

### MUDDY RIVER BIBLIOGRAPHY REFERENCE

Name	Author	Year	Reference	Report Name
<b>Muddy River</b>	AEIDC & University of Alaska	1979		A Study of the Historical use and Physical characteristics of Alaska's inland water bodies. Navigable water study report for BLM p. 62.
	Brown, Michael	1983		Alaska Kuskokwim River Region pp. 303-305, 311-316.
	Bureau of Land Management	1980		Navigable and Non-navigable Waters in the Upper Kuskokwim River Basin pp. 62-70.
	Gudgel-Holmes, Dianne	August, 1979		Ethnohistory of Four Interior Alaskan Waterbodies. Department of Natural Resources - Alaska pp. 115-116.
	Holmes, C.E. & Gudgel-Holmes, D.	May, 1988		Archaeological and Historical Investigations of the Lake Minchumina Airport Improvements Project (Project No. 63605) 1987. pp 9-10.
	UAA Archives & Special Collections			Dianne Gudgel-Holmes. Kantishna Oral History Project. Records; 1910-1984.
	US Depart of Interior. BLM Navigability Bibliography	July, 1979	00108	Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, 1903-January 1945.

A STUDY OF THE HISTORICAL USE AND  
PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ALASKA'S INLAND WATER BODIES.

Vol. 10 Southeast Region  
Summary Report

by

Arctic Environmental Information and Data Center

Report for U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

1979.

Arctic Environmental Information and Data Center  
University of Alaska  
707 A Street  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

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between Nenana and the Kantishna area from at least 1919 to 1922. One newspaper account says that he planned to take supplies to Lake Minchumina, but there is no description or account of this trip (79-91922-W, 79-92203-X, 78-92212-V).

The steamer SHUSANA was contracted in 1919 to deliver freight for the Aitkin outfit on Joe Quigley's property in the Kantishna hills. The last of that freight was delivered in early October. Captain Oscar Weber delivered the goods to Roosevelt (79-91904-X).

In 1920 the light-draft steamer RELIANCE had to abandon its work due to low water in the Kantishna. The RELIANCE was contracted to haul galena ore from Tom Aitken's mine. The steamer made two trips, hauling a total of 333 tons of ore, but in June it had to wait for rains to raise the water level (79-92011-T).

Dr. J.A. Sutherland began a large-scale hydraulic mining operation on Moose Creek in the Kantishna hills during 1920 and contracted George Black to bring in the supplies (79-92028-T).

The side wheel gas boat MUTT traveled between Nenana and Lake Minchumina in 1923. Captain Neuser reported that he had no trouble on the upper Kantishna (79-92302-V, 79-92312-T, 79-92314-U, 79-92319-S).

In 1941 Captain George Black, with the powerful motorboat IDLER and barge, hauled supplies up the Kantishna River and across Lake Minchumina to the CAA site being built. The IDLER took 135 tons and made the round-trip to Fairbanks in three weeks (108-94127-X).

Systematic Use: In 1918 Capps' USGS survey team descended the Kantishna River in a small boat to the Tanana River (2293).

In his 1917 work, Hudson Stuck reports that miners used gas launches and poling boats to reach the Kantishna fields (1750).

Mr. Herbert Brandt, on a bird expedition in winter of 1924, traveled by dogsled. He followed the river for the most part but cut overland much of the time to avoid bends of the river (546).

Incidental Use: In the summer of 1889, Henry Davis and a few other prospectors poled up the Kantishna and Muddy Rivers, taking 12 days to reach Lake Minchumina (5179).

Judge Wickersham, in his 1903 trip to Mount McKinley, traveled up the Kantishna in the steamer MUDLARK (5176, 2726).

George Byron Gordon made a hunting and exploration trip to the Kantishna region in 1907, using the Kantishna River for travel (808).

Hudson Stuck and his companions used the river on their return from their widely noted climb of Mt. McKinley in 1913 (1753).

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**Alaska's**

**Kuskokwim**

**River**

**Region**

**A History**  
**By**  
**C. Michael Brown**  
**BLM State Office**  
**Anchorage, Alaska**

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ALASKA'S  
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information was presented to make a navigability determination. However, the recommendations for the Middle Fork in T. 33 N., R. 29 W., Seward Meridian, the Pitka Fork, and the Salmon River were approved. On August 11, 1981, the BLM State Director concurred with the recommendations. 130/

#### Guitar Lake

This lake is located about one mile north of the Pitka Fork in Tps. 33 and 34 N., R. 28 W., Seward Meridian. In 1981, the BLM Anchorage District Office recommended that the lake be determined navigable, for it was suitable for floatplane landings. The district office noted that several lakes in the western limit of T. 33 N., R. 30 W., Seward Meridian, were also suitable for floatplane landings but made no recommendations for the lakes. The BLM State Director took no action on the recommendation for Guitar Lake. 131/

#### NORTH FORK KUSKOKWIM RIVER

The North Fork of the Kuskokwim River has long been an important water route to the Tanana and Yukon basins. Indians and later white prospectors and trappers ascended the Tanana, Kantishna, and Muddy rivers to Lake Minchumina, crossed a low divide to the headwaters of North Fork, and then descended that stream to the Kuskokwim River.

Although neither had been on the route, Josiah Edward Spurr and Lieutenant Joseph S. Herron noted the existence of the portage between the Tanana and Kuskokwim rivers. 132/ The first specific mention of the Minchumina portage was made by Herron in 1899: "A short portage between Minchumina and the

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Kuskokwim results from the extraordinary invasion of the former into the latter's territory, and the Indian canoe route between these waters is via this portage."

133/ The location of the portage is correctly illustrated on Herron's map of the upper Kuskokwim basin.

Spurr and Herron were not the first white men to learn of the existence of the route. Spurr himself recorded that sometime in the late 1880s, Frank Densmore and a party of prospectors journeyed from the Tanana River to the Kuskokwim River. It is not known what season of the year the Densmore party made the journey, but if the prospectors traveled in the summer, as seems probable, they may have crossed the Minchumina portage. Other white men were to follow. Spurr wrote that a prospector named Al King followed Densmore's route about the same time. Interviewing several Indian elders in the basin in the early 1960s, Hosley learned that a few white trappers traveled from the Kuskokwim River to the Tanana River via Minchumina portage. In the late 1880s or early 1890s, a white trapper ascended the North Fork, crossed the portage, and descended Kantishna River to the Tanana River. According to Hosley, the Indians considered this ascent of the North Fork by one white man as a "near super-human feat, since the current is comparatively rapid on the upper reaches of the river." 134/ Not long thereafter, a small party of white trappers took the same route. Oral tradition has it that one of the white men was killed somewhere on the upper reaches of the North Fork by Koyukon Indians from the west. 135/

During the gold rushes to the Kuskokwim and Kantishna rivers in 1905, prospectors and trappers doubtless made use of the Minchumina portage to explore virgin territory, and to reach the new gold camps on the lower

Kuskokwim River, the Kantishna River, and the Tanana River. Unfortunately, few recorded their experiences. The Fairbanks Northern Light reported that J. D. Green and J. M. Smith ascended the North Fork in a knockdown steam launch in the summer of 1906. The two men wintered on the launch at the mouth of Swift Fork, then known as McKinley Forks, and in the spring, when trail conditions were suitable, traveled to Fairbanks. The two men claimed that "in high water a launch could be steamed to within ten miles of Lake Minchumina, the head of navigation for the Kantishna." 136/

By this time the Minchumina portage had already become an established route of travel between the Kuskokwim and Tanana rivers. In 1907, George B. Gordon and his brother Maclaren ascended the Kantishna and Muddy rivers to Lake Minchumina, crossed the portage to the North Fork, and descended that stream and the Kuskokwim River to Bethel. George B. Gordon's account of the journey, published in 1917, was the first detailed description of the route. While the journal is primarily of interest to anthropologists, as it holds a great deal of information about Indians in the Lake Minchumina area, it contains many references to the fact that the Minchumina portage was used by white prospectors.

