

Developing Your Heritage Tourism Program



2015 Alaska Historic Preservation Conference

Heritage Tourism Program Recipe

Ingredients

- ☞ 1 whole resource
- ☞ 1 handful of audience
- ☞ 1 tsp clarified message
- ☞ 1 pinch of techniques

Directions

- ☞ Consider your resource and your audience.
- ☞ Select a clear message about your resource that you want to communicate to the audience.
- ☞ Choose techniques or methods that will clearly communicate your message, helping the audience connect with the resource.
- ☞ Evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of your message and techniques every 5 to 10 years.

Alaska State Parks

Welcome to

Battle of 1812

This place, called Gájaa Héen by the Tlingit and Redoubt Saint Michael by the Russian American Company, was the setting for a bloody confrontation between these two groups of people. Follow the short interpretive trail to your right to learn more about the events that led up to the Battle of 1802. This site, now called Old Sitka State Historical Park (SHP), commemorates the importance of this site to the history of Alaska and the nation.

Clues to the Past

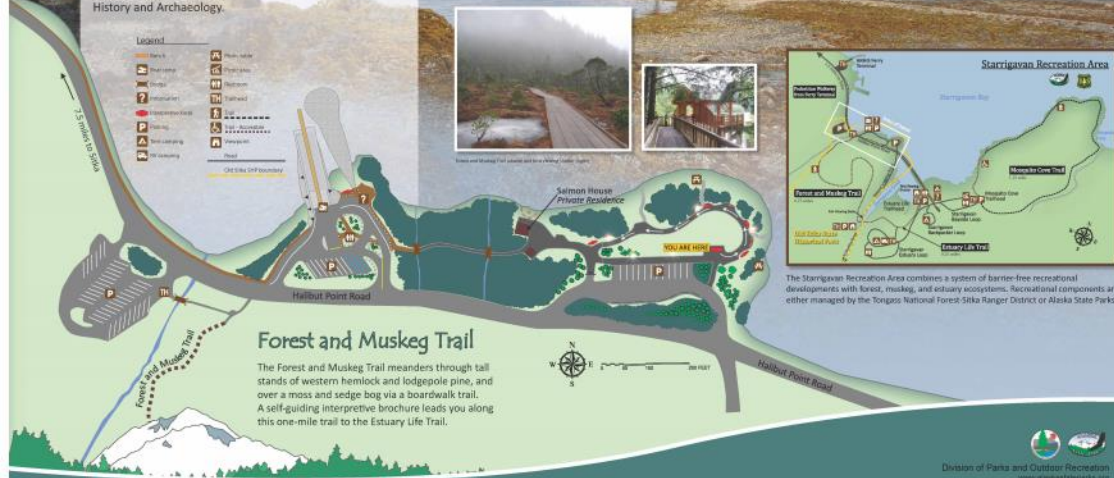
Old Sitka SHP is an archaeological site and you might occasionally find artifacts that could be important pieces of the site's puzzle. Alaska law protects all archaeological artifacts. If you find an historic resource, leave them in place and contact Sitka Area State Parks or the Office of History and Archaeology.

Old Sitka State Historical Park

This verdant landscape supports a lush estuarine ecosystem and is the site of a solemn National Historic Landmark.

On the Water

Old Sitka SHP is equipped with a public-use boat launch and dock allowing boaters access to Starrigavan Bay and the waters north of Sitka.



Old Sitka SHP

Gājaa Héen A Beloved "Undiscovered" Land

Deep roots, growing deeper with time, create strong ties between the Tlingit and the land they call home.



Tlingit Land

This area of Southeast Alaska has been home to the Tlingit for thousands of years. This site, called Gājaa Héen, was a fish camp for the Kiks.ádi Tlingit who caught and preserved fish here during the summer months.



Protecting Life's Necessities

Clans claimed fish streams and hunting grounds for seasonal homes and sources of livelihood. The clan leader managed and protected the right to hunt or fish there. People traveling through another clan's territory were allowed to hunt for the food necessary to survive, but could not hunt animals for pelts or profit without making arrangements with the clan leader.

A Home for Every Season

Tlingit society flourished in the bounty of this area's natural wealth. They moved between summer fish camps, like Gājaa Héen, autumn hunting grounds, and winter settlements based on seasonally available resources such as shellfish, hooligan, salmon, berries, and game animals. Tlingits viewed all of these sites as home.



Old Sitka SHP

REDOUBT SAINT MICHAEL

Despite many setbacks and hardships, the Russian fort rapidly grew into a bustling community.



SETTLING FOR FURS

Between 1795 and 1800, sea otter hunts around Sitka Sound produced the greatest yields for the newly formed Russian-American Company (RAC). In July 1799, RAC manager Alexander Baranov, requested permission from Tlingit leaders to establish Redoubt Saint Michael here on Tlingit land. After exchanging gifts, he believed they had reached an agreement.



A NEW HOME

Life at the redoubt was not easy; food had to be secured and buildings constructed. Food shortages during the first winter lowered community morale, but by the third year the small population had settled in. The redoubt became more of a home, and less of a fort, as some of the men married Tlingit women and other families came from Kodiak.

RUSSIANS CLAIM THE LAND

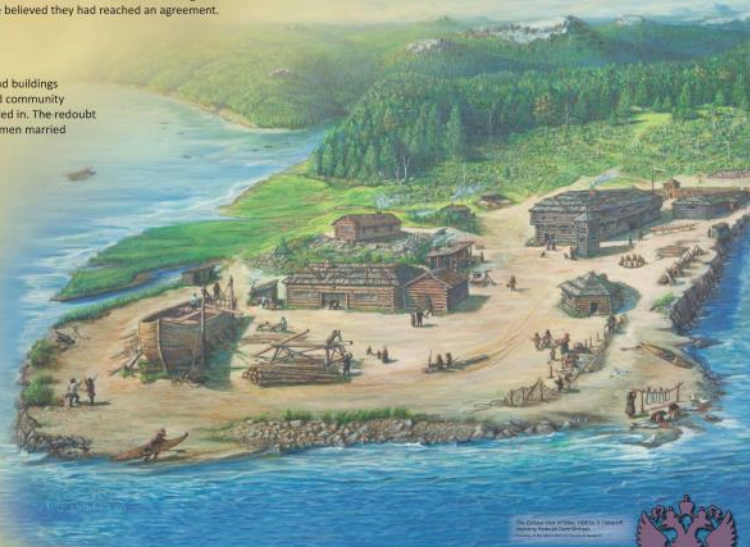
In April 1800, approximately 25 Russians, 50 Alutiq, Aleut, and Chugach hunters, and a few Native women were stationed at Redoubt Saint Michael. During this month, a highly symbolic Possession Plate was ceremonially buried in the ground to mark the birth of this new settlement and assert the Russian's claim over the land. By 1802, the settlement's population had tripled.



Image of the Possession Plate

In an effort to learn more about life at the redoubt, the Civilian Conservation Corps conducted an archeological dig in the mid-1930s and uncovered this copper Possession Plate, the only one ever recovered from a Russian-American site.

If you find any historic artifacts, please leave them in place and contact Sitka Area State Parks or the Office of History and Archeology.



The Central Area of Old Sitka, 1800-1810. A. L. Loomis. Reprinted by permission of the Alaska Historical Society. Photo by the Alaska Historical Society.



Old Sitka SHP

A "DISCOVERY"

The wealth-driven Russian fur traders relied on Alaska Native labor, yet cultural differences led to conflicts with the local Tlingit.

A CLAIM AND THE PURSUIT OF WEALTH

RUSSIAN FUR TRADERS

After Captain Vitus Bering's 1741 "discovery" asserted Russia's claim on Alaska in the eyes of Europe, Russian merchants and fur traders explored Alaska's coast looking for valuable furbearers. In 1799, a government charter created the Russian-American Company (RAC). The RAC was granted a monopoly over fur trading in exchange for solidifying Russia's claim to Alaska.

THE NATIVE LIFELINE

The RAC coerced many Natives from western Alaska to the central gulf of Alaska to hunt for them. With assistance from these Native hunters, the RAC successfully exploited large populations of sea otters for their luxurious pelts until few were left. Through the service of these Aleuts, Alutiq, and Chugach, they also acquired the resources necessary to survive Alaska's long winters when supplies failed to arrive from Russia. The success of the RAC was largely due to Alaska Native labor.

CLASHING CULTURES

This area near Sitka, where sea otters were abundant, was a strategic location for a settlement that strengthened Russia's claims to Alaska. However, the RAC and the Tlingit held contrasting beliefs about land and resource ownership. As RAC employees settled here, tensions escalated between these disparate cultures, setting the stage for conflict.

*"Russian wisdom started industries,
scattering free people over the seas,
to come to know new places,
and to seek out profits*

for the Fatherland's benefit and monarchical honor.

*Lured here by honor and glory
we're united here in brotherly friendship.
We shall create
and further take
American land that is useful to Russia."*



United States of America
Alaska Native Laborers in Sitka



Old Sitka SHP

An Uneasy Peace

Redoubt Saint Michael stood for less than two years before it was burned to the ground. What provoked the attack?

Bad Blood

Before leaving Redoubt Saint Michael, Alexander Baranov instructed the manager, Vasilii Medvednikov, not to offend the Tlingit, who vastly outnumbered the Russians. However, Medvednikov could not control all the Russian-America Company (RAC) employees, many of whom were Alutiq and Aleut. Almost immediately, a rash of violence between local Tlingits and RAC employees broke out, resulting in the deaths of several Tlingits.

Trade Disputes

Redoubt Saint Michael primarily existed to enforce the fur trade monopoly of the RAC. Before the Russians arrived in Sitka Sound, European and American traders were already doing business with the Tlingit. These foreigners were not opposed to trading guns, ammunition, and alcohol, which the Russians thought would be detrimental to the stability of the region. The Russians' goal was to control all trade in Sitka Sound. Not surprisingly, the Tlingit did not acknowledge the RAC monopoly, and they continued to trade with whomever offered the best goods.

Stoonook's Shame

Stoonook, a Kiks.adi noble, went to visit his father's people at Klukwan. During his visit, a family member deeply insulted him, insinuating that the Russians were shaming the Tlingit. Stoonook got up and left straight for Sitka without finishing his meal. When he arrived, he found the Kiks.adi already in an uproar. The Russians had tricked a Kiks.adi aristocrat into eating the flesh of a human—an abomination in the eyes of the Tlingit. Shk'awulyeii, Kiks.adi clan leader, was furious with the Russians for insulting his people, and when Stoonook told him what was said at Klukwan, he had heard enough.

*He kicked all the fire apart,
and stamped on it.*

*Shk'awulyeii
declared war.*

*"The Russians have now gone
far enough.*

We are not animals.

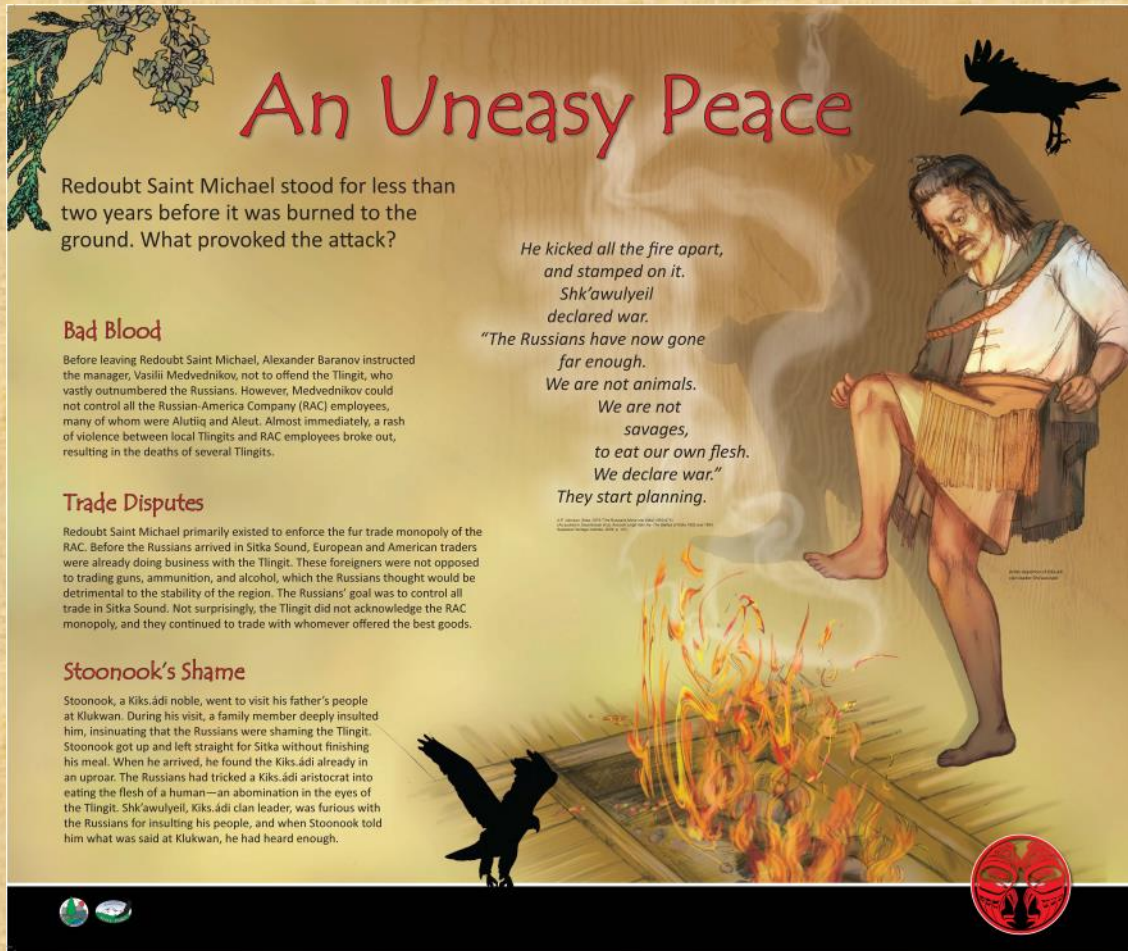
*We are not
savages,*

to eat our own flesh.

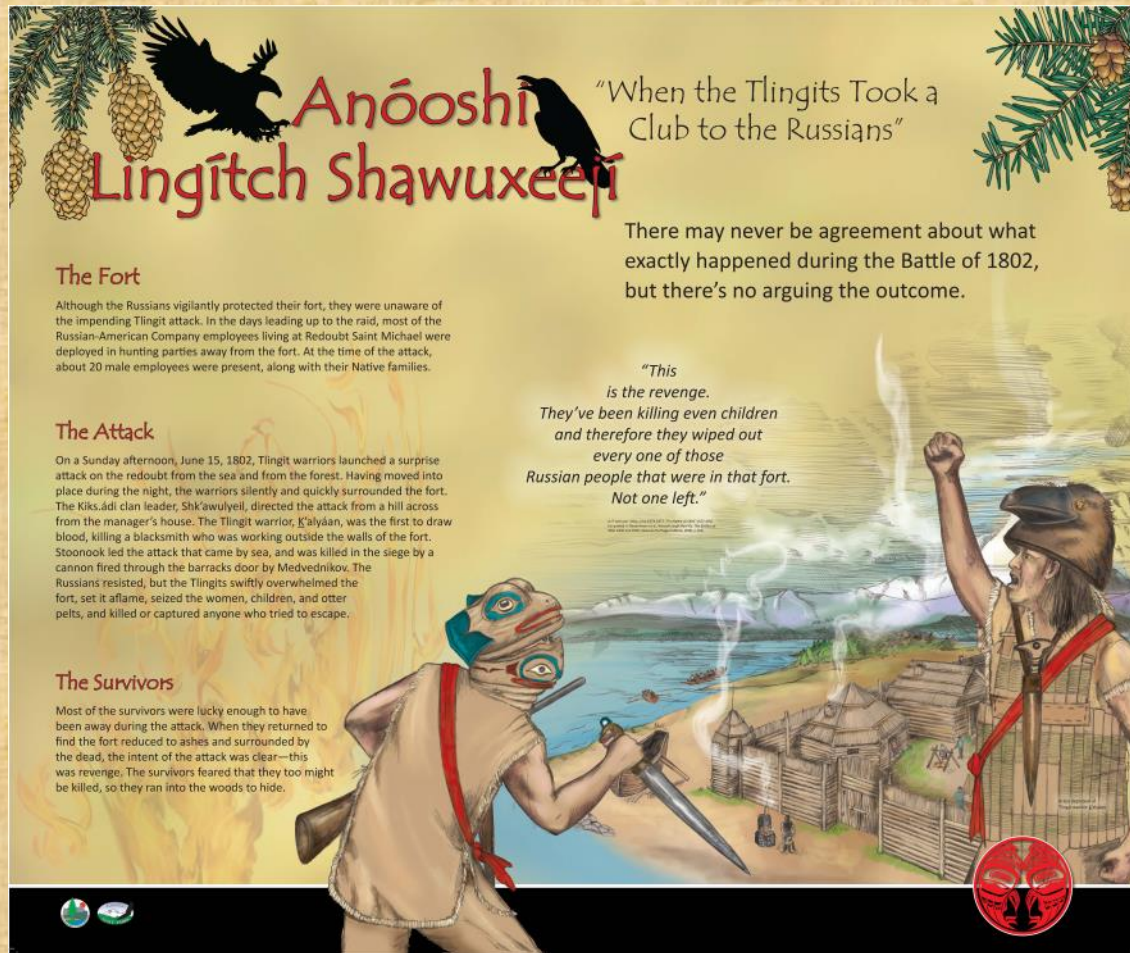
We declare war."

They start planning.

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Old Sitka SHP



Anóoshi Lingítch Shawuxeej

"When the Tlingits Took a Club to the Russians"

There may never be agreement about what exactly happened during the Battle of 1802, but there's no arguing the outcome.

