A 20th-Century Portrait of Lake Clark, Alaska
1900–2000

John B. Branson
June 16, 2014

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to provide you with a copy of A 20th Century Portrait of Lake Clark, Alaska 1900-2000 written by Lake Clark National Park and Preserve park historian John Branson. One of the facets of the National Park Service is to identify, evaluate, and preserve the cultural resources of park areas and to bring and understanding of these resources to the public. This book contributes by creating a broader understanding to the region, essential to present and future evaluation and preservation on Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.

The broad intent of this book is to highlight the twentieth century history of the interface of Native and settlers on Lake Clark and their influence on each other during a century of tremendous technological and sociocultural change. This book illuminates Denaʼina and settlers who resided on the lake and developed a subsistence life-style. Details include the rich legacy of early inhabitants of the land, including the largest Denaʼina archaeological site. Details also include commercial salmon fishing in Bristol Bay, mining camps that were largely aspirational rather than productive of actual mineral wealth, and fishing, hunting and gardening. The advent of aviation in the late 1920s and early 1930s brought modernity and more settlers to the isolated shores of Lake Clark.

Lake Clark’s history is told by narration, by timeline, by oral history, with letters, diaries, historic photographs, maps and home movies. A 25-minute companion DVD, which will enhance understanding, is enclosed inside the back cover.

Please let us know if you have any comments, questions, or requests for additional copies. You can contact us at the address above, by phone at 907-781-2134 or by email at john_branson@nps.gov.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Margaret L. Goodro
Superintendent
A view looking east into the maw of Lake Clark Pass from near the Head of Lake Clark. Photo courtesy of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.
LEFT: Wassillie Trefon and his fully loaded dog sled prepare to leave Tanalian Point for Miller Creek and the Telaquana Trail in 1939. Wassillie was a consummate practitioner of Dena'ina woodcraft and of travelling across the land in all kinds of weather and in all seasons. His and his descendants' lives embody the enduring Dena'ina presence in the Lake Clark country. Photograph courtesy of Helena Seversen Moses, H-15.

RIGHT: Babe Alsworth pauses by his trusty Taylorcraft at Lower Twin Lakes in 1968 after re-supplying Richard Proenneke. Like Wassillie Trefon, Babe was a consummate practitioner of his profession, an old-time, Alaska-bush pilot who began flying through Lake Clark Pass in 1939. Babe was tireless, amassing more than 30,000 hours flying in the Bristol Bay region. He taught scores of young people to fly and was dedicated to serving the public by flying people and supplies through the region. Babe helped bring modernity to the isolated Lake Clark country and his sons and grandsons have continued on with careers in aviation. Photograph courtesy of Raymond Proenneke, H-2170.
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John B. Branson

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As the nation's principal conservation agency, the
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of our national parks and historical places, and providing
for enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation.

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

Our mission is to identify, evaluate and preserve the
cultural resources of the park areas and to bring an
understanding of these resources to the public. Congress
has mandated that we preserve these resources because
they are important components of our national and
personal identity.
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“Come back again, you know the trail.”

Howard Bowman’s boyhood recollection of Doc Dutton’s parting words to visitors to Dutton’s Tanalian Point home
Acknowledgments

I would like to fondly remember a number of people who are no longer alive and who shared their knowledge and family histories around Lake Clark with a newcomer, beginning in 1969 at Naknek. The memory of those old friends will always be with me. Andrew Balluta and his mother, Sophie Hobson Balluta Austin, and her brother, Macy Hobson, helped educate me about the details of local history, especially historic Kijik and some of the characters of the early twentieth-century. The late siblings Alex Trefon, Pete Trefon and Katie Trefon Hill Wilson all shared some of their experiences with me about growing up at Tanalian Point, as did their cousin, Ida Carlson Meyer Crater. Other deceased friends who inspired me about Lake Clark history were Babe and Mary Alsworth, Jay Hammond, Howard Bowman, Floyd Denison, Terry and Vic Gill, Claudine Coray Wright and Bob Hadfield.

Others of those early friends who remain and continue to share their knowledge about Lake Clark history with the writer are Chuck and Sara Hornberger, Martin “Poykin” Johnson, Bella Hammond, the Alsworth family led by Margaret “Sis” Clum and her brothers Bee, Glen and John and his wife Esther, Tish Bowman, Allen Woodward, Bill and Martha Trefon, Johanna Walatka Bouker, Fred Walatka, Eleanor Johnson, Tinny Hedlund, Jack Hobson, Craig Coray, and Bill Baechler.

Other people who have materially assisted me putting this book together and companion DVD are cited in the bibliography and photographic and film credits. Their willingness to share stories and historic photographs with the U.S. National Park Service is very much appreciated.

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John B. Branson
Port Alsworth
March 3, 2014
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Introduction

The need for a twentieth-century Lake Clark history has been apparent to U.S. National Park Service cultural resource staff since before the 1980s. Beginning in 1985, Lake Clark National Park and Preserve funded a sociocultural study led by the late University of Alaska Fairbanks anthropologist Linda J. Ellanna. She and her colleagues, such as Nondalton elder Andrew Balluta, linguist Jim Kari, ethnobotanist Priscilla N. Russell, Ranger Hollis Twitchell and his wife Pam, and park historian Sara Hornberger, amassed a great deal of data on all manner of Lake Clark-related subjects. For instance, they gathered more than 1,000 Dena'ina place names, traditional Dena'ina plant uses and documentary information about the first Euroamericans who lived and prospected around Lake Clark. Much of this new data was collected through countless oral history interviews conducted with elderly local informants from Nondalton, Port Alsworth, Lime Village and other relevant locations. This work culminated in 1992 with the publication of the classic Alaska ethnography, *Nuvendaltin Quht'ana: The People of Nondalton* by Linda J. Ellanna and Andrew Balluta by the Smithsonian Institution Press.

The writer wishes to thank Lake Clark National Park and Preserve’s first superintendent, Paul Haertel, for his foresight, commitment and guidance in initiating the original sociocultural study. Had Mr. Haertel and the U.S. National Park Service not undertaken this project back in 1985, much of this history, Native and pioneer history alike, would have been lost forever.

One of the recommendations of the sociocultural study was for the National Park Service to publish a history of the “pioneer” settlers around Lake Clark. The book was to focus on twentieth-century Euroamerican settlement on Lake Clark and how those settlers both impacted the indigenous Dena’ina population and were, in turn, influenced by the Dena’ina. The work was to be geared toward both an academic audience and a general readership of local people, park visitors and others interested in Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.

Sara Hornberger, longtime Bristol Bay educator and resident of Lake Clark, was the park historian for Phase I of the sociocultural study and one of the first scholars to look at Lake Clark through a historian’s lens. Hornberger conducted more than 24 oral history interviews with local elders, Native and non-Native alike. Many of her interviews were with direct descendants of the original Euroamerican settlers, the settlers themselves or Dena’ina elders who had grown up at Lake Clark in the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s, including conversations with Mary Seversen Wassenkari Clark, Floyd Denison, Katie Tefon Hill Wilson, Ida Carlson Meyer Crater and others. In addition, Hornberger did archival research and gathered historic photographs. She combined three fields—oral history, textual research and historic photographs—to form a broad outline of twentieth-century Lake Clark history. And a fascinating history it is, one based on a symbiotic relationship between strong people, both Native and non-Native, and the natural world around Lake Clark. The lake with its stunning mountain terrain provided for a subsistence lifestyle based on an abundance of red salmon, brown bear, Dall’s sheep, berries and other vegetal resources.

The immediate hope to publish a Lake Clark history book did not materialize as it was originally proposed. However, because in the intervening 29 years a great deal of historical data in the form of primary source materials, government reports and a large number
A late 1920s image of Anton Balluta, stern, and Gillie Jacko, bow, paddle a three-hatch baidarka on Lake Clark. By the late 1920s the long era of the skin boats had passed on Lake Clark as the Dena’ina transitioned to constructing their water craft from whipsawed spruce planks. Photograph courtesy of the Tanalian School, H-2806.

of historic photographs and film have become available to researchers and historians.

The emphasis of this book is just as Linda Ellanna and Sara Hornberger proposed—to elucidate the Euroamerican settlers at Lake Clark, how they impacted the Lake Clark Dena’ina, and how the Dena’ina influenced them. The interdependent relationships between the early Euroamericans and the Lake Clark Dena’ina explain a lot about the successful lives that the some of the earliest permanent settlers seemed to enjoy at Lake Clark and the material enhancements the indigenous people enjoyed through increased trading, employment, education, and transportation opportunities. The definitive book on the people of Nondalton and Dena’ina history and culture remains Ellanna and Balluta’s Nuvendaltin Quht’ana: The People of Nondalton.

This book illuminates the decline of historic Kijik village, the transition to Old Nondalton by the survivors of the “Great Sickness” (a measles-influenza outbreak in 1900-1902) and the rise of present day Nondalton, all of which occurred during the first 40 years of the twentieth century. The first non-Native village on Lake Clark was probably at Portage Creek, followed by Tanalian Point and Kasna Creek on nearby Kontrashibuna Lake. With the advent of commercial aviation, Tanalian Point transitioned into Port Alsworth between 1944 and 1950. Aviation was the means by which the remotely isolated and sparsely populated Lake Clark country was opened to the wider world, beginning the process of increased Euroamerican settlement which Matt Nieminen initiated when he made the first documented aircraft landing at Tanalian Point in 1930.

This book is dedicated to Sara Hornberger and her legacy of historical research which has enriched the lives of all the people of Lake Clark, of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve and of those who visit and live in and around the park. I have been a prime beneficiary of Sara’s efforts as I now plow the many furrows of Lake Clark history that she initially opened so many years ago.
A Brief History of Lake Clark

The earliest evidence of human occupation around Lake Clark’s shoreline has been found in a campsite on the east side of Hardenburg Bay at Port Alsworth. A small hearth revealed debitage, birch bark and charcoal, and radiocarbon analysis showed occupation from 4,000 to 3,800 years before present (BP), with the present being 1950. There are probably older sites on Lake Clark but very few archeological surveys have been conducted to date. There is a site elsewhere in Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, where radiocarbon analysis indicates hunters chipped tools some 10,000 years BP.

As anthropologist Alice J. Lynch has noted in her monograph about Kijik, Russian fur hunters first saw Lake Clark in the late eighteenth century, but it was not until 1818 that Russian Pete Korsakovskiy visited Lake Clark and documented the inland Dena’ina name for the lake, “Kidzhik” or “place people gather lake.” Also called Kijik, the name’s meaning refers to the abundant salmon runs that enabled the Dena’ina to preserve large amounts of fish in underground caches which sustained them over the long winters. Overall, the Russians did not spend much time around Lake Clark, and their primary legacy was created not by the promyshlenniki or “fur hunters,” but by the Russian Orthodox Church. Starting around 1845, a few priests from the Kenai Peninsula made infrequent visits to Kijik village proselytizing the Dena’ina. During the next several decades, priests from Nushagak made very infrequent visits to Kijik holding church services, baptizing residents and marrying couples. The isolated Lake Clark Dena’ina were probably the last Native people in the Bristol Bay drainage to be Christianized, during the last half of the nineteenth century.1

Charles Leslie McKay, stationed at Nushagak for the U.S. Signal Service, was the first American known to have visited Lake Clark, which he did on a collecting expedition for the Smithsonian Institution in 1882. Thereafter, while a very small number of prospectors may have passed by Lake Clark, the next documented Americans to visit the lake were Albert B. Schanz, a writer for the nationally known newspaper, Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, and John W. Clark, the longtime trader for the Alaska Commercial Company at Nushagak, for whom the lake was named in 1891.

In 1895–1896, after gold was discovered in creeks of the Turnagain country of the northern part of the Kenai Peninsula, thousands of prospectors flocked to Cook Inlet. Some prospectors from Turnagain fanned out to the Iliamna–Lake Clark district as a result of crowding on the Kenai. One such person was Lieutenant Hugh Rodman, U.S. Navy, who was on leave and also worked for the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey. In 1898, Rodman came to Lake Clark in search of gold with Vasili Riktorov from Old Iliamna village. They traveled by baidarka and on foot and they spent a few days in the mountains east of Kontrashibuna Lake but did not find any gold. Rodman wrote the first description of the terrain around what would initially be known as Tanalian Point and is now called Port Alsworth. Rodman paddled across Lake Clark to the north shore and visited the Dena’ina village at Kijik before returning to Old Iliamna.

The first mining claims around Lake Clark were filed in 1906 by Charles T. Brooks, William L. von Hardenburg and possibly Harry Hicks on Kasna Creek, a small tributary on Kontrashibuna Lake, about 10 miles southeast of Tanalian Point. Hicks had been prospecting around Cook Inlet since 1896. In the Turnagain country Brooks had been a Crow Creek miner and U.S. Commissioner at Hope and

Sunrise before coming to Lake Clark in about 1901 with the Trans-Alaska Company. The company proposed to build a 560-mile, horse-drawn tram line between Iliamna Bay and St. Michael on Norton Sound.

In 1900 there were 76 Dena’ina living at Kijik village, along with 17 Euroamerican prospectors. During the winter of 1901–1902, a combination measles-influenza epidemic befell the Dena’ina at Kijik, as it had throughout western Alaska, with terrible results. The “Great Sickness,” as it was known, killed about 25% of the Kijik population. The Dena’ina were a strong and resilient people, and the survivors began to move away from Kijik during the summer of 1902 to establish a new village, Old Nondalton, 25 miles southwest on Sixmile Lake. Old Nondalton was fully established by 1909, and in 1910 there were 44 people living there. The Dena’ina disassembled many of their log houses and caches, rafted them down the lake to the new site, and then re-assembled them. Only one family remained near Kijik, the Big Evan Nudlash family, residing on the west side of the mouth of the Kijik River. To this day Kijik remains the most important cultural-historic site on Lake Clark to the people of Nondalton.

Meanwhile, eight miles east of Kijik, a small placer mining camp had sprung to life on Portage Creek, likely in the late 1890s, by miners perhaps from the Turnagain country. Compared to the Turnagain gold rush, Portage Creek was a very small operation on a small creek in a narrow valley. Portage Creek reached its apex about 1911 and was active through the teens; here a few miners took small amounts of coarse gold with a pick and shovel small-scale operation. The most active Portage Creek miners were Brown Carlson, M.A. Bartos, Otis M. “Doc” Dutton and Jonas E. “Joe” Kackley, Pete Anderson and his Dena’ina wife Aggie, Harvey Drew, Billy Gleason, and O.B. Millett, some of whom put down deep roots on Lake Clark.

Over the years, great physical labor was expended and considerable prospecting efforts were made on Portage Creek and adjacent streams, including the Kijik River, but there was precious little gold to show for it. Lake Clark Dena’ina were also involved in mining and prospecting and even filed claims around Portage Creek, including such men as Vladimir and Maxim Cusma, Marka Karshkeoff and A.A. Delkittie.

It would not be until the mid to late 1930s, with the advent of aviation, that Portage Creek would once again become active and more productive, through the mechanized placer operations brought in by Fred Bowman.

In 1910 a strike for placer gold was made in the Bonanza Hills on Bonanza Creek, about 38 miles north of the nascent village of Tanalian Point, by Jack Kinney of Iliamna Lake. As the Bonanza Creek placers were prospected and worked, Tanalian Point, a small mining camp-village was developing, partly as a jumping off place from which to access the Bonanza Hills.

Many of the same prospectors laboring at Kasna Creek and Portage Creek, such as Dutton, Kackley and O.B. Millett, were also active in the Bonanza Hills between 1909 and circa 1914. But once again, the miners were met with the same hard truths: their aspirations were not going to result in an Eldorado in the Lake Clark country. No matter how much back-breaking labor they expended getting in and out of these far-flung prospects, they all came up short in producing riches, much less a living.

The biggest result of the feverish activity at Kasna Creek, Portage Creek and the Bonanza Hills was not a great gold rush but rather the founding of the tiny hamlet of Tanalian Point. From this beginning, with both Dena’ina and Euroamerican residents, Tanalian Point has been continuously occupied since 1911 and has been known as Port Aisworth since 1950.

In 1911, J.W. Walker, Doc Dutton and Joe Kackley began...
A circa 1901 view of the Kijik chapel, named after the Precious and Life-giving Cross, was built in 1889. Left to right: Yvdakia Karshekoff, Mary Ann Trefon, Trefon Balluta, Wassillie Trefon, (front) and Gabriel Trefon, (front). Chief Zackar Evanoff stands in mid-line in front of the right corner of the chapel and is wearing a cap. Most of the other people are unidentified. Photograph courtesy of Cook Inlet Region, Inc., H-88.
living full-time at Tanalian Point after probably first visiting Lake Clark in 1906 or 1907. They gradually established themselves at the mouth of the Tanalian River by building a small cabin and clearing land for a garden. They were joined there by Trefón Balluta and his wife Mary Ann Trefon and their four children, also Pete and Aggie Anderson and children from Old Nondalton. They had probably all met at Old Iliamna where they were living in 1910. Tanalian Point was an ethnically diverse community with the Dena’ina Trefón Balluta family, the Swedish-born Pete Anderson and his Iliamna Dena’ina wife and children and the three mid-western Euroamericans: Walker, Dutton and Kackley. The commingling of the Dena’ina and the Euroamericans produced an interdependent society at Tanalian, with each group sharing with the others how to subsist off the land. For example, Dutton and Kackley introduced gardening and root cellars to the Dena’ina, and the Dena’ina shared good fishing and hunting locations with the newcomers.

At some point earlier, Trefón Balluta developed tuberculosis and eventually died in 1923; he is buried at Old Nondalton in the Russian Orthodox burying grounds. He left behind his wife Mary Ann Trefon with several young children and grandchildren to raise. Doc and Joe helped her with provisions and teaching her youngest children their three Rs.

In the 1920s mining and prospecting at Kasna Creek, Portage Creek and the Bonanza Hills probably continued on a limited basis but is not well documented. All three prospects had no infrastructure, were apparently of mediocre quality and were far from deep-water ports, so they languished and prospectors lost interest.

Meanwhile, Tanalian Point continued its sleepy ambience—and life revolved around the seasonal round of subsistence activities to put food on the table. More importantly, residents had to have put enough potatoes and rutabagas away in root cellars, salted enough water fowl and moose meat in wooden barrels, and smoked fish in caches to survive the long Alaska winter. Subsistence activities continued year around: in the spring with vegetable gardening and were followed by Bristol Bay commercial salmon fishing (for an infusion of cash), subsistence salmon fishing, berry picking, sheep and moose hunting, fire-wood cutting, trapping and wood hauling with dog teams.

In 1921, the first documented recreational tourists arrived at Tanalian Point to hunt and explore. Colonel A.J. Macnab and Frederick K. Vreeland of New York City spent about 50 days around Lake Clark, traveling by canoe and on foot. Dutton and Kackley hosted them and, along with Gabriel Trefon, guided the visitors on a sheep hunt in the mountains east of Kontrashibuna Lake.