The Gordon brothers learned of the existence of the Minchumina portage in 1905. At Tanana, an Indian village on the Yukon River opposite the mouth of the Tanana River, George B. Gordon obtained a crude map of the Lake Minchumina area showing the location of the portage from Chief Henry of the Tanana Indians, with the Reverend Jules Prevost, a missionary at the nearby Fort Gibbon acting as interpreter. They learned from the Indian that Kantishna River had its source in Lake Minchumina and that the Kuskokwim River could be reached from the lake. According to the Chief, the Kuskokwim River was "good water."

Intending to take the Kantishna River-Lake Minchumina route to the Kuskokwim River, the Gordon brothers returned to Tanana in 1907, and learned of the recent gold rush to Kantishna River and rumors of someone ascending the Kantishna River to the lake in a poling boat. In June, the brothers began the long journey to the lake in a canoe. Using the map provided by Chief Henry as a guide, they reached the lake after nearly a month of difficult travel. There they met two Indians at a small village who informed them that two white men in a large poling boat had crossed the lake to the portage ten days earlier. The Indians told the brothers that one could cross the Minchumina portage in five days if traveling light, and gave them a birchbark map of the lake, portage, and the North Fork.

After exploring the lake the Gordon brothers began the trek across the portage in early August. After crossing a low divide, they found signs, including an improvised roller, of someone dragging a boat over the ground. About two miles from the North Fork, they finally encountered two men with a poling boat. Gordon failed to record the names of the two men, only saying that they were bound for the South Fork of the Kuskokwim River where they planned to spend two years in prospecting and trapping. Continuing their journey, the Gordon brothers finally reached the North Fork on August 7, having spent seven days on the portage. George B. Gordon estimated it to be ten miles in length.

The Gordon brothers subsequently required about eight days to descend the North Fork and the Kuskokwim River to McGrath in their canoe. On the first day on the North Fork, they saw a cabin on a high bank. A trapper had built the cabin the previous summer and occupied it through the winter. On the third day, they found the Indian summer camp on the left bank of the river

questioning the Indian, Minnick was given to understand that Lagin and two Indians had died on the same day. Green noted, however, that Minnick and the Indian may have misunderstood one another, as neither understood English well. He wrote too that one Cowan, who found Lagin's canoe and took it to the Big River trading post, stated that Lagin had crossed the divide to the Nowitna River. 140/

Rumors that the Indians had killed Lagin were eventually squelched by the investigation of Harry Sheppard, a deputy marshal at Ophir. In January 1915, he announced that Lagin had not been murdered by Indians. 141/

During the the 1910s and 1920s, prospectors and trappers worked the tributaries of the North Fork. Sometimes they chartered boats to take them upriver to their headquarters. In May 1921, the Kusko Times reported the recent departure of Charles and Victor Nystrom from McGrath in the motor boat Shamrock. The two men were transporting a number of passengers to Salmon River and Medfra, before continuing up the North Fork to a point said to be 350 miles from McGrath where their launch Red Wing was left in the fall of 1920. 142/ About a month later, Herman Hinsche, a trapper whose cabin was located at the mouth of Swift Fork, descended the North Fork to McGrath in a boat. In late July, Arthur Berry returned Hinsche as well as Herman Hanson to their trapping headquarters. 143/ Several weeks later, Jesse Yoder descended the North Fork from the Swift Fork in a launch (probably the Maple Leaf) with C. O. Peterson on board. Yoder subsequently ascended the North Fork, this time to bring Major John C. Gotwals of the Alaska Road Commission downriver to Medfra. 144/

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In September 1922, Charles and Victor Nystrom again took the launch Red Wing to the Swift Fork, intending to search for Hinsche who failed to appear at McGrath as was expected. They found Hinsche's canoe and large boat in the water, but Hinsche himself was not to be found. Some believed that the trapper was lost, since he left more than \$1,000 worth of furs with a friend and a strangely worded note. But he reappeared in McGrath in October 1922 with fellow trappers John Dunn and Bob Robeson. 145/

Boat traffic on the North Fork must have been fairly heavy, for in the early 1920s local residents began agitating for mail service on the route during the summer and winter seasons. At this time, residents of McGrath, Takotna, and Ophir were receiving their mail by trail from Ruby during the winter, and by river from Holy Cross and Bethel during the summer. The editor of the Kusko Times, complaining about the poor mail service, suggested that the mail be routed from Nenana on the government railroad to McGrath throughout the year. Mail carriers could use boats on the North Fork, Lake Minchumina, and Kantishna River in the summer; and they could use sleds on practically the same route in the winter. Referring to an unnamed authority on the summer route, the editor declared "that no impediments other than a few riffles at various distances apart, give any great hindrances to the successful navigation of the North Fork, at least until the portage point is reached. With a boat of proper draft, equipped with [an] engine to give speed averaging 10 miles an hour, the distance from McGrath to the portage would be accomplished in 40 hours." Allowing a day to cross the portage by horse or dog team, the editor argued that only seven days would be required to travel from McGrath to Nenana, a distance estimated to be six hundred miles. 146/

In support of the editorial, the newspaper published a statement by Dave Clough, a roadhouse proprietor at McGrath. Clough claimed to know two men who crossed the divide from the Nowitna River to Lake Minchumina, and then portaged to the North Fork, which they descended to the Kuskokwim River. Theodore Von Frank, a well-known prospector, also crossed the portage and went down the river, although he did so in the winter. As to the winter route, Clough reported that Berry, who knew the country well, had informed officials of the Post Office Department that the trail from McGrath to the railroad line was about 150 miles in distance, and that a number of men had traveled from Kantishna to McGrath in five days. 147/

The Alaska Road Commission was not unaware of the agitation. In August 1921, Major John C. Gotwals ascended the Kantishna and Muddy rivers to Lake Minchumina in a small steamboat. With the assistance of K. B. Kammergard, a trapper and roadhouse proprietor on the lake, he crossed the portage, constructed a raft, and then floated down the North Fork. Near the close of the first day on the river, Gotwals met Sam Sanderson and a group of prospectors in a twenty-six-foot boat and Arthur Berry in his motor boat. Gotwals borrowed Sanderson's boat, and by himself rowed it to Herman Hinsche's headquarters at the mouth of Swift Fork. In the meantime, Arthur Berry transported Sanderson and presumably his party to the portage in the motorboat. Gotwals remained at Hinsche's cabin for two days before Jesse Yoder arrived in his launch, the Maple Leaf. He then accompanied Yoder downstream to Berry's Landing, and then took the steamboat Tana to McGrath, arriving there on September 3. From McGrath, Gotwals went to Takotna on the launch Maple Leaf, and subsequently followed the summer trail to Ophir and Ruby. 148/

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Not long after Gotwals passed through the section, local residents circulated a petition for the establishment of mail service on the Nenana-McGrath summer route. Stating that motor boats could be used on the entire route with the exception of the portage, the petitioners called for the establishment of a mail service on the route on a bi-weekly basis during the months of June, July, August, and September. In addition, Robert S. Boyd, chairman of the McGrath Commercial Club, wrote a letter dated November 5, 1921 to Alaska's Delegate in Congress, Don Sutherland, requesting his assistance in establishing the Nenana-McGrath route as a summer mail route. Boyd claimed that mail carriers would be able to haul one thousand pounds of mail on each trip. An Indian village was located near the portage, and a white trader at the foot of the lake. He noted as well that the steamboat Pioneer, carrying four horses and outfits for four men, had traveled from Nenana to Lake Minchumina in 1921 in a matter of four days. 149/

Little more was said about the summer route until the Post Office Department established winter mail service on the Nenana-McGrath trail, and the Alaska Road Commission decided to improve the winter trail. Writing to the Kusko Times on January 12, 1925, W. J. Widman, a resident of Medfra since 1921, advocated the establishment of summer mail service on the Nenana - McGrath route, and in support of his argument noted the fact that Arthur Berry of Medfra "always seemed to be able to get to the portage whenever he had occasion to go there." 150/ In October 1924, for example, Berry transported a number of people up the North Fork to the portage. Leaving Medfra on October 5, Berry ascended the river in his launch with J. L. Berry, Archie Higgins, and a child named Bessie Higgins on board. Arriving at the portage on October 10, Arthur Berry escorted his passengers across the portage to

