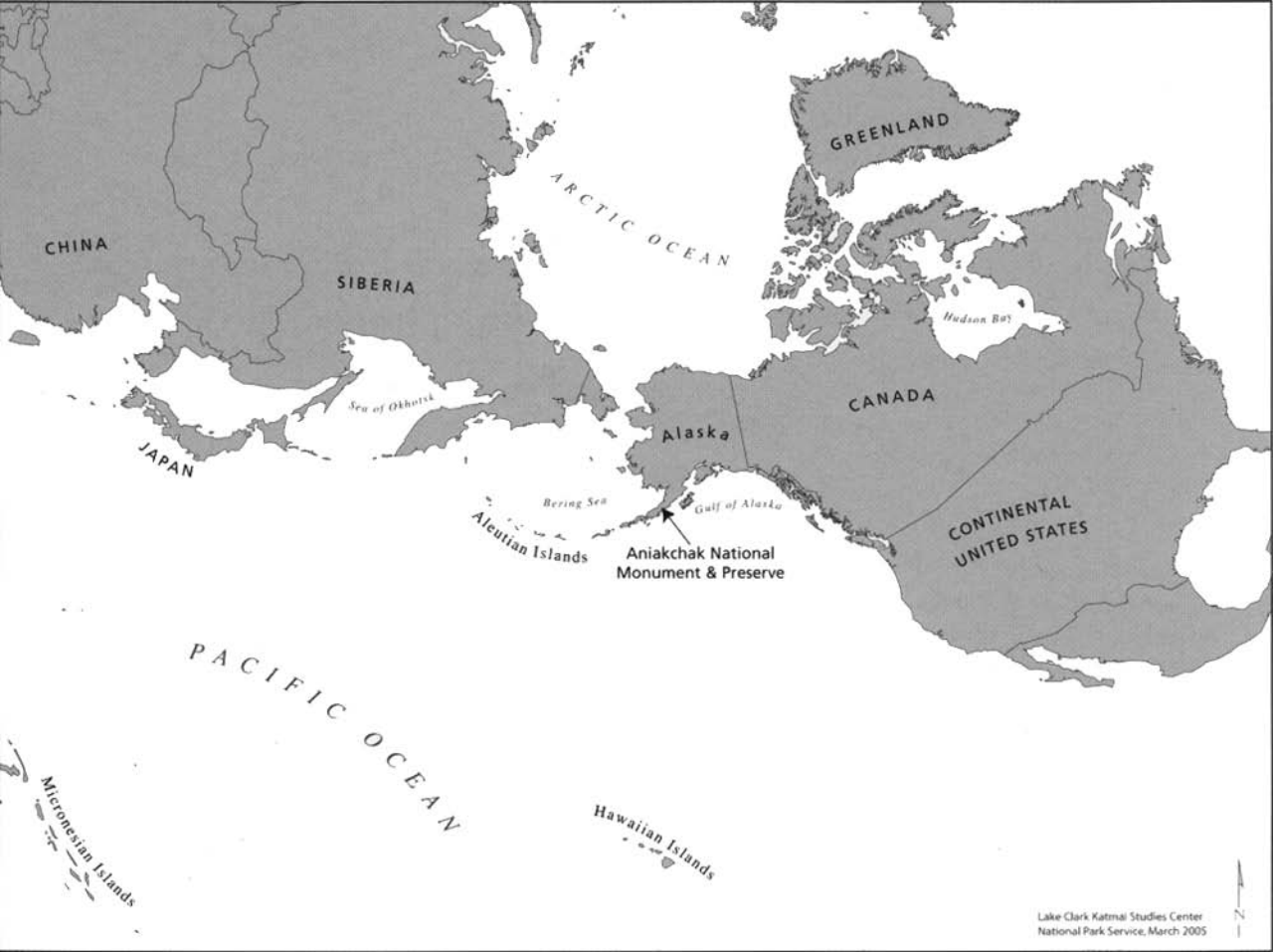
In the 1930s Father Hubbard was one of the highest paid and most sought out speaker on the national lecture circuit. Lecture poster for Marywood College, Scranton, Pennsylvania, ca. 1930s. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., Alaskan Photograph Collection. Photograph courtesy of Santa Clara University Archives.