In 1927, Russel Merrill opened up the Bristol Bay region to commercial aviation, making the first flight from Anchorage to Bristol Bay via Iliamna Bay. There is no documentary proof that Merrill landed on Lake Clark. But in 1929 he landed at Seversen’s Roadhouse at present-day Iliamna, which is only 20 miles from Old Nondalton and was where everyone from Lake Clark shopped.

The next year in July, pilot Matt Nieminen made the first documented landing at Tanalian Point in his float-equipped Waco-10. In September he made the first direct flight from Tanalian Point to Anchorage, perhaps through Lake Clark Pass. These aviation events mark the beginning of the end of the isolation of Lake Clark and its gradual opening to the wider world, materially improving the lives of all those who lived on the lake and making a way for new residents and tourists to access Lake Clark.

As the 1920s began, Lake Clark was a quiet hinterland. The 1920s ended with the roar of Nieminen’s radial-engine-equipped 4 The first airplane landing at Tanalian Point was documented in the article “Air Company Will Have Large Plane Here For Fourth,” Anchorage Daily Times, July 1, 1930, hereafter appears as ADT. Nieminen also made the first direct flight from Tanalian Point to Anchorage two months later, “Officials See Deer Herds On Airplane Trip,” ADT, September 13, 1930. On October 13, 1933 pilot Kenny Neese might have flown a sheep hunter and a guide from Kontrashibuna Lake to Seversen’s Roadhouse, demonstrating just how quickly guides, big game hunters and aviation joined forces to open up the Lake Clark country to sport hunting. The logbook of Kenny Neese, October 13, 1933, copy of selected excerpts in the LACL history files at the field headquarters at Port Alsworth, courtesy of Joy Guyer.

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Waco floatplane, as more people began to visit the lake and others came to settle down.

In 1932, pilot Oscar Winchell landed on the ice in front of Tanalian Point with hundreds of pounds of flour and sugar for Doc and Joe; at three-and-a-half cents per pound, he ushered in air freight to Lake Clark.

Tanalian Point received a few new residents between 1929 and 1932 when four Euroamerican settlers arrived, three by boat, including Charlie Wolfe, Charlie Denison and his son Floyd, and one by floatplane in the summer of 1932, Floyd’s wife Lena Denison. Charlie and Floyd stayed with Doc and Joe while they built houses of their own nearby. The Denisons brought in new ideas and new ways of living that would improve the lot of the Trefons, Doc, Joe, and the people of Old Nondalton. The Denisons introduced radios, generators, wind-chargers, washing machines, and a steam-powered sawmill that turned logs into dimensional lumber. Now, for the first time, Lake Clark residents could build framed houses instead of simply log houses. Sam Turner, a shell-shocked veteran of the U.S. Army during the Great War, as World War I was known as, also arrived to live out his life at the mouth of the Chulitna River in 1932.

Starting in the late 1930s, the people of Old Nondalton moved their village to the nearby location of present-day Nondalton. Many of them wanted to live in framed houses, and logs were sawed on Denison’s sawmill for shares. Charlie got one-third, the logger received a third and Charlie’s saw received the last third. Whatever the propriety of such an arrangement, having the materials to build framed buildings and planks for constructing the 20-24 foot-long and 4-5 foot wide wooden skiffs that the Nondalton people favored, was a big hit with residents of Lake Clark and Sixmile Lake. Denison’s sawmill supplied the lumber that built most of the houses in Nondalton in the 1940s and early 1950s.

In 1935, Jim and Glenna Kennedy moved to the north side of Lake Clark and, with the help of Anton Balluta built a log house that still used whipsawed lumber in it. Kennedy was the first resident pilot on Lake Clark. Although he did fly some local people, he is not thought of as a commercial bush pilot. Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, there were no landing strips at Lake Clark, so pilots operated with floats in the summer and skis in the winter.

In 1936, Fred and Norma Bowman and their son, Howard, moved from Anchorage to Portage Creek and re-energized the dormant placers by establishing Bowman’s Camp along the banks of the creek where it flows out of the canyon. Bowman was a blacksmith and skilled mechanic. He was able to mechanize placer mining at Portage Creek by bringing in equipment, and fabricating implements, to make the mining more feasible in the narrow, boulder-strewn valley. Bowman brought in a steel-tired Fordson tractor, a sawmill, steel pipe and a hydraulic giant machine and nozzle to more effectively mine the Portage Creek placers.

The Bowmans had a crew of workers who helped them mine. Although they moved a large amount of gravel and boulders, they only took out a minimal amount of coarse gold. After World War II interrupted American life, the Bowman mine was shut down as being non-essential for the war effort. After the war, the Bowmans resumed their small-scale operations but they never made a lot of money. However, Fred and Norma Bowman loved the lifestyle of considerable self-sufficiency in a stunning location. They lived off the land and had geese, chickens and a garden. Often, if they lacked a certain utensil or tool, Fred could make it in his blacksmith shop.

During the 1930s, there is no documentation to suggest that any significant exploration or mining occurred on the Kasna Creek copper claims. However, the story was different in the Bonanza Hills where Charlie Denison and his partner, Naknek area fisherman Billy Hill, brought in an Airplane Placer Drill to the nearby Mesa Mountain in the Mulchatna River country, enabling them to drill to bedrock in search of gold. Pilot Roy Dickson flew parts of the drill in from Seversen’s Roadhouse, and other, heavier components were freighted in by dog teams from Old Nondalton to the drill site near
the Chilchitna River, 25 miles southwest of the Bonanza Hills. The end result of this new, mechanized exploration was another disappointment for Denison and Hill, as they found little or no gold.

The significance of this 1930s era exploration was the growing role aviation played in getting the equipment to a very remote site. With the advent of commercial aviation around Lake Clark, the pace of life sped up. After this effort, the Bonanza Hills resumed its quiet state and there was very little placer activity in the 1940s. In the late 1950s, Terry and Victoria Gill purchased claims on Bonanza Creek and began a more mechanized effort on the placers.

The next significant event to occur around Lake Clark again involved Charlie Denison and ultimately was no more successful than his prospecting with the Airplane Placer Drill. In 1938 or 1939, Charlie constructed the first of three bridges he would build over the Tanalian River, decking it over with planks sawed on his mill. Sometime after 1940 the bridge washed out, but Charlie was determined to connect people living on both sides of the Tanalian River, specifically Doc and Joe, who lived on the east side of the river and himself on the west side.

In 1940, 19 years after Macnab and Vreeland's trip, another group of well documented sportsmen arrived at Tanalian Point, the first known to get there by air. The 1940 group was led by Field & Stream writer-editor Dan Holland, accompanied by writer-sportsmen Corey Ford and Alastair MacBain of New York City. Their purpose was to fish for grayling at the mouth of the Tanalian River and for rainbow trout on the upper Newhalen River near Nondalton. They probably flew to Lake Clark from Anchorage in a red monoplane owned by Bert Rouff's Bristol Bay Air Service. Ford took several photographs of Doc Dutton and Joe Kackley, and Holland took some historically important photographs at the Nondalton subsistence fish village on the Newhalen River.

In 1942, the first commercial bush pilot, Leon “Babe” Alsworth and his wife Mary Griechen Alsworth, bought the Jim Kennedy cabin across the lake from Tanalian Point. This purchase gave the Alsworths a toehold on Lake Clark and allowed for a careful survey of the lake to find the best place to build a homestead at an airplane-friendly spot. Kennedy sold the place to the Alsworths because he had found it nearly impossible to operate an airplane on the lake in front of his cabin because of the wind and waves. The Kennedys moved to Tanalian Point, where Jim landed a wheeled plane safely on the Tanalian River delta. During the next 18 months, Babe Alsworth learned the same hard lessons Kennedy had about the impossibility of safe airplane operations on the north side of Lake Clark.

Babe looked around Tanalian Point and, in August 1944, the Alsworths moved all their belongings, including goats and airplane parts, to Hardenburg Bay about one mile east of Tanalian Point. Hardenburg Bay was a safe harbor for both aircraft and boats. Additionally, it was conducive to the construction of a 1,500-foot landing strip, which was begun in the fall of 1944 and completed to 3,800 feet by 1950-1952 by Alsworth’s multi-talented mechanic, Mike Vandegrift, and builder Joe Thompson. In 1950, a post office was established in the Alsworths’ home, and the fledgling hamlet was named Port Alsworth.

While Babe flew practically non-stop for Bristol Bay canneries during the summer fishing season, Vandegrift, Thompson and others built the Alsworths a cabin and small shop to live in temporarily while they cut logs and milled lumber to build a large, two-story, framed home that was complete by 1952. The Alsworth homestead was nearly self-sufficient in food. It was becoming a transportation hub for Lake Clark and Sixmile Lake, as air freight was landed there and then delivered by water to Nondalton and around Lake Clark.

In 1951, pilot Oren Hudson and his wife Ruth, a registered nurse, moved to Nondalton. Oren would become the first resident commercial pilot of the village. With the Hudsons' arrival, Nondalton people suddenly had better access to medical services and to stores in Anchorage.

In 1953 a forest fire broke out on the east side of Hardenburg Bay at Port Alsworth. It was fought by local people, including several women from Nondalton, because most of the men were commercial

A 20TH-CENTURY PORTRAIT OF LAKE CLARK, ALASKA, 1900-2000
fishing out of town in Bristol Bay. The fire burned all around Tanalian Mountain and was not extinguished until the annual fall rains soaked the burning moss. After 1953 the village of Nondalton began sending crews of forest fire fighters throughout the Alaska Territory to fight wild land fires.

During the 1950s, recreational cabins began to crop up around Lake Clark slowly but steadily, built by sport fishermen and hunters, some of who were biologists, businessmen and government employees. With the new cabins came an increase in population around the lake. Some of the people who built or purchased cabins in the between the late 1940s and early 1960s were: Dr. and Mrs. Elmer Bly (1947-1952), Marion and Bertha Mooter, Bob and Bernie Barnett, Jay and Bella Hammond, Terry and Victoria Gill, Mr. and Mrs. Roger Briggs, Al Woodward, Earl and Claire Woodward, John and Claudine Coray and hunting guide Glen Andrews.

With the post-war economic boom in full swing throughout the United States, Lake Clark began to be slowly transformed from a “sleepy hollow” kind of place—with a cash-starved, subsistence-based local economy—to one based more on recreational hunting and fishing, air taxi transport, forest fire fighting, continued participation in the Bristol Bay commercial salmon fishery and a diminishing amount of fur trapping.

In the 1950s, Nondalton people were still involved in the Bristol Bay commercial fishery. Seasonal Nondalton forest-fire fighting crews were becoming more important to the village economy as their reputation for toughness and competence grew. Trapping occupied fewer Nondalton people as fashions changed and prices fell, reducing demand for raw furs. Yet subsistence hunting and fishing continued to play the major role in putting food on the dinner tables of Nondalton and Port Alsworth, as local people maintained their reliance on fish and game resources.

In 1963, placer miner Terry Gill, who was working many of the old claims on Bonanza Creek, hired Sam Alexie and Paul Cusma from Nondalton to resurrect the old Airplane Placer Drill in an attempt to locate valuable gold-bearing placers. However, in spite of a good deal of time and resources expended, they failed to locate anything of significance on Bonanza Creek. The Gills persevered on the Bonanza Creek claims because, for them, it was all about the lifestyle associated with their “Mom and Pop” placer mine. They never made a lot of money, but they did recover enough nuggets to sell to jewelers and used the money to pay their expenses and put food on the table. They never did own their own house in Anchorage, but instead housesat for others and had small cabins at Port Alsworth and at their mine. In 1970s, Richard Proenneke, an Alaskan since 1950 who became known later as the inspiration of the book *One Man’s Wilderness*, used to travel by canoe and on foot 35 miles from his Twin Lakes cabin to Bonanza Creek to assist the Gills in their mining efforts. The Gills sold their placer claims in 1985, and Terry died that same year.

After Fred Bowman died in 1959, his widow and son never put the Portage Creek placers back in production. The narrowness of the Portage Creek canyon did not lend itself to the construction of settling ponds.

Kasna Creek saw a drilling program of exploration in the 1960s and 1970s but the mediocre nature of the copper deposits, lack of infrastructure, lack of a power source and lack of a nearby deep-water port on tidewater made future development difficult. The owners of the claims sold them to the National Park Service about 1998.

After Joe Kackley died in 1944 and Doc Dutton in 1949 and Mary Ann Trefon's children all moved away, she moved to Nondalton in the early 1940s and only returned to Tanalian Point for salmon fishing in the summer. Tanalian Point was eclipsed by the rise of Port Alsworth. The Roland and Randy Briggs family from Illinois purchased the Dutton-Kackley place about 1955 and lived there until the late 1950s. They started a custom salmon canning company at Ugashik on the Bering Sea side of the Alaska Peninsula.

Port Alsworth did not grow a great deal during the 1950s and
A panoramic view from the mid-1940s of the Alsworth homestead. The cabin on the right was the first home of Babe and Mary Alsworth at Hardenburg Bay. The lumber was sawed on Charlie Denison's sawmill. The photograph would probably date from before 1947 when construction of the Alsworth's big house began. Photograph courtesy of John and Esther Alsworth, H-2793.

1960s. It remained essentially the extended Alsworth family homestead into the early 1970s, when Babe Alsworth leased some small parcels from his original homestead to friends and to the Tanalian Bible Camp. Wayne “Bee” Alsworth began to subdivide his 160-acre Native allotment in the late 1970s and early 1980s while also constructing a new, 4,800-foot runway near Babe’s original landing strip. This was the incentive to more settlement at Port Alsworth.

During the 1970s, Alaska was embroiled in a debate about the deposition of millions of acres of Alaska wilderness lands and waters. On one side were preservationists and their allies in Congress and the White House. On the other side were the extractive industries—oil and gas, mining and forest products—along with big game guiding interests and the State of Alaska. Lake Clark and its surroundings were very much part of the debate.

On December 1, 1978, President Jimmy Carter invoked the Antiquities Act and established 56 million acres of new national monuments in order to goad Congress into passing legislation creating new national parks, national wildlife refuges and national forest lands. Lake Clark National Monument was one of the new conservation units. On December 2, 1980, Congress finally passed the landmark conservation legislation that President Carter had sought; it was called the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. The act created units preserving 43,600,000 acres that were to be managed by the U.S. National Park Service, among them the 4,000,000-acre Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.

In the chronicle of twentieth-century Lake Clark history, no other single event had more importance to the future of the area than the creation of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. During the 1980s, the new park became staffed and operational and a field headquarters was established at Port Alsworth. With the advent of the national park, more tourists came to see the scenic beauty of the Lake Clark parksland. The National Park Service hired local residents and overall gave a substantial boost to the local economy, while laboring to preserve the park’s resources for future generations of Americans.

The physical presence of Lake Clark and the remoteness of the surrounding mountains must be considered when one ponders the allure of the place for so many people. When American prospectors began to trickle into the area after gold was discovered in the Turnagain district of Cook Inlet, they were driven by hopes of striking it rich. But as the history of Kasna Creek, Portage Creek and the Bonanza Hills demonstrates, the notion that anyone would get rich laboring at those places was disabused by reality. Short of a massive industrial transformation of the region, there are apparently insufficient concentrations of recoverable placer gold to make mining economically self-supporting.

Of all the people who prospected around Lake Clark from the late nineteenth century to the 1970s, only a handful put down roots and joined the local Dena’ina who have been enchanted by the stupendous scenery and abundant red salmon for more than 1,200 years. This book illuminates the stories of the people discussed within, perhaps enabling readers to compare and contrast the past with the present and ponder the future.
## Twentieth-Century Lake Clark Timeline

### 1900
U.S. Census lists 76 Dena’ina and 17 Euroamericans living at Kijik village. Approximate year Trans-Alaska Company established in San Francisco.

### 1901
During the winter a measles-influenza epidemic hits historic Kijik village, part of the “Great Sickness” that decimated western Alaska. Approximately 25% of the population of Kijik perished in the epidemic.

### 1902
C.T. Brooks and Harry Hicks reported at Lake Clark by Martin Gorman of the U.S. Biological Survey. A forest fire was documented by Gorman and Wilfred Osgood on the southeast side of Lake Clark. Osgood produces the first accurate map of Lake Clark and documents placer mining on Portage Creek. Nondalton men work at Diamond J cannery for the first time.

### 1903

### 1904
Kijik villagers who survived the epidemic are in the process of relocating to Sixmile Lake at the Old Nondalton Site, 1902–1909. Approx. year Brown Carlson begins living at Lake Clark.

### 1905
O.B. and Teresa Millett move to Old Iliamna and soon thereafter to Millett’s Point on the north shore of Iliamna Lake. Mrs. Millett begins keeping a guest book; her first guests were William von Hardenburg and Harry Nelson on December 31, 1906.

### 1906

### 1907
Otis M. “Doc” Dutton and Jonas E. “Joe” Kackley visit Lake Clark, probably for the first time.

### 1908
First public school established at Old Iliamna Village, Gertrude Schalaben is the first teacher. Her husband, Dr. Henry O. Schalaben, provides the first western style medical service to the Native people of the Iliamna-Lake Clark country.

### 1909
R.J. Park files first mining claim on Bonanza Creek. G.C. Martin and F.J. Katz of U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) explore the Iliamna-Lake Clark country conducting the first geological mapping of the area.

### 1910
Hannah Breece holds the first summer school at Nondalton Fish Village at the mouth of the Newhalen River. The census counted 44 people at Old Nondalton.

### 1911
Alexander Leggatt visits Lake Clark and the copper claims on Kasna Creek. J.W. Walker, Doc Dutton, Joe Kackley, Trefon Balluta and Mary Ann Trefon and their children, and the Pete and Agafia Anderson family move from Old Iliamna and Old Nondalton to Tanalian Point to start a new settlement on Lake Clark. Hannah Breece documents a forest fire along the Newhalen Portage, apparently started on the southeast side of Lake Clark. Dutton and Kackley active at Kasna Creek copper claims. Hans Seversen apparently living at Old Nondalton with his wife, Yenlu Nudlash Brooks, and running a small store on the Newhalen Portage at Roadhouse Timber.

### 1912
J.W. Walker files on the first homestead on Lake Clark, 160 acres on the east side of the Tanalian River, but does not complete the paperwork and leaves for Cook Inlet in a few years. Doc Dutton and Joe Kackley live out their lives on the site without benefit of legal title to the land.

### 1913
Harry Featherstone and Harvey Drew file on placer claims at Portage Creek. The
prospector-photographer Arthur S. Tulloch lives in the Lake Clark–Iliamna country. Walter R. Crane, Dean of the School of Mines at Pennsylvania State University, visits Lake Clark and Kasna Creek. Approximate year a reindeer herd was established for the Dena’ina at Iliamna by the Alaska Reindeer Service. The herd was generally grazed around Eagle Bay on the north side of Iliamna Lake and men from Old Nondalton participated.