Lake Minchumina, where they were met by K. B. Kammersgard. Leaving the lake on October 12, Kammersgard transported the passengers in his boat to Nenana where they arrived on October 15. The passengers then continued their journey to San Francisco by train and steamship. 151/ Later interviewing Arthur Berry, Widman learned that the water in the North Fork at the time of the trip was "pretty low," and that the trip would have been easier in a sternwheeler than in his propeller-driven launch. 152/

In addition, Widman sent the newspaper a copy of a letter written by K. B. Kammersgard on January 3, 1925. Kammersgard wrote that the portage was about eight and one-half miles long, striking Lake Minchumina in its southwest corner. The trail was in poor condition, and should be relocated to a high, dry ridge where it would strike the lake in its northwest corner and reduce the distance by one-half mile to one mile. Kammersgard claimed that freight from Nenana could be landed at the portage for four cents a pound; and that he would transport passengers to Nenana for about \$200, depending upon the size of the party. One man and his board would be charged \$50. As concerns the route for the transportation of mail, Kammersgard wrote, "I believe that's the only route by which it can be landed in McGrath two times a month, if they want it." 153/

The people of McGrath and Takotna wanted it. The Kusko Times published the correspondence of Widman and Kammersgard; and letters were sent to H. H. Ross, the representative of the Fourth Division in the Territorial Legislature, requesting his assistance. On March 12, 1925, Ross wrote to James G. Steese, president of the Alaska Road Commission, on the possibility of the Commission surveying the Minchumina portage, and forwarded to him letters from W. J.

Widman, Peter McMullen, the Innoko Lumber Company, and the Schwabacher Hardware Company, all advocating adoption of the summer route for the transportation of mail. Ross stated that it was his understanding that local inspectors of the Post Office Department desired to adopt the route, but could not do so until a survey had been made. Steese replied by letter dated March 13, informing Ross that a representative of the Commission was to examine the portage in the summer. 154/

In June 1925, the Road Commission announced that Major Lunsford E. Oliver, the Engineer Officer of the Commission, and Robert Sommers, a member of the Territorial road commission, were to inspect the portage with a view to its improvement to road, trail, or tramway standard. They were also to investigate water conditions on the upper Kantishna River and the North Fork and determine the practicality of river boat service on the streams. According to Steese, the Road Commission expected to improve the portage if Oliver's report was favorable and if the Post Office Department agreed to establish mail service on the route during the summer months. 155/

Oliver and Sommers made the trip from Nenana to McGrath in six and one-half days. They chartered a boat at Nenana to take them to Lake Minchumina, and on the North Fork side of the portage they met Joe Oates by previous arrangement. Oates took Oliver and Sommers in his launch to McGrath. Continuing to Takotna, the two men subsequently went over the summer trail to Iditarod, and there obtained passage on a boat to Holy Cross. 156/

While at Takotna, Oliver refused to discuss his investigations with local newspaper reporters. Evidently the Road Commission decided that the route was feasible, but would not improve the portage until the Post Office Department let a contract

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## NORTH FORK OF THE KUSKOKWIM RIVER

The North Fork of the Kuskokwim River has long been an important water route to the Tanana and Yukon basins. Indians and later white prospectors, trappers, and hunters ascended the Tanana, Kantishna, and Muddy Rivers to Lake Minchumina, crossed a low divide to the North Fork, and descended that stream to the Kuskokwim River.

Although neither had been on the route, Josiah Edward Spurr and Lieutenant Joseph S. Herron knew of the portage between the Tanana and Kuskokwim Rivers. 75/ The first specific mention of the Minchumina Portage was made by Herron in 1899: "A short portage between Minchumina and the Kuskokwim results from the extraordinary invasion of the former into the latter's territory, and the Indian canoe route between these waters is via this portage." 76/ The location of the portage is correctly illustrated on Herron's map of the upper Kuskokwim basin.

Spurr and Herron were not the first white men to know of the existence of the trail. Spurr himself recorded that sometime in the late 1880's, Frank Densmore and a party of prospectors journeyed from the Tanana River to the Kuskokwim River. It is not known what season of the year the journey occurred, but if the prospectors traveled in the summer, as seems probable, they doubtless crossed the Minchumina Portage. Other white men were to follow. Spurr learned that a prospector named Al King followed Densmore's route about the same time. Interviewing several Indian elders in the basin in the early 1960's, Hosley learned that a few white trappers travelled from the Kuskokwim River to the Tanana River via Minchumina Portage. In the late 1880's or early 1890's, a white trapper ascended the North Fork, crossed the portage, and descended the Kantishna River to the Tanana River. The Indians considered this ascent of the North Fork by one white man as a "near super-human feat, since the current is comparatively rapid on the upper reaches of the river." 77/ Not long thereafter, a small party of white trappers took the same route. Oral tradition has it that one of the white men was killed somewhere on the upper reaches of the North Fork by Koyukon Indians from the west. 78/

Following the gold rushes to the Kuskokwim River and the Kantishna River in the 1900's, prospectors and trappers doubtless crossed the Minchumina Portage to explore virgin territory, and to travel to the new gold camps on the Lower Kuskokwim River, the Kantishna River, and at Fairbanks. Unfortunately, few recorded their experiences. The Fairbanks Northern Light, a local newspaper, did report that J. D. Green and J. M. Smith ascended the North Fork in a knockdown steam launch in the summer of 1906. The two men wintered on the launch at the mouth of Swift Fork, then known as McKinley Forks, and in the spring, when trail conditions were suitable, traveled to Fairbanks. The two men reported that "in high water a launch could be steamed to within ten miles of Lake Minchumina, the head of navigation for the Kantishna." 79/

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George B. Gordon and his brother Maclaren ascended the Kantishna and Muddy Rivers to Lake Minchumina, crossed the portage to the North Fork, and descended that stream and the Kuskokwim River to Bethel. George B. Gordon's account of the journey was published in 1917; it was the first detailed description of the route. While the journal is primarily of interest to anthropologists, as it contains a great deal of information about Indians in the Lake Minchumina area, it contains many references to the fact that the Minchumina Portage was heavily used by white prospectors and trappers.

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After exploring the lake the Gordon brothers began the trek across the portage in early August. After crossing a low divide, they found signs, including an improvised roller, of someone dragging a boat over the ground. About two miles from the North Fork, they finally encountered two men with a poling boat. Gordon failed to record the names of the two men, only saying that they were bound for the South Fork of the Kuskokwim River where they planned to spend two years prospecting and trapping. Continuing their journey, the Gordon brothers finally reached the North Fork on August 7, having spent seven days on the portage, estimated to be 10 miles in length.

The Gordon brothers subsequently required about eight days to descend the North Fork and the Kuskokwim River to McGrath in their canoe. On the first day on the North Fork, they saw a cabin on a high bank. A trapper had built the cabin the previous summer and occupied it through the winter. On the third day, they found an Indian summer camp on the left bank of the river. The Indians on Lake Minchumina had described the camp to the Gordon brothers. The camp was occupied by only one "very ancient Indian." Then, on the fifth day on the river, August 12,

they met two trappers rowing two boats upriver. The two trappers had met several days earlier, and decided to form a partnership and trap on the North Fork for the winter. One of the men had spent three years on the South Fork of the Kuskokwim River; the other had spent the previous winter on the Takotna River and decided to abandon the field when prospectors appeared in the spring.

Shortly after encountering the two trappers, the Gordon brothers passed the mouth of Swift Fork, or as the Indians called it the Totzona, a muddy stream. Near the mouth of the river, they found a hut on the bank and two Indians in birchbark canoes who stated that their village was a short distance upriver. On the eighth day on the river, the Gordon brothers finally passed the mouth of the East Fork or the Chedotlothna and the two outlets of the South Fork or Istna, where they met an Indian in a canoe and saw the cabin of a trapper who had died sometime in the previous winter. From that place they pushed on to the new trading post of McGrath, thence to Bethel on the lower Kuskokwim River where they obtained passage on the Hattie B. to Nome. 80/

The Gordon brothers reached the upper Kuskokwim River shortly after the gold rush to Ganes Creek. As more prospectors entered the area following subsequent gold discoveries on the Innoko River and Kuskokwim River, some would travel up the North Fork to trap and to prospect. The account of Lee Raymond Dice in 1912 reveals the extent of traffic on the North Fork at that time.