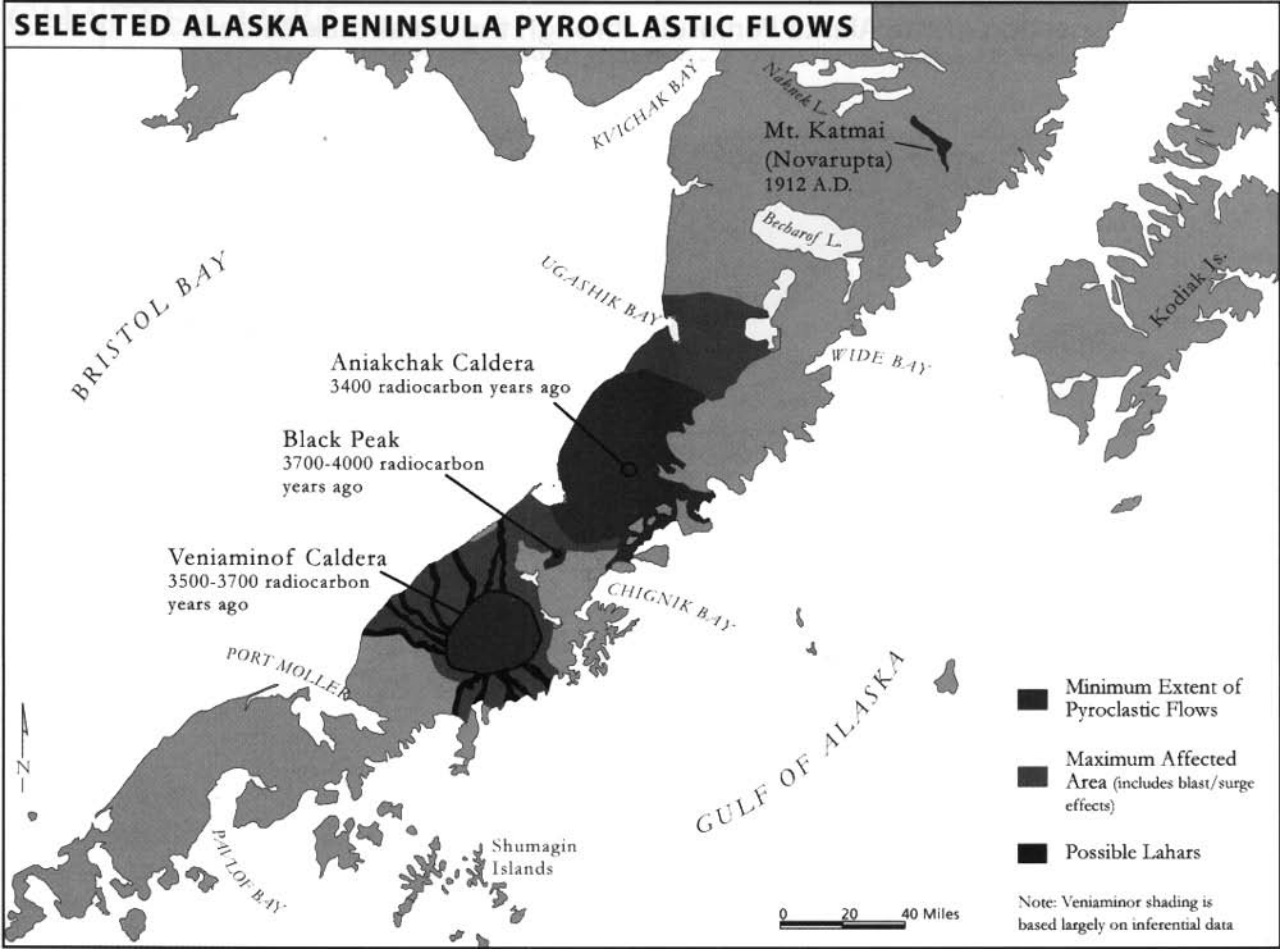
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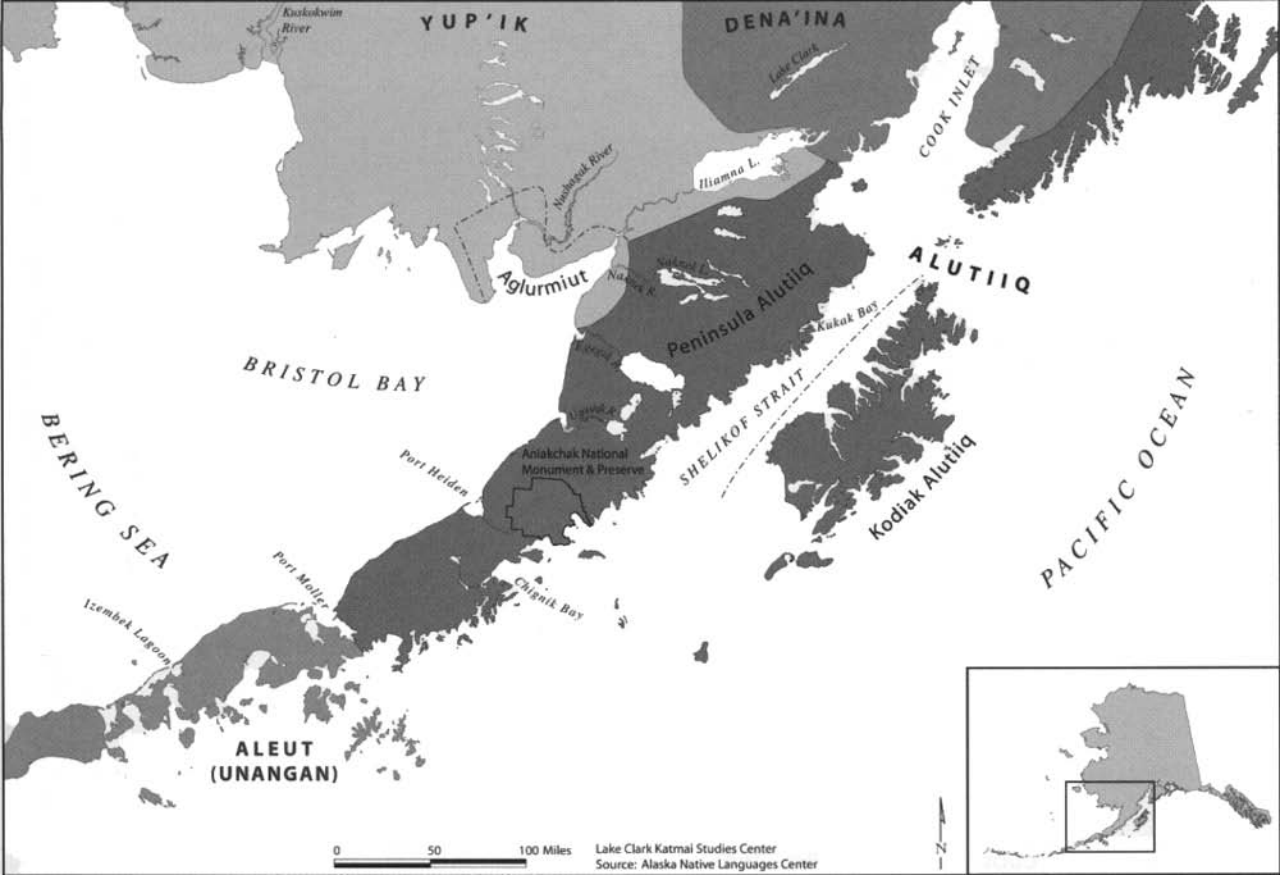
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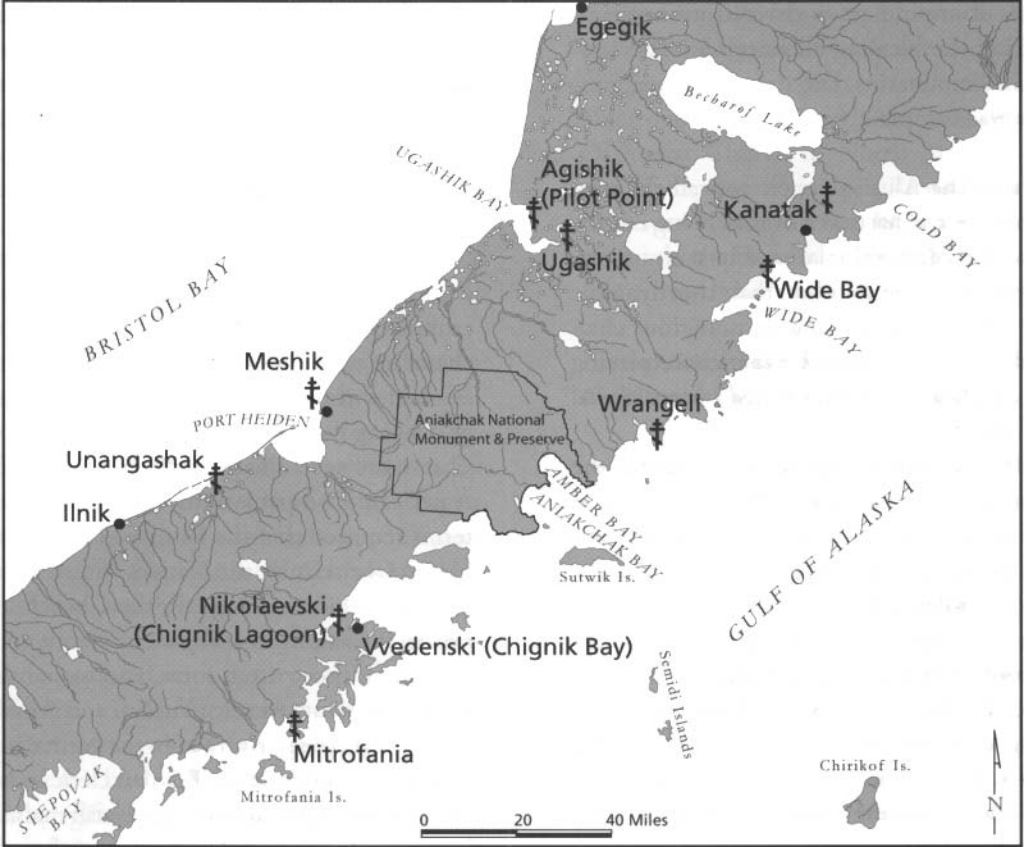