1914
P. S. Smith of USGS visits the southwestern portion of Lake Clark. Future territorial governor, George A. Parks of the General Land Office, visits Old Nondalton and Kasna Creek. Pete Trefon is born at Tanalian Point. Tommy Rasmussen, a Euroamerican, who lives on the north side of Lake Clark near Kijik had a 25-foot Columbia River salmon boat on Lake Clark, in which he transported Parks around the lake.

1915
Jack and Tatiana Hobson and children move to Lake Clark from the Stony River.

1917
Thomas Rasmussen dies at his cabin on Lake Clark. Thomas Hanmore dies at his cabin at Old Iliamna. Helen Wood is born at Tanalian Point to Anastasia and Edwin Wood. The Pete and Agafia Anderson family leave Tanalian Point and move to Naknek.

1918
A reported forest fire burns in the Miller Creek valley.

1919
Katie Trefon was born at Tanalian Point.

1921
Colonel A. J. Macnab and Fredrick K. Vreeland visit Lake Clark, becoming the first documented recreational visitors to Lake Clark area.

1922
Trefon Balluta dies of tuberculosis at about age 67.

1925
Doc Dutton travels to Oregon to visit his brother by steamship from Cook Inlet. The next documented time he travels away from Lake Clark is by airplane to Anchorage in 1942.

1926
Three big game hunters arrive at Tanalian Point from California. Hans Seversen is their outfitter, and he hires Anton Balluta to guide the hunters to Twin Lakes in search of moose.

1927
Gabriel Trefon acquires the first outboard engine in Old Nondalton.

1928
Agafia Trefon dies at age 20 and is the first person to be buried in the Trefon-Nudlash Cemetery at Tanalian Point.

1929
A USGS survey crew led by Stephen R. Capps, with 15 head of horses, explores the region north of Lake Clark and maps the Telaquana Trail. Former Portage Creek resident and miner Billy Gleason dies at Libbyville, at age 60.

1930
Matt Nieminen lands a Waco-10 at Tanalian Point, marking the first documented airplane landing at Tanalian Point on June 30. Nondalton Chief Zackar Evanoff relinquishes his position to Alexie Balluta. Mr. and Mrs. William Leise hold first public school at Old Nondalton.

1932
Charlie Denison, his son Floyd and his wife Lena move to Tanalian Point. Lena Denison is perhaps the first Lake Clark resident to arrive by air. Doc Dutton and Joe Kackley acquire their first AM radio receiver. The first freight flight lands on the ice at Tanalian Point, bringing in flour and sugar for Doc and Joe. The air freight fee is three-and-a-half cents per pound, and the pilot is Oscar Winchell. Approx. year Sam Turner moves to the mouth of the Chulitna River.

1933
Pilot Kenny Neese flies out first documented guide and Dall’s sheep sport hunter from Kontrashibuna Lake to Seversen’s Roadhouse.
1934
Charlie and Floyd Denison, with the help of several men and other dog teams from Iliamna, sled in the first sawmill at Tanalian Point from Seversen's Roadhouse.

1935
Chief Zackar Evanoff dies at Old Nondalton at age 81. Jim and Glenna Kennedy and children move to Lake Clark, and Anton Balluta helps them build their log house on the north side of the lake. Bill Smith and his nephew William H. Moore arrive on Lake Clark and build cabin on north shore of the lake.

1936
Fred and Norma Bowman and son Howard move to Bowman's camp on Portage Creek on the north shore of Lake Clark. Lena Denison runs the first clothes washing machine, a Maytag wringer-washer, on Lake Clark.

1937
Approximate year Joe Thompson arrives at Lake Clark.

1938
Approximate year Charlie Denison builds the first footbridge over the Tanalian River. Pilot Kenny Neese takes Brown Carlson on his first airplane ride to Anchorage.

1939

1940
Present day Nondalton begins to be established. The Denison bridge, supported by log cribs containing small boulders, was in place on the Tanalian River by this time.

1941
Approximate year Nellie Mae Alexander (Denison) dies. Nellie Mae is the first person to be buried at the Kackley-Dutton-Denison Cemetery. Gabriel Trefon builds an early house in present day Nondalton. Mary Moore killed by propeller strike in front of the Bill Smith cabin on north side of Lake Clark.

1942
Babe and Mary Alsworth move to the Jim Kennedy place on the north side of Lake Clark from Koggiung, on the lower Kvichak River.

1943
Babe and Mary Alsworth's first son, Leon, Jr., is born at Kanakanak Hospital July 12, and dies ten months later; he is buried on a terrace north of the Jim Kennedy site.

1944
Babe and Mary Alsworth move to Hardenburg Bay on the southeast side of Lake Clark. Mike Vandergrift moves to Lake Clark to be Babe Alsworth's mechanic and builder. Charlie Denison marries Helen Beeman at Doc Dutton's house on Tanalian Point. Joe Kackley dies of a heart attack in bed after fighting a house fire at Floyd Denison's, at the age of 83. He is buried in the Kackley-Dutton-Denison cemetery.

1945
Joe Thompson and Mike Vandergrift have cleared a 1,500-foot landing strip on the Alsworth's homestead. It is the first wheeled landing strip built on Lake Clark.

1946
The move from Old Nondalton village to present day Nondalton, three miles to the west, was completed.

1947
Nondalton Chief Alexie Balluta relinquishes his power to Gabriel Trefon. Babe and Mary Alsworth begin building new home on Hardenburg Bay.

1948
Jack Hobson dies in Nondalton at about 81.

1949
Doc Dutton dies at his house on Tanalian Point at the age of 90 and is buried in the Kackley-Dutton-Denison Cemetery.

1950
The Port Alsworth post office is established with Mary Alsworth as the postmaster. First freight plane lands at Port Alsworth on the newly expanded 3,800-foot runway.

1951
Alexie Balluta, retired Nondalton chief, dies at about age 66. Pilot Oren Hudson and wife Ruth reside in Nondalton.

1952
The Alsworth home is completed by Mike Vandergrift and Joe Thompson. Jay Hammond files on a homestead at the mouth of Miller Creek.

1953
A forest fire is started by children playing with fireworks on the Fourth of July and burns on the western flank of Tanalian Mountain and towards Copper Mountain. The fire jumps the Tanalian River to the west.
Diarist Helen Beemen Denison, R.N., dies at her home on Lake Clark and is buried in the Kackley-Dutton-Denison cemetery. John and Claudine Coray begin a two-year teaching stint at the Nondalton School 1953-1955.

1954
Charlie Denison begins building his third bridge over the Tanalian River, a suspension bridge.

1957
Charlie Denison marries Freida Luft, the last of his five wives. Freida was from California.

1958
Mary Ann Trefon dies at Nondalton at the age of 83. The Denison bridge is completed over the Tanalian River. Terry and Victoria Gill begin placer mining on their claims in the Bonanza Hills. Wassillie Trefon drowns while commercial fishing near Graveyard cannery, in Kvichak Bay at age of 61. Norma Bowman, R.N. and John Coray assist Claudine Coray in the birth of her daughter Anne, at Portage Creek.

1959
Charlie Denison dies at his home on Lake Clark, age 75, and is buried in the Kackley-Dutton-Denison Cemetery. Fred E. Bowman dies in Anchorage, age 68, and is buried in Memorial Cemetery. The suspension bridge over the Tanalian River built by Charlie Denison washes out in a fall flood. John Coray dies when his airplane disappears in lower Cook Inlet.

1960
Gabriel Trefon has first snowmobile in Nondalton. Pilot Bob Barnett gives Brown Carlson his second airplane ride to Anchorage.

1961
Joe Thompson builds the last of his several cabins on Lake Clark near Portage Creek.

1962
Richard Proenneke makes his first trip from Kodiak to Twin Lakes, flying from Iliamna to Twin Lakes with Oren Hudson.

1963
Brown Carlson left his Lake Clark home for the last time in August for an Anchorage nursing home.

1964
Nondalton Chief Gabriel Trefon dies at age 66. Harry Balluta becomes the last traditional chief and is replaced later by a Tribal Council. In March, an earthquake hits south-central Alaska. It is felt at Lake Clark and much of the Bristol Bay region.

1966
Sam Turner dies at his camp after his brothers arrive for a long-anticipated visit, at about age 70.

1967
Richard Proenneke builds his first log building, a shed style chicken coop for Babe Alsworth.

1968
Richard Proenneke builds his cabin 45 miles north of Port Alsworth on Upper Twin Lakes.

1969
Pauline Zackar of Nondalton graduates from Mt. Edgecumbe High School in Sitka. Leon "Lonnie" Alsworth, Jr., dies in airplane accident near Upper Talarik Creek.

1970
Kijik: An Historic Tanaina Indian Settlement by James W. VanStone and Joan B. Townsend is published by the Field Museum of Natural History.

1971
Joe Thompson leaves Lake Clark for the last time for North Dakota. The Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement establishes the Kijik Corporation as the Nondalton village corporation within the regional Bristol Bay Corporation.

1973
One Man's Wilderness published by Alaska Northwest Publishing Company chronicling Richard Proenneke's first year of life on Upper Twin Lakes and immediately becomes a best-seller in Alaska. The book was based on Proenneke's journals and was edited by Sam Keith.

1974
Jay Hammond elected the governor of Alaska. Pauline Zackar Hobson graduates with a B.S. degree from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Babe and Mary Alsworth have a radio telephone in their home by 1974-1975.

1975
Brown Carlson dies in Anchorage at age 95. The Tanalian Native Group, comprised of members of the Alsworth family spanning three generations, incorporates as Tanalian Inc.

1976
The first public school at Port Alsworth begins operating at the Tanalian Bible Camp building; Dan Hill is the first school teacher. He teaches at Port Alsworth until 1984. Dave and Jacque Wilder build their cabin at Port Alsworth. Mark and Sandy Lang move to Port Alsworth.
1978
President Jimmy Carter invokes the Antiquities Act and establishes millions of acres of new national monuments throughout Alaska, among them Lake Clark National Monument. Norma Bowman dies at the Palmer Pioneer Home at age 93 and is interred in Anchorage's Memorial Cemetery.

1979

1980
Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act passed by Congress; President Carter signs the act, preserving 97 million acres of new national parks and national wildlife refuges, among them the 4,000,000-acre Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.

1981
Paul Haertel becomes first superintendent at Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.

1982
Jay Hammond completes a second four-year term as governor of Alaska; he and his wife, Bella, retire to their Lake Clark homestead. A new Port Alsworth school is built. Sig Alsworth dies in a floatplane crash on Hudson Lake and is buried in the Alsworth Family Cemetery. Wayne “Bee” Alsworth completes his new 4,400-foot runway at Port Alsworth.

1983
Pauline Zackar Hobson graduates from Southern Oregon State College in Ashland, Oregon with an M.A. degree in Education. First year of operation for the new Port Alsworth school. Joe Thompson dies at Traverse County, Minnesota at age 81. Freida Denison dies in California at the age of 83. Andrew Balluta becomes the first Dena’ina ranger at Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.

1984
The Keyes Point recreational development begins under the auspices of the Kijik Corporation near the western end of Lake Clark on corporation lands. Dan Hill leaves Port Alsworth school.

1985
Terry Gill, Bonanza Creek placer miner, dies in Anchorage.

1986
Lake Clark-Lake Iliamna Country, by Fred Hirschmann, former National Park Ranger at Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, is published by Alaska Geographic Society; it is one of the first books to deal with the Iliamna-Lake Clark country. Floyd Denison dies in Anchorage at age 79.

1991
Mark and Sandy Lang start Lake Clark Inn at Port Alsworth. Tanalian Electrical Cooperative brings community power to Port Alsworth.

1992
Dave Wilder establishes Lake and Peninsula Airlines at Port Alsworth.

1994
Jay Hammond writes his autobiography, Tales of Alaska’s Bush Rat Governor.

1995

1996
Mary Alsworth dies at age 72 and is buried at the Alsworth Family Cemetery.

1997
Richard Proenneke begins spending more time at Port Alsworth during the next two winters.

1998
Dustin Lang graduates from high school after attending 12 years of school at Port Alsworth. In 2006 he graduates from medical school.

2000
Richard Proenneke spends two weeks at Port Alsworth and two hours at his home at Twin Lakes. He leaves the area for the last time.

2001
Jay Hammond writes a memoir, Chips from the Chopping Block.

2003
Richard Proenneke dies in California, age 86. Howard Bowman is suddenly stricken at his Portage Creek home and dies in Anchorage.

2004
Babe Alsworth dies at the Anchorage Pioneer Home at age 95 and is interred at the Alsworth Family Cemetery.

2005
Jay Hammond dies in his sleep at his Lake Clark homestead at age 83 and is interred there.
Chapter 1
Previous Residents and Travelers

The earliest documented human site within the boundaries of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve is between 10,000 and 11,000 years before present, and is located near Two Lakes, approximately 60 miles north of Port Alsworth.

The earliest known people to live around Lake Clark's shores camped on the east side of Hardenburg Bay between 4,000 and 3,800 years before present. A small campsite was excavated in 2007 and 2008 and subjected to radiocarbon analysis in order to date the site.6

The Russian promyshlenniki (fur hunters) Vasili Ivanov reportedly traveled through Lake Clark in the late 1790s on a winter exploration from Iliamna Bay to the Yukon River. Ivanov explored potential new fur trapping country. Ivanov worked for the Lebedev-Lastochkin Company, and his trip was reported to have been conducted between early January and April. Russian scholars believe Ivanov visited Lake Clark on his way north to the Mulchatna Dena'ina villages.7 Ivanov’s account was based on his verbal report to historian V.N. Berkh at Kodiak in 1804–1805 and on naval officer G.I. Davydov’s reading of a manuscript of the purported trip that was in the offices of the Russian American Company at Kodiak.8

Other early Russian explorers to Lake Clark may have been Vasili Grigorevich Medvednikov and Filipp Kashevararov who traveled by baidarka in 1792 from Bristol Bay. They were reported to have put up a cross in the vicinity of the debouchment of the Newhalen River from Lake Clark. Kashevararov wrote a report describing their travels in 1822.9

During the 1790s, the Dena’ina fought the Russians in several pitched battles on the north end of Iliamna Lake, perhaps at Old Iliamna or Pedro Bay or both, and on the Kenai Peninsula. These hostilities were the result of the promyshlenniki’s harsh treatment of the Dena’ina people, cheating them of their land, undervaluing their fur and abusing their women and children.

It was not until 1818, when the Russian explorer Peter Korsakovskiy of the Russian America Company visited Lake Clark, that the Russians firmly documented the presence of the lake. It is likely that there were a few Russian trappers in the country during the years 1799–1818, including Eremy Rodionov, who had a summer camp at Pile Bay. During August 1818, Korsakovskiy apparently traveled over the Newhalen Portage and visited Sixmile Lake10 before heading northwest toward the Mulchatna River. Korsakovskiy documented the word “Kidjhik” for the first time. The Dena’ina word for Lake Clark is Qizhjeh Vena, meaning “place people gather lake”—a testament to the large villages that have been occupied for about 1,200 years near the mouth of the Kijik. The annually occurring pre-contact run of the red salmon into Lake Clark could have been on the order of two to three million spawners, allowing the seminomadic Dena’ina to establish permanent year around villages around Kijik.11

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9 Unrua, op. cit., 71.
10 VanStone, op. cit., 52, 53, 54, 55, 56.
11 Lynch, Qizhjeh, 8-9; Carol Ann Woody, conversations with the author, 2000 to present.
John W. Clark (1846-1896) was the chief trader for the Alaska Commercial Company trading post at Nushagak between 1879 and his death in 1896. He visited Lake Clark in 1891 and is the namesake of Lake Clark. Photograph courtesy of Dennis and Lois Herrmann, H-2727.

Russian and Creole Orthodox clergy visited historic Kijik village after 1845 when Nikolaevskii Redoubt was established near the mouth of the Kenai River. But visits by Russian Orthodox churchmen were infrequent in the mid-nineteenth century and it was not until the mid-1870s, after the area had come under United States jurisdiction, that visits to Kijik by missionaries became more common. The remoteness of Lake Clark continued to be an impediment to regular visits by priests, though records from the Nushagak Mission indicate that 32 people at Kijik were baptized in 1877. This marks the initial church celebrations of baptism, confirmation, marriage and burial for the people of Kijik. They were some of the last people in the Bristol Bay region to be converted to Christianity, a process that occurred between the late 1840s and early 1880s.  

During the summer of 1882, Charles Leslie McKay of the U.S. Signal Service and a biologist collecting specimens for the Smithsonian Institution, was stationed at Nushagak. He visited Lake Clark but apparently did not get to Kijik village. He must have traveled along the six-mile-long Newhalen Portage, headed east on Sixmile Lake and on to Lake Clark and then to the Chulitna River. McKay brought Yup'ik guides and baidarka paddlers from Nushagak, but while he was in the Lake Clark country, he hired Zachar Evanoff, a young Dena'ina who seemed to have had a foot in both Old Iliamna village and historic Kijik, to guide him up the Chulitna River to the divide near the Koktuli River along the Chulitna Portage. By the early 1880s, there were California gold miners coming into the country through Iliamna Bay, on lower Cook Inlet; no doubt some had penetrated into the Lake Clark country. Simultaneously, prospectors were entering the Bristol Bay uplands, including probably Lake Clark via the emerging commercial salmon industry’s footprint on Nushagak Bay. It is even possible that the Alaska Commercial Company trader John W. Clark (later to become the namesake of the

lake) outfitted some prospectors who arrived at Lake Clark via Kvichak River, Iliamna Lake and the Newhalen Portage in the 1880s and 1890s. Unfortunately, there is no documented proof of their prospecting activity but merely speculation of plausible developments based on informed opinion of the writer. It is possible that documents in the form of journals or letters are extant, but thus far, they have not materialized.\textsuperscript{14}

In January 1891, A.B. Schanz and John W. Clark and party came by dog sled from Nushagak to “discover” the remote northern tributary of Iliamna Lake—Qizhjeh Vena. Despite his acknowledgment that the Dena’ina Athabascan had a name for the lake, Schanz, in a bit of colonial hubris, renamed it in honor of his traveling companion and organizer of the sledging trip, longtime fur trader John W. Clark.\textsuperscript{15} Schanz’s main contribution to the history of Lake Clark is that he was the first American to document the lake’s existence. From the platform of \textit{Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper}, he publicized the lake’s beautiful scenery and offered the American public their first description of the Lake Clark Dena’ina people. Schanz published a map of Lake Clark that was an improvement over earlier Russian-made maps, but it still had significant errors in the cartography and geography of Lake Clark.\textsuperscript{16} Schanz’s impressions of Kijik were very positive:

\begin{center}

\textbf{The headman of the village wore cowhide top-boots and a blue swallow-tailed coat ... The houses and fish caches were neatly built of hewn logs and planks, the houses having windows made of tanned skin of mountain sheep intestines. The whole village bore an air of respectability and cleanliness ... upon entering the chief’s house, we found it floored with carefully hewn planks and heated by an old-fashioned heavy Russian box stove with four holes for cooking. ... Soon the teakettle was singing on the little stove, and before long we were stimulating ourselves with an infusion of fragrant tea, which the chief proudly had served in some fancy china cups ... His squaw [sic] also laid before us some excellent dried salmon, very clean and of a delicious flavor. ... these Indians have been accustomed to secure articles of civilized comfort and luxury through intertribal commerce from trading posts on Cook Inlet ... [and] on Knik Bay.\textsuperscript{17}}
\end{center}


\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 184-186, 222. Hazel Nudlash Barlip, interview with the author, August 5, 1998.