In February 1912, Dice, a deputy game warden, and Stephen Foster, a noted guide, traveled overland from Tanana to the headwaters of the North Fork by way of the Cosna River, a tributary of the Tanana River. Descending the North Fork for about 12 miles, they found two men named Ben Anderson and James Johnson in a small cabin on a creek draining Haystack Mountain, also known locally as Cone Hill or Mount Unsuzi. Anderson and Johnson had spent the winter on the creek, digging prospect holes and trapping fur-bearing animals. Dice and Foster remained at the cabin, and assisted the prospectors in the construction of a poling boat, a narrow, flat-bottomed craft about 33 feet in length with pointed ends. The boat was capable of carrying a load of one ton or more. On May 1, the ice in the North Fork went out; and 11 days later, Anderson, Johnson, and Foster left the camp in the poling boat for McGrath. The prospectors intended to trade their furs for provisions at McGrath, and then return to a different location on the North Fork for another year of prospecting and trapping.

During early June, Dice constructed a scow, which was 17 feet long with flared sides seven feet wide. On June 18, a man named Ben Mozee joined him, and five days later both began to float down the North Fork. Dice recalled that the river was "small, swift, with dangerous snags." Landing at the portage, Dice and Mozee walked over the trail to Lake Minchumina. Dice recalled that men took boats over the portage each year, and in this instance he found two men on the eight-mile portage. One man had dragged a large canoe to the lake and was carrying his equipment over the last stage. His companion had already dragged a

heavy poling boat over the trail to the lake. Dice saw various contraptions used to haul boats over the portage. One was a small cart designed to move on a track of birch poles. Another was a large cart which someone pulled over the trail with handmade pulleys and rope.

Returning to the North Fork, Dice continued his journey down the river. Their progress was rapid, the current being swift in many places, occasionally broken by long sluggish stretches. After several days on the river, Dice noted that the current gradually became sluggish in a stretch of a few miles to the junction of the McKinley Fork (Swift Fork). Rowing the scow through the "dead water," they finally reached the mouth of the Swift Fork, a large muddy stream. There they met an Indian named "Sheshuey" or "Shesuie" in a canoe who had a cache of rotten moose meat nearby. Dice learned that the Indian's village of Telida was located 10 miles overland or 25 miles by river up the Swift Fork.

Minch

Below the mouth of the Swift Fork, Dice and Mozee found the current of the North Fork very rapid, with many shallow places. Several times their scow struck the stream bottom. Numerous sunken logs and stumps, and sweepers were hazards to navigation. They passed a few cabins on the banks, but most were vacant. They did see two cabins occupied by prospectors who had already made their summer trip to McGrath to obtain supplies and were busily prospecting. They met one man on the North Fork who was returning to his cabin; and near Big River they passed several men bound for the North Fork.

Dice eventually reached McGrath, then a community of three or four cabins, and ascended the Takotna River to Takotna. He subsequently returned to McGrath and floated down the Kuskokwim River to Bethel. 81/

Not long after Dice passed through the district, the North Fork received a considerable amount of attention when Bob Lagin, a trapper and prospector, disappeared in the headwaters of the stream. In August 1914, Stephen Foster, a guide and trapper residing in Fairbanks, informed authorities that in March 1913, while in the Lake Minchumina area, he had learned from Indians that Lagin was on the North Fork, about three miles below the Minchumina Portage with ample supplies recently acquired from Jesse Yoder. Foster reported that, following a confrontation with Indians at the mouth of the North Fork, Yoder and Lagin had ascended the North Fork in a boat and canoe. Apparently fearing reprisals from the Indians, Yoder refused to remain on the North Fork and returned to McGrath, leaving the canoe with Lagin. 82/

When Lagin failed to return to McGrath, rumors had it that Lagin had been murdered by the Indians. In a letter to Deputy Marshal Percy G. Charles, Wilbur F. Green, the U.S. Commissioner, expressed his suspicions that Indians had killed Lagin, and described a recent conversation with Yoder. Lagin and Yoder had killed two moose about 35 miles up the North Fork. The two men separated on September 12, planning to meet again in McGrath at Christmas. Yoder then took the moose downriver in a poling boat to the Big River trading post while Lagin went up the North Fork for about 45 miles in his canoe to trap. Two days later, Yoder encountered

Indians from the Swift Fork who attempted to intimidate him. A fist fight resulted, and, according to Yoder, a gun battle would have occurred if the Indians had not been aware of his prowess with a rifle. Yoder was convinced that these same Indians had killed Lagin, recalling too that another man named John Sigurson had recently disappeared in the country.

Green also described a conversation with Paul Minnick, a German who had recently returned from a hunting trip on the North Fork. Minnick had ascended the river in a motorboat to the mouth of McKinley Fork (Swift Fork), where a cabin owned by another German named Federick was located. Shortly after Minnick reached the cabin, "Chief Soo Suey" also arrived in a boat and both spent the night in the cabin. Questioning the Indian, Minnick was given to understand that Lagin and two Indians had died on the same day. Green noted that Minnick and the Indian may have misunderstood one another, as neither did not understand English well. He wrote too that one Cowan, who found Lagin's canoe and took it to the Big River trading post, stated that Lagin crossed the divide to the Nowitna River. 83/

Rumors that the Indians had killed Lagin were eventually squelched by the investigation of Harry Sheppard, a Deputy Marshall at Ophir. In January 1915, he announced that Lagin had not been murdered by Indians. 84/

During the remainder of the 1910's or 1920's, prospectors and trappers continued to work the tributaries of the North Fork. Sometimes they chartered boats to take them upriver to their headquarters. In May 1921, The Kusko Times reported the recent departure of Charles and Victor Nystrom from McGrath in the motorboat Shamrock. The two men were transporting a number of passengers to Salmon River and Medfra, before continuing up the North Fork to a point said to be 350 miles from McGrath where their launch Red Wing had been left in the fall of 1920. 85/ About a month later, Herman Hinsche, a trapper whose cabin was located at the mouth of Swift Fork, descended the North Fork to McGrath in a boat. In late July, Arthur Berry returned Hinsche as well as Herman Hanson to their trapping headquarters. 86 Several weeks later, Jesse Yoder descended the North Fork from the Swift Fork in a launch (probably the Maple Leaf) with C. O. Peterson on board. Yoder subsequently ascended the North Fork, this time to bring Major John C. Gotwals of the Alaska Road Commission downriver to Medfra. 87/

In September 1922, Charles and Victor Nystrom again took the launch Red Wing to Herman Hinsche's headquarters, this time to search for Hinsche who failed to appear at McGrath as was expected. They found Hinsche's canoe and large boat in the water. Some believed that the trapper was lost, since he had left more than \$1,000 worth of furs with a friend and a strangely worded note. But he reappeared in McGrath in October 1922 with fellow trappers John Dunn and Bob Roberson. 88/

Boat traffic on the North Fork must have been fairly heavy, for in the early 1920's local residents began agitating for mail service on the route during the summer and winter seasons. At this time, residents of

McGrath, Takotna, and Ophir were receiving their mail by trail from Ruby during the winter, and by river from Holy Cross and Bethel during the summer. The editor of The Kusko Times, complaining about the poor mail service, suggested that the mail be routed from Nenana on the Government railroad to McGrath throughout the year. Mail carriers could use boats on the North Fork, Lake Minchumina, and Kantishna River in the summer; and they could use sleds on practically the same route in the winter. Referring to an unnamed authority on the summer route, the editor declared "that no impediments other than a few riffles at various distances apart, give any great hindrances to the successful navigation of the North Fork, at least until the portage point is reached." He then continued: "With a boat of proper draft, equipped with [an] engine to give speed averaging 10 miles an hour, the distance from McGrath to the portage would be accomplished in 40 hours." Allowing a day to cross the portage by horse or dog team, the editor argued that only seven days would be required to travel from McGrath to Nenana, a distance estimated to be 600 miles. 89/

In support of the editorial, the newspaper published a statement by Dave Clough, a roadhouse proprietor at McGrath. Clough claimed to know two men who crossed the divide from the Nowitna River to Lake Minchumina, and then portaged to the North Fork, which they descended to the Kuskokwim River. Theodore Von Frank, a well-known prospector on the Nixon Fork, also crossed the portage and went down the river, although he did so in the winter. As to the winter route, Clough reported that Berry, who knew the country well, had informed officials of the Post Office Department that the trail from McGrath to the railroad line was about 150 miles in distance, and that a number of men had traveled from Kantishna to McGrath in five days. 90/