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COLD BAY
Kanatak
WIDE BAY
BRISTOL BAY
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Port Heiden
Aniakchak National Monument & Preserve
PORT HEIDEN
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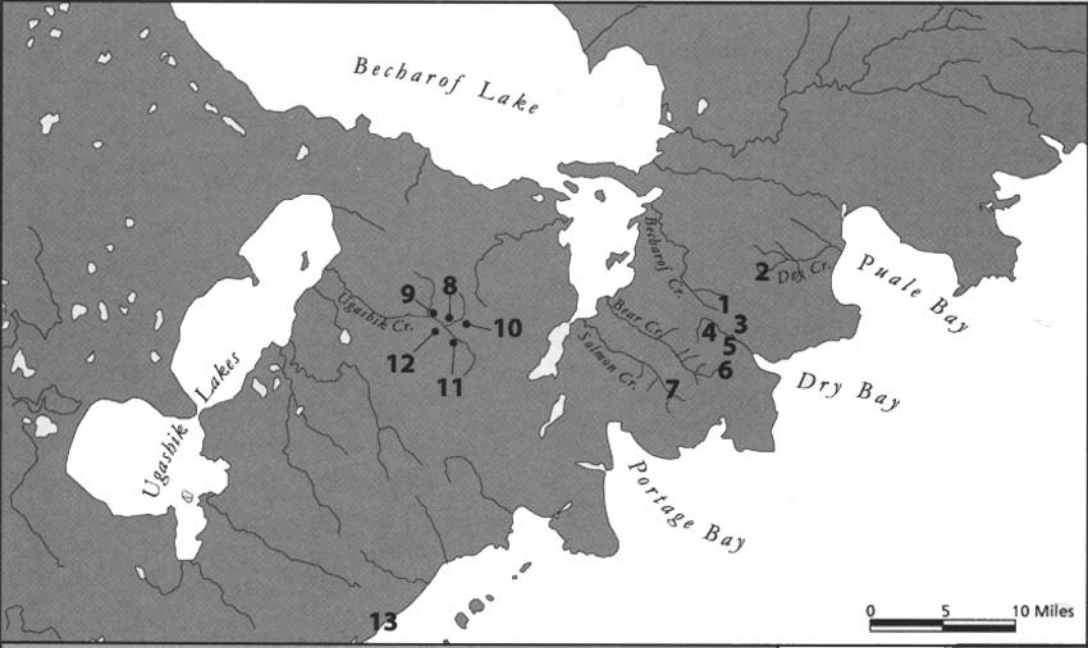