\textsuperscript{16} Unrau, \textit{op. cit.}, 212

In 1898, Lieutenant Hugh Rodman, on leave from the U.S. Navy and an assistant with the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, explored Lake Clark, Kontrashibuna Lake and visited historic Kijik Village while on a prospecting foray for gold. Rodman was told by the chief of Kijik Village, Nicholai Rickertoff (Riktorov), that a Dena’ina man had found a vein of possible gold-bearing rock in the mountains beyond Kontrashibuna Lake. Rodman provided the first written description of the land on the east side of Lake Clark around what would become Tanalian Point and Port Alsworth.\(^{18}\) While in the Cook Inlet area Rodman met Jack Hobson who would be at Kijik in 1902 at the time of a terrible epidemic of measles and influenza. Hobson later moved to Qeghnilen soon after and married Tatiana Constantine and started a large family. He was one of the few Euro-Americans to convert to Russian Orthodoxy and was known as Grigorii Mikhailovich Hobson and was quite fluent in Dena’ina.\(^{19}\)

Rodman traveled with Dena’ina guides from Old Iliamna village to Lake Clark via Iliamna Lake, the Newhalen Portage, the Newhalen River, Sixmile Lake and Lake Clark by baidarka and hiking on foot.

July 22, ’98, [about 20 miles up Lake Clark] Nicolai [sic] [Riktoeov] stopped at the base of a mountain (Tanalian Mountain) saying that beyond the mountain was a lake (Kontrashibuna Lake) and that somewhere beyond the lake were the mountains we sought, and that Peter, his paddler, would stay to guide us and away went Nicolai and Michali for upper Kijik.

It is believed that Rodman misunderstood Nicolai and that the Dena’ina went across the lake to historic Kijik village rather than upper Lake Clark. Rodman described packing over the “upper parts of the hills”\(^{20}\) and hearing the sound of falling water, which they thought was the outlet of the “lake beyond the mountain.” The sound they heard was likely the falling Tanalian River going over the 50-foot high Tanalian Falls.\(^{21}\) They hiked over downed trees and through brush and:


\(^{20}\) Ibid., 8.

clouds of mosquitoes, with the men falling into moss holes and the bidarka [baidarka] hanging in the trees but we finally made the four miles over the mountain slope, found ourselves on the calm water of the lake outlet, and paddling seven or eight miles along the lake shore were by eleven o’clock camped.  

The prospect Nicholai had found turned out to be “soft yellow iron pyrites.” Later Rodman and his three Dena’ina guides, encountering big winds, had a harrowing trip across Lake Clark to Kijik village. Rodman met the sick man who had previously found the “fools gold” and was now dying of tuberculosis at Kijik. Rodman gave a rather pessimistic view of Kijik Village during the summer of 1898.

Rodman witnessed a dance while at Kijik.

An all day rain. In honor of my visit, Nicolai gave a dance in which two men sat on the floor and by convulsive jerking of their muscles kept time to the singing of other Natives sitting along the walls. The dancers had small wands decorated with eagle feathers and used them as spears and clubs in pantomime killing a bear while a woman standing at one side slowly swayed from side to side and with her hands pretended to be preparing the entrails and sinew. The songs are not half bad and nearly always in minor.

In 1902 biologist Wilfred Osgood was the first federal explorer to visit Lake Clark in the twentieth century. He produced the most accurate map of Lake Clark and took important photographs of Kijik village and some of its residents in the immediate aftermath of the “Great Sickness.

Photograph courtesy of the Field Museum, H-638.

The sick man [was] dying of consumption as indeed are all these people...(chief) Nicholai’s capital Nikhkak (historic Kijik Village) is not impressive, two barabaras, two or three caches built or posts, a banya or sweat-house...a small church and an extensive graveyard with many new graves. The church is a small log affair built by the Natives when they were more numerous than they are now. Once in two or three years when the ice is good a Russian missionary comes from the Bering Sea to hold a service here, during his absence the necessary affairs of the church are performed by a Native. Only last night a woman walked in through the woods from a barabara five or six miles away carrying her two-day-old baby to be baptized...Vasili performed the ceremony dipping the youngster three times in a basket of warm water purified with a few drops of holy water from a beer bottle.

In 1902 biologist Wilfred Osgood was the first federal explorer to visit Lake Clark in the twentieth century. He produced the most accurate map of Lake Clark and took important photographs of Kijik village and some of its residents in the immediate aftermath of the “Great Sickness.

Photograph courtesy of the Field Museum, H-638.

22 Rodman, op. cit., 8.
23 Ibid., 10; barabara is the Russian word for the semi-subterranean winter houses that were built in the ground two to three feet to provide insulation during the winter months and used by Dena’ina Athabascans.
As had been suggested earlier, prospectors had been visiting the Lake Clark country since the early 1880s and with them came epidemics and disease, such as tuberculosis, scarlet fever, small pox, influenza and measles. As one historian noted:

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Dena’ina were frequently visited by ... epidemics. During his 1880 visit to the Dena’ina of the Mulchatna area, priest Vasily Shishkin drew a grim picture of the devastation produced by an epidemic of scarlet fever, which wiped out 117 of 144 residents of the locality. Father Modestov described the overall consequences of epidemics in the same area, reportedly, of 600-800 people who populated Kijik, Iliamna and Mulchatna area in the 1870s, by 1895 only 138 “Kenaitze” remained alive. Later, in 1921, Father Shadura, writing about four major Cook Inlet Dena’ina villages, noted that the Indians “die like flies from influenza and measles.” Dena’ina of the Kijik village who suffered through the several epidemics eventually came to the conclusion that the ground where their village stood had been poisoned and apparently on both a missionary’s and their elder’s advice they abandoned the old site in 1901 and founded a new settlement, Nondalton, close to the trading post on Iliamna Lake and the canneries of Bristol Bay.25

The diseases brought by prospectors to the Lake Clark country were devastating to the well-being of the Dena’ina. One of the last major epidemics to hit the Kijik people was the “Great Sickness” in southwest Alaska in 1901–1902 which was a deadly combination of influenza and measles that finally drove the survivors to move away from Kijik. However, we can see from Rodman’s 1898 account that Kijik’s people were being decimated by tuberculosis even before the arrival of the “Great Sickness” in 1901–1902.

Little is known about the first wave of late-nineteenth-century prospectors to arrive at Lake Clark. It is only from about 1900 into the first decade of the twentieth century that we are able to identify specific prospectors and miners in the Lake Clark country.

Two such early prospectors who passed through Lake Clark and wintered (1900–1901) at Old Iliamna village were Lemuel E. Bonham and Quincy Williams, both from Wisconsin, who prior to coming to the Bristol Bay region were in the Klondike and at Nome in the late 1890s.

Bonham describes the logistics of travel from lower Cook Inlet on Iliamna Bay to the headwaters of the Kuskokwim River via Kijik village.

25 Znamenski, op cit., 38, 39.
I am at the present time on Cook Inlet, or at the mouth just opposite Kodiak town. I have been here four weeks to get some provisions off a steamer that was to have arrived here Feb. 26. The same steamer run in here Feb. 1st with passengers from Seattle, bound for the headwaters of the Kuskokwim. This is the best winter route 12 mile portage from here to Iliamna Village, hence 50 miles down the lake [Iliamna Lake] hence 6 miles [Newhalen Portage] portage to river between Clark Lake and Iliamna Lake, hence 13 miles up river to Kijik [Indian village]. Hence 140 miles do (sic) north to point of late discoveries on Kuskokwim. I took 500 lbs. for a stampede from here to Kijik.

In the 1900 U.S. census, there were 17 American prospectors living in and around Kijik village, which would have presented frequent opportunities for ill prospectors to transmit contagious diseases to the Dena’ina. During the summer of 1902, the first federal zoologist to visit Lake Clark, Wilfred Osgood, was working for the U.S. Bureau of Biological Survey. Botanist Marlin Gorman accompanied Osgood while he explored Lake Clark. Osgood paddled the full length of Lake Clark, including Little Lake Clark, and provided a much more accurate map of the lake than the A.B. Schanz map.

Gorman’s journal of the trip illuminated plant species growing in the Lake Clark-Iliamna country, but also documented some of the earliest Euroamerican activities around Tanalian Point and Kontrashibuna Lake.

Osgood had a positive first impression upon seeing Lake Clark:

Our first view of Lake Clark from the low ground near the head of the Nogheling River (Newhalen River) was not an impressive one, as we were so situated that only the lower end, where the shores are comparatively low, could be seen. When once on the lake itself, however, with an unobstructed vista of the greater part of its length, the view was magnificent.

G.C. Martin and F. J. Katz, two geologists with the United States Geological Survey, hereafter USGS, and a party of ten men visited the Iliamna-Lake Clark area in 1909 and conducted the initial comprehensive mapping survey of the lake country. Their maps were published in 1912 and were the most concise maps made of Lake Clark and Iliamna to that date.

In 1914, USGS geologist Philip S. Smith and topographer R.H. Sargent brought in a party of five additional men and a pack train of 20 horses to explore the Lake Clark-Central Kuskokwim River area. They divided their party into two groups; one went by boat to the Roadhouse and the other group of men rode horses around the north side of Iliamna Lake to the Newhalen Portage and on to Sixmile Lake where they departed for the Kuskokwim on June 20. The expedition completed its work at Iditarod on September 10 after a journey of 280 miles from Sixmile Lake, mapping some 4,800 square miles of what had previously been terra incognita.

The expedition publication, The Lake Clark-Central Kuskokwim Region, Alaska, written by Smith presented a full panoply of geographical, geologic and physiographic information about the country from

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26 L.E. Bonham. Letter of March 10, 1901 to Mr. and Mrs. A.G. Bonham, copy in the LACL history files.
27 1900 Census of the United States, Kijik village.
32 Roadhouse refers to a trading post near present-day Iliamna that was built on the Newhalen Portage by the Trans-Alaska Company in 1902. A second roadhouse was built on the beach near the start point of the Newhalen Portage in 1913 by miner Frank Brown and by the early 1920s was known as Seversen’s Roadhouse.
Lake Clark to the central Kuskokwim district.33

The next documented noteworthy visitors to Lake Clark were Colonel A.J. “Sandy” Macnab of the U.S. Army and Frederick K. Vreeland of New York City who spent more than 50 days exploring and hunting in the Lake Clark-Iliamna country during the summer of 1921. The significance of the Macnab and Vreeland trip was that they were the first documented recreationalists to visit what is now Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. In addition, both Macnab and Vreeland left an important legacy for future generations. Macnab kept a journal of his trip from when he went on leave from Camp Benning, Georgia on June 27, 1921, until October 8 when he and Vreeland returned to Seattle. Macnab’s diary provides glimpses of the Lake Clark-Iliamna country six years before the Bristol Bay region was opened up to the wider world with the arrival of Merrill and Nieminen in their airplanes.

Vreeland took several photographs of the people and localities they encountered around Lake Clark and Iliamna Lake, and he wrote a trip report on biological conditions which he sent to a prominent biologist at the Smithsonian Institution.34

The last significant expeditions of exploration into the Lake Clark country occurred between the years 1926 and 1929. They were led by the very capable geologist-explorer Stephen R. Capps of the USGS. During four expeditions, Capps and his crew surveyed a 27,000-square-mile region between Rainy Pass on the north, the Kuskokwim, Stony, and Mulchatna river drainage on the west, Iliamna to the south and Cook Inlet on the east. Much of the area northeast of Lake Clark explored by Macnab and Vreeland was mapped by Capps’ 1929 expedition.

Capps’ eloquent descriptions of the scenic beauty and wilderness charting of the Lake Clark country are worth repeating:

This portion of the Alaska Range, though nowhere nearing the altitude of Mount McKinley, is nevertheless of impressive grandeur, with many peaks reaching heights of 10,000 to 12,000 feet, and include a labyrinth of rugged mountain crests that nourish great valley glaciers, interspersed with timbered valleys studded with magnificent glacial lakes. In it the wild animals including moose, big horn sheep, and grizzly bears, live in a primitive wilderness almost undisturbed by men.35

33 Unrau, op. cit., 235-236.
In 1927 Capps led an expedition with five other men and 15 pack horses from Trading Bay into the Chakachatna—Chakachamna—Kenibuna Lakes but also traveled by Mount Spurr, ascended Nagishlamina River and came upon the Chilligan River valley. They mapped about 2,000 square miles of unsurveyed country, affecting the activities of another Alaskan, Russel H. Merrill of Anchorage Air Transport Company. Using Capps’ information, Merrill began flying from the Susitna River basin across the Alaska Range into the Kuskokwim country in the fall of 1927. Merrill reported that he had seen a pass through the Alaska Range; it would ultimately become known as Merrill Pass.³⁶

On November 6, 1927, Merrill took a straight line compass bearing from Anchorage over the Alaska Range to Akiak on the Kuskokwim River. He flew high over the Chakachamna Lake and high over the range. Heading west for a time, Merrill thought he saw a pass that would connect the Susitna country with the Kuskokwim. Merrill spent the night in Akiak and the next day flew to Bethel. On November 8, carrying three passengers, Merrill headed back to Anchorage. Flying low, he passed two undocumented lakes that he called Two Lake and Upper Two Lakes. Later, after a few dead ends, he found the pass that would bear his name, Merrill Pass, a 3,000-foot-elevation short-cut through the innards of the Alaska Range. Two days later, he passed through Merrill Pass and went over Chakachamna Lake and over the 11,000-foot summit of Mount Spurr. Merrill climbed to 13,000 feet in his open cockpit Travel Air in minus 30 degree Fahrenheit weather. He took several photographs of Merrill Pass and Two Lakes.³⁷

Capps wrote about the logistical challenges facing his 1929 expedition and the novelty of horses in the Lake Clark country,

Today we moved from an unattractive, bug-infested camp with poor horse feed to the foot of this beautiful lake and are camped just outside a Native fishing village [Nondalton]. This place is equally buggy, but there is more grass and after the boys go back for the second load of stuff tomorrow we will be through with “double tripping” for a month, and possibly for all summer. I have made arrangements with a squaw man (sic) [Jack Hobson] here to take some 1,500 lbs. of supplies up Lake Clark for 40 miles to a trapper’s [Brown Carlson] cabin, so from here on we can go straight ahead, and in a couple days will be at the edge of the work done by [R.H.] Sargent and P.S. Smith in 1914 and onto virgin ground. … Our arrival here was the cause of great excitement among the few Native

³⁶ Unrau, op. cit., 241.
families at this place [Nondalton Fish Village] as none of them under 15 years of age had ever seen a horse. Then, soon after we had made camp, a boat load of ten of them came down from another village above here [Tanalian Point] not to see us, but to see the horses, “Red” gave several of the kids a short ride, and it was a thrill that comes once in a lifetime for them.38

Capps wrote about the sparsely inhabited remoteness of the Lake Clark country,

Of course we have learnt nothing of outside news, and have seen not a soul white or Native, since we left Lake Clark. The packers will probably see the lone prospector at Lake Clark tomorrow or next day, but the rest of us will get another month without sight of a human being other than ourselves.39

Capps summed up his impressions of the scenic beauty of Lake Clark,

Lake Clark is a magnificent body of water surrounded, except at the lower end, by lofty mountains. It is 44 miles long, averages about 4 miles in width, and is separated by short stretches of river from Sixmile Lake, below, and Little Lake Clark, above … In beauty of setting it deserves a place among the famous mountain lakes of the world, though it has been little visited. … and its shores are inhabited by only half a dozen white men and less than a hundred Natives.40

Capps spoke about the difficulties of summer travel in the Lake Clark country,

For summer transportation all supplies for the country continue to Lake Clark are backhauled across portage [Newhalen Portage] a distance of about 6 miles from the head of the portage, and in fact generally throughout the country to the north, there are only faint native trails for land travel. One of these may be followed from Nondalton village northwesternd to the Chulitna River, and another follows the north shore of Lake Clark, for the most part keeping to the beach…Another faint trail, formerly much used by Natives, leaves the shore of Lake Clark, at the mouth of the Kijik River and continues northward through the foothills to Telakwana Lake.41

The end of Capps’ 1929 expedition into the Lake Clark country marked the end of the age of exploration since the early years of the American ownership of Alaska. The geographic and geologic discoveries were very significant scientific accomplishments. In an area where the Federal government invested few resources in scientific discovery, government explorers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century labored very capably and accomplished major tasks at little cost to the government. The Federal government exploration of Alaska and the Lake Clark country was nearly the exclusive realm of the U.S. Army, the USGS and the Bureau of Biological Survey, the exception being the Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper expedition with A.B. Schanz and John W. Clark in 1891.42

38 Unrau, op. cit., 243.
39 ibid., 244.
40 ibid., 245.
41 ibid., 246.
42 ibid., 246-248.
Chapter 2
Infectious Diseases at Historic Kijik and the Rise of Nondalton, Old and Present Day Villages
1902–1941

By the year 1900, historic Kijik village on the north shore of Lake Clark was in decline. The population of the Lake Clark Dena'ina had been decreasing since the mid-nineteenth century as diseases brought to southwestern Alaska by prospectors, cannery workers and fishermen took a drastic toll on the Dena'ina people. Losses to disease more than offset any Kijik population gain brought about by the abandonment of the Mulchatna River villages, the village at Telaquana Lake, and Qeghen on the Stony River whose residents largely moved downriver and established "Hungry Village" (Lime Village) or to historic Kijik.45

The more remote Dena'ina villages were abandoned because of a number of factors. By the mid to late 1880s, reduced salmon escapement to the Mulchatna River brought about by cannery fish traps caused starvation and suffering to the Dena'ina living in upriver villages and contributed to villagers leaving. Epidemic diseases such as influenza and scarlet fever reduced the population. Several Dena'ina villages that were remote from the trading posts established in about the first decade of the twentieth century near present-day Iliamna village, such as Roadhouse No., 2 were abandoned by 1900.44

Ellanna and Andrew Balluta stated that:

What were the most instrumental factors affecting inland Dena'ina settlement and demographic patterns in the 1900s? The Bristol Bay commercial fishery, mineral exploration and the institution of western schools were among the most significant influences in this context.45

Around 1900, proposed railroad ventures emanating from Iliamna Bay and passing through the Lake Clark brought surveying parties to the region. In 1901-1902 the first railroad venture, the Trans-Alaska Company announced its plan for a winter horse-drawn sled route from Iliamna Bay to Nome and St. Michael on Norton Sound.46

In 1903 a second proposed railroad scheme, the Alaska Short Line Railway and Navigation Company came forth with plans to build a railroad from Iliamna Bay to Anvik on the Yukon River.47

The Alaska Short Line Railway and Navigation Company based in Seattle claimed it was promoting:

44 Ellanna and Balluta, 178.
45 Ibid., 76-77.
46 The Trans-Alaska Company was backed by San Francisco money, perhaps including William Henry Crocker, president of the Crocker National Bank of California. The Alaska Prospector, "Strike on Clark River," March 20, 1902, hereafter referred to as TAP.
Chief Zackar Evanoff and his wife Mary photographed by prospector Arthur S. Tulloch probably at Old Nondalton c. 1909. Chief Zackar was well respected by his own people and by the Euroamericans, including school teacher Hannah Breece. He led the Lake Clark Denä’ina for at least the first thirty years of the twentieth century. Photograph courtesy of the Alaska State Historical Library, PCA-148-76, the Arthur S. Tulloch Collection, H-72.