The Alaska Road Commission was not unaware of the agitation. In August 1921, Major John C. Gotwals of the Commission ascended the Kantishna River and Muddy River to Lake Minchumina in a small steamboat, the Pioneer. With the assistance of K. B. Kammersgard, a trapper and roadhouse proprietor on the lake, Gotwals crossed the portage, constructed a raft, and then floated down the North Fork. Near the close of the first day on the river, he encountered Sam Sanderson and a group of prospectors in a 26-foot boat and Arthur Berry in a motorboat. Gotwals borrowed Sanderson's boat, and by himself rowed it to the mouth of Swift Fork, where he found Herman Hinsche's headquarters. In the meantime, Arthur Berry transported Sanderson and presumably his party to the portage in his boat. Gotwals remained at Hinsche's cabin for two days before Jesse Yoder arrived in his launch, the Maple Leaf. He then accompanied Yoder downstream to Berry's Landing, where he took the steamboat Tana to McGrath, arriving there on September 3. Gotwals then took the launch Maple Leaf to Takotna, and subsequently followed the summer trails to Ophir and Ruby. 91/

Not long after Gotwals passed through the section, local residents circulated a petition for the establishment of mail service on the Nenana-McGrath summer route. Stating that motorboats could be used on

the entire route with the exception of the portage, the petitioners called for mail service on a bi-weekly basis during the months of June, July, August, and September. In addition, Robert S. Boyd, Chairman of the McGrath Commercial Club, wrote a letter dated November 5, 1921, to the Alaska Delegate to Congress, Dan Sutherland, requesting his assistance in establishing summer mail service on the the Nenana-McGrath route. Boyd claimed that mail carriers would be able to haul 1,000 pounds of mail on each trip. An Indian village was located near the portage, and a white trader at the foot of the lake. He noted as well that the steamboat Pioneer, carrying four horses and outfits for four men, had traveled from Nenana to Lake Minchumina in 1921 in a matter of four days. 92/

Little more was said about summer route until the Post Office Department established winter mail service on the Nenana - McGrath trail, and the Alaska Road Commission began improvement of the winter trail. Writing to The Kusko Times on January 12, 1925, W. J. Widman, a resident of Medfra since 1921, advocated the establishment of summer mail service on the Nenana - McGrath route, and in support of his argument noted the fact that Arthur Berry of Medfra "always seemed to be able to get to the portage whenever he had occasion to go there." 93/ In October 1924, for example, Berry transported a number of people up the North Fork to the portage. Leaving Medfra on October 5, Berry ascended the river in his launch with J. L. Berry, Archie Higgins, and a child named Bessie Higgins on board. Arriving at the portage on October 10, Arthur Berry escorted his passengers across the portage to Lake Minchumina, where they were met by K. B. Kammersgard. Leaving the lake on October 12, Kammersgard transported the passengers in his boat to Nenana where they arrived on October 15. The passengers then continued their journey to San Francisco by train and steamship. 94/ Later interviewing Arthur Berry, Widman learned that the water in the North Fork at the time of the trip was "pretty low," and that the trip would have been easier in a sternwheeler than in his propeller-driven launch.

In addition, Widman sent the newspaper a copy of a letter written by K. B. Kammersgard on January 3, 1925 in response to Widman's letter of inquiry dated December 14, 1924. Kammersgard stated that the portage was about 8.5 miles long, striking Lake Minchumina in its southwest corner. The trail was in poor condition, and thus should be relocated to a high, dry ridge where it would strike the lake in its northwest corner and reduce the distance by one-half mile to one mile. Kammersgard claimed that freight from Nenana could be landed at the portage for four cents a pound; and that he would transport passengers to Nenana for about \$200, depending upon the size of the party. One man and his board would be charged \$50. As concerns the route for the transportation of mail, Kammersgard wrote, "I believe that's the only route by which it can be landed in McGrath two times a month, if they want it." 95/

The people of McGrath and Takotna wanted it. The Kusko Times published the correspondence of Widman and Kammersgard; and letters were sent to H. H. Ross, the representative of the Fourth Division in the Territorial

Legislature, requesting his assistance. On March 12, 1925, Ross wrote to James G. Steese, president of the Alaska Road Commission, in regards to the possibility that the Commission survey the Minchumina Portage, and forwarded him letters from W. J. Widman, Peter McMullen, the Innoko Lumber Company, and the Schwabacher Hardware Company. Ross stated that it was his understanding that local inspectors of the Post Office Department desired to adopt the route, but could not do so until a survey had been made. Steese replied by letter dated March 13, informing Ross that a representative of the Commission was to examine the portage in the summer. 96/

In June 1925, the Commission announced that Major Lunsford E. Oliver, the Engineer Officer of the Commission, and Robert Sommers, a member of the Territorial road commission, were to inspect the portage, with a view to its improvement to road, trail, or tramway standard. They were also to investigate water conditions on the upper Kantishna River and the North Fork and determine the practicality of riverboat service on the streams. According to Steese, the Commission expected to improve the portage if Oliver's report was favorable and if the Post Office Department agreed to establish mail service on the route during the summer months. 97/

Oliver and Sommers made the trip from Nenana to McGrath in 6.5 days. They chartered a boat at Nenana to take them to Lake Minchumina, and on the North Fork side of the portage they met Joe Oates by previous arrangement. Oates took Oliver and Sommers in his launch to McGrath. Continuing to Takotna, Oliver and Sommers then took the summer trail to Iditarod where they took passage on a boat to Holy Cross. 98/

While in Takotna, Oliver refused to discuss his investigation of the route with local newspaper reporters. Evidently the Commission decided that the route was feasible, but would not improve the portage until the Post Office Department let a contract for summer mail service on the route. 99/ However, the department was at this time planning to use airplanes for the delivery of mail to communities on the upper Kuskokwim River. Mail service on the Minchumina Portage route was never instituted.

The introduction to airplanes as carriers of the mail was not entirely welcomed by local residents. On September 4, 1925 Jack Mutchler of Takotna wrote a letter to Alaska Delegate Dan Sutherland, expressing his belief that airplanes would not meet the local needs for mail service. He stated that the majority of local residents favored the adoption of the Lake Minchumina route for the delivery of mail on a bi-weekly basis during the open season. Once the mail service was established, perishable freight could be delivered at McGrath from four to six weeks earlier than presently possible. Also, mail carriers on the route would be in touch with the winter mail trail whenever the early freeze-up of the river ice occurred. Finally, the adoption of the route would tend to develop the country between McGrath and Nenana. As Mutchler put it, "Prospectors who want to go into that section at present are either compelled to buy or charter a gas boat, which you know isn't likely to happen. With a permanent route established as proposed, they could come and go at will." 100/

As airplanes became the general mode of travel between Fairbanks and Nenana and McGrath, boat traffic on the North Fork declined in frequency. The North Fork continued, however, to be the primary route of travel to hunting and trapping grounds. As late as 1937, Victor Nystrom was operating on the river. The Kusko Times reported in September of that year that Nystrom was headed to his trapping grounds on the North Fork in a boat. He carried as passengers two other trappers named George Harwood and Arnold Akers and their supplies. Both trappers were bound for Bill Hartzberg's trapping grounds. 101/

Local residents continue to travel on the North Fork in connection with hunting and trapping activities. However, only a few travel up the river as far as the mouth of the Swift Fork. In 1979, Diane Cudgel-Holmes contacted 12 individuals who had operated boats on the river. Five individuals had ascended the North Fork beyond the Swift Fork. In 1971, Ken T. Alt ascended the "slow and crooked" river as far as Little Hog Butte with a 24-foot boat and propeller unit. Miska Deaphon stated that he had ascended the river to the Minchumina Portage only twice in his lifetime. Deaphon Eluska, who has a winter home on the North Fork opposite the mouth of the Swift Fork, stated that he went to the Minchumina Portage and beyond once about 30 years ago in a poling boat. He said there were places where he had to line his boat through some shallow spots, but had no problem descending the river. He may have used a 30-foot poling boat, but now uses an 18-foot boat with a propeller unit. Dick Nikolai claimed that he goes hunting nearly every year on the North Fork upriver from Swift Fork; he usually does not go beyond the Chleca Lakes but says it is possible to go farther. Steve Nikolai has been to a cabin above the West Fork of the North Fork just for sightseeing, but not often. 102/

#### Swift Fork

Together with the North Fork of the Kuskokwim River, the Swift Fork has been the primary route of summer travel to Medfra and McGrath for residents of Telida Village. White prospectors and trappers may have ascended the river as far as the village in poling boats or launches; but there does not appear to be documentation of the journeys. The record indicates that canoes and riverboats have been used on the river.