Aniakchak National Monument & Preserve
Pumice Cr.
Cinder River
Lava Creek
Reindeer Creek
Half Cone
Surprise L.
1931 Eruption Crater
The Gates
Black Nose
Vent Mtn.
Birthday Pass
Birthday Cr.
Aniakchak Peak
Hidden Cr.
Elephant Mountain
Main Creek
Jenny Fork
Mystery Cr.
Pinnacle Mountain
Plenty Bear Cr.
Monument Preserve
Meshik R.
Meshik L.
Albert Johnson Cr.
Aniakchak River
Cape Horn
AMBER BAY
Cape Kunmik
ANIAKCHAK BAY
Cape Kumlik
Kumlik Island
KUJULIK BAY
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GULF OF ALASKA
Sutwik Island


CHINA
SIBERIA
ARCTIC OCEAN
GREENLAND
Hudson Bay
CANADA
Alaska
Sea of Okhotsk
JAPAN
Bering Sea
Gulf of Alaska
Aleutian Islands
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National Park Service, March 2005
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SELECTED ALASKA PENINSULA PYROCLASTIC FLOWS
KVICHAK BAY
Naknek L.
Mt. Katmai
(Novarupta)
1912 A.D.
Becharof L.
BRISTOL BAY
UGASHIK BAY
WIDE BAY
Kodiak Is.
Aniakchak Caldera
3400 radiocarbon years ago
Black Peak
3700-4000 radiocarbon
years ago
Veniaminof Caldera
3500-3700 radiocarbon
years ago
CHIGNIK BAY
PORT MOLLER
GULF OF ALASKA
PAILOF BAY
Shumagin
Islands
N
Minimum Extent of
Pyroclastic Flows
Maximum Affected
Area (includes blast/surge
effects)
Possible Lahars
0 20 40 Miles
Note: Veniaminor shading is
based largely on inferential data