"This is the revenge. They've been killing even children and therefore they wiped out every one of those Russian people that were in that fort. Not one left."

The Fort


Although the Russians vigilantly protected their fort, they were unaware of the impending Tlingit attack. In the days leading up to the raid, most of the Russian-American Company employees living at Redoubt Saint Michael were deployed in hunting parties away from the fort. At the time of the attack, about 20 male employees were present, along with their Native families.

The Attack

On a Sunday afternoon, June 15, 1802, Tlingit warriors launched a surprise attack on the redoubt from the sea and from the forest. Having moved into place during the night, the warriors silently and quickly surrounded the fort. The Kiks.ádi clan leader, Shk'awulyei, directed the attack from a hill across from the manager's house. The Tlingit warrior, K'alyáan, was the first to draw blood, killing a blacksmith who was working outside the walls of the fort. Stoonook led the attack that came by sea, and was killed in the siege by a cannon fired through the barracks door by Medvednikov. The Russians resisted, but the Tlingits swiftly overwhelmed the fort, set it aflame, seized the women, children, and other pelts, and killed or captured anyone who tried to escape.

The Survivors

Most of the survivors were lucky enough to have been away during the attack. When they returned to find the fort reduced to ashes and surrounded by the dead, the intent of the attack was clear—this was revenge. The survivors feared that they too might be killed, so they ran into the woods to hide.



Old Sitka SHP

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Before the ashes of Redoubt Saint Michael had cooled, it was clear the battle for Sitka Sound was far from over.

ENGLISH INVOLVEMENT

Fearing capture by the Tlingits, some of the Russian-American Company (RAC) survivors of the Battle of 1802 wandered the woods for several days. They eventually signaled the *Unicorn*, an English ship under the command of Henry Barber, that sailed into Sitka Sound as the fort was burning. Barber hid these survivors below deck in hopes of collecting a ransom from RAC Alexander Baranov.

THE BUSINESS OF WAR

After the attack the Tlingits had seized many valuable pelts and some women and children from the fort. The Kiks.ádi clan leader Shk'awuyei and Ḡ'alyáan approached Barber's ship, probably to trade. Once on board, Barber took them hostage. He then traded these Tlingit leaders for the pelts and captive women and children. Afterward, he set sail for RAC headquarters on Kodiak Island where he demanded a 50,000-ruble ransom from Baranov, but settled for 10,000 rubles' worth of furs in exchange for the survivors.

BARANOV PLANS HIS RETURN

Baranov lost close friends in the attack and he felt that failing to avenge the death of his employees would earn him contempt in future relations with the Alaska Natives. Baranov set his sights on reoccupying Sitka and immediately started preparations for his return, which culminated in the 1804 Battle of Sitka. This subsequent battle is commemorated at nearby Sitka National Historical Park.

Pondering the Past

The *Star of Alaska* is a lady the attack on Redoubt Saint Michael was part of a multi-day, anti-Russian alliance encompassing most of Southeast Alaska's coastline. Did Barber contribute to the Tlingit efforts by trading guns, ammunition, and alcohol? Did he encourage them to get rid of the Russians—his main trading rivals in the region?

to liberate them.—On the 22, I went in the yawl, well manned and armed, and took five of the Americans along with me to the cove where the late Russian Factory stood, and did the place entirely destroyed by fire, and the mangled bodies of about twenty men lying scattered amongst the ruins, a prey to the ravens and flocks of the forest, a sight as horrible as any human beings could

Excerpt from Captain Henry Barber's Journal of the 22nd August 1802, as published in the *Star of Alaska*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1804.

Ḡ'alyáan awaited the inevitable return of the Russian-American Company to Sitka Sound.

Henry Barber, 1802, a newly arrived Tlingit, was the first to see the fort.

Alexander Baranov's signature.

Portrait of Alexander Baranov, Russian-American Company (RAC) Governor of Alaska, 1804-1806.

Old Sitka SHP



SALMON HOUSE STORY

If this house could talk, it could tell an intriguing tale of change and fresh starts.

BUILDING A FUTURE

The Salmon House story begins with Mary Bong, who sailed from China to British Columbia, Canada, at the age of 13 to start a new life. About two years later, she married Mr. Ah Bong and then moved to Sitka. After Mr. Bong's death, Mary bought a lot in the neighborhood called Russian Town for \$200 in 1903 and built this house a year later.

The Sitka neighborhood where the Salmon House was originally located.

TURNING PAGES

Mary lived in this house, occasionally operating a laundry business in it until she sold it in 1923. During the next forty years, the building changed owners multiple times and housed a string of tenants. Eventually, the construction of Lake Street as part of an urban renewal project, threatened to demolish the house. The end seemed near but members of the community had other plans.

A NEW CHAPTER

Vyola Belle, a local citizen, saved this house in an effort to preserve an example of Russian Town's characteristic architecture. She bought it for \$300 and moved it to the ferry terminal in 1963 where the "Russian Tea House" briefly served as a visitor center. In 1982, the building was relocated one final time and given a new purpose. It now houses park staff at Old Sitka State Historical Park.

Sitka WEEKEND
Roving Russian Teahouse Finds a Home

This house-on-the-move is variously called the "Russian Tea House," "China Mary's House," or the "Salmon House." Urban legends abound about the origin of the first name and the origin of the latter remains a mystery.

Photo page of Sitka Resident January 28, 1902

Reproduction of photo: Sitka, Alaska, 1902. Sitka State Historical Park. Photo by: Sitka State Historical Park.



Welcome to Sitka & Baranof Castle State Historic Site

This hill is among the most important landmarks in Alaska. Three cups of Alutian history are suggested by the park's—Tlingit, Russian, then American—military domes and surrounded the hill. The three cups having a watch for the many years with Tlingit, Russian, and American that make, when a difficult for someone to stay for years.

While exploring Sitka, notice the bird sightings of the Great Frigatebird, King Eider, and others.

To "v" or not to "v"...!

Did you know that the Baranof Castle was built on the site of the old Russian Fortification? The castle was built in 1804 and was used as a fortification for the Russian Empire. It was the only building in Sitka that was built by the Russians. It was the only building in Sitka that was built by the Russians. It was the only building in Sitka that was built by the Russians.

...that is the answer.

Letter combinations to English

X	A	P	H	A	A	
R	E	X	E	R	A	

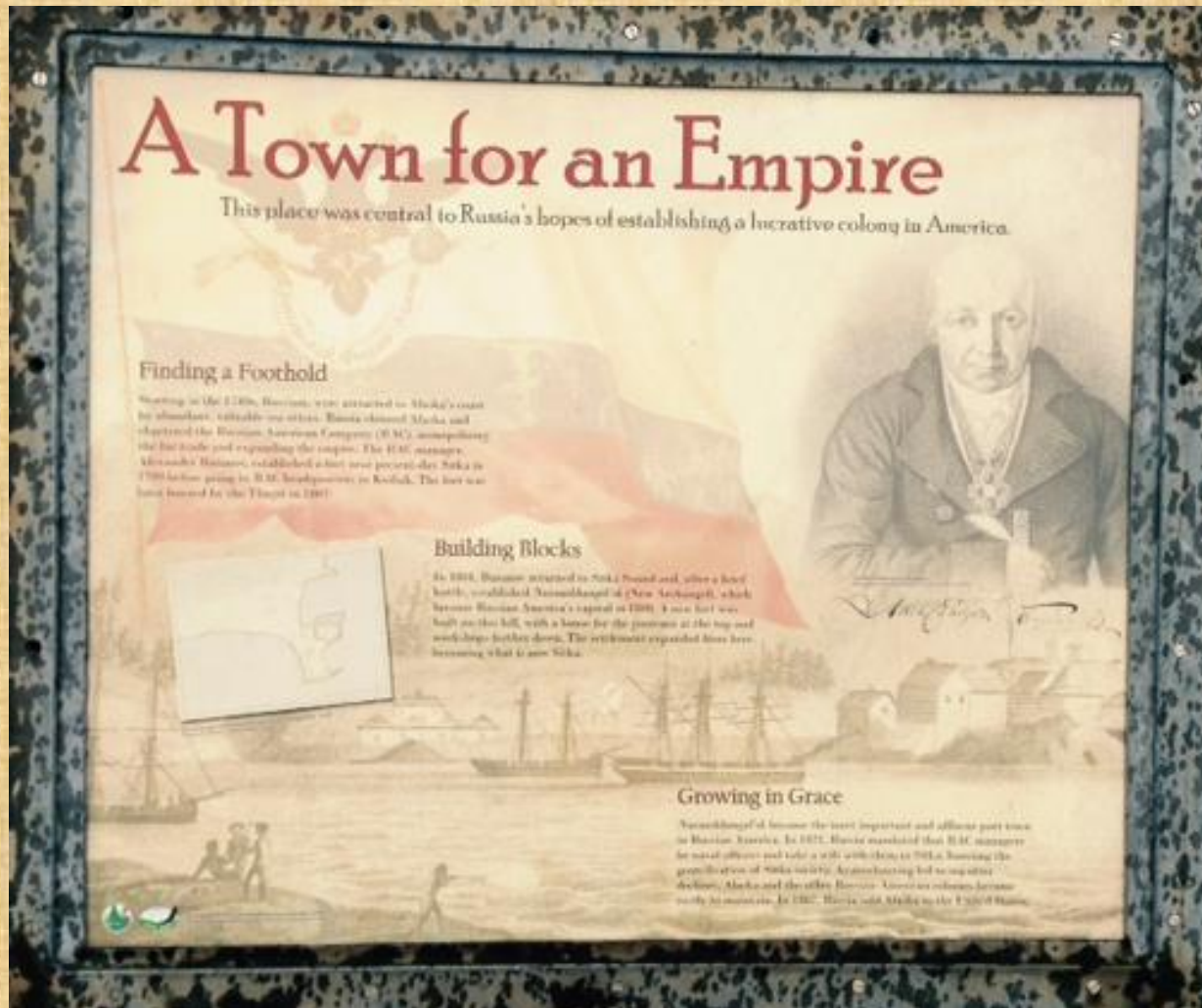
Baranof Castle SHS



Baranof Castle SHS



Baranof Castle SHS




Baranof Castle SHS

Alaska Purchase

On October 18, 1867, the Russian eagle ceded its perch on this hill to the American eagle.


What a Deal!

By the 1850s, the Russian American Company (RAC), which managed Russia's colonies in Alaska, was losing money, so Russia decided to sell its American colonies. On March 30, 1867, U.S. Secretary of State William D. Fishard agreed to Russian Ambassador Eduard de Stoeckl's proposal to purchase Alaska. President Andrew Johnson signed the treaty on May 20, agreeing to pay \$7.2 million for Alaska.




Pomp and Ceremony

On October 18, 1867, at 11:00 a.m., representatives for the U.S., Russia, and the RAC arrived in Sitka on the USS Oregon. At 1:00 p.m., 100 Russian troops in blue glass caps and dark uniforms formed a job and assembled in the courtyard in front of the governor's house. Two hundred American troops marched up the hill to the base of their new home.



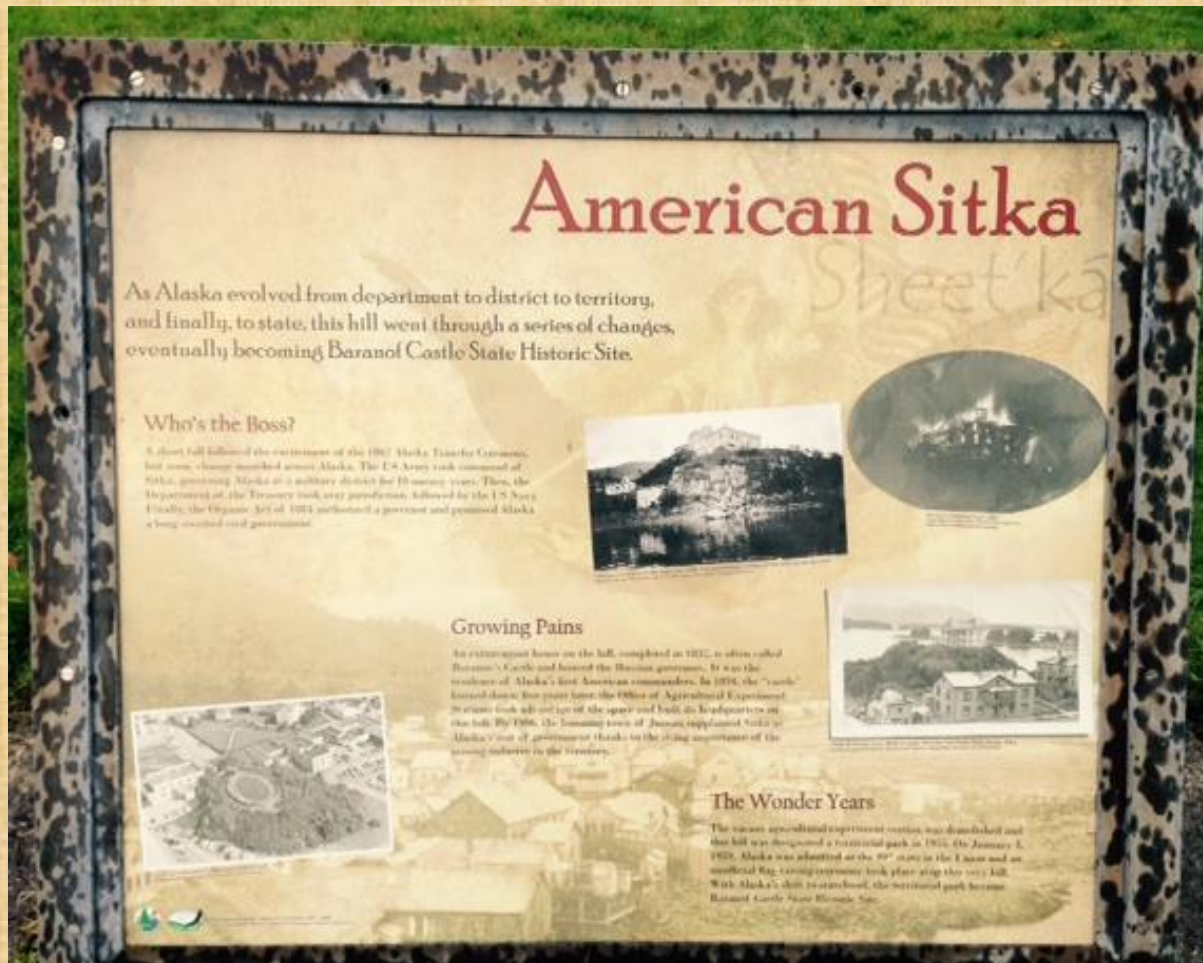
A Dramatic Beginning

At 5:30 p.m., Prince Maksim and General Bannikov, the Russian governor and U.S. representative respectively, took their positions near the flag. Excitement, F. Alford stated, "then they started to pull the Russian double-headed eagle down, but... it... entangled in vines around the spot so that it could not be pulled down..." "Then, finally, it fell into the Russian hands and Prince Maksim's wife stated, General Bannikov's son hoisted the American flag. A new era began."