In 1979, several people reported that they had traveled by boat on the Swift Fork and its tributaries. Ken T. Alt stated that in the fall of 1971, he ascended the Swift Fork to the mouth of Highpower Creek, and up that creek for a distance of about 20 miles, or to the eastern edge of T. 23 S., R. 30 E., K.R.M. He was using a 24-foot riverboat. Beyond the mouth of Highpower Creek, he said, one would need an airboat to ascend the Swift Fork. Nic Dennis, Deaphon Eluska, and Dick Nikolai stated that they also used the Swift Fork in boats to reach Telida Village. Eluska, who maintains a summer home at Telida, stated that the Swift Fork is shallow at times with sandbars and snags. Steve Nikolai stated that he has ascended the Swift Fork as far as the mouth of Highpower Creek in the fall to hunt. He stated that he has no difficulty ascending Highpower Creek to the mouth of Deep Creek where he fishes. He said that he goes there several times each year, and could go farther

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# Ethnohistory of Four Interior Alaskan Waterbodies

by: Dianne Gudge-Holmes  
Department of Natural Resources — Alaska



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ETHNOHISTORY OF FOUR INTERIOR  
ALASKAN WATERBODIES

DIANNE GUDGEL-HOLMES  
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Sponsoring Agency

State of Alaska  
Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Research and Development

Project Committee Members

Richard O. Stern  
Ron Swanson  
Robert Frederick

August, 1979

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were made up Deep Creek to cut logs for cabin building. They have also previously used the area around Kantishna (outside of McKinley Park near Wonder Lake) and past the Foraker River towards the Park for hunting and prospecting. This was in the 1950s.

Kenneth Granroth, a trapper and former postmaster at Lake Minchumina, has been a resident there for thirty-eight years. He has cut logs for his cabin and has hunted moose on Deep Creek. He owns a small Hovercraft that is kept at the lake. He has used the Kuskokwim portage summer and winter ever since he has lived at the lake; the last time was September 20, 1978, when he made the trip in two days. He has drawn maps of the portage for other canoeing parties in the recent past. According to Mr. Granroth the usual time to cross the portage is about four days.

Bill and Fran Holmes have been residents of the area since 1952. They own the local electric utility and had a 32-foot tug boat and barge that was used to bring fuel to the lake from Nenana from 1961 to 1964. But at that time a severe storm at the lake destroyed both the boat and barge and since then the fuel has been flown in.

Charles Holmes has used the lake each summer from 1972 to 1978 with a canoe and riverboat while doing archeological surveys.

Margaret John, sister to Dinah Albert, says that her family used outboards on their boat in going to the lake each spring for beaver and muskrat hunting. Her family was living down the Kantishna at Toklat.

Muddy River. Also known as Nichutalino and the Great Muddy, flows east 25 miles from Lake Minchumina to Birch Creek at 63°53' N, 151°35' W.

Dick and Florence Collins and their children have used the Muddy River many times on trips in a riverboat and canoe from the lake to Fairbanks, or vice versa. They have traveled as many as six times a year down river fifty miles for hunting and picnicking. Mr. Collins reports that the old time trapper Slim Carlson poled up the river from his cabin on Birch Creek to the lake a few times.

Tom and Mary Flood have used the Muddy for hunting for twenty-five years and have fished commercially there also, mainly for dog food.

Jens and Helen Forshaug have used the river for hunting once a year from 1961 to 1965.

Kenneth Granroth, long-time resident of Lake Minchumina, hunted on the Muddy in the 1960s.

Bill and Fran Holmes use the Muddy each fall for moose hunting. The fuel for their electric utility was barged up the Muddy from Nenana from 1961 to 1964.

Charles Holmes traveled the river to Manley Hot Springs in 1973 with a 17-foot canoe while on an archeological survey. In 1975 he traveled

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the river twice on a round trip from Fairbanks to the lake in a 22-foot riverboat.

Alfred Starr was a resident of the Birch Creek and Muddy River area in the 1940s. He stayed there about ten years due to the death of Roosevelt John, well-known Birch Creek resident. His wife was related to Roosevelt John. Mr. Starr had a wooden boat and motor. He had a fish camp near the Muddy at a place called Fish Camp Lake and every July he was at Birch Creek, which he says is a shallow stream.

Toklat River. Also known as the Toclat and Tutluk River flows northwest 85 miles to the Kantishna at 64°27' N, 150°18' W.

Dinah Albert was raised at the mouth of the Toklat. In the mid-1920s her family moved to Nenana. Her father was John Evan and her grandfather was Chief Evan. Mrs. Albert reports that they did not go up the Toklat very far, maybe about ten miles. Her father used all the creeks and waters in the area. Her grandmother walked from the Toklat to what is now the McKinley Park and on to the trading post near Anchorage (Susitna?) before Dinah was born. Her grandmother lived to be 104 years old, and was still alive during World War II.

David Esau has an allotment at the mouth of the Toklat. He was born on the river twelve miles above Knight's Roadhouse. As a boy he used the Middle Fork of the Toklat for sheep hunting to a crooked canyon at Crooked Creek, near the present park boundary.

Margaret John lived on the Toklat after her marriage in 1927, and reports the river is shallow and dries up. In the fall there are sweepers.

Gil Ketzler went up the river two to five miles once in the 1940s. He was also trapping for beaver near Knight's Roadhouse in the 1950s with Ed Lord.

Hank Ketzler has been up the Toklat a few miles above the mouth, usually in the fall. He reports that the area is shallow with snags.

Celia Peterson was raised on the Kantishna. Her father fished on the Toklat and they used to hunt up the river in the fall by walking up to Heart Mt. (unidentified). Mrs. Peterson reports there used to be a big Native village on the upper river, three miles below Knight's. Many people died during the 1919 flu epidemic, however.

Helen Simpkin reports that the streams around Knight's Roadhouse do not freeze in the winter and the bears stay out. Her father, Tom Stand, known as the "Savage" trapped at Knight's about 1925.

Alfred Starr reports that the Toklat cannot be used with a boat.

#### Winter Usage Minchumina Area

Michael Carey's father, Fabian, trapped the Minchumina area in the 1940s. His line went to Carey and Dull Ax lakes. His father would

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL INVESTIGATIONS OF THE  
LAKE MINCHUMINA AIRPORT IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT,  
(PROJECT No. 63605) 1987**



**Charles E. Holmes and Dianne Gudgel-Holmes  
May 1988**

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**OFFICE OF HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY REPORT NUMBER 13**

**Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation**



**Alaska Department of  
NATURAL  
RESOURCES**

the lights that were installed there would be operational, thus allowing Minchumina the dubious distinction of having the only lighted seaplane landing area. However, in 1952-3 the Foraker River cut a new channel into the lake which subsequently caused the water level to decline (Walter Parker, personal communication 1988). This decline continues to this day; consequently flooding is a rare occurrence, but one did occur in 1967 (Dick and Florence Collins, personal communication 1988).

The CAA's Airport Facilities Record dated August 20, 1947 indicates Minchumina's runway was 3,500 feet expandable to 5,000 feet (Ralph Westover reports that all intermediate airfields were 4,400 feet). An additional comment in the 1947 report noted the landing area needed maintenance because it was "undulating".

Supplies for the Minchumina CAA station were barged up the Kantishna and Muddy rivers. The CAA's River Transportation Unit was responsible for supplying many of the stations by water until they found, in about 1956, that it was cheaper to fly in the fuel, groceries, and other equipment.