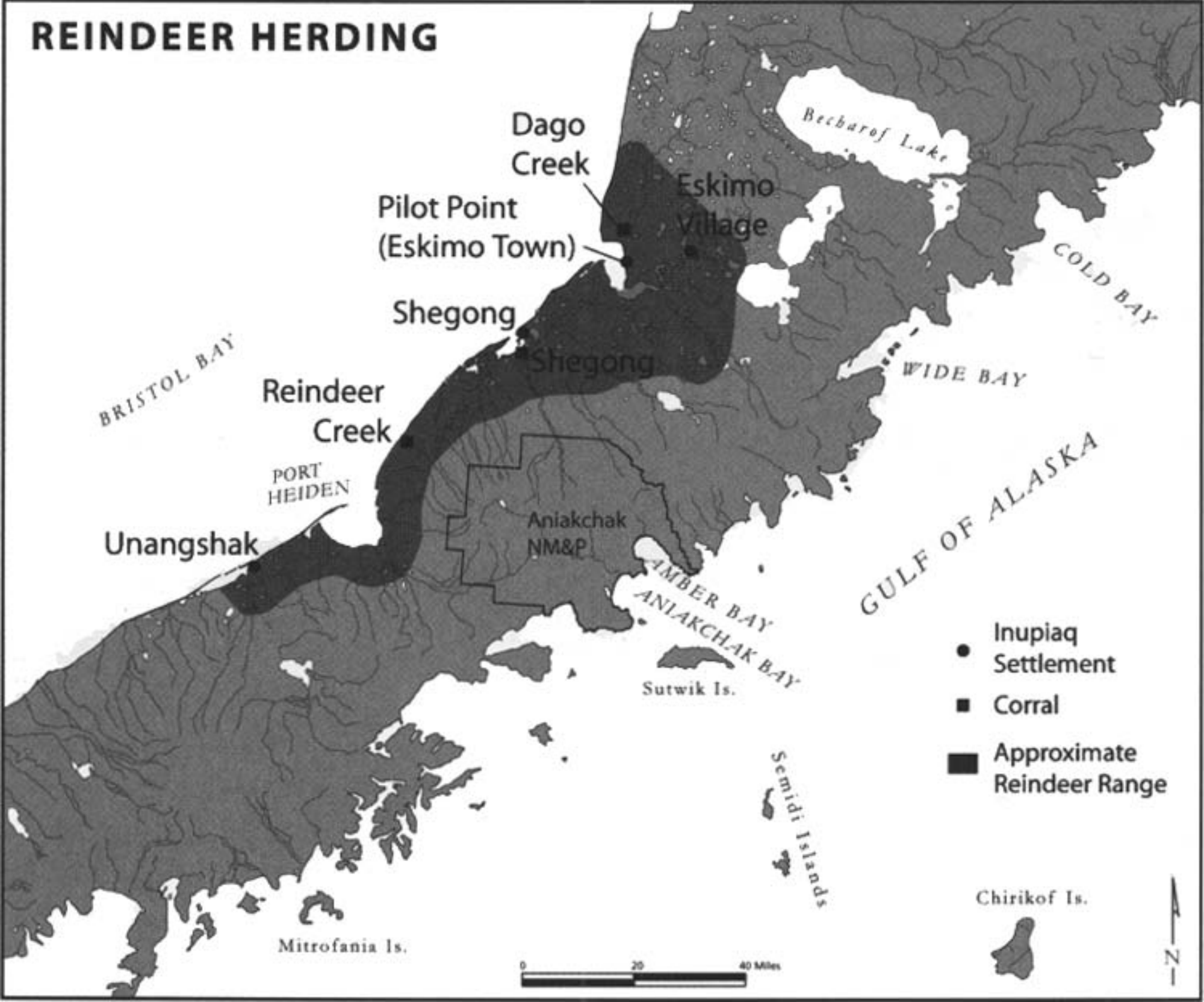

Kuskokwim River
YUP'IK
DENA'INA
Lake Clark
COOK INLET
Nushagak River
Iliamna L.
Aglurmiut
Nakeck R.
Peninsula Alutiiq
ALUTIIQ
Kukak Bay
BRISTOL BAY
SHELIKOF STRAIT
BERING SEA
Aniakchak National Monument & Preserve
Port Heiden
Kodiak Alutiiq
PACIFIC OCEAN
Port Moller
Chignik Bay
Izembek Lagoon
ALEUT (UNANGAN)
0
50
100 Miles
Lake Clark Katmai Studies Center
Source: Alaska Native Languages Center
N

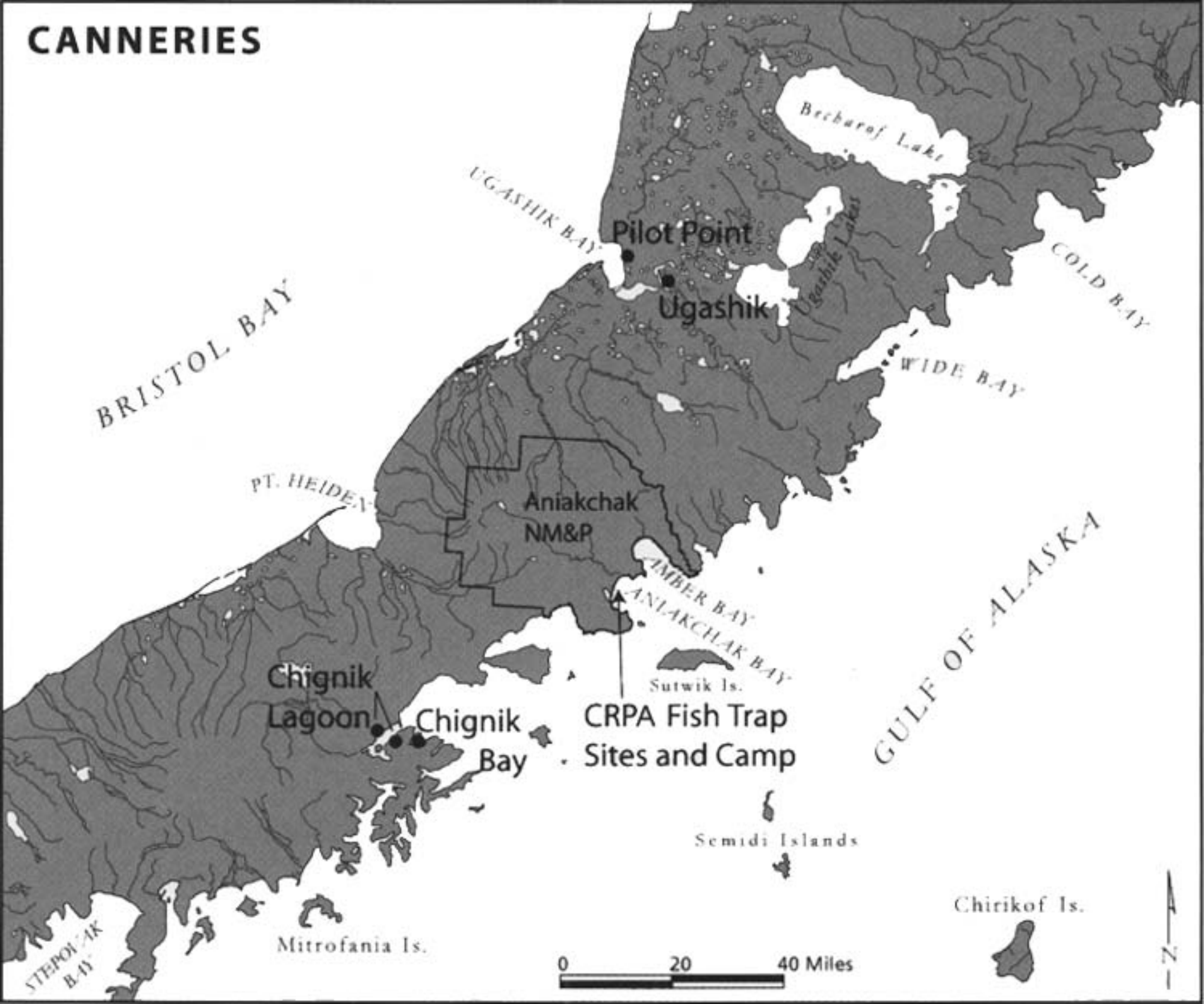

Egegik
Becharof Lake
UGASHIK BAY
Agishik
(Pilot Point)
Kanatak
COLD BAY
Ugashik
Wide Bay
WIDE BAY
BRISTOL BAY
Meshik
PORT HEIDEN
Aniakchak National
Monument & Preserve
Wrangell
Unangashak
Ilnik
AMBER BAY
ANIAKCHAK BAY
Sutwik Is.
GULF OF ALASKA
Nikolaevski
(Chignik Lagoon)
Vvedenski (Chignik Bay)
Semidi Islands
Mitrofania
Chirikof Is.
STEPOVAK
BAY
Mitrofania Is.
0
20
40 Miles
N