“an all American Route ... Iliamna Bay is the only all year Deep Water harbor From Which a Railroad Can Reach This Richest Portion of Alaska.” Anvik on the Yukon River was to be the terminus of the railway. Clark Lake (sic) was characterized as having: “Its most desirable climate none better summer or winter” in the region and endowed with “sulphur, copper, gold, and timber.”

The latter firm hired Warren E. Smith as chief engineer, whose task was to survey the route. It is thought that the Alaska Short Line Railway and Navigation Company ceased operations between 1908 and 1912. It had little more than a promotional brochure, which hyped the railroad and contained a rudimentary map showing the proposed route, to show for the $150,000 invested. Promotional literature produced by the company characterized Lake Clark as “Clark Lake Sulfur, Copper, Gold and Timber,” to promote the idea that a railroad would open up the Lake Clark country and points north to all manner of extractive industrial processes. The proposed map of the railroad route showed the line crossing the connecting stream between Lake Clark and Sixmile Lake and going north from the northwestern corner of Lake Clark, at Hanmore’s Cache, and continuing northward crossing the Chulitna River, the Chilikadrotna and Mulchatna rivers before heading northwest toward Anvik on the Yukon River. Later Smith apparently did some prospecting around Lake Clark, as schoolteacher Hannah Breece encountered him at her summer school at the Nondalton fish village in 1910. Breece wrote that Smith was working for mining engineers in Seattle who were allied with the Guggenheims, a major copper promoter in the Territory of Alaska in the early twentieth century.

48 Unrau, op. cit., 368-369.
49 Ibid., 364, 369; Orth, op. cit., 755.
50 Hanmore’s Cache or as it is known locally, “Hammer Cache,” was named after Thomas W. Hanmore, a storekeeper at Tyonek in the mid-1890s and a resident of Old Iliamna village in 1910, where he was thought to be U.S. Commissioner and responsible for maintaining weather records. Hanmore was a prospector and friend of J.W. Walker, Doc Dutton and Joe Kackley of Tanalian Point.
The Trans-Alaska Company started the first trading post in the Iliamna-Lake Clark country around 1902 when they constructed their roadhouse, along the Newhalen Portage. The building of Roadhouse No. 2, as it was called, explains the origin of the name Roadhouse Mountain, a prominent geographic feature lying a few miles northeast of the roadhouse.

The construction of another trading post on the shore of Iliamna Lake in 1913-1914, first known as Brown's Roadhouse, and later as Seversen's Roadhouse, provided the second opportunity for the Lake Clark Dena'ina and the few prospectors who lived in the area to shop "locally."

By 1900, conditions were ripe for an epidemic to visit historic Kijik village. The Dena'ina people had endured frequent epidemics during the 1880s. The newcomers brought diseases for which the local Native Alaskans had little immunity. Some of the illnesses befalling Alaska Natives of western Alaska during the 1880s were typhoid fever, smallpox, measles, diphtheria, scarlet fever, mumps, Asiatic cholera, influenza, tuberculosis, syphilis and pneumonia. Beginning in the twentieth century, the Lake Clark Dena'ina population was undoubtedly reduced in number by repeated epidemic events. Many of these epidemics gained a foothold on the Cook Inlet or Bristol Bay coasts and may have spread to the Inland Dena'ina at Kijik by prospectors and by trading forays to the coastal settlements. The "Great Sickness" of 1900 reached historic Kijik sometime during the years 1901-1902.51 There is very little documentation about how the "Great Sickness" impacted Kijik other than it wrought a terrible wave of acute illness and death to the Lake Clark Dena'ina.

The arrival of the "Great Sickness" in western Alaska has been illuminated by Dr. Robert Fortune in his book *Chills and Fever: Health and Disease in the Early History of Alaska.*

In the spring, summer, and fall of 1900, a disastrous epidemic of influenza, accompanied by measles, smallpox, and possibly other diseases struck with unprecedented force the Native people of western Alaska. Virtually no coastal or lower riverine community from Atka to Point Hope was spared more merciless onslaught ... The epidemic seems to have been composed principally of two highly contagious diseases — influenza and measles.52

Each was probably introduced into Alaska at a different time and in a different manner, and each spread in its own way, sometimes overlapping the other and sometimes attacking a region by itself.53

Robert J. Wolfe, an assistant professor at the University of Southern California in 1982, wrote a paper entitled "Alaska's Great Sickness, 1900: An Epidemic of Measles and Influenza in a Virgin Soil Population" in which he laid out in detail the devastating course of the "Great Sickness" in Alaska. He noted that:

"The most likely source of both diseases would seem to be one of several ships from Seattle and San Francisco bearing thousands of Americans to the Nome gold fields in the spring of 1900. However, most contemporaries believed measles had been brought from Siberia by Eskimo traders."54

The influenza virus may have arrived in Alaska when gold fever hit Nome in the spring of 1900. Dr. Fortuine stated this possibility.

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51 Ellanna and Balluta, op. cit., 64, 66.
53 Ibid., 215.
The earliest report (of the influenza) came in June from the Pribilofs, St. Michael, and Nome, each of which were frequent ports of call for northbound ships. From these entry points the diseases spread northward as far as Point Hope, to the interior along the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers, and to the Bristol Bay region.55

Once influenza hit Bristol Bay coastal villages and canneries, all the upriver Natives working in the fishery could have been unknowing carriers of the sickness and taken the infectious diseases upriver when they returned home from the fishing season. Conversely, Euroamerican prospectors who worked in the fishery could have carried the influenza to Kijik and other villages in the fall of 1901. The 1900 census from historic Kijik listed 76 resident Dena'ina, with 17 Euroamerican prospectors residing at the village. Fortuine wrote:

The influenza virus found a fertile field in the raw, irritated respiratory passages of the Natives and within a short time virtually every individual (in Gambell) was sick, many with complications such as pneumonia, bronchitis, and ... colitis.56

Dr. Fortuine quotes Wolfe about the conditions wrought by the “Great Sickness,” which seemed to conform with oral history accounts of what the Kijik people endured in 1902.

You enter a trail and you see a man and his wife and three or four children and some infant lying on a mat, all half naked, coughing up bile with blood, moaning, vomiting, passing blood with stool and urine, with purulent eruptions from the eyes and nose, covered with oily and dirty rags, all helpless, wet, and damp day and night.57

Perhaps the epidemic entered the Bristol Bay region from the Kuskokwim country or from cannery ships at various Nushagak Bay, Kvichak Bay or Naknek River canneries. High mortality occurred at the Nushagak River villages and the village of Tikchik was abandoned as a result.

The late Nondalton elder, Macy Hobson, said his father (Jack Hobson) was at Kijik in 1901 with another man by the name of Charlie Carlson, when the black measles-influenza epidemic hit during the winter of 1901-1902. Euroamericans who lived near Native people were generally not affected by the “Great Sickness.”58

Macy recalled that as soon as the black measles symptoms were manifested, the victims came down with high fever. He said the Kijik people did not know how to treat the illness but that the ill people wanted to roll in the snow or stay outside because it was cooler than in their log homes. Winter weather might have contributed to the mortality at Kijik because ill people likely caught colds that paved the way for pneumonia, which was the ultimate cause of death of many of the victims of the “Great Sickness.” Jack Hobson and Charlie Carlson kept the ill inside and tried to keep them warm. Many felt the two men saved lives at Kijik during the epidemic. Other sources say it was Brown Carlson rather than Charlie Carlson who assisted Jack Hobson providing succor to the sick people at historic Kijik village.59

Dr. Fortuine summarized the impact of the “Great Sickness” on western Alaskan Native villages and put it in relation to previous epidemics in Alaska.

55 Fortuine, op. cit., 215.
56 Ibid., 217.
57 Wolfe, op. cit., 95, as quoted in Fortuine, op. cit., 223.
59 Macy Hobson et al, interviewed by Sara Hornberger, February 21, 1985, copy in LACL history files; The ambiguity about which Carlson, Charlie or Brown, was assisting Jack Hobson nursing sick people at Kijik will likely never be solved. Ellanna and Balluta writing in The People of Nondalton state on page 78 that it was Brown Carlson who helped the sick with Jack Hobson at Kijik. Wolfe, op. cit., 109.
The “Great Sickness” of 1900 was probably the most calamitous event in the history of the Alaska Native people since the smallpox epidemic of 1835–1840. In the earlier epidemic, however, the disease spread more slowly, and even in the more localized areas was abroad for much as a year. In 1900, however, influenza and measles struck with lightning force and within days whole villages were sick or dying. No one knows the full extent of death the epidemic brought, but official estimates, perhaps conservative, ran as high as two thousand (Brady 1901, 28). In some areas the mortality surely ranged between twenty-five and fifty percent. So great was the toll and the impact on the people in some areas that for many years later events were reckoned from that date.

The exact number of mortalities wrought by the “Great Sickness” at historic Kijik is not known for certain but Nondalton informants estimated that approximately 25% of the Kijik village population perished in the 1901–1902 epidemic.61

Between 1902 and 1909, most of the surviving Lake Clark Dena’ina families gradually moved away from historic Kijik because many of the people felt bad spirits had caused the “Great Sickness” to take so many people.

The start up of trading posts along the Newhalen Portage by 1902 and on the beach at Iliamna, Brown’s Roadhouse, in about 1913, enabled Kijik survivors to be closer to trading opportunities.62 Finally, the growing involvement by Kijik people in the Bristol Bay commercial fishery was more readily facilitated by moving about 30 miles west to the Old Nondalton site on Sixmile Lake, thereby considerably reducing the 100-plus mile trip to the mouth of the Kvichak River by 30 miles. Wolfe noted:

Although relatively ineffective in managing the acute onslaught of infectious diseases, the Eskimos and Indians displayed a remarkably rapid social and economic recovery following the epidemic. ... the widespread famine and starvation so many outsiders predicted apparently never occurred. Survivors began harvesting subsistence foods such as whitefish and burbot and snaring rabbits and shooting spruce grouse to tide them over until the waterfowl and salmon returned.

The evidence suggests that access to basic health care of food, water, shelter, and emotional support markedly

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60 Fortune, op. cit., 226.
61 Ellanna, editor, with Andrew Balluta and Albert Wassillie, Sr., et al, Lake Clark Sociocultural Study, Phase One, Chapter 8, Historic Photographs From The Lake Clark Study Area, data sheet for H-88.
Jack Hobson and his wife Tatiana Constantine at their home in Old Nondalton c. 1930. Tatiana was from Qeqhnilen village on the Stony River. The Hobsons moved to Lake Clark in 1915. Hobson was prospecting on Cook Inlet at least by 1895 and had been in the Kondike before moving over to the Lake Clark country by 1902. Photograph courtesy of Sophie Hobson Balluta Austin, H-444.

This statement corroborates the oral histories of Nondalton elders in the 1980s who said Jack Hobson and either Charlie Carlson or Brown Carlson provided important care to the ill people of historic Kijik village during the “Great Sickness.”

While most of the villagers who survived moved away, the Big Evan Nudlash family continued to live nearby until the early 1940s, on the south side of the Kijik River, in a protected cove. Andrew Balluta and his family also remained at Kijik village for some years. The Trefon Balluta family, who formerly lived at the Ch’qul-ch’ishtnu village on Trail Creek near the Telaquana Lake, had moved to historic Kijik prior to 1900. Trefon Balluta and his wife Mary Ann Trefon had a child, Alexandra, who was born in the aftermath of the “Great Sickness” at Kijik in 1904. They moved to Old Iliamna village and were counted there in the 1910 U.S. Census, along with Jonas E. Kackley, Otis M. Dutton, J. W. “Wally” Walker and Thomas Rasmussen, all of whom would move to Tanalian Point on Lake Clark by 1911.

Over time, during the first decade of the twentieth century, the Kijik survivors moved to Old Nondalton, about halfway down Sixmile Lake on the north shore, and established a new village. Some of the reasons for leaving historic Kijik village were documented in the 1980s by Linda J. Ellanna and Andrew Balluta as they researched their book Nuvendaltin Quht'ana: The People of Nondalton.

Some (elders) said that people had become accustomed to using coffee, tea, and other goods and wanted to be where they could access them more readily, especially since game was very scarce during their time. Others explained that the “ground around the village (Kijik) was really old and worn out and it was time to find a new place to live” a point most commonly associated with declining timber proximal to the community. Most recounted that it was too hard to get to Bristol Bay from Kijik, because they lacked outboard motors in those days. Some elders said that there had been so many deaths in Kijik from the epidemic that the cemetery was full. Influencing the Dena’ina was the fact that most of the Russian Orthodox Clergy had encouraged them to leave. Lastly, most everyone who recalled stories from that time reported that there were bad reduced mortalities in certain communities. The lowest mortality rates occurred in communities where unaffected EuroAmericans could provide some minimal health assistance. Communities without outside assistance showed the highest mortalities, at times exceeding 50 percent.

64 Anthropologist Ales Hrdlik documented Yenlu Nudlash Seversen (formerly Mrs. Charles T. Brooks) had been born at one of the Dena’ina Mulchatna villages. It is plausible that Big Evan and their entire surviving family members moved away from the Mulchatna River to Kijik as a result of some disruption to their subsistence, perhaps brought about by over fishing by commercial salmon interests in Nushagak Bay or epidemic diseases brought in by prospectors. Ales Hrdlika. Alaska Diary 1926-1931. Lancaster, Pennsylvania: The Jacques Cattell Press, 1944, 393.

65 Trifon Vasiliev Broder (Trefon Vasiliev Balluta) and his wife, Maria (Mary Ann Trefon) were encountered by Father Nikifor Amkan, the priest from the Kuskokwim Mission on January 7, 1907 at the Dena’ina Stony River village of Qeqhnilen. Father Amkan said the Trefon Balluta family were living at the village Vonzai, which likely was located near the north western corner of Telaquana Lake. The Dena’ina call the place Ventsi or Ventsi Vena, or “his head lake.” The priest baptized Agafia Trefon. A few days later Father Amkan said there were 46 communicants attending his church service. Later the villagers established a brotherhood and collected dues. Next the members of the brotherhood elected a treasurer unanimously. Trefon Balluta. He was characterized as an honest Kenaite (Dena’ina) who was respected by all the people of the village. The brotherhood had 26 members, both men and women, and one of their goals was the education of their children. This would seem to be the genesis of Trefon Balluta’s strong desire to see his children receive some education from newcomers, such as Hannah Breeze at the Old Iliamna school and Doc and Joe at Tanalian Point. Znamenski, op. cit., 310-311; Karen Evanoff, Denaina Ehena. A Celebration: Voices of the Denaina. United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, 2010, 112.

The earliest known photograph of Old Nondalton taken in 1914 by the future territorial governor, George S. Parks. An American flag flies over Chief Zackar’s home. Photograph courtesy of the Alaska State Historical Library. PCA-240-577, George S. Parks Collection, H-2350.
spirits at Kijik, as evident by the death of so many people ... Old Nondalton eventually attracted some previous resi-
dents of the upper Stony River and Telaquena as well.67

Historic Kijik village was the home for the Lake Clark
Dena’ina for about the past 1,000 years, until the “Great Sickness” rav­
aged the village in 1901–1902. Some of the first Kijik families to move
to the new village were led by Maxim and Vladimir Cosma, Gillie
Koktelash, Alexie Balluta, Pete Delkittie, and Marka Karshekoff. The
founding of Old Nondalton was more or less complete when Chief
Zackar Evanoff and his family left Kijik for the new village in about
1909. Old Nondalton provided access to optimal subsistence salmon
fishing on the upper Newhalen River, and it was closer to Iliamna
trading posts and Bristol Bay salmon canneries.68

The first population figure for Old Nondalton village was 44
people in 1907, apparently documented by the Bureau of Education.69
Hannah Breece, who held the first public summer school at the Old
Nondalton fish village at the outlet of Newhalen River, documented in
1911 that there were 12 school children between 5 and 20 years of age,
living part of the year at the village. The majority of the year they were
with their families in outlying subsistence hunting, fishing and trap­
ping camps. This situation made it difficult to conduct typical school
functions when many of the students were absent much of the time.

Apparently, Old Iliamna merchant Pete Anderson and his
Dena’ina wife Agafia Rickteroff and children moved to Old Nondalton
about 1911 and opened a small store in the village, as Anderson had
previously done in Old Iliamna, as early as 1904. In 1913 Fred Roehl,
Sr., who lived at Old Iliamna, applied for a mercantile license for both
Old Iliamna and Old Nondalton.70 It is thought that Hans Seversen

67 Ellanna and Balluta, op. cit., 64-65; Old Nondalton was first documented in 1909 by the Martin
and Katz USGS expedition, Orth, op. cit., 695; the Dena’ina word is Nundaltin Q’et Qayeh or “lakes extend
across old village.” Nondalton comes from the Dena’ina word Nuvendaltun or “lake extends below” and
lies on Sixmile Lake, Evanoff, op. cit., 126.
68 Ellanna and Balluta, op. cit., 64; Ellanna and Hornberger, 4-62.
69 Ellanna and Balluta, op. cit., 81.
70 Frederick J. Roehl moved his family from Hallerville, site of the North Alaska Salmon Company
cannery, on the lower Kvichak River in about 1912 to cash in on the expected railroad construction by
one of the two proposed rail road companies eyeing Iliamna Bay as the starting place to penetrate
inside Alaska’s western interior. Fred Roehl, Jr., conversations with the author, April 14, 1994, and March
71 Ellanna and Hornberger, op. cit., 4-12 and 4-13.
72 For more details on Seversen’s life, see Seversen’s Roadhouse: Crossroads of Bristol Bay, Alaska,
With the Diary and Writings of Myrtle and Jack Bailey, edited by John Branson, Anchorage: The Cook
Inlet Historical Society, 2003. The writer recently became aware of an oral history interview of the
late Dena’ina elder, Albert Wassillie, Sr., in Lake Clark National Park Project Jukebox. Wassillie sheds
light on how Hans Seversen became affiliated with the people of Kijik or Old Nondalton, likely around
1908. When the Lake Clark Dena’ina first encountered Seversen, he had “no shoes or boots,” but was
wearing foot gear made of burlap bags. Wassillie makes it sound as if Seversen was destitute, but over
the following years, he became wealthy. The Dena’ina befriended him and made him mukluks. He
married Charles T. Brooks’s widow, Yenlu Nudlash, about 1908 or 1909, and their first child, Frank, was
born in 1910. Like other ambitious and savvy prospectors, Seversen put aside pick and shovel labor for
trading and storekeeping. Seversen was fortunate that the Lake Clark Dena’ina took him in and he had
a ready clientele for his merchandise at Old Nondalton and Tanalian Point.
Chapter 3
Early Twentieth-Century Prospecting at Kasna Creek 1902

Floyd Denison on early twentieth century land rights:
“... the only land title really considered in the Bristol Bay area was ‘squatter’s rights.’ You owned your cabin and you owned your stove and that was about it.”