J-boats were used for the Minchumina run from Nenana. They were about 25 feet long and 16-18 feet wide with steel barges 20 x 100 feet. The Hanson brothers, Emil and Einer, from the John Hanson Lake area on the Kantishna River, were the J-boat captains. These smaller boats were used because it was felt the larger boats could not handle the narrow and shallow rivers leading to the lake. However, the last year that supplies were barged to the lake (1955) a larger boat, the *Taku Chief*, 50-60 feet long was used (Figure 5).

An interesting film, still in existence, was made of that last trip by a CAA photographer. Warren Lindsay, a retired CAA (River Transportation Unit) employee who was on the last trip, narrated the silent film in 1984 at his home in Oregon, while being interviewed by Cliff Cernick, Alaskan FAA Public Affairs Officer. Warren's narration and letters bring home the difficulty in navigating the rivers:

. . . . Just past Roosevelt we tie the barges to the bank and untie the tugs from the barges. The tugs have been "pushing" the barges to this point. From now until we reach the lake we pull the barges. In order to make the barges "track" we cut two large birch trees per barge and lash them with leaves and all to the rear corners. This acts as a drag and helps the tugs control them better.

So now we turn off the Kantishna River onto the Muddy River which is straight on each end and crooked as all heck in between. The Muddy River is very narrow and deep and so crooked that 3 times the tug[s] would be passing each other heading in (the) opposite direction with only ten feet of land separating them. So we get close to the lake and tie up so that we can send a kicker boat to the mouth of the Muddy to clear the logs [debris] etc. so the tugs can get through onto the lake. . . [Warren Lindsay, personal communication 1982].

The usual ten- to twelve-day trip by the J-boats was reduced to three with the larger boat. It was predicted the larger boat could not navigate the rivers, but the water was high that year and several trips were accomplished before the close of the season. But from that year onward until the station shut down, all supplies were flown to Minchumina. New developments in air-navigational technology eventually made intermediate stations such as Minchumina obsolete and it closed in 1969 (Dick Collins, personal communication 1979; Cudgel-Holmes 1979:110).

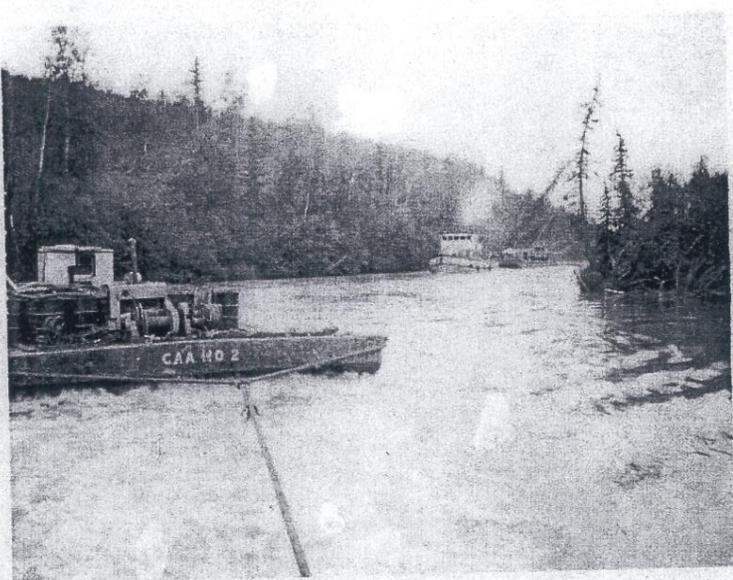


Figure 5. Barging fuel and supplies to the CAA station at Lake Minchumina In 1955. (FAA file in D. Gudgel collectioo, UAA archives, Anchorage).

UAA - Archives + Special Collections

Diane Gudgel-Holmes.

Kantishna Oral History Project.  
Records; 1910-1984.



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UAA - Archives + Special Collections

Diane Gudel - Holmes. Kanishva

Oral History Records; 1910-1984.

Lake Muchanina 76  
trips Mud River  
place at a "wide"  
place on the Mud

Last bering trip to  
L. Muchanina 1954  
for CAA/FAA

from - Warren Lindsay

FAA 16mm Films of barging and air lifting fuel

Viewed July 26, '83, by D. Gudge

Oil Haul to Farewell. 1948, black and white. 25" long, no sound, titles.

Film is of first flight of hauling fuel by air. Pilots were Freeland and Jefford. Shows loading planes in Anchorage. Flying over Blaska Range through Rainey Pass. The plane is a DC-3. Shows landing at Farewell-summer time. Shows cat with tanks on a sled taking in the fuel and then going to fill many 55 gal. drums. Return trip through pass is made at low altitude and there is an aerial shot of the PTI beacon station.

Tractor Train Oil Haul. 1954, color. 25" long, no sound

Winter. Film shows supplying of oil from Farewell Landing to Farewell Station on South Fork of Kuskokwim River area. Shows warming up cat engine with torch. Hauling a little house on sled with cat. Shows an area where there are high oil storage tanks. Four men eating. Going across snow covered terrain. Man in hut using radio phone and man on other end using his. Shows arriving at Big River station which is Farewell Landing? More big storage tanks and FAA housing. Shows men making something for tractor, welding and drilling. Shows inside of generator house. Filling roof top tank of a house? from a tank truck. Shows cat trying to loosen a large long metal fuel? tank that eventually is taken on the rest of the trip. Tractor has a canvas cover over engine. Tractors (2) leave with little house on sled and long storage tanks on skis. Unloading, eating, sunset. Cross snow covered country. Great scenes of family back home waiting for father to return and then eating and an evening after he does return. Air shot of cat train. frm

Boat launching and sled assembly. 1954 at Nenana. color, 25", no sound

Plane landing in snow. Tractor with house and large fuel tanks.

Summer and river and barges? Filling underground tank?

Winter: crane lifting sled parts and assembly of. Nenana?

" loading of plane.

Summer-boat on river and big steamboat? (stern wheeler).

Launching of several FAA boats in water at Nenana. Shows preparation of skids and greasing and jacking up of boats for the launch. Boats are Civiar and Hatanucka which is a stern wheeler. Shows kids watching add dog running around.

C123 Operations. Color. 1954? 15-20 minutes, no sound

Unloading truck and tractors from large plane. A lot of loading and unloading. View of McKinley from air. Salvage operations at Annette Is. Shows dropping special barrels in the lake to assist the salvage operations.

Last barging effort of fuel from Nenana to Lake Minchumina, 1954. color.

Launching of boat. loading of same.

On Kantishna River doing something in the woods with a line, perhaps helping the boat get off a sand bar? Shows cutting trees to be used as a trail on the 2 barges to aid in tracking the tight corners of the Muddy River. Shows crews working on barges, etc.

STOR 160339907005001230000979802120175202040002200040  
 MOUT N635304 M1513537 F1205 0200W 19  
 LUPR KANTISHNA RIVER  
 KEYM ROUTE-DISCHARGE-WATER-LAND CRAFT, TRAFFIC, WATER GEOLOGY  
 ABST 35 THENCE THE TRAIL FOLLOWS THE WEST BANK OF THE CLEARWATER FOR A MILE OR MORE AND THEN TAKES A NEARLY DIRECT COURSE SOUTHWEST TO SLIPPERY CREEK, CROSSING THE "MUDDY RIVER" AT A POINT 4 MILES ABOVE ITS MOUTH. ALTHOUGH BOTH THE MCKINLEY FORK AND THE "MUDDY RIVER" ARE GLACIAL STREAMS AND ARE SUBJECT TO THE WIDE RANGE OF VOLUME COMMON TO SUCH STREAMS, THEY USUALLY OFFER LITTLE DIFFICULTY TO FORDING WITH HORSES. "THE MUDDY RIVER IS THE STREAM FROM HANNA GLACIER. IT IS HEAVILY LOADED WITH SILT AND IN SOME STAGES IS DIFFICULT TO CROSS WITH HORSES, ALTHOUGH IT ORDINARILY OFFERS LITTLE TROUBLE AND IS CROSSED ON FOOT BY THOSE FAMILIAR WITH THE CROSSINGS." (P304)

9935 MAIN MUDDY RIVER 974 MUDDY RIVER  
 REFN 05189  
 STOR 160339907005001230000979802120175202040002200040  
 MOUT N635304 M1513537 F1205 0200W 19  
 LUPR KANTISHNA RIVER  
 KEYM NO TRAFF, TRAPPING  
 ABST TOM AND MARY FLOOD TRAP EVERY YEAR ON THE MUDDY R. NEAR MCKINLEY, FOR BEAVER, MARTEN AND OTHER FURBEARERS AND EARN A SUBSTANTIAL PART OF THEIR LIVELIHOOD THIS MAY (P121)