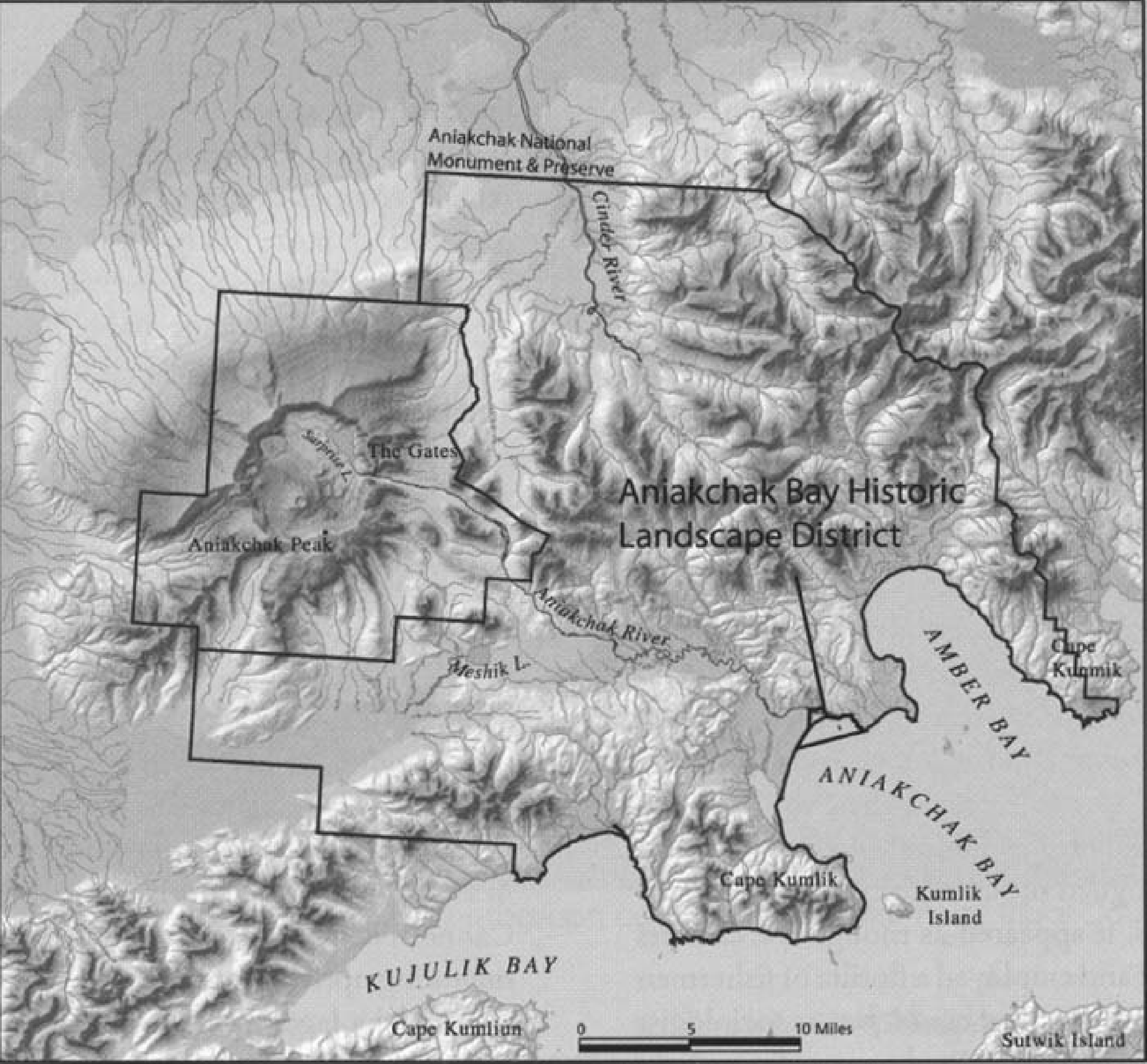


1. Pacific Oil No. 3 (1902-4)
2. Pacific Oil No. 1 (1903-4)
3. Pacific Oil No. 2 (1904)
4. Costello No. 1 (1903)
5. Costello No. 2 (1904)
6. Exxon-Shell Bear Creek No. 1 (1957-59)
7. Socal Grammer No. 1 (1938-40)
8. Socal Lathrop No. 1 (1923)
9. Socal McNally No. 1 (1925)
10. Assoc. Oil Co. AK No. 1 (1923-6)
11. Socal Lee No. 1 (1923-6)
12. Assoc. Oil Co. Finnegan(1923)
13. Richfield No. 1 (1962-3)