ARTIN GORMAN (1853–1929) WAS A BOTANIST who specialized in the Pacific Northwest. He was born in Ontario Province, Canada, and came to Portland, Oregon, in 1885.

His journal provides the first written account of specific names of prospectors who worked in the Lake Clark country after the 1900 federal census. The following is Gorman’s account of his first impression of Lake Clark on July 22, 1902.

Two days were spent in getting up the Nogheling River [Newhalen River] ... the foot of Lake Clark was reached. From July 23 to Aug. 1st was spent in ascending the lake mostly by the NW shore as the SE shore for about two thirds of its lengths had been severely visited in June, by a forest fire which rendered it unfit for botanical collectors for one season at least, of the 8 camps made along the lake 6 were made on the NW side and 2 on the SE side. The descent of the lake was made in 3 days...

Practically there was no hot weather experienced during the whole trip, the highest temperatures recorded being 74 degrees on July 11th, and on only 6 days during the season did the temperature reach 70 degrees...The ice usually takes on both Iliamna Lake and Lake Clark [fit for travel] about the first week in January, and this year [1902] the ice on Lake Clark went out on April 29. Lake Clark instead of being the large body of water indicated on the present maps is simply a broad river with a series of basins or expansions. Its extreme length is about 55 to 60 miles by 2 to 8 miles wide. About the foot of the lake numerous old water levels attest its volume at a former period when the present Nogheling River did not exist and the plain which now intervenes between Lake Iliamna and Nogheling River was submerged and the two lakes were united in one.

Among the people documented in association with Lake Clark who aided Gorman around the lake, three are worth noting: H.H. Hicks, C.T. Brooks, and Meekowluh [Mikhail] Rickteroff (Chief of the Kenai) from Old Iliamna Village.

Gorman wrote that Portage Creek was “noted for its placer gold and at the time of our visit was the scene of considerable

Mrs. Harry Hicks and child at Sunrise, in the Turnagain country in Cook Inlet in 1898. Mrs. Hicks was from the Matanuska band of the Upper Inlet Dena’ina. She accompanied her husband, Harry Hicks, to the Iliamna-Lake country during the first years of the twentieth century while he worked for the Trans-Alaska Company and prospected at Kasna Creek. Photograph courtesy of the Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage, Edwin F. Glenn Papers, 0116-3a-9-1, H-2765.

Only two streams of any consequence enter the lake from this side [east], the Tanalian and Little Tanalian. The former heads in Tazimina Lake a body of water of such size and in such a position that it is possible the incorrect L shape of Lake Clark on the present maps was first derived from information obtained from some explorer who saw Tazimina from the divide on its W. side and supposed it was united with the head of Lake Clark. ...Since the region was first inhabited the Natives have continuously used narrow trails along all of the portages and most of the stream banks. The white men since his advent has simply followed the trails which he found. The result is that these narrow paths from constant use have become sunken from (3 to 16 inches) deep according to the hardness of the ground over which they are hard, when the rainy season sets in as it does here in early August, these trails become in places veritable ditches filled with water through which the prospector, explorer, or naturalist must patiently plod as any attempt to better oneself by changing to the tundra or sodden sphagnum on either side is like attempting to walk over a mass of new sponges.

Wilfred Osgood, Gorman’s nominal supervisor on the expedition, also commended both Hicks and Brooks, implying that they were both employed by the Trans-Alaska Company.

It was very difficult to access Lake Clark in 1902 and, once at the lake, it was difficult to travel because the rough terrain and frequent

75 Gorman apparently never visited Kontrashibuna Lake or Tazimina Lake because he was confused when writing about them.

high winds on the lake caused delays. The Dena'ina had many trails across their homeland but they were narrow tracks and not necessarily conducive to horses. Winter was the easiest travel time in the entire Bristol Bay region, and travel by dog sled was the optimal method.

Three significant people both Gorman and Osgood encountered during their trip left their mark on Lake Clark history. First would have been Chief Zackar Evanoff (1854-1935), whom Gorman also referred to as Zackar Rickteroff (Riktorov) and later as Evanoff, chief of Kijik village in 1902.78 Like most folks who encountered the chief, Gorman remarked on his intelligence and his willingness to share traditional local knowledge with visitors. Chief Zackar would remain chief until 1930, overseeing the difficult move from historic Kijik village to Old Nondalton and the transition to the early aviation era when increasing numbers of Euroamericans lived on Lake Clark.

Two men Gorman singled out, Judge C.T. Brooks and Harry H. Hicks, had been in the Cook Inlet country and the Kenai Peninsula and Matanuska-Susitna Valley since the mid-1890s. They came to the Lake Clark-Iliamna country with the railroad company venture proposed by the Trans-Alaska Company from San Francisco. Hicks worked as a guide for a number of explorers, scientists and investors in Southcentral Alaska and the Lake Clark country into the early twentieth century.

Brooks was an attorney from Memphis, Tennessee, who came to Alaska for the Turnagain gold rush in 1896. He was appointed United States Commissioner at Sunrise in the late 1890s. In 1901 he resigned from the Commissioner's position and moved to the Lake Clark-Iliamna country to pursue copper prospects at Kasna Creek on Kontrashibuna Lake.79

In 1906, Brooks and William L. von Hardenberg, filed on the Kasna Creek copper claims. These claims were the first mining claims filed around Lake Clark.80

78 Kijik Confessional Records, 1854-1935, translated by Anne Sudkamp and John Stimson, June 1988, LACL-00992, LACL 2182/006.01
80 Ellanna and Hornberger, op. cit., 4-17.
Mrs. Hans Seversen photographed at Seversen’s Roadhouse in 1930. She was born at one of the Mulchatna villages in 1885 and moved to Lake Clark because of epidemics and married prospector Charles T. Brooks by about 1902. After Brooks died in 1906, Yenlu married Hans Seversen. She died of tuberculosis in 1935 at the Roadhouse on Iliamna. Photograph courtesy of the Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, H-184.


Brooks was reported to have married Yenlu Nudlash, a Mulchatna Dena’ina girl of about 17 who was probably living at historic Kijik village or at Old Nondalton. Brooks fathered at least two children with Yenlu: Katherine Brooks, born in 1904, and Stephen, born about 1907. Brooks left Lake Clark and returned to Seward for medical treatment, he died after complications from bladder surgery in late 1906. Stephen Brooks died at a young age. His sister Katherine lived with her mother and stepfather, Hans Seversen, at Old Nondalton. In 1913, Katherine was sent to Chemawa Indian School in Oregon. She never returned to Lake Clark. She lived in Washington State where she married, had children and lived into her 80s.

Brooks’ name became associated with two geographic features around Lake Clark. As late as the mid-1970s, Kontrashibuna Lake was still referred to as Brooks Lake (not to be confused with the official Brooks Lake in Katmai National Park and Preserve, named after explorer Alfred Hulse Brooks) by some residents of Port Alsworth. The other feature is Brooks Creek that is an officially named source of Kontrashibuna Lake and lies about 12 miles southeast of the Kasna Creek mining camp.

Hicks was born in Illinois in 1866 and came to Alaska in 1895, probably to participate in the Turnagain gold rush. In the 1900 U.S. Census he was listed as a prospector and miner, living in Tyonek, married to a 27-year-old Dena’ina woman named Ada who was member of the Matanuska Tribe. They had a one-year-old daughter named Minnie.

In 1895, Hicks prospected the Matanuska Valley. His experience in southcentral Alaska enabled him to guide Captain Edwin F. Glenn and Walter C. Mendenhall on explorations of 1898 into the interior north of Tyonek. Captain Glenn had kudos for Hicks. “I find Hicks and Corporal Young a great addition to my party and both look

82 Orth, op. cit. 161.
better after a good night's rest and removal of their packs."

In 1896, naturalist Lewis Lindsay Dyche (1857-1915), a notable scientist and professor and curator at the University of Kansas, visited Cook Inlet on a collecting trip. He enlisted Harry Hicks to guide him up the Knik River on a sheep hunt. By the early twentieth century, Hicks had established a reputation as an honest and competent guide. His marriage to a Dena'ina woman must have enhanced his standing among the Dena'ina of Cook Inlet and more fully informed him about all manner of life around Cook Inlet and what it took to survive.

In 1901, John Alden Loring (1871-1947), a zoologist-naturalist who was subsequently on the Smithsonian-Roosevelt African Expedition of 1909-1910, was sent to Cook Inlet to collect live Dall's sheep lambs for the New York Zoological Society and its Bronx Zoo. Loring raved about Thomas Hanmore who was the Alaska Commercial Company agent at Tyonek and said, "he was exceedingly kind and helpful to me—as he has been to many others before me." In addition, Loring was effusive about Hicks' capabilities:

I had the good fortune to find at this place Mr. H. H. Hicks, who had been strongly recommended to me as a very intelligent, skillful and personally agreeable guide, his services were secured, and he proved to be an ideal man in every respect—a skillful hunter, familiar with the tongue of the Natives, well acquainted with the county, and at all times reliable.

...I take real pleasure in expressing my appreciation of the faithful and skillful service of Mr. Hicks, who from the start entered into the work enthusiastically and...
left nothing undone that could contribute to its success. His
experience and good judgment were both invaluable.88

The expedition caught six lambs, but they all died in captivity
before they got back to Tyonek.

In November 1904, Hicks traveled through Iliamna Bay
on the Dora, perhaps heading to the Lake Clark country and Kasna
Creek, where he was going to winter and cut logs for development in the
summer of 1905.

Apparently, by the first years of the twentieth century, Hicks
was hired by mining investors to locate prospects. Investors grubstaked
him to search for possible developable mineral lands and to stake them
for the backers. In addition, Hicks sought out mining properties for
himself and partners. Hicks, filed claims on the Kasna Creek copper
prospect in 1907 or 1908.

George C. Martin and Frank J. Katz brought a USGS survey
expedition into the Iliamna-Lake Clark region during the field season
of 1909. They traveled in the area by horse and canoe and surveyed
the Hardenberg prospect at Kasna Creek. In addition, the crew con­
sisted of D.C. Witherspoon and C.E. Giffin, as topographers. When
they visited Lake Clark they divided the party into two groups, one of
six men was led by Martin and traveled in three Peterborough canoes.
The other was in charge of Witherspoon and consisted of six men and
traveled by pack train with eight horses. Mrs. Teresa Millett noted
in her visitors log on September 7 that Witherspoon with two men
traveled from Kasna Creek on Kontrashibuna Lake via the Pile River
to Old Iliamna village. They sold six horses at Iliamna Bay on their
way Outside.89

The prospect was a copper-iron deposit about ten miles from
Tanalian Point. Apparently prospectors had been using Tanalian Point
as a camping site since about 1895, although Hugh Rodman did not
note any cabins there in 1898 when he passed by. Martin and Katz
noted at least two cabins between Dry Creek and the mouth of the
Tanalian River, another near Tanalian Falls and another stood at the
mouth of Kasna Creek on Kontrashibuna Lake. A trail led up the
drainage to the claims above tree-line at about 2,300 feet elevation,
where “one small hole had been excavated.” Martin and Katz wrote:

Water rights and a power site have been staked
by some of the men interested in the property at the falls
of Kontrashibuna River [Tanalian River], the outlet of
Kontrashibuna Lake 8 miles from the prospect. There is
a fall of 60 feet here and a large flow during the summer
months, so that sufficient power might be developed to as­
sist materially in the working of the claims.90

Both proposed railroad companies came about through pros­
pecting in the Kuskokwim country and the Nome gold rush in 1900.
The Trans-Alaska Company initially planned a route of about 560
miles through virtual terra incognita and was a poorly financed by pro­
motors. Part of the plan was to explore the route and build a roadhouse
every 25 to 30 miles. Only three or four roadhouses were built before
the venture collapsed in futility.

One roadhouse was located about halfway along the Newhalen
Portage. It became known unofficially as “Roadhouse Timber” by the
people of Nondalton, though officially Roadhouse No. 2. Another
roadhouse was built by the Trans-Alaska Company, near the con­
fluence of the Mulchatna and Nushagak rivers. A third was built at
Koserefski near Holy Cross on the Yukon River.91

Presumably a road­
house was also built in Iliamna Bay, perhaps at A.C. Point or at the
head of the bay, now known as Williamsport.

The audacity of the railroad venture notwithstanding, on

88 Ibid., 46-55
89 Millett, op. cit., copy in the LACL history files.
91 Orth, op. cit., 544.
Thomas Hanmore and his wife at Tyonek in 1898. Hanmore was a trader for the Alaska Commercial Company at Tyonek in the early 1890s. He was apparently a promoter of mining ventures during the Turnagain gold rush in Cook Inlet. He moved to Old Iliamna during the first decade of the twentieth century. Hanmore built a cache in the most western corner of Lake Clark that is known locally as “Hammer Cache.”

September 4, 1902, the Wilfred Osgood party, of the U.S. Biological Survey, purchased some supplies at what was referred to as “the defunct Trans-Alaska Company roadhouse,” which was located near the confluence of the Nushagak and Mulchatna rivers. This would indicate that the Trans-Alaska Company was out of business by the fall of 1902. Teresa Millett noted in her Visitors Record that Pete Anderson and Harry Hicks each owned a horse he purchased from the Trans-Alaska Company by 1904.

What did the Trans-Alaska Company and the Alaska Short Line Railway and Navigation Company contribute, if anything, to the Lake Clark–Iliamna region? Their contributions were mostly ephemeral. The three or possibly four roadhouses have long since rotted back into the ground, and little material remains have survived out in the bush. There are limited photographic records of the activities of the Trans-Alaska Company at the Bancroft Library at the University of California Berkeley and the University of Washington Special Collections Library. Roadhouse Mountain dominates the northeastern viewshed from present-day Iliamna, and it received its official name from its proximity to Roadhouse No. 2. That certainly is a tangible result of the Trans-Alaska Company’s efforts to build a railroad through the country.

Perhaps the most significant legacy of the two railroad schemes was the opening of the area to newcomers in the form of American prospectors, Judge C.T. Brooks, J.W. Walker, Hicks and perhaps Jack Hobson, some of whom married into the local Lake Clark Dena’ina villages and put down roots. Those individuals, and a few others helped begin the process of opening up the isolated region to outside American influences.

Remote, off-the-beaten-track Lake Clark experienced its first significant opening-up as a result of the railroad ventures. By the first few years of the twentieth century, the isolation of Lake Clark began to be breached—though access was still very limited, travel being laborious, expensive and time-consuming for outsiders to get “inside.”

In spite of the early support for the railroad concepts, the ventures never accomplished anything substantive. Funding for the Alaska Short Line Railway suffered the ill effects of the national Panic of 1907, which caused a temporary lull in the availability of investment capital and by 1908 only $150,000 had been expended on route finding. The end result was one map for the first 45 miles of the route from Iliamna Bay. Promoters of the project tried to find more investment capital, but no construction was ever begun, and the venture ceased to operate by 1912.

92 Osgood, Biological Reconnaissance, 18. Compared with most other contemporary railroad ventures in Yukon and Alaska the Trans-Alaska Company had at least a few tangible results, namely the construction of the roadhouses. Most railroad ventures never graduated beyond issuing stock. Frank Norris, e-mail message to the author, February 3, 2014.

93 Millett, op. cit, 1904.

94 Orth, op. cit, 755.

95 Unrau, op. cit., 371.
Chapter 4
Early Prospecting and Mining Efforts in the Lake Clark Country

WILLIAM L. VON HARDENBERG WAS A CIVIL and mining engineer who was born in 1868 in Stuttgart, Germany and lived in San Francisco. He might have been at Kasna Creek on behalf of some San Francisco investors or he might have been involved in the Turnagain gold rush and moved over to Lake Clark to seek his fortune. Von Hardenburg did build a small log cabin on the south side of Hardenburg Bay about 1905–1906 but he was gone from Lake Clark, living in San Francisco, in 1910 and living in Los Angeles in 1920 and 1930. Although von Hardenburg was only at Lake Clark for a few years, his name is attached to Hardenburg Bay, the bay around which Port Alsworth grew from the Alsoworth homestead to the small, bustling village it is in the early twenty first century.96

Harry Hicks’ association with the Trans-Alaska Company railroad project brought him to the Lake Clark country, and while there, he apparently undertook personal prospecting activities which led him to file additional claims at Kasna Creek by 1907–1908. He built a new residence in or near Old Iliamna village by 1903 and he owned two small trading posts in the “Iliamna country,” which suggests...


A view of most of the residents of Old Nondalton at their summer fishing camp taken July 4, 1911, for Hannah Breece. Photograph courtesy of Mrs. Ray Schaleben. H-620.

In 1908, the first school in the Iliamna-Lake Clark country was built near Old Iliamna village under the supervision of Dr. Henry O. Schaleben. Schalaben's wife, Gertrude, was the first teacher. Doctor Schaleben hired local men to build the hand-hewn, log schoolhouse and teachers’ quarters. Local laborers were only willing to work on a cash basis, and there was only one local person willing and able to advance funds for the federal government project—Harry Hicks. Hicks had recommended building a public school at Old Iliamna village and was considered a reliable person. Dr. Schalaben assigned three claims of $354.50 to Hicks for the Iliamna school construction and presumably Hicks was reimbursed.

In 1909, F.F. Evans, an investor and secretary for the Alaska Iliamna Copper Company in New York City, apparently owned the Hardenberg claims at Kasna Creek. He wrote a letter to another investor on March 7, 1909, reporting that H.O. Schaleben of Old Iliamna did assessment work on the claims owned by the Alaska...
Iliamna Copper Company in 1908. Evans went on to write: “I hope to get things in shape so I can sell the Dutton [Cottonwood Bay], Iliamna, and Hardenberg copper Properties to the Rail Road crowd next year.”