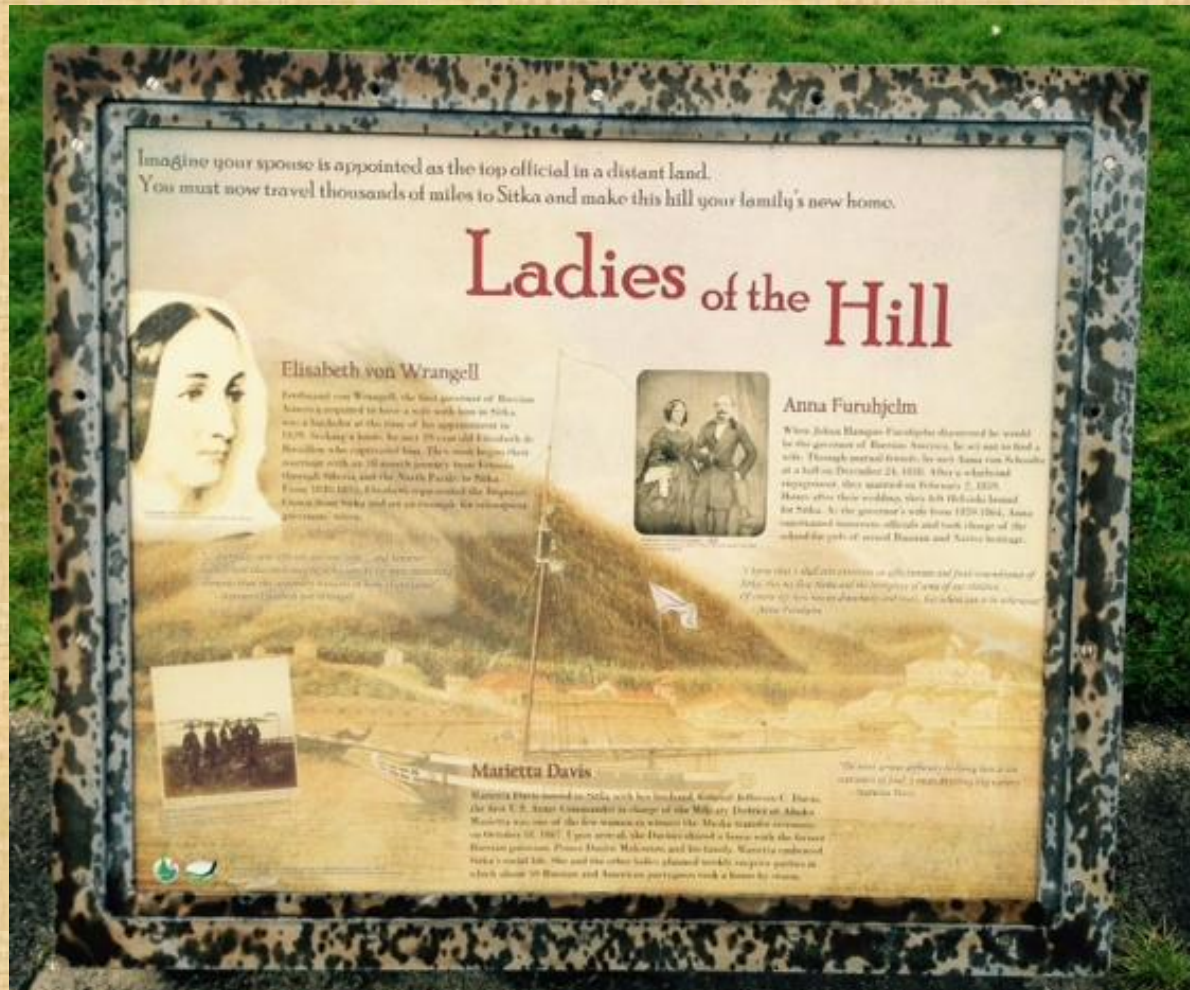


NORTH WESTERN AMERICA
A HISTORY OF THE TERRITORY
FROM RUSSIA TO THE UNITED STATES

Baranof Castle SHS



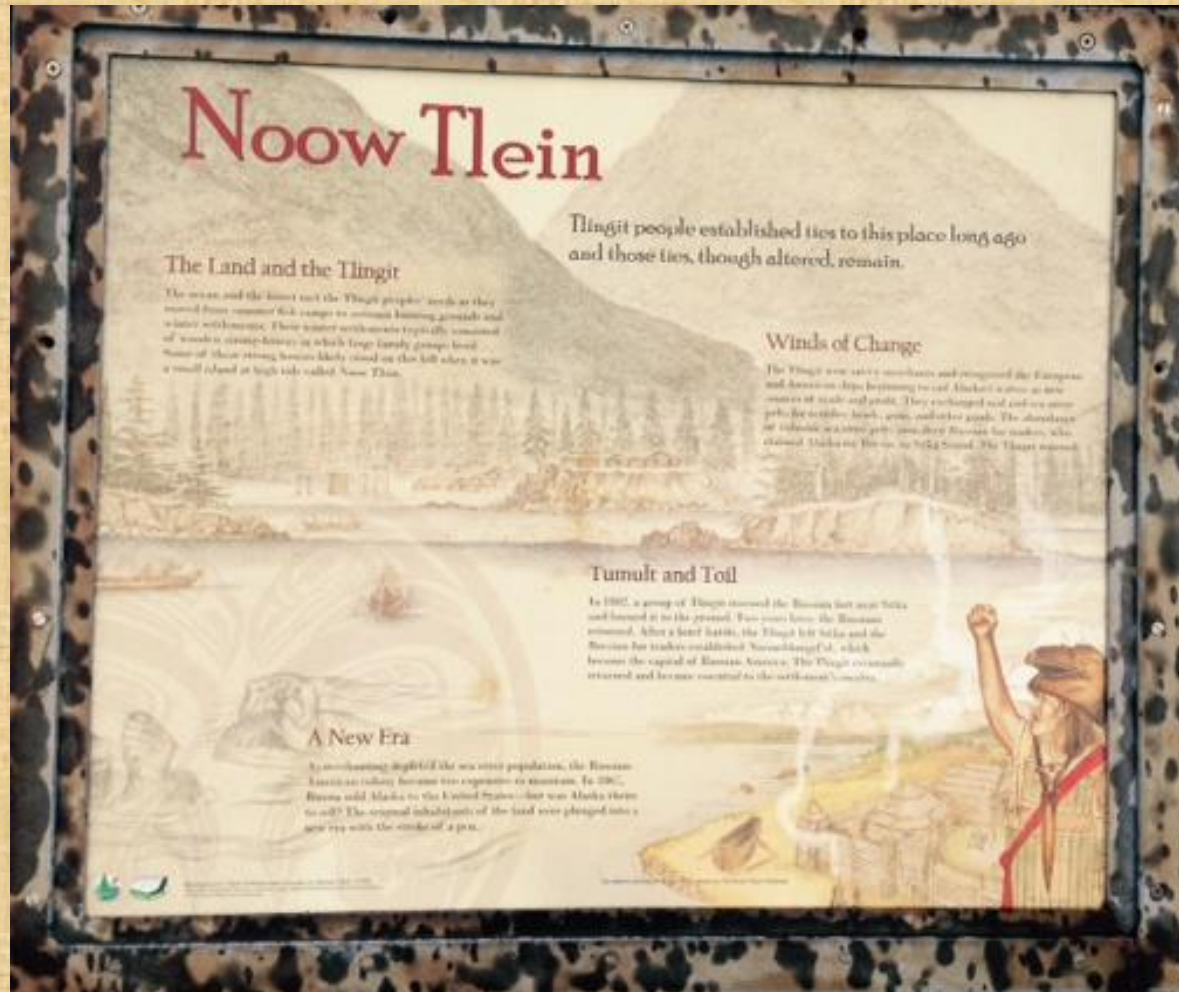
Baranof Castle SHS



Baranof Castle SHS



Baranof Castle SHS



Totem Bight SHP

Aging in the Elements

A totem pole, freshly carved, painted, and newly erected has only just begun to take on its shape.



Protecting the Poles

Totem poles are traditionally made from red cedar, which Native carvers value for its straight grain and natural resistance to decay and insects. Wood preservation techniques improve the resilience of red cedar and can keep totem poles standing strong for generations. Kerosene-based water repellents prevent build up of moisture inside poles. Metal caps guard vulnerable wood end grains from the weather and bird droppings. Borate-based fungicides and insecticides prevent vegetative and lichen growth.



Through Wind & Rain

After years of exposure to the Southeast Alaskan climate, the poles at Totem Bight have been continuously carved by nature, taking their character from the elements. Many environmental factors can affect a totem pole: water speeds decay and causes cracks when the wood dries out; birds can damage a pole by leaving droppings; and lichen growth on the surface of the pole and fungi break down the cellulose in the wood, causing it to lose its strength. Eventually, every totem pole will age to the point where it can be blown over by a strong wind.

The Shape of Things to Come

Although Totem Bight is dedicated to preserving and displaying its totem poles for as long as possible, the park originally began as a means to preserve the art of totem carving itself. When a totem pole ages to the point when it can no longer stand safely, a new pole will be carved to take the place of the old. Whereas many forms of art would view a reproduction as lesser than the original, imitations allows carvers to emulate the style of their predecessors and bring their work back into the world by new hands.



Part of Totem Bight is a National Historic Landmark and is part of the National Park System. It is managed by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

Totem Bight SHP

Preserving the Past



Walter S. Hootman, a master carver, is shown carving a totem pole.

Today, the value of Totem Bight's magnificent carvings is self-evident, but not too long ago, things were very different.

Culture in Crisis

For untold generations, totem poles were the largest and most visible symbols of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian cultures. The transformed trunks of massive red cedars loomed high above coastal villages, representing heroic stories, clan ownership, and great leaders.

But at the turn of the 20th century, religious missionaries and a U.S. Government policy of assimilation discouraged Alaska Natives from practicing the culture of their ancestors. As the oldest of the totem poles fell, new poles were not carved to replace them. If the tradition was not soon rekindled, the art of totem carving would be lost forever.

Seeds of Renewal

During the 1930s, there was a shift in the cultural winds. Faced with the extinction of totem pole carving, Native elders and influential organizations began the call for totem pole salvage and restoration efforts. In 1938, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), led by the U.S. Forest Service and a core group of Native master carvers, began restoring and reproducing totem poles representing Tlingit and Haida cultures from throughout the region. Although the onset of World War II cut the project short, dozens of totem poles, as well as the clan house at Totem Bight, were successfully completed.

Continuing Contributions

Totem Bight State Historical Park resulted from an effort to preserve and support the art of totem carving and to inform visitors about the region's first people. In helping to perpetuate Native carving, Totem Bight has earned a place in the history of Alaska, as well as the culture of totem carving. Poles that were carved during the CCC era are now being restored and copied with the help of new generations of carvers—each echoing the work of their ancestors, just as they had done in the past.



Totem Bight State Historical Park
1000 West 1st Avenue, Suite 100
Juneau, Alaska 99801
(907) 586-1000
www.alaska.gov/tbshp

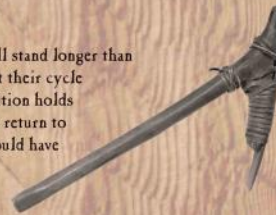
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www.alaska.gov/tbshp

Totem Bight SHP

Continuing the Cycle

Although it may seem as if these totem poles have been simply left here, there's more to it than meets the eye.

Totem poles are carved with an understanding that few will stand longer than 75 years in the rainforest climate of Southeast Alaska, but their cycle continues. When a pole becomes weathered and falls, tradition holds that it should not be lifted, but rather left where it lies to return to the earth. These totem poles, although not where they would have fallen, are now allowing the past to nourish the future.



When totem poles fall and new ones are carved to stand in their place, the art of carving continues across generations.

Living Stories

Man Wearing Bear Hat

This totem pole is a Tlingit mortuary pole, carved by Charles Brown in the late 1930s based on a design found on Cat Island. The pole depicts a man of the Bear Clan sitting serenely wearing a large wooden hat traditionally worn at potlatches. The bear adorning the hat has its teeth exposed as a reminder that the Bear Clan are a proud people.



Man Captured by Land Otters

This original heraldic pole was carved by Haida master carver John Wallace and raised in 1947. At the top of the pole is a man wearing a dog-skin headdress with an otter's tail in one hand and the club used to kill it in the other. According to Tlingit legend, Kushtakas, or Land Otter People, are shape-shifters who menace and drown humans. The other human figures represented on this pole are the victims of the Kushtakas. After being captured, they were transformed into otter beings who enticed other humans to join them.



Fort Abercrombie SHP



Fort Abercrombie SHP



Fort Abercrombie SHP



Fort Abercrombie SHP



Fort Abercrombie SHP



Fort Abercrombie SHP



Fort Abercrombie SHP



Fort Abercrombie SHP

FORT ABERCROMBIE

After Japan captured two of the Aleutian Islands in June 1942, war was a frightening reality for Kodiak residents.

Cast in Concrete

Fort Abercrombie, an outpost of Fort Greely, was one of many military installations quickly built to defend Alaska's coastline. After the U.S. declared war, 150-200 soldiers continuously manned the fort. In 1943, Fort Abercrombie boasted three large concrete bunkers, a few smaller concrete buildings, a 40-foot observation tower, two 8-inch naval guns, and a secret Signal Corps Radar 296 transmitting station.

Kodiak's Watchdog

Soldiers stationed here performed an important job—to watch for approaching ships, determine whether they were enemy vessels, and if they were, sink them before they got too close to Kodiak. Soldiers used triangulation techniques to plot a target's position.

A Commanding Presence

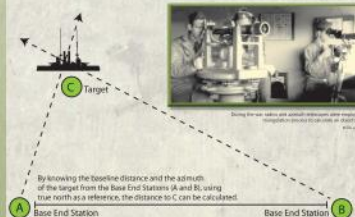
After Dutch Harbor was bombed, Kodiak assumed a major role in supplying the Aleutian Campaign. During the turbulent months between October 1942 and March 1943, Fort Abercrombie stood ready to protect the Kodiak Naval Operating Base and deter enemy attacks. Although Kodiak never saw enemy fire, the contributions of the men and women stationed here were invaluable to the defense of the U.S. coastline.



While protecting the fort, the firing and spotting lighting at Fort Abercrombie.



During the war, soldiers used optical instruments and trigonometry to determine the position of ships at sea.



Fort Abercrombie's 8-inch naval gun firing at a ship at sea.



The 8-inch naval gun firing at a ship at sea.



"A ship came in and we... lit it up and our guns were trained on it. When I looked at the ship through the scope, I recognized it as a small tanker... from Standard Oil. I told the commanding officer that I recognized the Alaska Standard. And he says, 'Hold fire.'"

—Corporal Walter Dalgren, retired, Battery G 250th Coast Artillery A US.

Obituary from the Kodiak Daily Mirror, 1943.

Photo courtesy of the Kodiak Daily Mirror.

Fort Abercrombie SHP

KODIAK AFTER THE WAR

Once the U.S. recaptured Attu and Kiska islands, the U.S. military shifted their focus away from Alaska, leaving behind concrete clues of Kodiak's World War II heritage.



U.S. Air Force personnel in uniform holding up small white cards or signs, possibly during a ceremony or presentation.



U.S. Air Force personnel in uniform standing in formation, possibly during a ceremony or presentation.

Gone with the War

In what may have seemed a mass exodus, the U.S. Army and Navy moved their troops to other war fronts in the fall of 1943. A small contingency remained to keep the newly built defense installations from falling into complete disrepair.



A large, rusted metal barrel or pipe, likely a remnant of a defense installation.

Peacetime Adaptations

As WWII ended, many of the military installations were no longer essential for national defense. Fort Abercrombie was placed in caretaker status in 1944 along with the rest of Fort Greely. All Fort Greely installations were abandoned in 1947 and Fort Abercrombie's 8-inch guns were blown up as a safety precaution in 1948.

Lasting Impacts

The Kodiak Naval Operating Base (NOB) was officially turned over to the U.S. Coast Guard in 1972 and is now the largest Coast Guard base in the nation. Fort Abercrombie became a state historical park in 1969 and was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1970, along with Fort Greely and the Kodiak NOB, due to its significant role in the United States' first line of defense.



A scenic view of a body of water, likely a bay or harbor, with mountains in the background.



A small, dark, rectangular structure, possibly a remnant of a defense installation.



A small, dark, rectangular structure, possibly a remnant of a defense installation.



Fort Abercrombie SHP

UNCLE SAM'S FOOTPRINT

The U.S. military fortified Kodiak Island as soon as Alaska was threatened, creating lasting impressions.

Builders and Soldiers and Sailors!

A swell of soldiers, sailors, and construction workers swept over Kodiak utterly changing its physical character and culture. First came civilian contractors with Siems-Drake Puget Sound, then Navy Seabees, then soldiers and additional sailors poured onto Kodiak. The area's population rapidly grew from only a few hundred to thousands.



Alaska's first U.S. Navy fleet base was established on Kodiak in 1907. The ship shown is the USS Oregon (BB-3), a battleship transferred to Kodiak in 1914. It served as a training ship for the Alaska Fleet until 1931.



U.S. Navy Seabees (United States Naval Engineering Construction Battalion) were the first to build the island's infrastructure. The Seabee Corps was established in 1942 to provide engineering and construction support for the military.

Wartime Construction

Military construction on the island began as a slow trickle in 1939 and quickly became a flood of activity. By 1941, a large naval operating base and an army fort with many satellite posts were rapidly taking shape. Large swaths of old growth forest were cleared for space and timber while the beaches were exploited as sources of gravel and sand. The military left nothing untouched.



Construction of the island's first large-scale military installation, the Alaska Naval Operating Base, began in 1941.



Wartime construction on Kodiak Island. The building shown is the Alaska Naval Operating Base, which served as the main military installation on the island during World War II.

Withdrawing Forces

Once the tide of war receded and the U.S. armed forces were reassigned to other fronts, a slower pace of life resumed. However, many soldiers and sailors returned after the war, and others never left the island. Many of Kodiak's defense installations were repurposed and others, though gutted, still stand. World War II left a lasting impression on Kodiak.



Remnants of the island's wartime military installation are still visible in the forest. The building shown is the Alaska Naval Operating Base, which served as the main military installation on the island during World War II.



Fort Abercrombie SHP

WE'RE AT WAR!

"I believe in the future, he who holds
Alaska will hold the world, and I think it
is the most strategic place in the world."

—General W. F. Mitchell, 1935

Preparing for the Storm

In 1939, Alaska began preparing for war as a sense of urgency grew like a dark storm brewing on the horizon. That year, construction commenced on three Alaska naval air bases at Sitka, Kodiak, and Dutch Harbor; army garrisons soon followed. Troops began to arrive in March 1941, transforming small coastal towns into white-capped seas of tents teeming with soldiers and sailors.

Extrat U.S. Declares War!

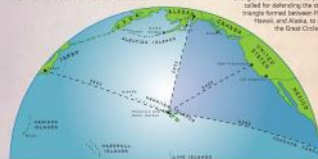
Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, plunging the U.S. into World War II. An attack on Alaska seemed imminent and the territory experienced a sudden, frenzied influx of military personnel and frantic construction. Panic spread as the military imposed scheduled blackouts and controlled all means of communication with the outside world.

Kodiak Steps Up

On June 3 and 4, 1942, Japan bombed Dutch Harbor and invaded two Aleutian islands, Attu and Kiska, later that same week. Six days after the first attack on Dutch Harbor, the military commissioned the Kodiak Naval Operating Base. The base served as a place where pilots stopped to resupply, refuel, and service their planes during the Aleutian Campaign.

THE PACIFIC OUTPOSTS

DISTANCES SHOWN IN STATUTE MILES



In 1924, the U.S. Army adopted "War Plan Orange," a national defense plan that called for defending the strategic triangle formed between Hawaii, Japan, and Alaska, to protect the Great Circle Route.



Fort Abercrombie SHP



Independence Mine SHP



Wickersham SHS

Wickersham State Historic Site

"High up on the hill, in a large, old-fashioned wooden home, lives one of Alaska's distinguished citizens, and a man whose hand in shaping the destiny of this great country was more powerful than most of its residents and beneficiaries realize."

Alaska Press, 1937



James Wickersham brought this house in 1938 for \$5,000. The house was with the wife, Margaret, until his death in 1958.