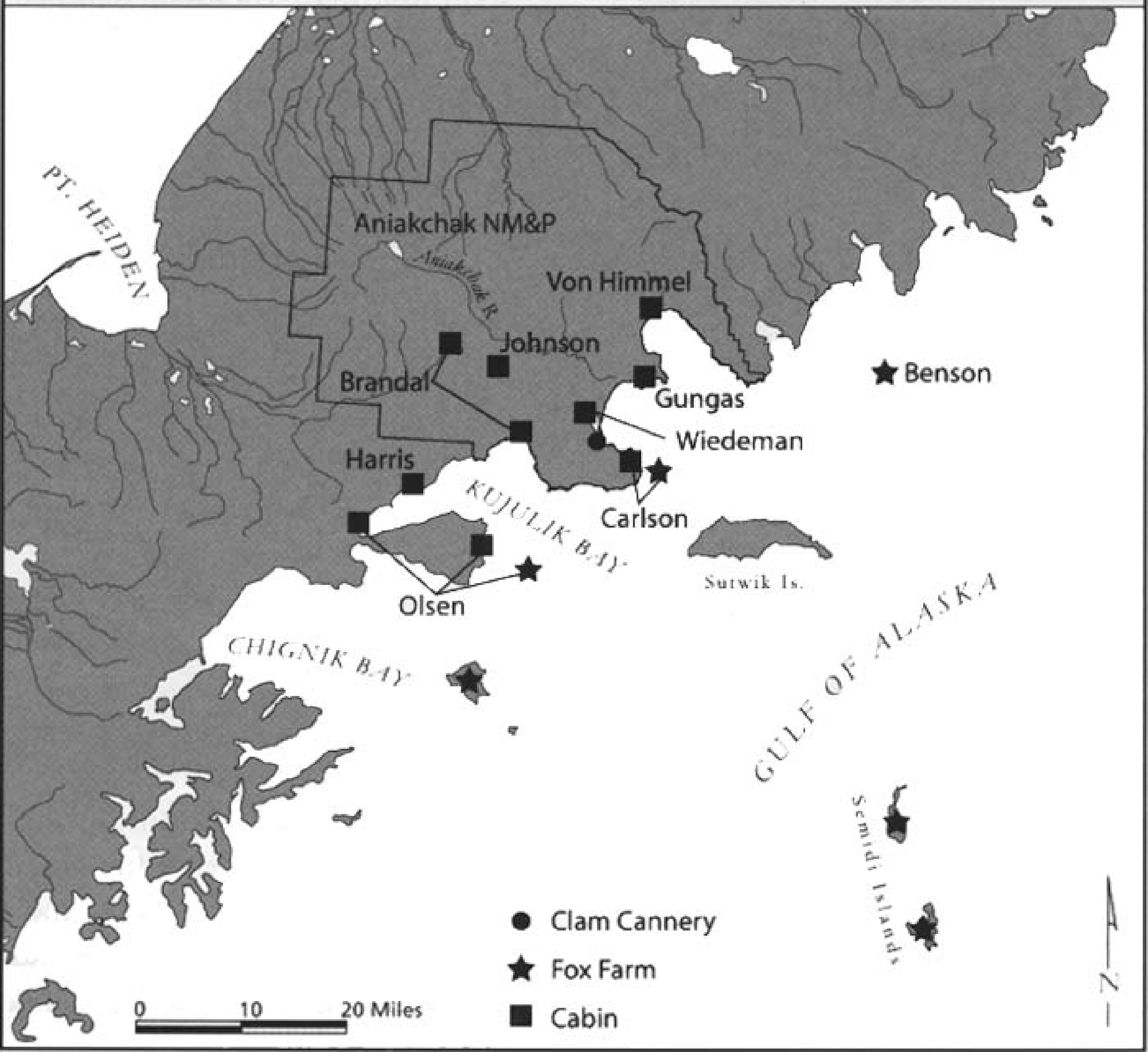


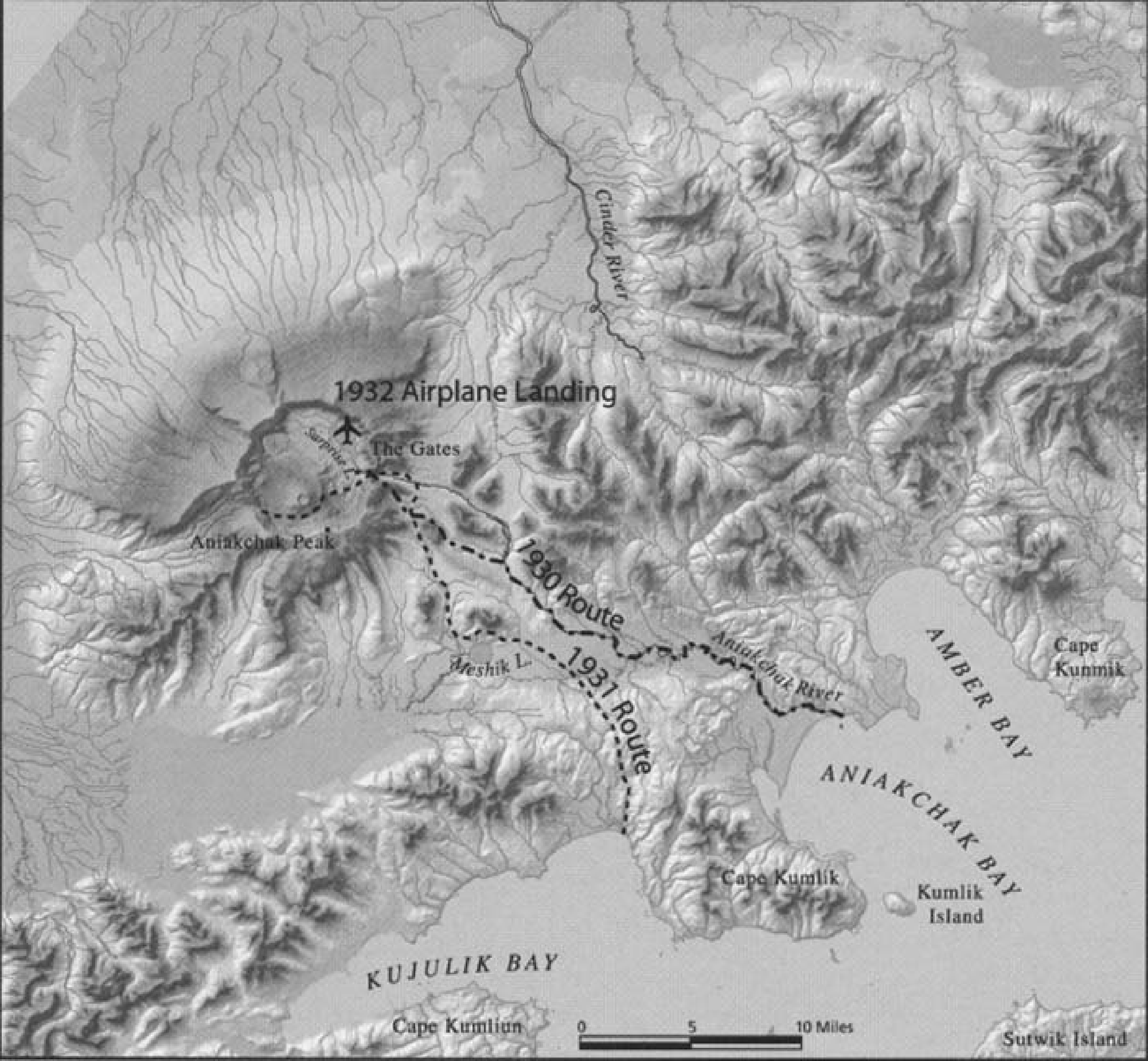

REINDEER HERDING
Dago Creek
Pilot Point (Eskimo Town)
Eskimo Village
Becharof Lake
COLD BAY
Shegong
Shegong
WIDE BAY
BRISTOL BAY
Reindeer Creek
PORT HEIDEN
Unangshak
Aniakchak NM&P
GULF OF ALASKA
AMBER BAY
ANIAKCHAK BAY
Sutwik Is.
Inupiaq Settlement
Corral
Approximate Reindeer Range
Semidi Islands
Chirikof Is.
Mitrofania Is.
0
20
40 Miles
N

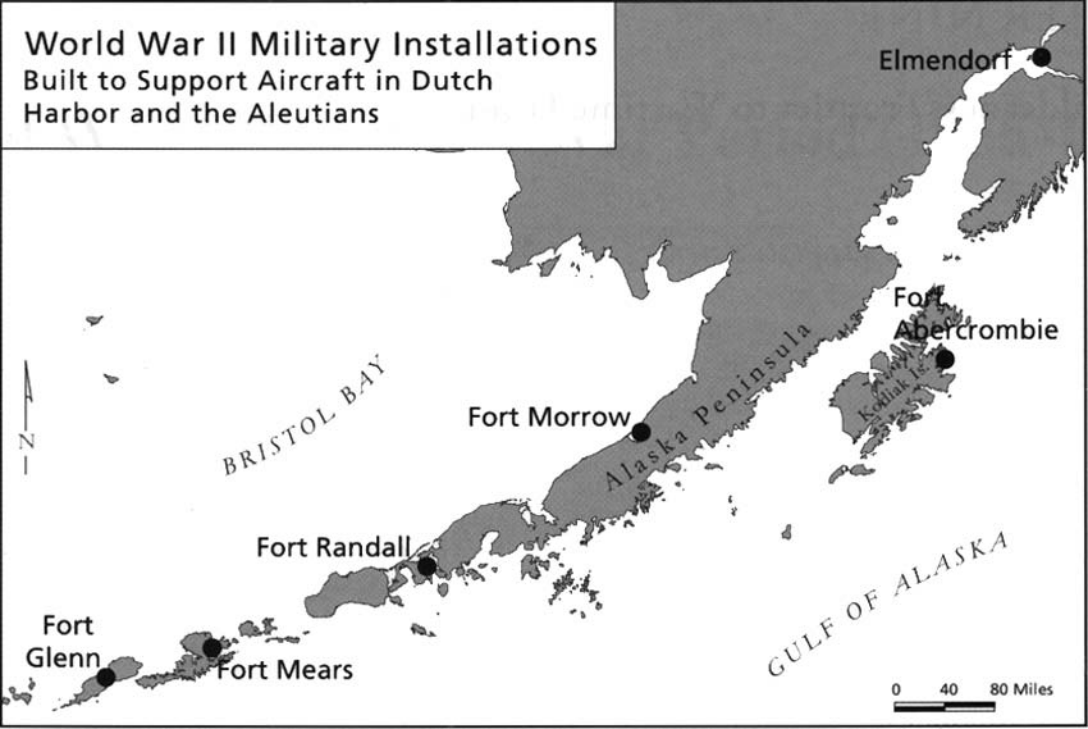

CANNERIES
Becharof Lake
UGASHIK BAY
Pilot Point
Ugashik
Ugashik Lakes
COLD BAY
BRISTOL BAY
WIDE BAY
PT. HEIDEN
Aniakchak NM&P
IMBER BAY
ANIAKCHAK BAY
GULF OF ALASKA
Sutwik Is.
Chignik Lagoon
Chignik Bay
CRPA Fish Trap Sites and Camp
Semidi Islands
Chirikof Is.
Mitrofania Is.
STEPOVAK BAY
0 20 40 Miles
N


Aniakchak National
Monument & Preserve
Cinder River
The Gates
Aniakchak Bay Historic
Landscape District
Aniakchak Peak
Aniakchak River
Meshik L.
AMBER BAY
Cape
Kumlik
ANIAKCHAK BAY
Cape Kumlik
Kumlik
Island
KUJULIK BAY
Cape Kumlian
0
5
10 Miles
Sutwik Island

FOX FARMING, TRAPPING, AND CLAMMING




1932 Airplane Landing
The Gates
Surprise
Aniakchak Peak
1930 Route
1931 Route
Meshik L.
Aniakchak River
Cinder River
AMBER BAY
Cape Kunmik
ANIAKCHAK BAY
Cape Kumlik
Kumlik Island
KUJULIK BAY
Cape Kumlium
0
5
10 Miles
Sutwik Island


World War II Military Installations
Built to Support Aircraft in Dutch Harbor and the Aleutians
Elmendorf
Fort Abercrombie
Kodiak Is.
Alaska Peninsula
BRISTOL BAY
Fort Morrow
N
Fort Randall
GULF OF ALASKA
Fort Glenn
Fort Mears
0 40 80 Miles