The railroad which Evans hoped to sell the copper claims to was the Seattle-based Alaska Short Line Railroad and Navigation Company which existed on paper but never built a rail line before its demise in 1912.

Hicks apparently left the Lake Clark–Iliamna area about 1908 because he no longer showed up in any records in the area after that date. It is likely Hicks sold his claims at Kasna Creek before 1910, possibly to Evans, because in that year that Richard M. Edwards of Houghton, Michigan, purchased the claims and set about having them examined in 1911 and 1913 by mining engineers.

In 1911 Alexander Leggatt, a prominent mining engineer from Butte, Montana, was hired by Edwards to assess the claims on Kasna Creek. Leggatt visited the Kasna Creek claims during the summer of 1911. He mentioned there was a mining camp at the mouth of the creek on Kontrashibuna Lake and claimed the lake’s name was a Kenai Indian word for the lake’s color “dark green water.” (In 1986, linguist James Kari worked with Dena’ina elders and documented the name, Kontrashibuna, meaning “boiling lake” or “lake in which water extends against the mountains.”)

In 1913 Walter R. Crane, Dean of the School of Mines at Pennsylvania State College traveled to Kasna Creek to do assessment work for Edwards but his report has not been located. However, prospector Arthur S. Tulloch took at least two photographs of Crane at Kasna Creek which have survived.

Until the advent of commercial aviation, Lake Clark was always a difficult place to access. Some people traveled from Bristol Bay via Kvichak River, Iliamna Lake, the Newhalen Portage, and finally Sixmile Lake, which is a continuation of Lake Clark via a narrow connecting stream. But the preferred route was via lower Cook Inlet and Iliamna Bay; this was probably the easiest route to Lake Clark and it is how Alexander Leggatt traveled. After Leggatt finished his assessment work at Kasna Creek, he had a very difficult time reaching Seward to catch a steamship to Seattle.

From the head of Iliamna Bay a good trail traveled by horse during the short summer and by dog team during the winter leads to Iliamna village a distance of 13 miles...the trail crosses the divide between Bering Sea and Pacific drainages about three miles inland on an elevation of 850 feet and, dropping immediately to the level of a lively little river at 450 feet elevation, follows it to the balance of the way to Iliamna. ... Iliamna is a Native settlement of less than 100 inhabitants, is the residence of the U.S. Commissioner and Records for Iliamna Precinct, has a government school of the Natives, a store, and a Greek Catholic Church and is located on the north bank of the Iliamna river four miles above its mouth. ... From Iliamna one takes a gasoline launch, sailboat, or dory, to cover the 31 miles down the river and lake to the Roadhouse Portage, easily made in one day if the winds are favorable, but sometimes taking a week. The Roadhouse Portage [is] six miles long, and must be made on foot and baggage or freight packed over...
Peter Morris, left, and Walter R. Crane, right, Dean of the School of Mines at Pennsylvania State University in 1913 at Kasna Creek mining camp on Kontrashibuna Lake. Morris was the foreman of the Kasna Creek camp and Crane was visiting to assess the potential value of the copper deposits for the mine owner, Richard Edwards of Houghton, Michigan. Photograph courtesy of the Alaska State Historical Library, AHL-PCA-148-138, Arthur S. Tulloch Collection, H-75.

by Natives, who are usually glad to find employment... up the Newhalen River 16 miles is Nondalton Village where a white trader has a small stock of supplies and boats and Natives may be hired if needed. From here it is about 25 miles to Tanalian Pt. ... The present primitive means of transport and its high cost are great drawbacks to this section, and must be greatly improved before any extensive development can be undertaken. Practically all supplies for the country are brought in over the route just described, and the total cost of landing supplies at Kasna Creek Camp, from Seattle, is nearly $200 per ton.108

Leggatt also wrote about the hydroelectric power potential on Kontrashibuna Lake and the Tanalian River.

As a source of steady, all-the-year-round power, in quantity sufficient for a large plant, the Falls of the Kontrashibuna, just below the lake, are about ideal. Here the river drops about fifty feet into a narrow defile, and, for a small preliminary plant, nothing is necessary but a short canal and loose rock diversion weir, but to develop and maintain the greatest output possible, a storage dam near the mouth of the lake will be necessary. A dam ten feet or so high, utilizing the entire area of the lake, 20 square miles or so, for storage, will enable the plant to produce plenty of power during the winter months of low water as well as during the summer and fall high water...

Leggatt wrote about a previous examination of the Kasna Creek claims in 1906 and the litigious nature of conflicting claims.

This property was examined in 1906 by Messrs. F.W. Bradley and Cohn, of San Francisco, with a view to purchase at a figure said to have been $200,000 or so, but in view of threatened litigations among the owners and the misrepresentations that had been such as to the value of the ore, no further action was taken by them. The sample crusher taken in by them is still on the ground, and it was from a pile of their rejected quarterings on the Barnes cropping that sample #1 was taken.109

Leggatt noted that Kasna Creek miners were paid $4.00 per day and board. He estimated the development tunnel would likely cost $20.00 per linear foot with the use of Native labor at $50.00 per month.


109 Ibid.
“Brown’s Portage,” in 1914, and later also known as Seversen’s Roadhouse at present-day Iliamna. The roadhouse was built by Herman Gartlemann, Frank Brown, Jack Kinney, and Ed Ahola in 1913. It was owned by Frederick J. Roehl, Sr. and taken over by Hans Seversen by about 1923. Seversen’s Roadhouse was the most important store and trading post for the people of Lake Clark and Iliamna during the 1920s and 1930s. Photograph courtesy of the Alaska State Historical Library, ASL PCA-240-572, George S. Parks Collection, H-2347.
and board. He wrote that Kasna Creek had no immediate value and only advocated purchase at a “minimal sum under present conditions.” However, he thought in the future the Kasna Creek prospect would, 

... become of great value, great enough to amply remunerate the owner for the cost of obtaining title now, and to pay the large interest and profits in addition. I strongly recommend that five lode claims, the Cyanide, Kendall, Giltedge, Barnes and Peary, and as much land on the share of Lake Kontrashibuna as can be taken as millsites, trading-post sites, etc. be patented at once. It will be well to secure the outstanding one-third interest still held by Frank Brown, if it can be bought at the same figure the other two-thirds were, otherwise let the matter rest until he gets tired of holding on.110

Leggatt stated that Peter Morris was in charge of operations at Kasna Creek. Leggatt recommended that Morris abandon the tunnel he had started which was only 10 feet in length and instead construct two cross cut tunnels from the hanging wall of the Giltedge ore body in order to discover the true width of the ore bodies.

Old Iliamna schoolteacher Hannah Breece documented an incident on Lake Clark where Kasna Creek miners aided a widow at Miller Creek and buried her husband who had died suddenly near their cabin. The incident apparently occurred during the winter of 1910–1911. Jennie Miller and her husband, originally from Wales, were trapping around Lake Clark, about five miles from their cabin at Miller Creek and nearly the same distance from the Kasna Creek camp, when Miller suddenly died. Mrs. Miller left her husband’s body where he died and contacted the miners who then returned to the body and buried him, perhaps near the Miller’s cabin. They also helped Mrs. Miller travel to Old Iliamna village. According to Breece’s account, Mrs. Miller knew no one in Alaska or the United States but fell in love with a “good man” at Old Iliamna area and settled down in a “real house” for the first time.111 Mrs. Teresa Millett lists Mr. and Mrs. W.H. Miller as stopping by her Millett’s Point cabin on September 10, 1910, which would fall in between Martin and Katz’s initial documentation of Miller’s Camp at Lake Clark in 1909 and Breece’s report of Miller’s death the winter of 1910–1911.

The Millers had a cabin on the east bank of Miller Creek, called Nan Qelah by the Dena’ina, where it enters Lake Clark, three miles northeast of the Kijik River mouth. USGS explorers G.C. Martin and F.J. Katz called the site Miller’s Camp in their 1909 field notes.112 Breece met the Millers at Nondalton Fish Village in 1910 and left this description:

Everyone had a kind word for Mrs. Jennie Miller but said little about her husband except that he made her do all the work. He was no favorite. Before I had left Nondalton a young, travel-worn woman had appeared at my tent. She was timid to the point of being frightened, and dreadfully bedraggled: barefooted, bareheaded, missing some teeth and others rotted.113

Breece wrote that Miller had earned $50,000 selling whisky in the Klondike before coming to Lake Clark nearly indigent. In 1986, National Park Service historian Sara Hornberger was told by Lake Clark informants that Miller died after eating “water lily roots.”114

110 Ibid.
114 Ellanna, and Hornberger, op. cit., 4-36.
Big Evan Nudlash, the last Dena’ina to live full-time near Kijik, was a Kasna Creek blaster during the time Hannah Breece was in the Lake Clark–Iliamna country. Prospector Frank Brown who would obtain a stake in the ownership of the Kasna Creek claims noted in one of his small account books that on “June 9, 1912 paid P. Morrse by Mrs. Brown to Big Evan.” Big Evan and his family were the nearest neighbors of the Millers, and he was likely involved in Miller’s burial. It is not known if other Dena’ina men worked at the Kasna Creek claims, but they were certainly involved at Portage Creek and in the Bonanza Hills with prospecting and mining.

There was only one active copper mine in the area and that was at Kasna Creek. This site was about 17 miles by dog sled, via Tanalian Point to Miller’s Camp. It is not known what year the Millers first built their cabin, but it must have been only a few years old when Martin and Katz documented it during the summer of 1909. Neither Wilfred Osgood nor Martin Gorman mentioned the Millers as being on Lake Clark in 1902. After Mr. Miller died and his wife left the area during the winter of 1912, their cabin was probably used as common property by local Euroamerican prospectors and Dena’ina people. There are many documented cases of people taking over an abandoned cabin and using it as their own. Local businessmen took over commercial buildings at A.C. Point and at the head of Iliamna Bay, and at Roadhouse No. 2. Cabins at Current Creek, Little Lake Clark and on the Mulchatna River were all used by many local people as common property after the original cabin builder was long gone from the area.

Prospectors Frank Brown of Old Iliamna and J.W. Walker of Tanalian Point built a cabin on the Telaquana Trail on the south side of the Kijik River, at the traditional ford, about 1910. This site was about eight miles north of Miller’s Camp. Once Brown and Walker left the area, Dena’ina traveling on the Telaquana Trail began using the cabin. Prior to the twentieth century, the Dena’ina would likely have camped at the ford on the Kijik River in temporary brush shelters. Similarly, before the arrival of Miller at the mouth of Nan Qelah Tustes, the Dena’ina would have camped there in temporary brush or hide shelters or walked three miles down the beach to historic Kijik village.

In the mid-1980s, Sara Hornberger learned from Nondalton informants that Dena’ina families Gabriel and Katherine Trefon and Wassillie and Mary Trefon had cabins at the mouth of Miller Creek after Miller died. It is quite possible that Anton and Sophie Balluta used Miller’s cabin until the cabin was burned, perhaps by Brown Carlson. At the time of her research, Hornberger did not have the benefit of Hannah Breece’s account of Mr. and Mrs. Miller’s life around the Iliamna–Lake Clark country.

The Breece account of Miller’s demise, taken with the other documents, seems more plausible and compelling than the account told to Hornberger of him dying after eating “water lily root.” If Miller died after eating a plant, it would likely been summer rather than winter when Breece documents his death. It is possible that some unknown, early-twentieth-century, Euroamerican visitor to Lake Clark died after eating water hemlock, Cicuta mackenzieana, and was confused with Miller. In addition, a related plant Angelica genulflexa or Angelica lucida hybridizes with water hemlock in some areas and is poisonous, so there could have been other opportunities for people to be poisoned by plants. Hornberger wrote that other local informants thought it was Thomas Hanmore, not Miller, who ingested the poisonous plants and died, but Hanmore is known to have died as a suicide in 1917, at his Old Iliamna cabin, not on Lake Clark.

After the mid-teens, during the last years of World War I, activity at Kasna Creek subsided, a trend seeming to signal an overall decline of prospecting in the Lake Clark region after 1910.


116 Ellanna and Hornberger, op. cit., 4-36.

In 1909 Martin and Katz reported that the Kasna Creek mining camp consisted of one log house, a cache and a trail that led up the creek into the valley to the claims. Floyd Denison, who moved to Tanalian Point in 1932 and was a long time Lake Clark resident, said there were “several fine log buildings” and an assay office with racks of chemicals and testing equipment at the camp. However, archeological surveys conducted by the National Park Service have not located evidence of the remains of “several fine log buildings,” rather, only the remains of two cabins and two caches has been discovered.

The Kasna Creek mining camp had two cabins—one of approximately 15 by 20 feet and another 18 by 18 feet. The mining camp has local importance because it was associated with some of the earliest documented Euroamerican residents, however fleeting was their residency, of Lake Clark—William L. von Hardenburg, Judge C.T. Brooks, Harry Hicks and Harry B. Nelson, who all arrived between 1901 to 1908. These men were very transitory at Lake Clark, like most prospectors. The Kasna Creek venture never panned out, apparently because it was a mediocre copper deposit in a very inaccessible region that totally lacked infrastructure and was far from a deep-water port.

In 1944, St. Eugene Mining Corporation, Ltd. acquired Kasna Creek Claims from the Richard Edwards estate. Subsequently, core samples were taken but inaccessibility hindered development. After Lake Clark National Park and Preserve was created in 1980, the claims lay idle until they were sold to the National Park Service in 2002.

Another noteworthy early-twentieth-century prospector who left his name on Lake Clark was Charles M. Keyes, an attorney, who filed on nine mining claims around Old Iliamna village in 1905. Keyes was apparently a Turnagain prospector who like several others of his cohort moved over to the Iliamna-Lake Clark country in search of the proverbial pot of gold. Keyes Point is located toward the western end of Lake Clark and is named after him and is an official name; however, it also has a Dena’ina place name—Chialikel’u T’ech’ Nini’u or “one that extends downstream from one that extends from flows out.” Keyes Point got its name when Keyes attempted to walk from the mouth of the Chulitna River to Old Nondalton and lost his way, until he discovered he was on a peninsula and had to return to his starting place and then proceed west to Old Nondalton, a distance of about 15 miles. Keyes died in 1907 at Iliamna. A will for Keyes was probated in 1910. Keyes was in the U.S. Marines from 1885 to 1896. He was stationed in Sitka before getting involved in the Turnagain gold rush.

118 Floyd Denison, interviewed by Sara Hornberger, September 26, 1984, 4.
119 Kara Sorbel, e-mail message to the author, February 6, 2014.
120 SWG, “Charles M. Keyes Dead,” September 14, 1907; Ellanna and Hornberger, op. cit., 4-17; Evanoff, op. cit., 118, 120.
121 Charles M. Keyes probated will in the Alaska State Archives, Juneau. Title 1: Probate Record OS 1333; and Title 2: Probate Record OS 1334. “One that extends downstream from one [Cape Shishkin] that extends from flows out [Chulitna River]” is the literal description of Keyes Point, from Cape Shishkin on the east, to Keyes Point to the west.
Chapter 5
The Portage Creek Mining Camp

The discovery date of the gold placers on Portage Creek, a small tributary stream entering Lake Clark on the north shore, is not known; however, it likely would have been in the 1880s or early 1890s. California gold miners passed through Iliamna Bay on their way to the interior by 1883. It seems plausible that prospectors would have combed the Lake Clark basin as soon as they arrived in the country.

John W. Clark, an Alaska Commercial Company trader at Nushagak, might very well have grubstaked some anonymous prospectors who traveled to Lake Clark via Nushagak Bay, Kvichak Bay, the Kvichak River, Iliamna Lake, the Newhalen Portage, the Newhalen River and Sixmile Lake, finally arriving at the mountain pot lake, now called Lake Clark, by the mid-1880s and early 1890s.

In July 1898 Hugh Rodman visited Lake Clark with the Rickteroff (Riktorov) brothers: Mikhail, Nicholai, and Old William (Vasilli) Rickteroff from Old Iliamna village in search of a “vein of white rock in which were bits of yellow metal as soft as lead and the color of the sun.” But it was on Kontrashibuna Lake, not Portage Creek, that Rodman and guides devoted their energies in a futile attempt to find gold.

In 1902, when U.S. Biological Survey biologist Wilfred Osgood visited Lake Clark, he documented six miners working placers on Portage Creek. Osgood described the Portage Creek mining.

Portage or Achteedeedung Creek, which enters the north side of the lake about half way between Keeghik and the mouth of the Theekakeela, is the only stream in which gold has been found. About half a dozen men have worked on this creek and secured a few samples of placer gold, but nothing that pays for working.

The Dena’ina word for Portage Creek is Nusdatl’na Qayeh or “ghosts village.” Nusdatl’na Qayeh Tustes means “ghosts village pass,” which was also known as Ingersol Pass to early twentieth century prospectors. The pass had long been used by Lake Clark Dena’ina as a trail to Lachbuna Lake and the Mulchatna River country to the north. The Dena’ina showed the trail to the Euroamericans and they called it Ingersol Pass or Portage Creek Pass. Nothing is definitively known about Ingersol, but he is assumed to have been a prospector who spent a good deal of time there. Lachbuna Lake was commonly called Ingersol Lake by Euroamericans around Lake Clark, but that name now seems to be losing its currency.

In the same article Osgood documented the pass from upper Cook Inlet that the Dena’ina called Qizhjeh Vena Tustes which is now known as Lake Clark Pass. Osgood wrote about a portage to Tyonek that went over “at least one glacier and is probably rather a difficult one.”

During the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, prospectors undoubtedly visited Lake Clark in search of gold. They came into the remote Bristol Bay uplands to access Lake Clark, from the

123 Branson, John W. Clark, 193-196. A mountain pot lake is a lake ensconced in the mountains, either tucked in amongst mountains or nestled at the base of a mountain range. The Chigmit Mountains have several mountain pot lakes, such as Lake Clark, Kontrashibuna Lake and Upper and Lower Tazimina Lakes. The term seems to have been used by nineteenth century travelers.
124 Rodman, op. cit., 7.
126 Evanoff, op. cit., 110-111.
127 Wilfred Osgood, Lake Clark, 328-329.
Kuskokwim country to the north, from the east through Lake Clark Pass, from the southeast via Iliamna Bay, and from the southwest from Koggiung on Kvichak Bay. Access to Lake Clark was also possible from Nushagak Bay via the Nushagak River, the Mulchatna River and the Chilikadrotna River. All routes to Lake Clark were very demanding physically whether one traveled by dog sled, baidarka, pole boat or on foot. Difficult access kept Lake Clark in a pristine state into the early 1930s when commercial aviation began to open up the country to settlement. Aviation made prospecting less expensive because it reduced the time and expense of accessing remote regions.