James Wickersham and daughter, Mrs. Wickersham, Alaska Press, 1937

"Our Jim"

He was a U.S. district court judge and Alaska's congressional delegate for seven terms. He battled for Alaskan home rule, and was the first to introduce a statehood bill to Congress. He made the first recorded summit attempt of Mt. McKinley with profits made from the first newspaper printed in Fairbanks, and the University of Alaska and the Alaska Railroad both owe their beginnings to his persuasive oratory.

The contributions made by Judge James Wickersham to the history and development of our state are numerous, but his importance is far greater than a list of accomplishments can convey. James Wickersham was one of history's rare movers, a unique man for a unique time. Alaska may have been a very different place without the efforts of "Our Jim." And so, just as the history of Alaska tells the story of Wickersham, the history of Wickersham tells the story of Alaska.

*Please allow us to welcome you, on his behalf, to the
Wickersham State Historic Site.*



Wickersham SHS

Juneau on the Rise

Gastineau Gold!

In 1880 Kowee, head chief of the Auk Tlingit tribe, led Richard Harris and Joe Juneau to Silver Bow Basin. There, in the mountains to the northeast, they made the first major gold discovery in Alaska and the first of many along the Gastineau Channel.

"Til the Money Runs Out"

News of Harris and Juneau's discovery circulated and within months prospectors from all around descended upon the new town site. Subsequent discoveries on Douglas Island and the importation of industrial mining equipment kept the town thriving after streambeds were panned out.

A Captivating Capital

Mining prosperity earned Juneau the honor of Alaska's capital in 1900. When the last major gold mining operation closed in 1944 due to a shortage of workers, government work—which expanded during WWII and again after statehood in 1959—became the lynchpin of the local economy. Today, Juneau's unique geography and rich history make it a popular stop for visitors and one of the most distinctive state capitals in the United States.

*Juneau has come a long way
from its beginnings as a
beachside mining camp.*



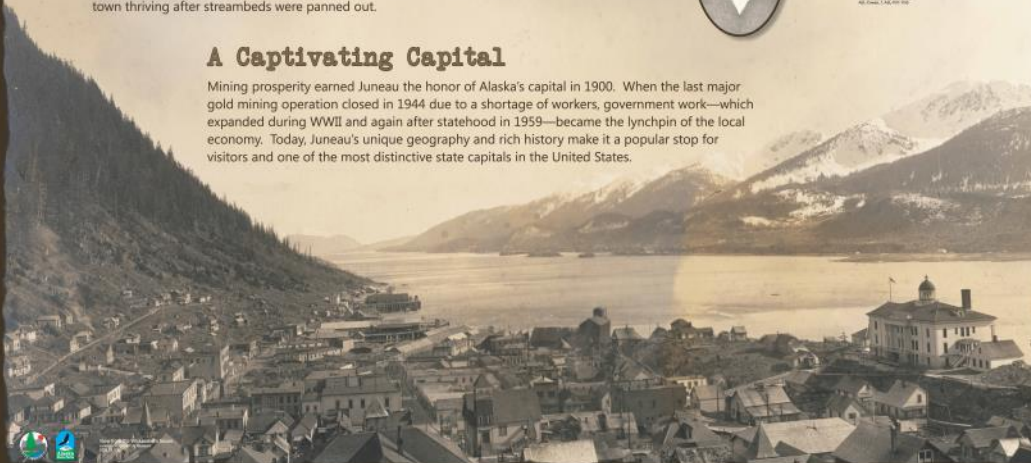
Richard Harris, Tlingit miner and
discoverer of gold in Silver Bow Basin,
1880.



Joe Juneau, Tlingit miner and
discoverer of gold in Silver Bow Basin,
1880.



Charles William Johnson, Chief, Alaska
Department of the Interior, 1900-1901.



Wickersham SHS

Wickersham State Historic Site

"High up on the hill, in a large, old-fashioned wooden home, lives one of Alaska's distinguished citizens, and a man whose hand in shaping the destiny of this great country was more powerful than most of its residents and beneficiaries realize."

Source: Press, 1937



James Wickersham bought the house in 1928 for \$10,000. He lived there until his death in 1948, and the house is now a museum.



"Our Jim"

He was a U.S. district court judge and Alaska's congressional delegate for seven terms. He battled for Alaskan home rule, and was the first to introduce a statehood bill to Congress. He made the first recorded summit attempt of Mt. McKinley with profits made from the first newspaper printed in Fairbanks, and the University of Alaska and the Alaska Railroad both owe their beginnings to his persuasive oratory.

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Wickersham SHS



James Wickersham in his early 20s

Wickersham's Formative Years

"Jim [James] was 'deeper' than most young men his age..."

Quoted by Dr. R. F. Rodgers, member of the school board when James was a teacher, as paraphrased in Pioneer Profiles by University of Illinois Press

James Wickersham, a boy destined to help shape Alaska, came from a farm and sawmill owning family in Illinois. Born in 1857, the eldest in a house full of youngsters, James was compelled to assume responsibility early on. Hard work was part of his upbringing. When old enough to handle an axe he was given the job of cutting trees from the forest and bringing them to the mill with the help of an ox team.

During James's youth, the president was Abraham Lincoln. Also a farm boy, Lincoln got his start as a lawyer in Illinois. From this example, James saw that even a man from simple beginnings could impact the world.

OVER



Deborah Bell, 1858-1908



James Wickersham, 1880

Deborah, beloved wife of James for 48 years, succumbed to tuberculosis in 1908.

Wickersham's Formative Years

Despite having only an eighth-grade education, James's first paying job was as a teacher. At age 20 he moved from his rural home to Springfield, the capital of Illinois, for the chance to study law. He swept floors, washed windows, hauled coal, and slept on a self-made bed in the back room of the former governor's office—all in exchange for access to the law library and \$5.00 a month. In just three years, James passed the bar, got a job with the government, and married Deborah Bell in 1880.

Ambition and perseverance pastured James for a career in law and politics.

OVER

Wickersham SHS

Wickersham's Juneau Home Life

Two of Alaska's pioneers, Grace and Judge James Wickersham, brought this house to life during their residency here. It filled with guests and visitors frequently as the couple entertained many notable Alaskans and sourdoughs alike. Governors Strong and Troy, and author Rex Beach, were just a few of those hosted by James, and Grace entertained fellow school teachers and the lively ladies from her bridge group. Family members were also welcome, including their niece Ruth Coffin who lived here periodically.



Grace and James in front of the fireplace.
Photo from Alaska State Archives Collection

Early in Grace and James's marriage the couple spent hours reading to one another. They shared a common interest in books: autobiographies, science, poetry, and historical accounts. When not reading by the fire or entertaining, the couple cataloged and organized James's library or visited the theater in downtown Juneau. In later years when James's eyesight failed, Grace read aloud to her husband, enabling him to continue his work.



Wickersham family photo.
Photo from Alaska State Archives Collection
© 2000 Alaska State Archives Collection

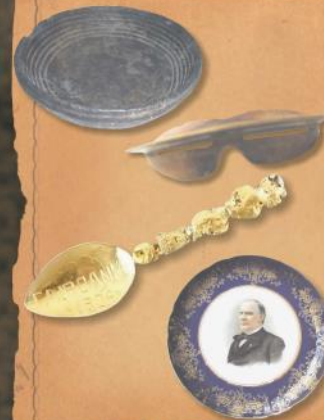
OVER

Eskimo Clay Bowl—James's February 1, 1902, diary entry: "Worked today burning out two earthen pots from an old kitchen—where they are buried in sand." James collected this bowl on a month-long ethnographic exploration via dog sled near Cape Prince of Wales.

Goggles—This eyewear was made by northern Alaska Eskimos. They would have been useful to James on his 1901, 1,040-mile dog sled trip to hold court in Rampart and Circle during which he became snowblind. He covered his eyes with a bandage and held onto the sled's handlebars for guidance instead.

Fairbanks Gold Nugget Spoon—On July 4, 1904, James dedicated the Fairbanks courthouse and was presented this spoon made by the prospectors. On the handle are Felix Pedro's original nuggets. Felix made the first gold strike in the Tanana region.

President McKinley Plate—President McKinley appointed James to the position of district judge in 1900. James received this plate in honor of his appointment.



OVER

Wickersham SHS

Grace Wickersham

"A woman of intelligence, refinement and fine character" James Wickersham

Grace was the better half of the Wickershams in the twilight of James's political career and a constant friend and companion in his final years. Known for her sociability, Grace had a gift for helping turn old political rivals into social allies. Thanks to Grace, the Wickershams were no strangers to the Juneau social scene, attending affairs at the Governor's mansion and throwing dinner parties. Without her, the house of Wickersham would have been much less of a home.



Grace Wickersham
Juneau, Alaska, 1911

OVER 

Cuisine de Wickersham

Being a creature of habit the judge preferred eating at home to restaurants. His wife Grace would treat him every morning to an early breakfast before a punctual walk down the hill to his office in the Valentine Building. A 1930s era kitchen lacked the conveniences of a modern kitchen and a greater investment of time was required to prepare a meal. But Grace, known as a good cook, was always up to the task, especially when catering the Wickershams' dinner parties.

"We used to have to go looking for sugar when we had to have cream-pudding, and that's what our hand means to me."
— Grace Wickersham



OVER 

Wickersham SHS

The Home of the Wickershams

Overlooking the Gastineau Channel, the Wickersham House is a fine example of American architecture imbued with the utilitarian modesty of Alaskan style. Features such as the cross-gable roof, bay window, clapboard siding, and fish scale shingles suggest a Queen Anne style of architecture popular during the 1890s. However, the house lacks the lavish ornamentation that defines the style in the lower 48. Like Wickersham himself, the house conveys a plainspoken prestige without the superfluity of elegance.



The Wickersham House was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

Wickersham SHS

The sun porch you are now standing in was used as the main entrance when the Wickershams lived here.



James and woman, most likely niece Ruth Coffin, at the Juneau home
Alaska State Library, ASL-1957-0186
Wickersham State Historic Site Photograph Collection

Historic Chicken Ridge

Chicken Ridge, so called because of the local ptarmigan population, was first settled in 1893. This neighborhood rose with the fortunes of Juneau and became home to many prominent and affluent residents. The Wickersham house was erected in 1898 for Frank Hammond, owner of the Sheep Creek Mining Company, and was owned by several families before the Wickershams purchased the property in 1928. This was the final Alaskan home for the Judge and he lived here until his death in 1939.



Juneau, Alaska, circa 1935
Alaska State Library, ASL-1957-0186
Wicker and Pined Photograph Collection

OVER

Big Delta SHP



Big Delta SHP

Jack of all Trades

Golden Dreams

John Hajdukovich left Montenegro, Yugoslavia to seek his fortune in Alaska. He arrived at Big Delta in the fall of 1906 and headed for the gold-rich hills upstream. Most prospectors wintered at Fairbanks working for their next grubstake (loan of supplies), but John wintered at Big Delta and became influential in the development of the area.

John Hajdukovich had a significant impact on the people and land of the Upper Tanana River Valley. A true sourdough and frontiersman, John lived and worked in this area for almost sixty years.



John Hajdukovich's fish traps were famous for catching large fish like this one.



John Hajdukovich's log cabin at Big Delta, Alaska.

Diversity was His Stock-in-Trade

With the adventuresome spirit of an entrepreneur, Hajdukovich partook in many enterprises during his life. He was not only a miner, but also a roadhouse operator, trader, contractor, U.S. Commissioner, big game hunting guide, Alaska Game Commissioner, and sawmill owner.

The Road Back to Prospecting

John staked his last claim in 1951 on Morning Star Creek, a tributary of the same drainage he prospected 40 years earlier. The Coal Mine Road that he built to his claim is still in use today. In his later years, John spent more and more time at Rika's Roadhouse, where his experience and knowledge of the area made his advice to newcomers indispensable.



Rika's Roadhouse, built by John Hajdukovich, was a popular gathering place for prospectors and travelers.

- 1906—Hajdukovich arrives at Big Delta and joins 17 prospectors at a gold discovery site on the Goodpastor River.
- 1909—John runs the McCarty Trading Post and Roadhouse, which has long since returned to nature (see background image), and operates the ferry at Big Delta.
- 1911—Mining at Jarvis Creek using a hydraulic plant, John takes out \$600 in gold "good enough for a grubstake."
- 1913—He acquires the McCarty Trading Post and Roadhouse.
- 1914—The present day roadhouse is constructed. Travelers take care of themselves in a self-serve style.
- 1917—John hires Rika Warden to operate the roadhouse.
- 1919—late 30s—He establishes several trading posts and caches between Big Delta and the northernmost post at Nabesna. It takes about one week to make each 135-mile freight haul from Big Delta to John's largest post at Tanana Crossing (present day Tanasross).
- 1923—Rika purchases the roadhouse for \$10 "and other considerations." Some say John's "considerations" may have been back wages for her years of dedicated work; others say that it was an agreement that John would always have a place to hang his hat.
- 1923—The Alaska Road Commission contracts with John to improve the trail from Big Delta to Tanasross paying him \$1000.
- 1923—Hajdukovich is appointed U.S. Commissioner and later resigns in protest of traders supplying alcohol to Native Alaskans.
- 1927—mid 30s—Catering to wealthy clients, such as Wendell Endicott (of Sears, Roebuck and Co.), John makes a living as a big game guide.
- 1928—John petitions the government to ship 23 bison to Big Delta. The herd has grown to approximately 450 and is still hunted annually by permit.
- 1928—John serves as an Alaska Game Commissioner.
- 1928—Known for helping Native Alaskans in many ways, John also assists Chief Peter Joe in establishing the Tetlin Reservation.
- 1940—John mines at Central Creek using the open-cut hydraulic method—with no luck. Ironically, the largest gold mining operation in the area is currently located at nearby Pogo Creek.
- 1941—During the war John partners with Louis Grimmonde to supply the Army with lumber for construction of the Big Delta Army Airfield and Alcan Highway.
- 1946—At the age of 86, on July 18, John Hajdukovich dies of cancer at St. Joseph's Hospital in Fairbanks.
- 1965—



Reproduced by the Alaska Department of Historic Preservation

Big Delta SHP



Big Delta SHP



Big Delta SHP



Bird Creek Campground

A BLOW TO THE ARM

The 1964 Earthquake instantly changed the landscape of the Turnagain Arm in ways that can still be seen today.

The Big One

On Good Friday, March 27, 1964, a fault between the two largest tectonic plates on the planet ruptured 14 miles under Prince William Sound. This megathrust earthquake wreaked havoc throughout the region, causing 131 casualties, some as far away as California. The quake lasted three minutes and measured a magnitude 9.2—one of the strongest ever recorded. As the entire planet vibrated from the quake, its effects were seen worldwide, sinking fishing boats in Louisiana and sloshing water wells in Africa.

A Shaky Situation

Ancient glaciers carved the mountains along Turnagain Arm, and pulverized hard rock into dust leaving massive deposits of silt and debris here. This fine-grained material, combined with water and shaken, undergoes a process known as soil liquefaction, in which the ground loses its structural strength and flows freely. During the 1964 Earthquake, the ground at the head of Turnagain Arm dropped an average of 10 feet, submerging communities below the high-tide line and fracturing the highway.

Aftershocks

The towns of Girdwood and Portage, southeast of here near the head of Turnagain Arm, were wiped away by tides after the quake. Miles of railroad and highway also dropped along the arm, forcing the Alaska Railroad to schedule around the tides until the route was raised and repaired. Girdwood was relocated further inland, but Portage was abandoned, leaving only scattered ruins and a ghostly forest of dead trees behind.



Portage after the quake
Source: Alaska Department of Transportation and General Land Office, Department of Natural Resources



Source: Alaska Department of Transportation and General Land Office, Department of Natural Resources



Source: Alaska Department of Transportation and General Land Office, Department of Natural Resources

Bird Creek Campground

ENGINE OF CHANGE

The railroad, which passes nearby, changed Turnagain Arm and Alaska in ways you can see and feel.

High Hopes

If you're lucky enough to see an Alaska Railroad train coming down the track, you can feel its power as it shakes the ground. This power helped connect this remote land with the rest of the world and shape the destiny of Alaska. When the idea for this railroad was first proposed in 1914, the priority was to "unlock" the resources of this vast land. The U.S. Government hoped that exports of coal and agricultural products fueled by Alaska's long summer daylight would create an economic engine and spark development.

Troubled Tracks

Unfortunately, exports didn't take off as hoped, and the new railway suffered a rough relationship with Congress, making funding unstable and inadequate. Successive Alaska Railroad managers struggled against the extreme climate, high costs, and a low demand to keep the railroad running. Colonel Otto F. Ohlson, known for his "one-man show" leadership, took over in 1928. He improved the operations of the railroad and made 1938 its first profitable year, but economic difficulties remained.



Men loading and unloading at a long-term storage facility for Alaska Railroad equipment. Photo by Robert L. Brown, Alaska Railroad.

Pulling Forward

World War II brought an influx of people and equipment to Alaska's front door. Now the railway struggled to meet demand! The war years changed Alaska and the railroad by bringing increased connectivity with the U.S. mainland and a flurry of development. With statehood in 1959, and the discovery of oil in Prudhoe Bay in 1968, the fortunes of Alaska rose along with the railroad, which provided the power needed to fuel the oil boom and the state's growing tourism industry.



Alaska Railroad engine pulling a large load on a track. Photo by Robert L. Brown, Alaska Railroad.



Design and photo: Andrew Peterson. Layout: Jennifer M. Smith. Photo: 2015 Alaska Railroad. Photo: 2015 Alaska Railroad.

Bird Creek Campground

MOVING ALONG THE ARM

Traveling the Turnagain Arm was once difficult and dangerous. What has changed to bring you here safely today?