9936 MAIN MUDDY RIVER 947 MUDDY RIVER  
 REFN 05529  
 STOR 160339907005001230000979802120225602620  
 MOUT N632515 M1510230 F1705 0180W 20  
 LUPR MCKINLEY RIVER  
 KEYM LAND TRANSPORT, NO TRAFF, GLACIER, RIVER, DISCHARGE, WATER GEOLOGY, LAND GEOLOGY  
 ABST A TRAIL LEADS UP THE MUDDY RIVER TO HANNA GLACIER, THEN ALONG A RUSHING SMALL STREAM BESIDE THE GLACIER. (P286-288) THE MUDDY RIVER IS A MILD GLACIAL TORRENT WHICH DRAINS THE NW FACE OF MT. MCKINLEY, BELLING UP FROM HANNA GLACIER. IT'S BLACK COLOR COMES FROM GLACIAL GRINDING OF DARK SLATE AND SCHIST. THE RIVER IS DIFFICULT TO CROSS WITHOUT HORSES. THERE ARE GRAVEL FLATS ON THE E SIDE OF THE RIVER. (P286)

9937 MAIN MUDDY RIVER 922 MUDDY RIVER  
 REFN 06722  
 STOR 160339907005001230000979802120225602620  
 MOUT N632515 M1510230 F1705 0180W 20  
 LUPR KANTISHNA RIVER  
 KEYM TRAFFIC, UNSPECIFIED TRANSPORT, PAST USAGE, WATER LEVEL  
 ABST BEACH'S PARTY MET 2 PROSPECTORS ON RIVER WHO HAD JUST (AUG-LATE, 1922) STAKED SILVER DEPOSITS. (P51 AND 52) IN AUG. 1925 BEACH'S EXPEDITION FOUND RIVER BADLY SWOLLEN FROM A STORM WHICH DELAYED THEIR CROSSING. (P73 AND 74) ON RETURN TRIP IN MID-SEPT. THEY CAMPED AND HUNTED NEAR RIVER? CROSSING SEVERAL TIMES. (P98 AND 99)

9938 MAIN MUDDY RIVER 920 NEUCHUCHALANAUGH RIVER  
 REFN 07220  
 STOR 160339907005001230000979802120175202040002200040  
 MOUT N635304 M1513537 F1205 0200W 19  
 LUPR KANTISHNA RIVER  
 KEYM WATER CRAFT, TRAFFIC, PHOTO  
 ABST U OF A ARCHIVES FOSIER ALBUM COLLECTION #121 "COMING DOWN THE NEUCHUCHALANAUGH RIVER JUNE 20-1920." IT SHOWS A RAFT WITH DOGS. BEHIND ARE 2 CANOES. 2 MEN.

9939 MAIN MUDDY RIVER 906 PETERS BRANCH OF MCKINLEY FORK R  
 REFN 05422

KEYM NO TRAFF, RIVER-EXPEDITION  
 ABST IN SAN JOHNSON'S "ROADS AND TRAILS IN ALASKA", A MANUSCRIPT IN THE VERTICAL FILE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ARCHIVES, THE SURVEYOR OF A NELCHINA RECONNAISSANCE, 1926, REPORTED, "MUDDY CREEK FLOWS INTO THE HATANUSKA RIVER A LITTLE LESS THAN A FOURTH OF A MILE E OF HICKS CREEK". (P24)

9930 MAIN MUDDY RIVER 951953 FORAKER RIVER  
 REFN 01472  
 STOR 160339907005001230000979802120175202040002200040  
 MOUT N635304 W1513537 F1205 0200W 19  
 LUPR 35 KANTISHNA RIVER  
 KEYM MAP, TRAPPING, NO TRAFF, RIVER BASIN, UNSPECIFIED TRANSPORT  
 ABST TRAPLINE #4 STOPS RIGHT AT FORAKER RIVER. (P47A) THE TRAPLINE CROSSES TWO TRIBUTARIES OF THIS RIVER. A MAP OF AREA IS INCLUDED WITH THIS REPORT.

9931 MAIN MUDDY RIVER 923 NCKINLEY FORK  
 REFN 00124  
 STOR 160339907005001230000979802120225602620  
 MOUT N632515 W1510230 F1705 0180W 20  
 LUPR 35 NCKINLEY RIVER  
 KEYM TRAFFIC, PAST USAGE, WATER-LAND CRAFT, LAND TRANSPORT, ROUTE, MAP, RIVER, COMMUNITY  
 ABST ON AN AMERICAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY MAP OF 1923, THE MGRATH-KANTISHNA TRAIL FOLLOWS THE S SIDE OF HCKINLEY FORK FROM TELIDA E FOR 5 MILES AND THEN CROSSES THE RIVER HEADING FOR HCKINLEY RIVER.

9932 MAIN MUDDY RIVER 926 HCKINLEY FORK  
 REFN 01496  
 STOR 160339907005001230000979802120225602620  
 MOUT N632515 W1510230 F1705 0180W 20  
 LUPR 35 HCKINLEY RIVER  
 KEYM NO TRAFF, EXPEDITION, ROUTE, LAND TRANSPORT  
 ABST IN SAN JOHNSON'S "ROADS AND TRAILS IN ALASKA", A DISTRICT OPERATIONS REPORT, 1926, STATED, "LEAVING LIGNITE ON JAN 13TH HE ARRIVED AT HCKINLEY FORK MARCH 16, 1922. PRETTY WELL PLAYED OUT AND SHORT OF DOG FOOD AND PROVISIONS... DETERMINED TO REACH TELIDA, TWO OF US STRUCK OUT EARLY ON THE MORNING OF THE 19TH WITH TEN DOGS... WE MADE 22 MILES THAT DAY AND SIMASHED ON THE RIGHT LIMIT OF HCKINLEY FORK. IN THE MORNING WE LEFT THE STREAM AND FOUND A WELL BEATEN TRAIL. THEY TOOK THIS TRAIL, WHICH LED FROM THE RAILROAD TO THE RUSKOKNIM, TO TELIDA. FINDING NO FOOD THERE, THEY RETURNED TO THEIR CAMP ON HCKINLEY FORK AND HEADED FOR HOME. (PP49-50)

9933 MAIN MUDDY RIVER MUD RIVER  
 REFN 00108 94127 X 941  
 STOR 160339907005001230000979802120175202040002200040  
 MOUT N635304 W1513537 F1205 0200W 19  
 LUPR 35 KANTISHNA RIVER  
 KEYM TRAFFIC, PAST USAGE, WATER CRAFT, FREIGHT, RIVER, LAKE, LAND GEOLOGY  
 ABST THE ARTICLE "IDLER ENDS VOYAGE UP KANTISHNA" IS INCLUDED IN THE "FAIRBANKS DAILY NEWS-MINER" OF AUG 27, 1941. IT IS REPORTED THAT CAPT GEORGE BLACK JUST RETURNED WITH HIS "POWERFUL MOTOR BOAT IDLER AND BARGE" FROM LAKE HINCHUHINA. "SAILING FROM FAIRBANKS SHE TOOK 135 TONS OF CARGO FROM THIS PORT AND NENANA UP THE KANTISHNA RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES INTO AND ACROSS LAKE HINCHUHINA...". (P4) "COVERING THE DISTANCE OF 275 MILES FROM THE MOUTH OF THE KANTISHNA TO THE LAKE, CAPT. BLACK REPORTS HE FOUND THE GOING EAST MOST OF THE WAY BUT ENCOUNTERED SHOALS ON A PORTION OF THE UPPER STRETCHES. THE LAST 80 MILES, WHICH WAS THROUGH THE MUD RIVER TO THE ENTRANCE TO THE LAKE, IS FULL MUD FLATS BUT WITH GOOD DEPTH OF WATER." (P4) THE ROUND TRIP TOOK 3 WEEKS. (P4)

9934 MAIN MUDDY RIVER 930 MUDDY RIVER  
 REFN 02405

FF 94610