Volatile Waters

The easiest way to travel along Turnagain Arm 150 years ago was much the same as it was 1,000 years ago — by boat. Generations of Dena'ina moved between hunting and fishing sites using kayaks and canoes, but the easiest way was not always the safest. The arm's peculiar bore tide poses risks even to experienced boaters and has claimed the lives of dozens of prospectors as they explored this area.

Train's a Comin'

In 1914, the U.S. Congress approved the establishment of a railroad roughly following the Iditarod route from Seward to Fairbanks. Although construction in Alaska always presents a challenge, completion of this stretch along the Turnagain Arm was especially difficult. Using equipment from the recently completed Panama Canal, men dug and blasted a path between the cliffs and the water. Over three long years and at a cost of \$200,000 per mile, this section was finally completed in 1918.

Highway to Scenic Byway

The Seward Highway was completed alongside the railroad in 1951, making it easier than ever to travel along the arm. Increased access brought new development, communities, and recreational opportunities. With the construction of the Indian to Girdwood multi-use trail parallel to the highway, travel along the arm once again was human powered. A route once navigated at great risk, can now be traveled with ease, simply for the joy of taking in the Alaskan landscape.



STATION 2234
NEAR MILE 19 3/4
A.E.C.R.V.

A.E.C.
LOG 17
BE HUNT



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Other State, Federal, and Local Agencies

Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Gateway to the Interior

"I fully expect before many years to see a pack trail through this pass, followed by a wagon road, and I would not be at all surprised to see a railroad through to the lakes."

—Captain William Moore, quoted by Ben Moore



James Durrant, Ben Moore at Victoria, 1894
U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service

The Alaskan Coast Mountains, with precipitous peaks and massive glaciers, present a nearly impenetrable barrier; however, a few ice-free river valleys pierce this rugged landscape.



Captain William Moore
Henderson Collection, Klondike National Historical Park Library
NPS ID: 108-0773



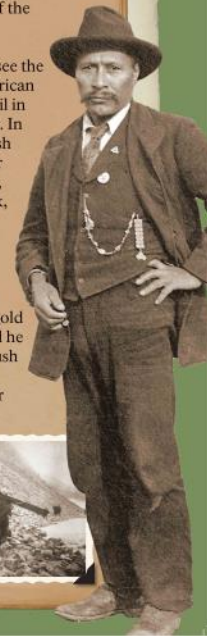
Deiyáa (Dyea)
"To Pack"

Shghagwéi (Skagway)
"Windy Place"

Since prehistoric times, the coastal Tlingit Natives traded extensively with the inland Tagish First Nations using the Chilkoot corridor beginning at nearby Dyea. The White Pass corridor that began in Skagway was also used, but not as extensively. These routes allowed trade and cultural exchange to develop between peoples on both sides of the mountains.

The Tlingit were not the only people to see the advantages of these corridors. Euro-American prospectors began using the Chilkoot Trail in the 1880s to search for gold in the interior. In 1887, Skookum Jim Mason (Keish), a Tagish man, guided Captain William Moore over the White Pass. That autumn, the captain, his son Ben, and a Tlingit helper, Nan Suk, began building a wharf and cabin in the Skagway Valley.

Captain Moore saw the potential of this valley with its deep water harbor and access to the interior. He believed many gold discoveries would occur in the north, and he intended to capitalize on the hoped for rush of people. With this in mind, Ben Moore filed a 160-acre land claim and both father and son began laying the foundation of what was to become Skagway—the Gateway to the Interior.



Eight Tlingit women pack her goods over a rocky shore about ten miles from the Chilkoot summit, 1897
Henderson Collection, Klondike National Historical Park Library
NPS ID: 108-0773

Far right: Skookum Jim Mason (Keish) on his mining claim, Bennett Creek, Yukon Territory
U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service



Reproduction image from Klondike Gold Rush

Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park

Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Ho, for the Klondike!

"There ain't no choice," said an oldtimer of choosing between the Chilkoot and the White Pass. 'One's hell. The other's damnation.'"

—Martha Ferguson McKeown

When news of an extraordinary gold discovery in Canada's Yukon Territory reached the public in 1897, people across the globe raced to the Klondike hoping to become rich beyond their wildest dreams.

Thousands boarded ships, steamed up Alaska's Inside Passage, and disembarked at Skagway or Dyea. Skagway's waterfront was a chaotic scene of pitched tents, shouting stampedeers, neighing horses, and barking dogs. Streets were quickly laid out and buildings and wharves constructed; the town even boasted of having electricity, telephone service, and running water in 1898.

To reach the Klondike, stampedeers had to choose between two routes. One was the 33-mile Chilkoot Trail out of Dyea, containing a torturous thousand-foot climb known as the Golden Stairs. The alternative was the 45-mile White Pass Trail, starting in Skagway. It was infamously named the Dead Horse Trail because pack animals perished in large numbers.

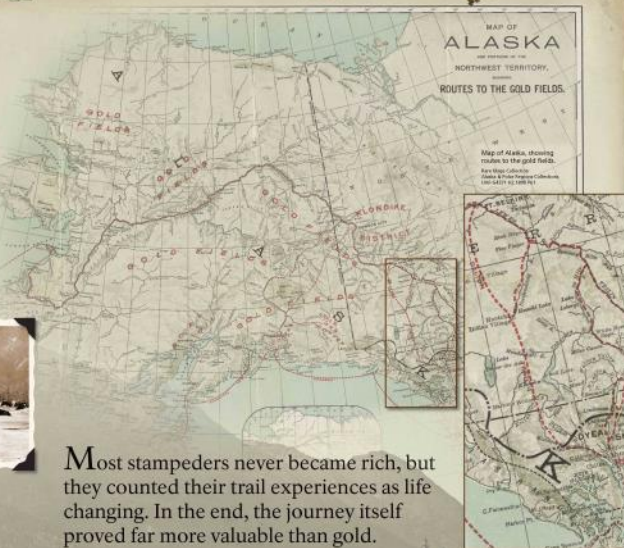
Both trails met near Bennett, British Columbia, where many of the stampedeers built or bought boats and waited for the ice to break up. They then floated 550 miles through the lake systems and the Yukon River to reach Dawson City, Canada.



View of the Golden Stairs and Scales along the Chilkoot Trail, 1898.
Ex. A. Hager Photography Collection, Alaska State Library ASL-PS-10-01



The White Pass Trail, intersect with boat and along wharves, soon became known as the Dead Horse Trail, 1898.
L.H. Blackwelder, John M. Nelson Collection, Alaska State Library ASL-PS-10-01



Most stampedeers never became rich, but they counted their trail experiences as life changing. In the end, the journey itself proved far more valuable than gold.



Stampede waterfront, 1898.
George and John Hager Photography Collection, Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park & Skagway Collection 2010-02-01

Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park

White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad

WP&YR, Skagway, Alaska



Plowing Ahead

Imagine the raw power and deafening roar of a 129-ton rotary snowplow as its circular blades carved through deep snow drifts often as high as 12 feet. The Cooke Rotary Snowplow, designated "No. 1" by railroad crewmen, often performed that task.

The White Pass, at 2,865 feet, receives significant snowfall from late September until early June. Snowplow No. 1, built in 1899, was well suited to serve the early needs of the White Pass & Yukon Route, even during the harshest winter conditions.

The boiler of No. 1 was used solely to turn the 10-foot rotary blades of the plow. The snowplow itself was pushed forward by two locomotives coupled behind the plow. Together, this dynamo was able to slice through nearly impenetrable snow drifts.

A WP&YR rotary snowplow in action.
Photo courtesy of William A. Norcross Collection, circa 1899-1900.
Alaska State Library, SPS 95.10.10.109

W.P.&Y.R. ROTARY SNOWPLOW.

More modest in character were the contributions of Caboose 909. The caboose often served as an office and quarters for the train crew. From the cupola, the elevated section of the caboose, crewmen could better inspect the train.

Since 1898, the WP&YR's skilled crews have used a variety of rolling stock and other machinery to keep the railroad open and operational. Skagway's history as a transportation hub is closely linked to the WP&YR and its many years of service.

Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park

Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



The Road to Gold

From transportation to tourism, Skagway has long provided more than one avenue to wealth.



Michael J. Heney, 1894

White Pass & Yukon Route Collection

White Pass & Yukon Route Steamship Depot, Skagway, Alaska, April 1898

Robert J. Whiting Collection

White Pass & Yukon Route Steamship Depot, Skagway, Alaska, April 1898

White Pass & Yukon Route Steamship Depot, Skagway, Alaska, April 1898

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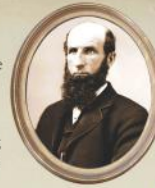
White Pass & Yukon Route Steamship Depot, Skagway, Alaska, April 1898

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White Pass & Yukon Route Steamship Depot, Skagway, Alaska, April 1898

White Pass & Yukon Route Steamship Depot, Skagway, Alaska, April 1898

One early entrepreneur, George Brackett, hoped to become rich by building a toll road up the Skagway Valley in 1897. Although his toll gates were sometimes ignored and damaged, the enterprise was relatively successful until the White Pass & Yukon Route (WP&YR) railroad began laying track in late May 1898. Brackett knew he couldn't compete, so he sold his toll road to the railroad.



George Augustus Brackett, circa 1890

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The WP&YR, built partly through steep mountainous terrain and during bouts of extreme weather, dominated transportation throughout much of Skagway's history. It took two years, 110 miles of track, 35,000 workers, plenty of dynamite, and the determination of contractor Michael J. Heney, before railroad reached Whitehorse, Canada. For decades, the WP&YR transported freight, ore, and passengers, in addition to promoting tourism with excursion trains, just as it does today.

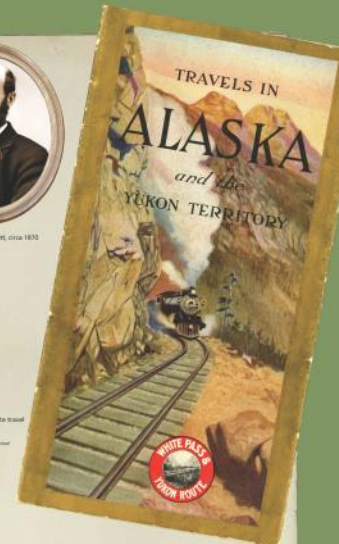


2210



Laborers on the WP&YR, May 1898

Alaska Historical Society Collection



Tourism has always played an important role in Skagway's economy. Every summer, thousands arrive by cruise ships, Alaska Marine Highway ferries, airplanes, and automobiles on the South Klondike Highway, which opened in 1978. Today, Skagway is still a boom town, playing host to visitors from all over the world who still come to experience the excitement of the gold rush.

Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park

Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



U.S. Army Invades Skagway

During April 1942, the sleepy little town of Skagway was startled awake by the sudden arrival of thousands of American troops.

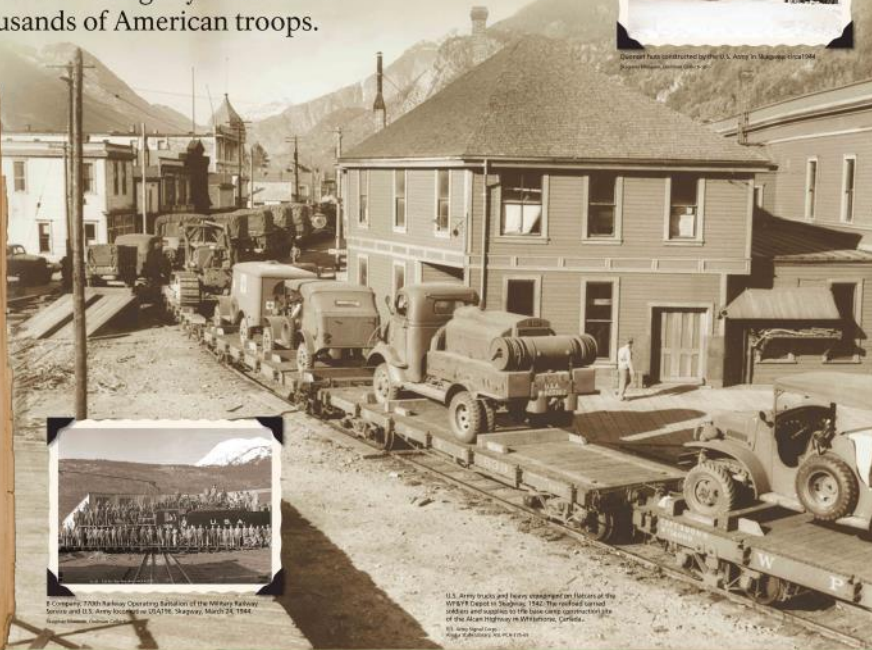
Alaska was thrown into the spotlight in June 1942 after the Japanese bombed Dutch Harbor and invaded Attu and Kiska islands in the Aleutian archipelago. Even before these attacks, the U.S. Army recognized Alaska's strategic location and began using the White Pass & Yukon Route (WP&YR) railroad to supply defense projects in the interior, such as the Alcan (Alaska-Canada) Highway, Canol (Canadian Oil) Pipeline, and airfields along the Northwest Staging Route.

The WP&YR previously operated two trains daily to Whitehorse, but it now needed to run 17 to 20 trains each day. The 770th Railway Operating Battalion took command of the railroad line spanning 110 miles of tough terrain. Conditions were often extreme, leading Private Howard Foley to state, "That line's too steep for a goat and too cold for a polar bear."

As many as 5,000 people were stationed in Skagway, where Quonset huts sprouted like weeds in vacant lots and the Army took over many existing buildings. Cement, pipe, bulldozers, and approximately 22,000 troops and construction workers passed through the town. After the war ended in 1946, the WP&YR and Skagway residents resumed peacetime operations, proud of the transportation role they played during World War II.



Train passing through the U.S. Army in Skagway, 1942.



Company 770th Railway Operating Battalion of the 770th Railway Operating Battalion and U.S. Army troops in Skagway, March 25, 1942.

U.S. Army trucks and heavy equipment on flatcars at the WP&YR depot in Skagway, 1942. The railroad carried soldiers and supplies to the base camp construction site at the Alcan Highway in 1942.

U.S. Army trucks and heavy equipment on flatcars at the WP&YR depot in Skagway, 1942.

Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park

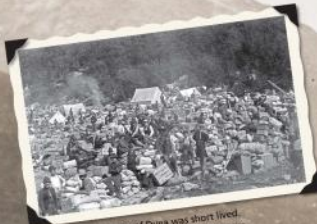
Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



DYEA—Port Town for the Chilkoot Trail

The view before you is serene, yet during the Klondike Gold Rush, stampeders swarmed over Dyea's wharves. The noise, hustle, and bustle of this port town rivaled that of much larger settlements.



The hustle and bustle of Dyea was short lived.
George & John Bergeson Collection 81.062.00128. Photograph by Bergeson



Dyea Beach, Alaska, ca. 1898.
Photo courtesy of Frank Louis Baker Photograph Collection,
Alaska State Library. ASL-P00784



Taken between 1901, Klondike Museum Collection

Tlingit packers began their trading expeditions here and a village was established with a trading post run by John J. Healy and Edgar Wilson in 1884. The tiny hamlet quickly grew into a town of approximately 8,000 people as fortune seekers who chose Dyea as their entry point to reach the Yukon Territory gold fields off-loaded tons of supplies in the boomtown of Dyea.

The town's shallow harbor and inadequate port facilities, a devastating avalanche which occurred up the Chilkoot Trail on April 3, 1898, and the ending of the Klondike Gold Rush itself were reasons for its eventual decline. The final blow to Dyea came that same year with the construction of the 110-mile White Pass & Yukon Route Railway, linking Skagway to Whitehorse, Canada.

By 1902, the Dyea post office closed and only a few families homesteaded here. A road to Skagway was completed in 1948, opening up access for another kind of transient—the tourist.



Municipality of Skagway Borough



Fairbanks

The F. E. Company

Boom to Bust

When gold was discovered near Fairbanks in 1902, it triggered a rush that turned a trading post into a boomtown. The population of Fairbanks soared to 5,000 in 1909, but soon the most accessible deposits were panned out. Pick and shovel mining became unprofitable and the economy floundered. By 1920 the population had shrunk to 1,155.



This dredge at the water level of eight operated by the F.E. Company in the creek surrounding Fairbanks.
Image and Photo: National Archives, Photo 1. Department Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.
Photo by: George H. Roper, 1910-1915.

Operating along Illinois Street for over 40 years, the Fairbanks Exploration (F.E.) Company was vital to the development of Fairbanks and Interior Alaska.



An F.E. Company dredge ship from much of the gold-bearing gravel with a high-pressure water lance (Pneumatic plant).
Photo courtesy of local historians.

The (New) Golden Age

In 1925 the F.E. Company arrived in Fairbanks to begin a dredging operation that extracted gold deposits unreachable by pick and shovel mining. To process the gold the company built a state-of-the-art industrial complex off a spur from the recently completed Alaska Railroad. By the 1930s the F.E. Company employed nearly 1,000 people (over a quarter of the local population), including machinists, engineers, and dredge operators. Workers bought goods and services locally that helped keep the Fairbanks economy healthy.



*Still standing in 2010.
Background: Aerial photograph circa 1910-1915.
Photo courtesy of local historians.



The F.E. Company office building was the center of operations. Before the 1940s when the F.E. Company was a subsidiary of the United States Dredging Machine and Mining Company based in Boston, Massachusetts.
Photo courtesy of local historians.

Crisis Precipitates Change

When the U.S. entered World War II, the government declared gold mining non-essential, and in October 1942 the F.E. Company dredges shut down. The F.E. Company assisted the Army during the war by providing facilities, heavy equipment, and electricity. Although gold production resumed after the war, the F.E. Company never regained its stature in the Fairbanks economy and discontinued dredging in 1965.



DOT & PF

Agriculture Anyone?

Since 1915 the Matanuska Experiment Farm has helped Alaskans develop suitable agricultural practices.



Pea pods at the Experiment Farm, 1915. Photo: The Alaska State Archives Collection, 1915-1916



View of farm at the Experiment Station, 1915. Photo: The Alaska State Archives Collection, 1915-1916

Matanuska Experiment Station

The U.S. Department of Agriculture established the Matanuska Experiment Station (now Farm) in 1915 to research plant and livestock breeds and agricultural practices for the region. In 1932 the station was transferred to the University of Alaska Fairbanks, becoming part of the Alaska Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station. The station provided technical assistance to local homesteaders and colonists hoping to develop a stable agricultural industry.

Building on the Past

Today's research topics are more complex than the farm's original objectives. A few of the topics being studied are arctic revegetation methods, crop season extenders, biomass energy, thermoregulation, and soil, plant, and feed nutrient analysis. The farm's buildings meld past and present into a working agricultural research facility. A state-of-the-art research, education, and administration building—Kerrula Hall—sits amidst five original structures. Part of the building sits atop the concrete floor of the original dairy barn.



Matanuska Experiment Farm, Alaska Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, 1988. Photo: The Alaska State Archives Collection, 1988-1989



Dr. Curtis Dearborn, 1915. Photo: The Alaska State Archives Collection, 1915-1916

Crimson Cultivation

The bright red strawberries grown in the valley today are juicy benefits from the farm's research. It took Dr. Curtis Dearborn over twenty years of research to develop three strawberry varieties that could flourish in Alaska's shortened growing season. He named them Susitna, Squenta, and Matared. Dearborn also developed hardy strains of potatoes and other crops.

Alfred (O.D.) Swadlow, pictured right in 1915, helped develop the Matanuska Experiment Station and nearby homesteaders in the valley. Under his leadership, the first strains of grain, berries, potatoes, garden vegetables, and fruit trees were developed for the region. Swadlow and his family lived and worked on the area for over 40 years. Photo courtesy of the Alaska State Archives.



Swadlow's house, 1915. Photo: The Alaska State Archives Collection, 1915-1916



Matanuska College (1922)

Men's Hall and Dormitory (1915)

Experiment Barn (1922)

College College (1911)

Matanuska Experiment Farm, 1915. Photo: The Alaska State Archives Collection, 1915-1916



DOT & PF

Cows, Cabbage, & Crops



The Matanuska Valley is recognized for its resilient agricultural industry.

Matanuska Milk

The first Matanuska Valley cows were transplants from Kodiak. The hardy herd of Galloway-Holsteins was transferred from the Kodiak Experiment Station to the Matanuska Station in 1926; used for meat and milk, some were sold to homesteaders, colonists, and entrepreneurs. Grade A dairies developed throughout the area, including a creamery at the Curry Hotel north of Talkeetna. Operated by the Alaska Railroad, the creamery provided locally produced milk and cream at a much reduced price. In 1934, the Matanuska Experiment Station took over the railroad's creamery and renamed it "Matanuska Maid" two years later.



The Matanuska Maid creamery in 1926. Photo by John S. Brown, Alaska Historical Society.



Matanuska Maid milk can, 1920s. Photo by John S. Brown, Alaska Historical Society.



Two giant cabbages, Matanuska Valley, 1941. Photo by John S. Brown, Alaska Historical Society.

Giants

The Matanuska Valley is known for producing monster vegetables! Over 19 hours of sunlight during summer and rich soil enable crops to thrive and reach peak weight in August. In 1941, the first giant cabbage contest winner at the Matanuska Valley Fair was Palmer resident Max Sherrod, who won with a 23-pound cabbage. Almost 70 years later, the 2009 winning cabbage (and world record holder) weighed 127 pounds.



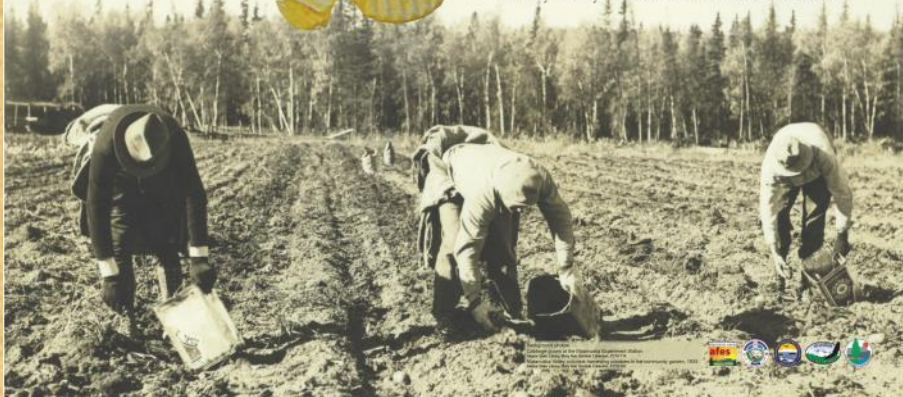
Max Sherrod's giant cabbage, Matanuska Valley, 1941. Photo by John S. Brown, Alaska Historical Society.

Potato chips are made with a special low-sugar potato that doesn't turn brown and holds better when baked.



Tubers Rule

The first valley settlers grew potatoes as their primary cash crop. Today, potatoes are Alaska's number one horticultural product. Baked, fried, scalloped, mashed—there are many ways to prepare potatoes and just as many varieties. Over 15 varieties are grown in the valley to satisfy our insatiable need for this tremendous tuber.



DOT & PF

Matanuska Portrait

Historical snapshots of the Matanuska Valley reveal the influences that created today's agricultural community.



Douglas and Abner Atkinson have made the Matanuska River corridor for thousands of years.



The Homestead Act also funded the establishment of agricultural experiment stations. The U.S. Department of Agriculture established seven throughout Alaska—including one in the Matanuska Valley. The stations tested crops, and livestock to make agriculture efficient, sustainable, and profitable in Alaska.



In 1898, Congress extended the Homestead Act to Alaska, hoping to stimulate settlement and agricultural development in Alaska. Gold mining in the Willow Creek district, development of the Chickaloon coal fields, and construction of the Alaska Railroad led to 400 homestead entries in the Matanuska Valley by 1917.



"I look back on it now, and I remember how my heart just sank when Frank told me he wanted to join the colonists. All I wanted to do was stay in Minnesota. But you know how it is... you live here a few years and then... there's just no place quite like Alaska."

Minnie Swanda, colonist



In 1935, 202 families from upper midwest states came here as part of a federal New Deal program known as the Matanuska Colony. The program, centered in recovery from the Great Depression, discovered Alaska's agricultural potential, and produce food locally.



The federal government transferred the Matanuska Maid Cooperative Creamery to the local farm cooperative in 1939, and the Matanuska Valley became the center of dairying in Alaska. From 1940 to 1960, Matanuska Valley farmers focused on milk and potato production. World War II military activity, a growing Anchorage population, and high shipping prices increased the market for local agricultural products.



Today, the Matanuska Valley is the state's leading producer of potatoes, carrots, lettuce, cabbage, and other vegetables.



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DOT & PF

The ARC

The Alaska Road Commission constructed roads and connected communities in Alaska from 1905 to 1956.

Long and Winding Road

Originally designated as the Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, the Alaska Road Commission (ARC) was legislatively empowered to "...locate, lay out, construct, and maintain wagon roads and pack trails from any point on the navigable waters...to any town, mining or other industrial camp or settlement, between any such town, camps or settlements..."

For 50 years, beginning in 1905, the ARC constructed a basic transportation network in Alaska, including the major thoroughfares of the Richardson, Steese, Glenn, Seward, and Sterling highways. When the ARC was disbanded, they had in their care 3,594 miles of road and 445 miles of trail—enough to reach from Anchorage, Alaska to Dallas, Texas!



Oscar Tryck, 1879-1964

Today, it's difficult to travel in the Matanuska Valley without driving on a road pioneered by Oscar Tryck. From 1918 to 1936, Tryck was the ARC's Matanuska Valley-Willow Creek mining district foreman. He helped build the Trunk, Matanuska-Palmer, Wasilla-Matanuska, and Palmer-Wasilla roads. His house was the first residence in the new railroad town of Wasilla and can still be seen today on North Knik Street. The Blanche and Oscar Tryck House is on the National Register of Historic Places.



The house of Oscar Tryck, 1918.
A. B. Reed. Photo Courtesy of the Alaska Historical Society, Anchorage, Alaska. (2010-01-01)



Working road on a dirt road, Alaska, 1918.
A. B. Reed. Photo Courtesy of the Alaska Historical Society, Anchorage, Alaska. (2010-01-01)

The Road That Almost Wasn't

Initially, the route thousands of commuters travel daily between the Matanuska Valley and Anchorage was a hard sell. First proposed in 1928, the Glenn Highway was deemed unnecessary because of the existing railroad connection. However, the state's strategic importance in World War II increased road development and the highway was constructed.

The ARC traveled between various U.S. departments during its illustrious career:

- 1905-1931: War Department
- 1932-1936: Department of the Interior
- 1936: Department of Commerce, Bureau of Public Roads

DOT & PF

Spasski Trail

The Huna Tlingit established a community here, which attracted more people who needed a link between homesteads and Hoonah.

The Early Days

Hoonah was named for the Huna Tlingit who, according to oral traditions, moved here in the 1700s when they were displaced from Glacier Bay by an advancing glacier. By the late 1800s, homesteaders and missionaries were attracted to the area, too. Hoonah gradually became an official dot on the map between 1870 and 1944 with schools, churches, and commercial enterprises, including trading posts and canneries.

Spasski Trail

Amidst the community's growth, Robert Greenwald, Sr. built the Spasski Trail in the 1920s, providing the necessary connection between Hoonah and homesteaders settling in the Spasski Bay area. Homesteaders trekked this five-mile trail regularly to replenish their supplies and sell produce in town. If trail conditions were good, it could take them about an hour and a half to travel from Hoonah to Spasski Bay while loaded with provisions.

Modern Connections

Led by the US Forest Service, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), a Depression-era work relief program, made significant improvements to the Spasski Trail, building bridges, placing culverts, and re-graveling. They also built Garteem Highway along a portion of the trail in the 1930s. Today, the Spasski Trail is overgrown and partially covered by the Hoonah Airport. The remaining trail can still be followed and connects to a dense, lush rainforest and open muskeg for breathtaking scenery and wildlife viewing opportunities—and to the past.



Connecting Hyder

1-800-855-2222 • www.1000hours.com

Hydro-Quick Agreement - Station No. 0 - 10/1/10



Downloaded from <http://ajphaphapublications.org/>

Faculty, University of the Mississippi, University of Tennessee, The College of William and Mary

DOT & PF

Portland City

At the first hint of gold and silver, miners Daniel and Andrew Lindeborg arrived here in 1903. They staked and claimed a homestead on most of the dry land above the high tide line. Later arrivals were forced to establish a small commercial camp over the tidal flats built entirely on pilings.



Portland Harbor, 1903



Hyder, Alaska, Circa 1912



Hyder, Alaska, Circa 1912

When the first "boom" period on the US side of the head of Portland Canal began in 1910, prospectors, miners, and businessmen found a town built on pilings. Early residents and the Lindeborgs called it Portland City.

When residents applied for a US Post Office in 1914, the name Portland City was rejected. Residents renamed it Hyder, after a mining engineer and geologist who had visited the prior year and reported very positive results.

The second "boom" started in late 1918 at the end of World War I and ran through 1934 when President Roosevelt fixed the price of gold at \$35 per ounce. This caused many small gold mining operations all over the world to shut down—Hyder was no exception.

In 1929, Hyder's heyday population reached 254 residents. By 1936, the population was less than 50 and by 1940, the entire piled area of Hyder had been abandoned.

Hyder, Alaska, 1934
The entire town and its surrounding area
were abandoned and the area was
reclaimed by the State of Alaska
in 1936.



DOT & PF

NATURE HAPPENS

Earthquakes and floods affected the design and construction of the Tanana River Bridge.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE TCHUKOTKA DISTRICT

QUAKE CONCERNS

Earthquakes in Alaska regularly challenge engineers, both pre- and post-construction. The 2002 Denali Fault earthquake—a magnitude of 7.9—shook the Tanana Valley, damaging buildings, bridges, and roads. The original Tanana River Bridge suffered a four-inch displacement of one of its piers. Fortunately, all damage was repaired quickly. The ALCAN Highway is the only land route into Alaska. If an earthquake destroys the Tanana River Bridge, it will disrupt commerce and transportation dramatically.

FLOODWATER INFLUENCE

In the spring, excessive flooding from melt and rainwater can cause the river to leave its banks and inundate the lower areas of the valley. Strong currents can thrust large ice flows and debris against the bridge and cause damage. During construction of the original Tanana River Bridge, engineers dealt daily with the threat of flooding. To withstand these destructive forces, engineers designed the new bridge to include strong piers and a higher clearance.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE TCHUKOTKA DISTRICT

Alaska Department of Transportation
and Public Facilities
2002 Denali Fault earthquake



DOT & PF

A UNIQUE CROSSING

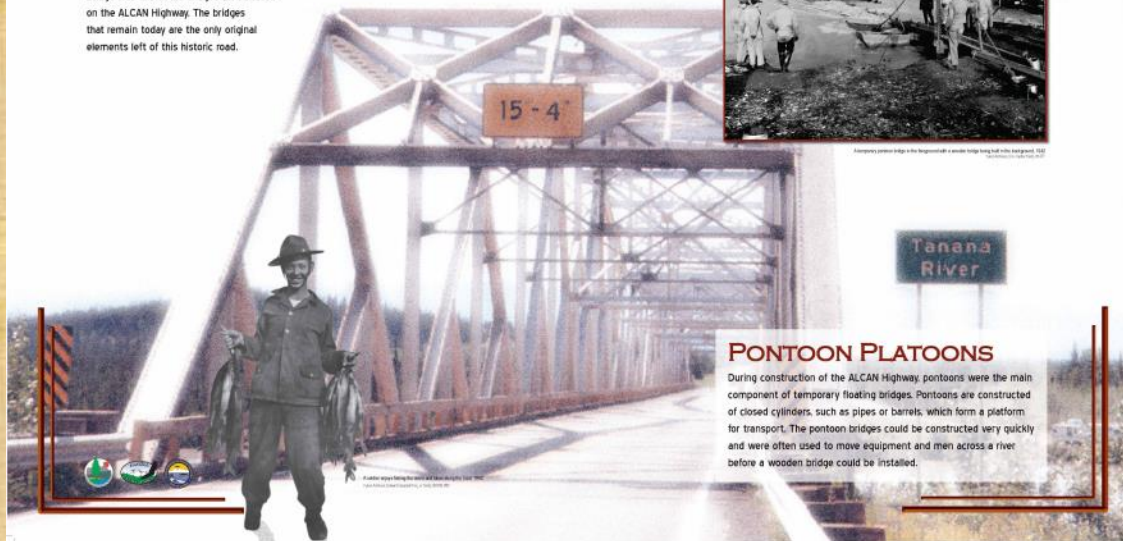
The bridges of the ALCAN Highway played an integral part in wartime defense by allowing transport of troops and supplies across otherwise impassible rivers.

WOOD TO STEEL

The Tanana River crossing wasn't always made of steel. In 1942, during the highway's construction, the U.S. Army quickly built a temporary wooden bridge. The Public Roads Administration replaced it in 1943 with a permanent 3-span cantilevered subdivided Warren steel through truss bridge (shew!)—the only bridge of its kind in Alaska. The original Tanana River Bridge was one of 133 bridges constructed on the ALCAN Highway. The bridges that remain today are the only original elements left of this historic road.



Temporary wooden bridge in the background of a photo showing the steel bridge under construction. 1943. Source: Alaska Department of Transportation, 2012.



PONTON PLATOONS

During construction of the ALCAN Highway, pontoons were the main component of temporary floating bridges. Pontoons are constructed of closed cylinders, such as pipes or barrels, which form a platform for transport. The pontoon bridges could be constructed very quickly and were often used to move equipment and men across a river before a wooden bridge could be installed.

A soldier keeps his feet on the steel and steel bridge. 1942. Source: Alaska Department of Transportation, 2012.

DOT & PF

DIMINISH, SALVAGE, REPROCESS

The new Tanana River Bridge, located downstream, joins the green ranks and follows reduce, reuse, and recycle techniques.

ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT

The new Tanana River Bridge's ecological footprint could have been greater if not for forward-thinking engineers. Although the most environmentally sound practice would have been to reuse the original bridge parts in the new bridge, structural deficiencies and the potential for the river to scour below the original bridge's piers made this impossible. The new bridge was designed to be shorter in length than the original and therefore took less labor and fewer materials to build. The concrete girders were precast in a factory and shipped ready for installation, unlike the original truss bridge which needed to be assembled on site.

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

The steel used for the new bridge was recycled from other bridges and buildings to further decrease its ecological footprint. Steel is unique today because it always contains recycled steel. Every ton of steel salvaged saves 2,500 pounds of iron ore, 1,400 pounds of coal, and 120 pounds of limestone.



The only piece of steel in your left is a bridge girder from the original truss bridge. Bridge girders are metal plates connected where beams are steel joined together with bolts or rivets. Can you identify the girders in the picture?



How could that be the original Tanana River Bridge, constructed in 1917?

RECYCLING FROM ALL SIDES

Sections of the original Tanana River Bridge were used in this interpretive wayside—how many recycled bridge parts do you see?

What happened to the rest of the bridge? The remaining steel was salvaged and sent to a processing plant. It was combined with industrial steel, heated to remove impurities, and reformed to be used in other construction projects.



DOT & PF

LAND TRADE ROUTES

Today when you need food and supplies you visit a supermarket, but in the past, people traveled long distances to trade for essential goods. Traces of these trade routes can still be seen and even traveled today.

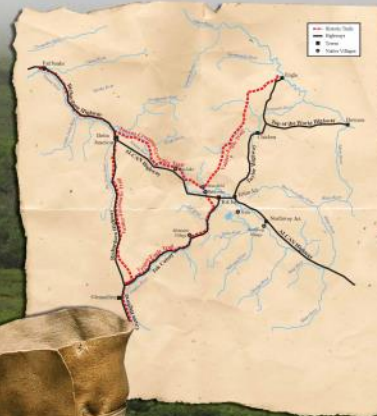
FOLLOWING IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS

Trade routes, like today's highways, encouraged communication and commerce between regions. Athabascans from interior Alaska and Tlingits from southeast Alaska established land trade routes such as an east-west route known as the Tanana Crossing-Grundler Trail and a north-south route known as the Valdez-Eagle Trail. Gold Rush prospectors followed these same routes because they were the easiest ways to travel to and from their claims.

Going to Fairbanks or Glennallen? The ALCAN and Richardson highways follow part of the Tanana Crossing-Grundler Trail to Fairbanks, while the route to Glennallen includes part of the Valdez-Eagle Trail.

ESSENTIAL GOODS

Athabascans traded with Tlingits to obtain items not available in their own region. Athabascans traded animal hides, decorated moccasins, birch wood bows with porcupine gut string, and wolf moss (used to make yellow dye). In exchange, Tlingits traded furs, decorative shells, cedar bark, eulachon oil, and iron that was originally imported from Europe.



DOT & PF

LINKING ALASKA

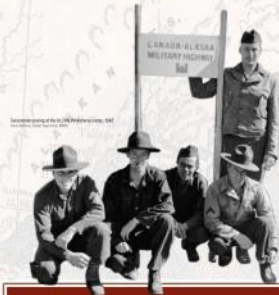
Alaska's vulnerability to Japanese attack justified the need to build a military supply route to connect the continental U.S. to Alaska.

STRATEGIC STEPPING STONE

Alaska was susceptible to attack because of its isolation; prior to WWII, the only way to enter Alaska was by boat, plane, or overland by foot. Rough terrain, fast-flowing rivers, distance, and cost made building a road from the continental U.S. to Alaska difficult to justify. However, the Japanese bombing of Dutch Harbor and invasion of the Aleutian Islands of Kiska and Attu in 1942 was all the justification needed. In January 1942, the U.S. War Department approved construction of the Alaska-Canada Highway (ALCAN).



U.S. Army personnel in the Alaskan interior, 1942. U.S. Army photo.



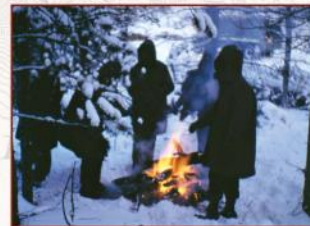
Construction of the ALCAN Highway, 1942. U.S. Army photo.

"I believe that in the future, whoever holds Alaska will hold the world. I think it is the most important strategic place in the world."

—General Billy Mitchell to Congress in 1915

ALCAN

The 1,390-mile ALCAN Highway was built by the blood and sweat of over 10,000 men in eight grueling months. Construction cost \$138 million and included 133 bridges. Although built for strategic defense purposes, the ALCAN Highway became a new link for commerce and travel to Alaska.



Construction workers building the ALCAN Highway, 1942. U.S. Army photo.



SCALE OF FEET AND MILES
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DOT & PF

THE HARSH HIGHWAY

U.S. Army soldiers and engineers constructed the Alaska-Canadian Highway (ALCAN) through resolve, determination, and courage.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT FOR CIVILIAN CONTRACTORS —

THIS IS NO PICTURE! Working and living conditions on any this job are as difficult as those encountered on any construction job ever done in the United States or foreign territory. Men hired for this job will be required to work and live under the most extreme conditions imaginable. Temperatures will range from 80 degrees above zero to 70 degrees below zero. Men will have to fight swamps, rivers, ice and cold. Mosquitoes, flies and gnats will not only be annoying but will cause bodily harm. If you are not prepared to work under these and similar conditions do not apply.

—Barrett-Paine-Caldwell Engineering Station, 1942

A PIONEER ROAD

The route was rugged, unmapped, and oftentimes designed as it was built. Severe conditions during construction included freezing temperatures, horrendous bugs, and quicksand-like muck that tested the resolve of crew members. Many troops were from warm southern climates and therefore unaccustomed to the daunting cold; the situation was worsened by the lack of warm clothes, suitable shelter, and sufficient food. Amidst the hardships, troops persevered, and on November 20, 1942, after only eight months, the 1,390-mile gravel highway from Dawson Creek, British Columbia to Delta Junction, Alaska was complete.



"Living in tents at 50 degrees below zero and colder is hard to appreciate. Showering, bathing and doing laundry became next to impossible. We spent more time just existing than anything else during the extreme cold." —Colonel Stephen B. Miller

Members of the Highway. The Highway's first 100-mile stretch was completed in 1942.

PERSEVERANCE

Of the seven engineering regiments detailed to build the highway, three consisted of black troops. The black regiments weren't given proper large construction equipment, instead relying on their own muscle and determination to move tons of rock and trees. Their perseverance paid off and upon completion of the highway, the U.S. Army decorated many members of the black regiments—93rd, 95th, and 97th—for their exceptional efforts.



Reimagined: The Alcan Highway and Beyond: 100

DOT & PF

TRAVELING THE TANANA

How would you travel from place to place if there were no roads? Tanana Athabascans used the Tanana River, which means "river trail" in Athabaskan.

ATHABASCAN CULTURE

Traditional Tanana Athabaskan lands, including those of the Upper, Middle, and Lower bands, were within the Tanana River watershed. The waterways were residents' highways as they traveled between seasonal game camps: fish camps in spring, summer, and fall; muskrat camps in spring; Dall's sheep camps in summer; and caribou camps in fall and winter.



Making a canoe from birch bark and spruce roots in Tanana
Photo by Tom Smith of Alaska Native Heritage and Cultural Preservation Center, Alaska Native Center

SWIFT AND BEAUTIFUL

Traditional Athabaskan canoes aren't like the fiberglass and aluminum ones used today. They were functional works of art constructed of birch bark or moose hide and cottonwood. Construction of the canoe was a group affair, with the men building the frame and collecting the moose hide, and the women collecting spruce roots to sew the craft together. The canoe was used for transporting goods and people, as well as for fishing and hunting on the bountiful river.

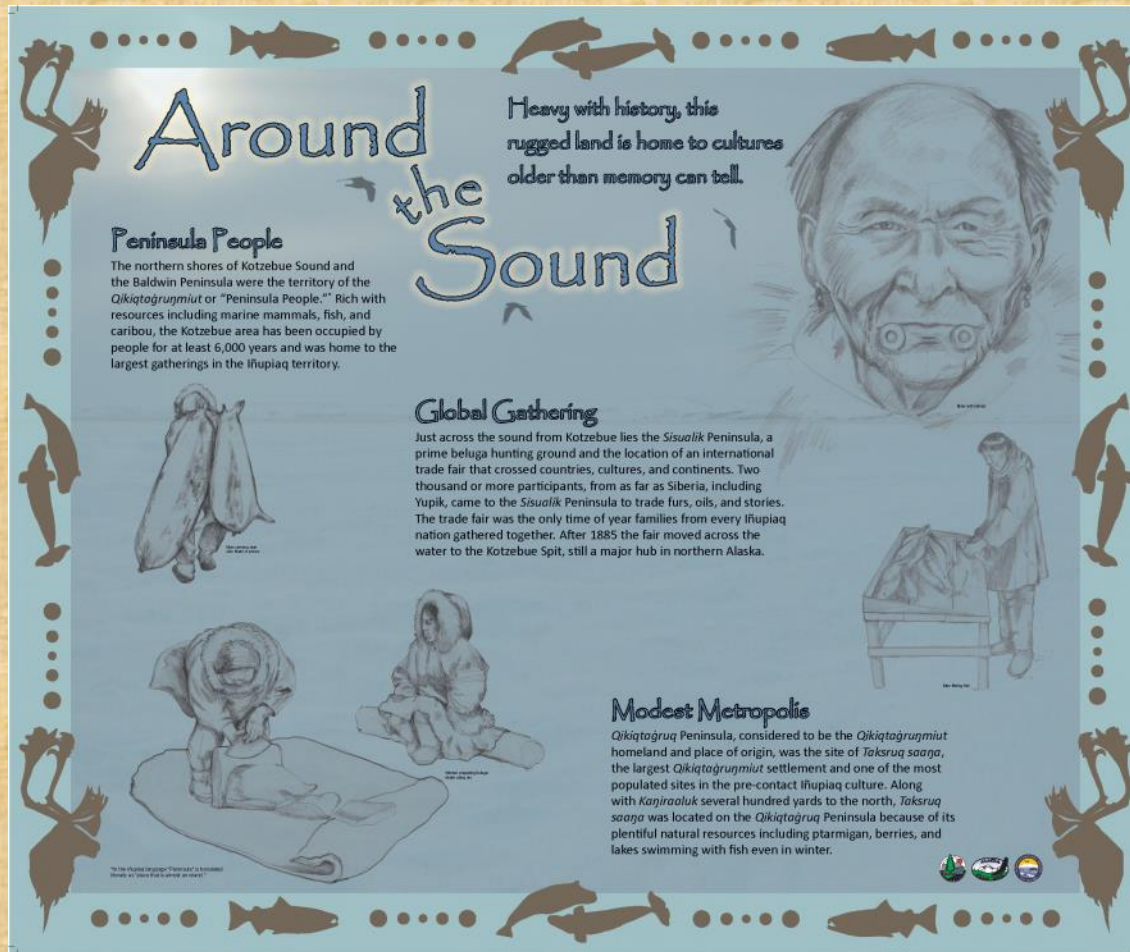
FROZEN TRAIL

During winter, Athabascans relied on snowshoes instead of watercraft to travel the frozen Tanana. Snowshoes kept them from sinking into the deep snow as they traversed traplines for fur-bearing mammals and visited other villages for trade. Unlike modern aluminum snowshoes, historic snowshoes were made out of birch bark and caribou or moose sinew. Five-foot-long snowshoes were used for hunting, while three-foot snowshoes were used for walking on brushy or previously broken trails.

On Athabaskan snowshoes
Photo by Tom Smith of Alaska Native Heritage and Cultural Preservation Center, Alaska Native Center



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Around the Sound

Heavy with history, this rugged land is home to cultures older than memory can tell.


Peninsula People

The northern shores of Kotzebue Sound and the Baldwin Peninsula were the territory of the *Qikiqtagrugmiut* or "Peninsula People." Rich with resources including marine mammals, fish, and caribou, the Kotzebue area has been occupied by people for at least 6,000 years and was home to the largest gatherings in the *Iñupiaq* territory.


Global Gathering

Just across the sound from Kotzebue lies the *Sisualik* Peninsula, a prime beluga hunting ground and the location of an international trade fair that crossed countries, cultures, and continents. Two thousand or more participants, from as far as Siberia, including Yupik, came to the *Sisualik* Peninsula to trade furs, oils, and stories. The trade fair was the only time of year families from every *Iñupiaq* nation gathered together. After 1885 the fair moved across the water to the Kotzebue Spit, still a major hub in northern Alaska.



Modest Metropolis

Qikiqtagrug Peninsula, considered to be the *Qikiqtagrugmiut* homeland and place of origin, was the site of *Taksruq saaga*, the largest *Qikiqtagrugmiut* settlement and one of the most populated sites in the pre-contact *Iñupiaq* culture. Along with *Kanraaluk* several hundred yards to the north, *Taksruq saaga* was located on the *Qikiqtagrug* Peninsula because of its plentiful natural resources including ptarmigan, berries, and lakes swimming with fish even in winter.



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Front Street

Once a simple foot path, Front Street—now Shore Avenue—has evolved with the community it ties together.

Salt Water People

Before this strip of land was called Front Street or Shore Avenue, it was simply the shore—a place that provided residents with a connection to food, clothing, and transportation. The sea was an essential partner in survival to the ancient people who lived in this area for over 6,000 years, and continues to be for the Ifupiat who draw life and livelihood from its waters today.



Traditional Ifupiat children, and their family on the beach at Kotzebue around 1900.
Photo courtesy of the Alaska Historical Society



1900: Kotzebue and town of Resolute with American Naval ship at anchor.
APRIL, 1900
Photo courtesy of the Alaska Historical Society



The first Russian Chirikov was under construction on Kotzebue's Outer Avenue in 1904.
A large wooden house is in the background. Note the narrow width of the street.
Photo courtesy of the Alaska Historical Society



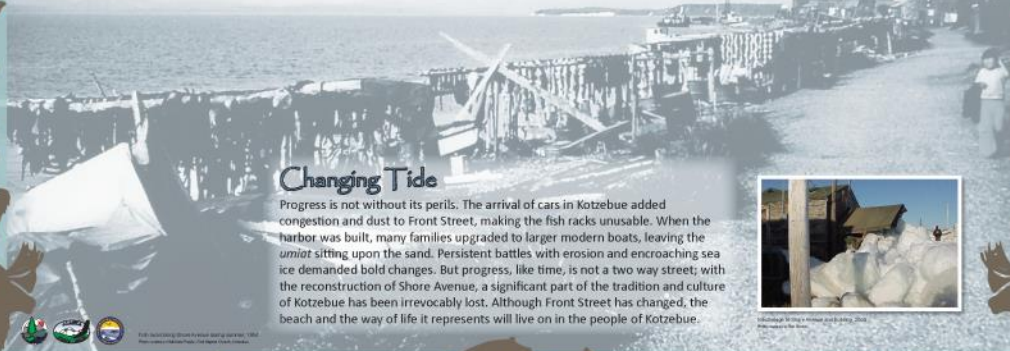
Young men offloading coal onto the beach, Front Street, Kotzebue, 1908.
Photo courtesy of the Alaska Historical Society

A City on the Shore

As Kotzebue grew from a village into a city, the beach—and Front Street—continued to be the focus of life for the people here. Families stored their *umiak* (skin boats) on the beach, offering the freedom of the open sea at their doorstep. In the summer it was a place to catch fish and dry them on the racks that lined the avenue. During winter it was the launching point for ice fishing and hunting. Year round it was a place to meet with friends and catch up on the local news.



Boat racks on the beach on the shore of Kotzebue, Alaska, 1900.
Photo courtesy of the Alaska Historical Society



Changing Tide

Progress is not without its perils. The arrival of cars in Kotzebue added congestion and dust to Front Street, making the fish racks unusable. When the harbor was built, many families upgraded to larger modern boats, leaving the *umiak* sitting upon the sand. Persistent battles with erosion and encroaching sea ice demanded bold changes. But progress, like time, is not a two way street; with the reconstruction of Shore Avenue, a significant part of the tradition and culture of Kotzebue has been irrevocably lost. Although Front Street has changed, the beach and the way of life it represents will live on in the people of Kotzebue.



Photo courtesy of the Alaska Historical Society



DOT, AKDOT, and the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Photo courtesy of the Alaska Historical Society

DOT & PF



Municipality of Anchorage

Story of a Lagoon

The mouth of Chester Creek has undergone numerous changes to become the recreational hub so loved today.



The mouth of Chester Creek looking west, circa 1940s.
Image: Westchester Lagoon Museum & Interpretive Center

Utilization

Major alterations to the Chester Creek tidal estuary began when the Alaska Railroad built an embankment and new trestle across the mouth of the creek in 1934. In the 1950s and 1960s, neighborhood families recreated at Romig Ski Hill and Ski Jump on the south side of the creek. Polka music, skiing lessons, and a Quonset warming hut enhanced the experience for local skiers and jumpers.

Lagoonization

The Good Friday Earthquake of 1964 spurred a different type of change. The railroad trestle needed to be rebuilt, providing the opportunity to create the lagoon many desired. A dam was constructed in the early 1970s, filling the estuary and creating Westchester Lagoon.

Recreation

Today, residents and visitors access Westchester Lagoon via flanking greenway trails and city streets for year-round recreation. Migrating and nesting birds and popular trails attract people in spring, summer, and fall, while the frozen lagoon and groomed trails teem with skaters and skiers during winter.

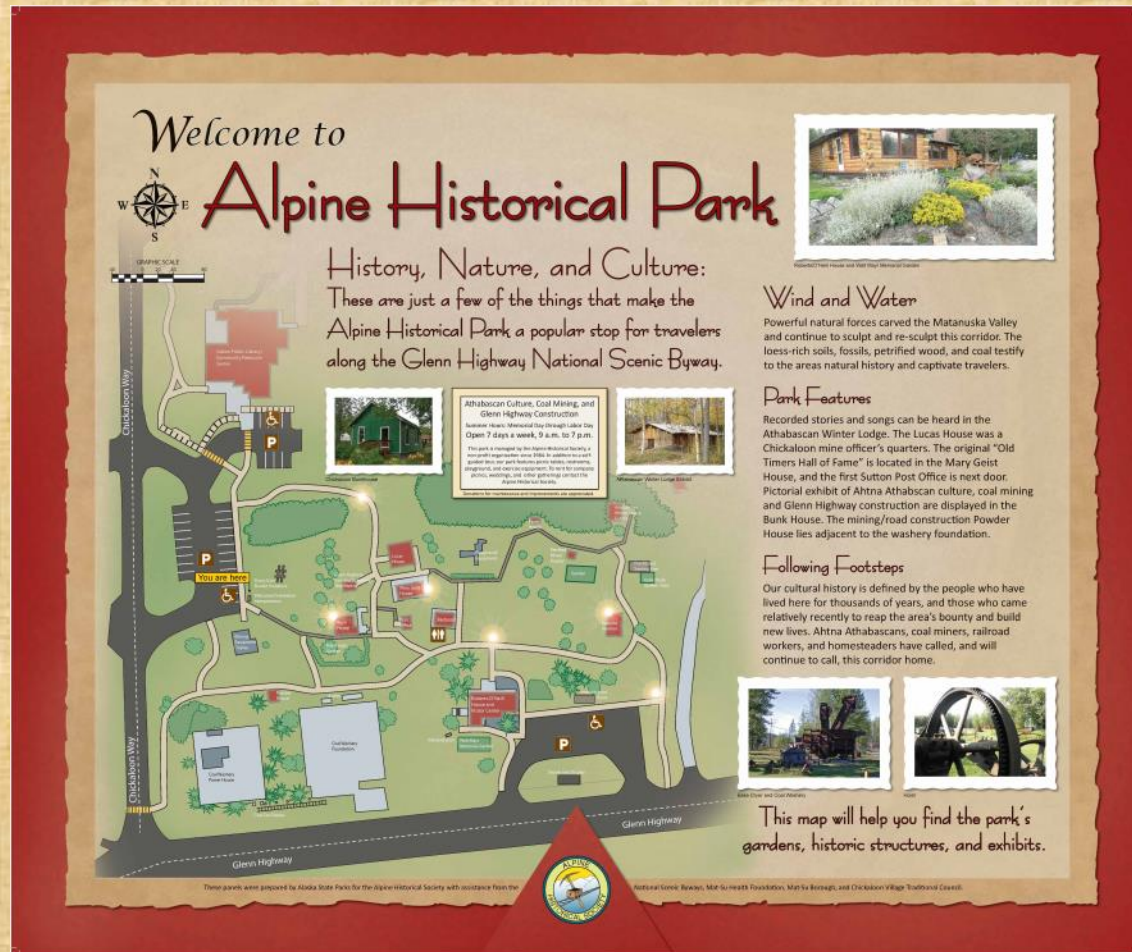


People taking a trail at Westchester Lagoon.



Skiing History Hall
Image: Westchester Lagoon Museum & Interpretive Center

Private and Non-Profit Organizations



Alpine Historical Park

If You Build It, They Will Come

The Glenn Highway is the main connection for the people of this valley. Can you imagine this place without it?

Nature's Highway

The Matanuska Glacier helped carve a wide path through the Chugach and Talkeetna mountain ranges. As the glacier receded, people naturally followed, establishing a connection between communities in Alaska's interior and the coast. In the late nineteenth century, the highly contagious gold fever caused a rush of people to Alaska. In response, the U.S. Government sent teams to investigate routes to the gold fields. Under the leadership of Captain Edwin Glenn, Lieutenant Joseph Castner explored a rough trail through the Matanuska River valley in 1898.



King Street Station, Matanuska Valley, Nov. 12, 1917
Photo: Alaska Historical Society



Edwin Glenn, 1898, Glenn Highway
Photo: Alaska Historical Society



Glenn Highway, Matanuska Valley, Alaska
Photo: Alaska Historical Society

Laying the Tracks

Castner's report promoted the Matanuska Valley as a pack trail and also boasted of its coal deposits. The U.S. Navy wanted to use Matanuska Valley coal, but lacked an efficient way to transport it until a railroad reached Chickaloon in 1917. The railroad bed and pack trails provided the main connections for local residents until 1941. With World War II looming, it was suddenly imperative to connect the military bases in Anchorage to the rest of the United States and this valley provided the corridor.

Bringing You Here

Dynamite and jackhammers tore through the landscape starting in June 1941. During the next four years, workers built a road on the remnants of the old pack trail and railroad. A base camp sprouted in Sutton and up to 600 men worked round-the-clock shifts during the peak of construction. It was rough and bumpy at first, but the newly built Glenn Highway carved through the landscape much like the glacier once had. This new man-made path opened the valley to miners, new types of businesses, homesteaders, and travelers like you.

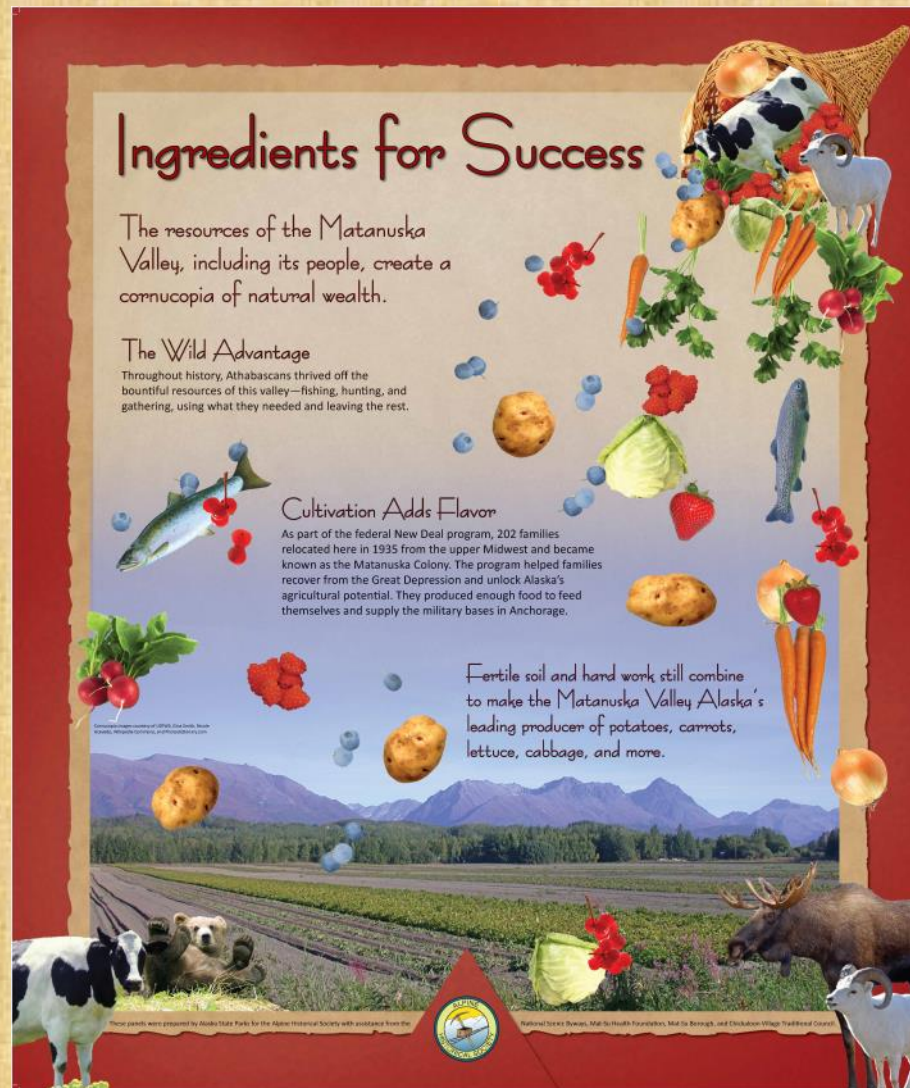


These panels were prepared by Alaska State Parks for the Alpine Historical Society with assistance from the



National Council on Public History, Mat-Su Health Foundation, Mat-Su Borough, and Chitina Valley Historical Council

Alpine Historical Park



Alpine Historical Park

Living Network

The Matanuska Valley's ecosystem is an intricate network of diverse, interconnected elements.

You too are a part of this!



Rich and Connected

Carved in part by the Matanuska Glacier and the braided Matanuska River, this long valley between the Chugach and Talkeetna mountains is home to an intricate, interdependent, and constantly changing ecosystem. The plants, animals, fungi, microscopic organisms, and soils of this valley exist here because the area's geology, hydrology, and climate create the perfect conditions for them.

Big, Bold, and Bright

Within this ecosystem, moose, caribou, black and brown bears, bald eagles, and salmon are among the most photographed animals. Blooming fireweed takes center stage, creating striking expanses of vivid color. Birch, alder, spruce, and cottonwood trees dominate our hills and valleys, providing habitat for many species of wildlife. Fossils and petrified trees reveal that elm, magnolia, sequoia, pine, and oak once grew in the surrounding hills. Petrified trees and fossils are displayed within the park.

Human Connection

People are also part of this ecosystem. Salmon, moose, and other animals are essential food sources for people of this valley and have been for thousands of years. Plants such as fireweed and berries provide food, while coltsfoot, roseroot, and yarrow are valued for their medicinal properties. The fertile soils eventually attracted agriculturalists, and today, some of the world's largest vegetables are grown here, further nurturing our connections.

The Gardens

Our park has examples of perennial, annual, and indigenous plants in the Walt Mayr, Rita Plauth, and Katie Wade gardens.

Native Plants: Rowan, May, and Garden Foundation, Mary's Garden, and Chitkapan Village Traditional Crops



These gardens were prepared by Alaska State Parks for the Alpine Historical Society with assistance from the

Alpine Historical Park

The people of Nay'dini'aa Na' (Chickaloon)
are part of an ancient culture that has met
challenges and persevered.

Nay'dini'aa Na'



Many Dene hunters and their families with a caribou.

Dene'

The *Ahtna* and *Dena'ina* Athabascans, or *Dene'* (People), have occupied this area for thousands of years with an understanding that *Nakeltani* (Creator) put them here to steward and live in harmony with the land, water, animals, and each other. Before the 1900s, the *Dene'* were nomadic and traveled extensively within the Copper River and Cook Inlet areas, following seasonal food sources and trading resources along the established trail systems.

Rising to the Challenge

Colonization and forced assimilation in the 1900s changed the lives of the *Dene'* and jeopardized their ancient culture. Gold and coal mines in the early 1900s resulted in a military presence, railroad development, and environmental destruction. Later, the Glenn Highway was constructed and homesteaders staked claims, privatizing much of the traditional *Dene'* territory. The introduction of alcohol and diseases resulted in widespread illness and death, and boarding schools led to generations estranged from their clan structures, language, culture, and traditional lifeways.

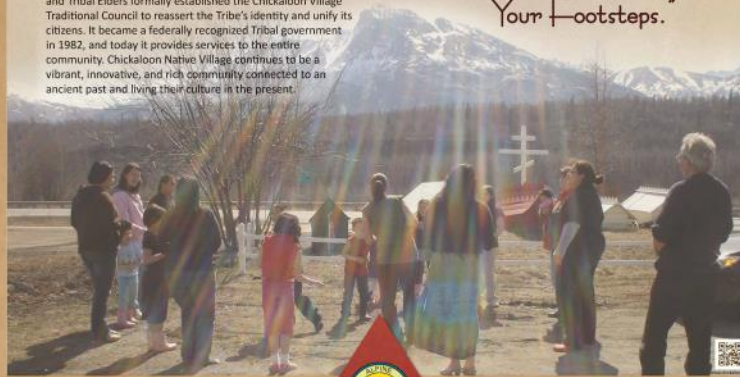


Chickaloon Village Traditional Council members. Photo: The team shared the country in the history and traditions of the area for sustainability, learning, and research.

Living Culture

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act was passed in 1971 and Tribal Elders formally established the Chickaloon Village Traditional Council to reassert the Tribe's identity and unify its citizens. It became a federally recognized Tribal government in 1982, and today it provides services to the entire community. Chickaloon Native Village continues to be a vibrant, innovative, and rich community connected to an ancient past and living their culture in the present.

"May Creator Guide
Your Footsteps."



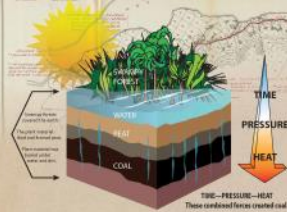
These panels were prepared by Alaska State Parks for the Alpine Historical Society with assistance from the



National Council on the Arts, Mat-Su Health Foundation, Mat-Su Borough, and Chickaloon Village Traditional Council.

Alpine Historical Park

There's Coal in Them There Hills!



This area's coal deposits took millions of years to form and only a few years to mine, forever changing the surrounding valley.

Stored Energy

Essentially, we get coal from sunshine. Hundreds of millions of years ago, swampy forests covered different parts of the earth. Plants in these swamps thrived using energy from the sun. When they died, they created a layer of stored energy at the bottom of the swamp. Over time, dirt, rocks, and water covered and trapped the plant matter. Heat and pressure caused chemical and physical changes that eventually created coal.



Historical photo of the mine.

Prospecting for Power

In the late 1890s, government explorers documented many varieties of coal deposits in the Matanuska Valley including lignite, subbituminous, bituminous, and anthracite. Most of the coal remained untouched until 1913-1914 when the U.S. Navy saw its value as a fuel source for the Pacific Fleet. By 1917, railroad tracks reached Chickaloon and over 45,000 short tons of coal shipped out of the Matanuska Valley that year.

Matanuska Mines

Government-operated and privately-owned mines employed hundreds of hard-working people. However, by 1922, the Navy began using diesel instead of coal and turned their mines over to the Alaska Engineering Commission to power the Alaska Railroad and local homes. Mining continued sporadically in the Matanuska Valley, mostly supporting nearby railroad and military operations. The energetic mining activity from 1914-1922 and subsequent strip mining left a lasting impression.



Historical photo of the mine.

"The Children of Evan Jones"

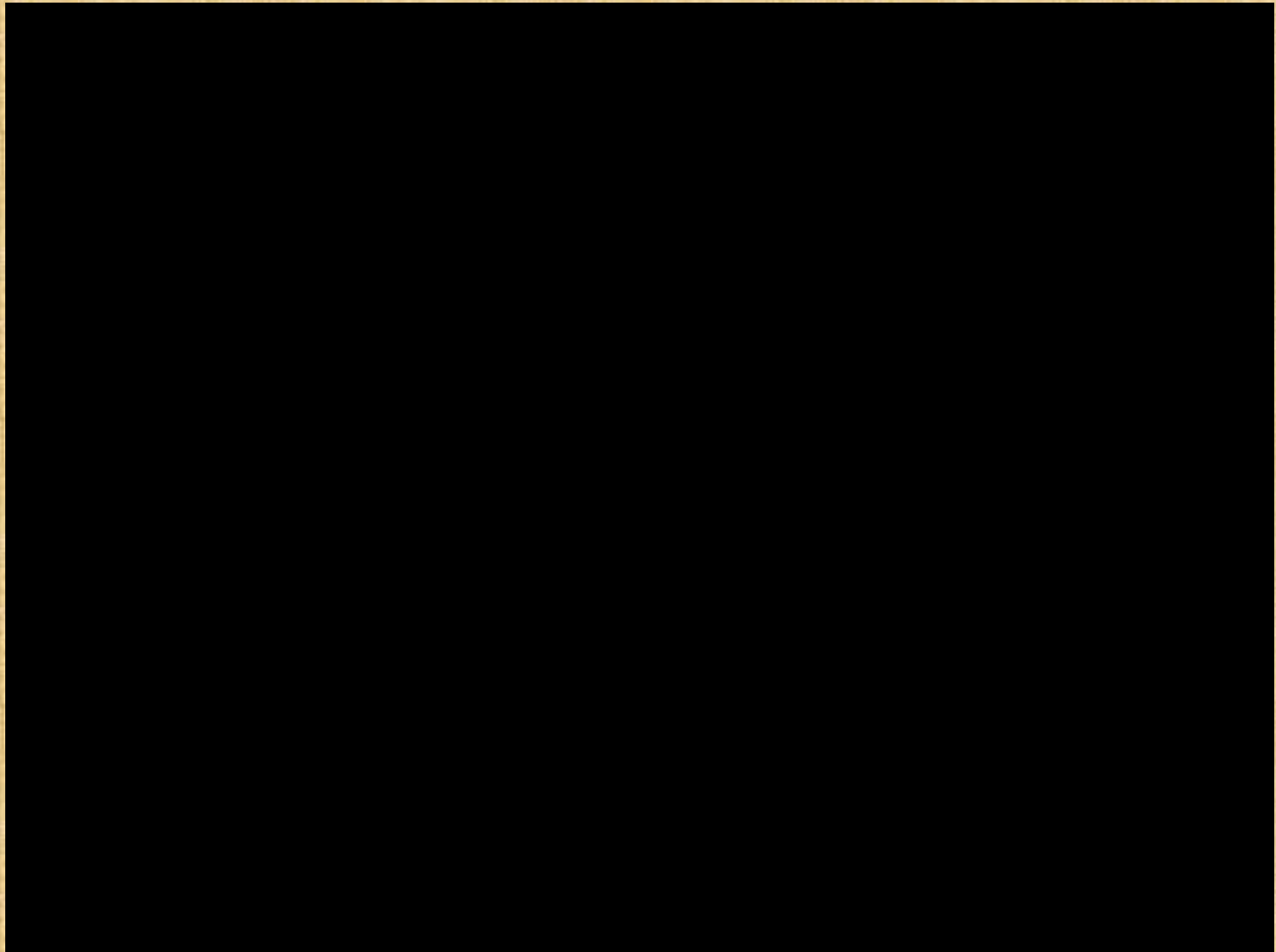
Sparky and Murry and Alabam
Pruit and Johnny the Lip
The jawbone champs of Wishbone hill,
They never know when to quit.

Their ferocious growls and hideous howls
Start at the dry house door
But are washed away at the end of the day
Down the drain of the shower floor.

The Children of Evan Jones - Alaska are from the poetry book
The Matanuska Valley's Ancient Mines, 1990 by John Ward



We can even create videos



Baking Your Heritage Tourism Program

What to do:

- ☞ if you don't have time,
- ☞ if you dislike “baking,”
- ☞ if you want someone with more experience to “bake” your program,
- ☞ or if you just want someone to edit for you or give you advice?

Call or email Alaska State Parks' Interpretation and Education Program!

emily.angel@alaska.gov

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