Some of the early twentieth century miners at Portage Creek were undoubtedly men like Hicks and Brooks who had been active in the Turnagain Gold Rush of 1894 to 1898 and spilled over to Lake Clark. Unfortunately we do not know the names of the miners who were first active on Portage Creek, although many if not most of the non-Native men enumerated in the 1900 U.S. Census at Kijik village probably did work Portage Creek placers. The 1900 federal census for Kijik village lists 17 Euroamericans as “various miners prospecting around,” four of the prospectors were born in Norway; the balance were American-born. Others were settled about the Lake Clark basin. None of them became longtime fixtures on Lake Clark. Most prospectors were highly transient, frequently moving from one location to the next, always looking for the next big strike. Although a few years later one fisherman-prospector, the Norwegian immigrant Brown Carlson, began to put down deep roots at Portage Creek that would span about 55 years, he was the rare exception among the early-twentieth-century Euroamericans who came to Lake Clark. Carlson was more a commercial fisherman, subsistence hunter, trapper and small-scale farmer than a prospector, but he did dabble at mining.

Exactly what year the first claims on Portage Creek were filed is not known, although it is assumed to be about 1911 after coarse gold had long been known to have existed there. In 1912 more coarse gold was recovered from the boulder-strewn Portage Creek, and a small amount of mining and prospecting effort was carried on prior to World War I around Lake Clark.

In 1913, USGS reported more small-scale placer mining on Portage Creek, but that was the only positive mining news in the Iliamna-Lake Clark country. However, prospecting continued on Kasna Creek and the so-called Gleason claims (named after Portage Creek miner Billy Gleason) near Lake Clark. The exact location of all of Gleason’s claims around Lake Clark is not known, but he was known as a Portage Creek miner, and he brought some copper samples to the Lockanok cannery on the Alagnak River in 1927, so he likely also worked on Kontrashibuna Lake.

Apparently the first recorded placer claims on Portage Creek went to M.A. Bartos in February 1911, William Gleason in March 1911 and Brown Carlson in April 1911. Other claimants on Portage Creek were recorded in the Iliamna Recording District:

128 One such early twentieth century miner to operate at Portage Creek was Dr. Pratt, who was apparently a medical doctor. His background in Alaska remains obscure. One news story said the doctor and his wife owned placer property near “Clark Lake,” which would mean at Portage Creek. In the fall of 1908 Dr. Pratt was despondent about losing most of his money in the fairbanks placer miners, which did not pan out, so Dr. Pratt committed suicide by over dosing himself with morphine while at Iliamna Bay. TAP, “Dry Bay,” September 3, 1903 and SWG, June 20, 1908 and SWG, “Physician Took Morphine, Dr. Pratt ...,” October 10, 1908.

129 Entry for Kichak (Kijik village); Alaska Census of Population; National Archives and Records Administration, Microfilm Publication, Cabinet 12, Drawer 3, Roll 1832, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900; Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29; National Archives and Records Administration, Alaska Region.

130 The staking of Portage Creek placers began before 1902 according to Charles Johnson, an employee of the Trans-Alaska Company and sometime prospector. Johnson was quoted as saying coarse gold was found in “Clark River” and on a stream that must have been the Kijik River. He said the latter stream had been staked “years ago.” The exact location of the Clark River is unknown but it might have been the prospector’s term for the two easternmost tributaries to Lake Clark, the Tlikakila and the Chokotok. Both rivers are western entrances to Lake Clark Pass and are relatively near the Portage Creek placers. TAP, “Strike on Clark River,” March 20, 1902.


133 Bartos Bay is a small protected bay on Lake Clark about one and a half miles north of the mouth of Portage Creek. The documentation is ambiguous about M.A. Bartos, but for the mining claim at Portage Creek. One George Bartos stopped into Millett’s Point on January 4, 1910, perhaps traveling with W. H. Miller of Millet Creek. The remains of a small cabin on the north shore of Bartos Bay might suggest that a person by that name built a cabin while prospecting the Portage Creek placers. The documentation is ambiguous about M.A. Bartos, but for the mining claim that Bartos made on Lake Clark. One George Bartos stopped into Millett’s Point on January 4, 1910, perhaps traveling with W. H. Miller of Millet Creek. The remains of a small cabin on the north shore of Bartos Bay might suggest that a person by that name built a cabin while prospecting the Portage Creek placers. M. A. Bartos claimed about 3 miles to the west at Portage Creek Village, near the Brown Carlson camp. David Barnett, telephone conversation with the author, February 5, 2014; Millett, op. cit., George Bartos; Bill Baschier, e-mail to the author, February 9, 2014.
July 11, 1911: Minnie Brodner, Charles H. McClees and George D. Brodner.

August 8, 1911: N.R. Walker.


June 2, 1912: George D. Brodner and Aboa Lee.

August 1, 1912: Four quarterly claims on the Kijik River, to be called “Nondalton Chief,” “Maxim,” “Lake View” and “Kijik Queen,” by Peter Anderson, Maxim Cusma, Vladimir Cusma, A.A. Delkittee, Marka Karshkekoff and William Gleason.

February 1, 1913: M.A. Bartos.

February 6, 1913: Otis M. “Doc” Dutton.

February 6, 1913: Joe E. Kackley.

February 6, 1913: Peter Anderson.

March 10, 1913: Harry W. Featherstone, M.A. Bartos, Aggie Anderson.

March 11, 1913: Marka Karshkekoff and Maxim Cusma.

March 11, 1913: Quarterly claims on Kijik River by Maxim Cusma, Marka Karshkekoff, Andrew Delkittee, Vladimir Cusma, to be known as “Nondalton Chief,” “Maxim,” “Lakeview” and “Kijik Queen.”

June 5, 1913: Harry W. Featherstone.

October 10, 1913: William Gleason and Company filed quarterly claims on the Kijik River to be known as “Nondalton Chief,” “Maxim,” “Lakeview” and “Kijik Queen.”

October 20, 1913: others who filed on claims as proof of labor on Portage Creek were F.L. Moms, William Gleason, Julia West, E.S. Beck, W.B. West, Robert Monroe, Maud M. Monroe, F.L. Morris (possibly Peter Morris, Kasna Creek foreman), Harold Feddow, E.L. Beck, R.M. Summers, E.E. Beck, Harold Sedden.

February 9, 1914: Marka Karshkekoff gave Frank Brown a quitclaim deed on the Kijik River with no indication of location.

March 18, 1914: Harvey J. Drew arrived in Bristol Bay in 1911 on a ship from Boston and filed on a Portage Creek claim.

August 10, 1914: Charles Carlson quartz claims on the Kijik River called “Molybdenum.”

September 2, 1914: Frank Brown filed a lien on four quartz claims on the Kijik River.

October 10, 1914: Charles Carlson filed on a quartz claim on the Kijik River.


November 25, 1914: Harry W. Featherstone filed proof of labor on Portage Creek.


March 27, 1916: William Gleason and Harry Featherstone filed proofs of labor on Portage Creek.

Martin and Katz visited Portage Creek and noted some random prospecting on tributary streams north of Lake Clark, the Kijik River and its tributaries. They noted the following:

From Caribou Creek (Koksetna Creek), a northwesterly tributary of Chulitna River, fine gold but no pay is reported. On the headwaters of Kijik River the alluvium of Kellet Creek and Ingersol, Lincoln, and Franklin gulches is reported to be auriferous. On Portage Creek, entering
Lake Clark about 35 miles above the outlet and heading against the stream just mentioned, one man, now dead, is said to have done considerable work. He took out about $40, all coarse gold. The alluvium was found to be about 12 feet deep and composed chiefly of large glacial boulders.\textsuperscript{144}

During the the summer of 1911 J.W. Walker, a mining engineer from Gary, Indiana, who had been in the Iliamna-Lake Clark country since 1907 and his two partners, Doc Dutton and Joe Kackley, began the final process of moving from Old Iliamna to Tanalian Point. In November 1911, Walker wrote a letter from Tanalian to Arthur S. Tulloch in Indiana telling him of the lack of positive prospecting news from the Lake Clark country. Walker wrote:

There is no news to tell you. Mulchatna is still at a stand still. It seems everybody wants the other fellow to do the digging. We are going to run a drain on Portage Creek next spring Brown [Frank Brown] and Gleason took out some good money last year. I had a drill sent from home and we intended to put it on Bonanza Creek next year. A short time will determine how far it is to bedrock.\textsuperscript{145}

In 1914, USGS geologist Philip S. Smith visited Lake Clark and learned that very few mines or prospects were being developed. He also thanked several local men for aiding his expedition—Thomas Hanmore, Hans Seversen, Frank Brown, Fred Roehl, Sr., B.S. Foss and Chief Zackar Evanoff of Nondalton.\textsuperscript{146} Smith wrote:

\begin{quote}
BELOW: A cartoon from a c. 1946–1947 magazine that was cut out and annotated by schoolteachers Rhoda and Bill Thomas. They worked at Libby's Graveyard Cannery at the mouth of the Kvichak River when Featherstone worked there. Surely Featherstone regaled them with his legendary bear hunting exploits from Lake Clark to Katmai. The cartoon was glued in a scrapbook kept by Rhoda and Bill. Its original source was not possible to discern. The hand-written commentary is an indication of the extent of Featherstone's notoriety as a bear hunter from the teens into the 1950s. Image courtesy of Chet Williams.

BELOW, RIGHT: Harry Featherstone (1862-1975) in retirement in Long Beach, California, in 1968. He was a miner who had a cabin near Brown Carlson's cabin at Portage Creek Village in 1913. Featherstone built other cabins at the mouth of Current Creek and at the head of Little Lake Clark. Featherstone was a famous brown bear hunter and story teller also involved at Bristol Bay canneries as a bookkeeper and tallyman on a scow for Libbys. In the 1920s he built a bear viewing stand on Margot Creek on Naknek Lake in Katmai National Monument from which to shoot brown bears for their hides. Photograph courtesy of the Bristol Bay Historical Society, H-196.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{134} Martin and Katz. Outline of the Geology, 193-200.
FAR RIGHT: Doc Dutton, in the center of this group, crouches next to a camp fire at Kasna Creek or Portage Creek in the late 1920s holding a wood-handled frying pan over the fire. Standing to his right, in a white shirt and dark hat, is Joe Kackley. The names of the other three men are unknown. Doc was a raconteur, chronicler and fine cook. Photograph courtesy of Helena Seversen Moses, H-716.

Practically no natives are employed in the producing mines, and probably the Natives are too few ever to have a marked effect on the cost of labor. Along Kuskokwim River, however, the usual wages paid to a native are $2 a day and board. This is also about the price demanded for Native labor on Iliamna and Clark Lakes, nearer the settlements of whites in the interior, however, the natives usually receive somewhat more. As most of the Natives are paid in trade the actual cost is considerably less than if they were paid in cash. ... In an area so remote from sources of supplies as much of the Lake Clark-Central Kuskokwim region supplies of all kinds are expensive. ... Throughout the greater part of the Lake Clark-Central Kuskokwim region no winter road and scarcely any trails are kept open except for purely local use...when the region was visited in 1914 no claims other than at the head of Lake Clark [Portage Creek] were being prospected.13

Portage Creek placer mining continued on a small scale during the World War I era. The 1920 U.S. Census was conducted at Portage Creek village, and eight residents were listed. William “Billy” Gleason was an Irish-born miner who put down roots at Lake Clark and in Bristol Bay as a commercial salmon fisherman. He died at Libbyville Cannery in 1929.138 Harry W. Featherstone was a longtime fixture from Lake Clark to the Kvichak Bay, known as a prospector, trapper, bear hunter, cannery tallyman and raconteur.139 Featherstone died in retirement at Long Beach, California in 1975. Karl Aspelund was born in Sweden, and was a partner of Featherstone at Lake Clark. He later moved to Naknek and married a local woman, Anna Klein, and started a big family while employed as a longtime winterman at Libbyville cannery. He died in 1938. Edward Gorman was an employee of the Bureau of Fisheries and was well known to the Lake Clark Dena’ina. Pete Martin was born in Denmark and after he left Portage Creek, he moved to Levelock on the lower Kvichak River and married Katie Egpluk. Lawrence Foster and Clarence Galston were young laborers from California who worked on the Portage Creek placers for a few years, then, like most Lake Clark prospectors, they moved on to what they hoped would be richer grounds.

Most Lake Clark area prospectors and miners were unknown and left few records. Billy Gleason was an exception. Billy Gleason (1870–1929) was a Portage Creek placer miner for more than 10 years. He filed on his first claim on the Kijik River and Portage Creek in 1912. Gleason was in a group of men, Dena’ina and Euroamerican, who worked together and included Maxim Cusma, Vladimir Cusma, Andrew Delkittie, Marka Karshekoff and Pete Anderson. Not many primary source materials have survived from the first prospectors to work the Portage Creek placers, but one reference to Gleason in the Frank Brown Collection is illuminating. “August 20, 1911 received from Gleason gold dust [for a grocery bill] $146.00.”140

A young Lockanok cannery store-keeper Stanley Tarrant encountered Billy Gleason at Bristol Bay during the fishing season of 1926 and wrote about him.

A wireless operator and I walked up the bank of the Alagnak [River], and spent several hours with an old bachelor miner who surprisingly had a light and clean cottage he built overlooking the river. His name was Billy Gleason. He said he had prospected just about everywhere in Alaska and also in the Klondike gold fields. His last prospect was at Lake Clark near Lake Iliamna, a source of the Kvichak River. Billy showed us copper ore samples from his Lake Clark prospect that were heavy as lead, and

137 ibid., 127-137.
139 A tallyman was a man stationed on a salmon cannery scow who kept count as fishermen pitched their salmon onto the deck of the scow while offloading their catch, one fish at a time. In the early twentieth century fisherman were paid by the fish rather than by the total pounds of their catch.
other samples of silver and gold. He gave up on Lake Clark because no matter how rich the ore was, it was useless to develop because of no transportation in the area.¹⁴¹

The location of Gleason’s Portage Creek village cabin has plausibly been identified at the trailhead to the Bowman Camp; just the outline is visible.

The last individual listed at Portage Creek was the inimitable Brown Carlson who was born in Norway between 1875 and 1878, emigrated to Port Townsend, Washington, in 1898, and came to Bristol Bay about 1900. Carlson was the subject of many stories and it is sometimes difficult to separate fact from fiction when discussing Brown Carlson. Some informants place Brown at historic Kijik village in 1901–1902 during the “Great Sickness.” He had his greatest year as a fisherman in 1902 when he and his partner caught 50,000 red salmon for a cannery on Kvichak Bay. He built a cabin at Portage Creek where he lived for approximately the next 55 years. In the early 1960s old age forced him to move to a nursing home in Anchorage where he lived until his death in 1975 at about the age of 95.

In addition to the eight Euroamerican residents at Portage Creek village, there were Lake Clark Dena’ina people who lived there as well. Vera Karshekoff was born at Portage Creek in 1923.¹⁴² Harvey Drew and his wife Alexandra (Alexan) Trefon lived at Portage Creek for a time during the late teens or early 1920s.

Anton Balluta’s older sister Cristina was Brown Carlson’s first wife and, as a young boy, Anton lived with them and learned how to read and write. He was probably taught by Harry Featherstone, since Carlson was functionally illiterate. One can imagine ten-year-old Anton Balluta reading at a rough sawed table, illuminated by a Pearl oil lamp in Featherstone’s cabin, just west of the Brown Carlson cabin. It must have been an invigorating experience to learn such new ways of looking at the world. It surely helped launch his successful and upright life which was cut short by an infection following an appendectomy at the Kanakanak Hospital at the age of 37.

During most of the 1920s, Portage Creek mining was at a standstill but toward the end of the decade there was some limited mining on the creek. There are no documented records of placer mining on Portage Creek during the 1920s and at least up to 1935.¹⁴³ However, there undoubtedly was small-scale placer mining going on at Portage Creek by local people. In a cash-starved area as Lake Clark was in the 1920s, residents likely availed themselves of all potential sources of earning a few dollars so they could purchase store-bought goods at Seversen’s Roadhouse.

Fred Bowman, the miner associated with the Portage Creek placers longer than any other one else, started mining Portage Creek approximately 1936–1939 but he began living at Portage Creek in the spring of 1936, if not earlier.¹⁴⁴ Historian Sara Hornberger wrote that Fred Bowman first became involved with the Portage Creek placers in about 1932–1933.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Eleanor Johnson, telephone conversation with the author, September 2013.
¹⁴⁵ Ellanna and Hornberger, op. cit., 4-23.
Chapter 6
Brown Carlson (Brynold Karlsen), A First Glance

Brown Carlson was born Brynold Karlsen in Holden or Holla in the Midt-Telemark district of southeastern Norway. At the time of Carlson's birth between 1875 and 1878 the community was known as Holden. His mother died when he was young and his father remarried. His older siblings, a sister and brother, were not happy so they apparently left, emigrating to the United States. Brown left home to seek a better life for himself, a life at sea. Some say he was shanghaied as a youth into the sailor's life, others claimed he left Norway as a stow away. He was reported to have jumped ship in Port Townsend or Bristol Bay in the late 1890s or 1900. Fish biologist Ole Mathisen, who knew Brown well, wrote that Brown Carlson left home at the age of 13 and sailed on a timber-hauler between Canada and England. Ultimately, Carlson sailed around the world, and made his way to the Bristol Bay region where he became a fisherman. Stories about Carlson are plentiful and often contradictory about his life before he came to Lake Clark and will remain ambiguous.

Carlson lived at Lake Clark for about 55 years and was the

146 Stories about Brown Carlson abound. Some stories are apocryphal and some are true or a combination of fact and fiction. As time moves along the Carlson legend is growing dimmer and this is an opportunity to set some of them down in one place for future generations to marvel at Carlson's life. Much of what the author knows about Carlson was shared by relatives of his and close friends and was not documented at the time we spoke in the 1970s and 1980s. The following people informed the author: Ida Carlson Meyer Crater, Katie Trefon Hill Wilson, Charlie Trefon, Craig Coray, Howard Bowman, Mary Alsworth, Jay Hammond, David Barnett, Al Woodward, and Victor and Annie Monsen.

147 Ida Crater, interviewed by Sara Hornberger, August 3, 1985, 1.

148 Ole Mathisen, letter to Ida Crater, November 30, 1981, copy in the LACL history files.

three caches are in the center, and his woodshed is right center. The poles from Carlson’s fish drying racks are on the right. Photograph courtesy of Margaret Atworth Clum, H-2710.
first permanent Euroamerican settler on the lake. While in Norway he had some training in gymnastics and was reported to have performed as a circus acrobat. Even at age 78 he could turn a handstand.  

Brown married Cristina Balluta, (a sister of Harry Balluta,) in March 1906 at Kijik and they lived at his cabin at Portage Creek, about six miles east of Kijik Village. His wife died at Portage Creek sometime in the 1910s, or in the early 1920s. They had no children. Cristina was buried a few hundred yards west of his cabin.

After Carlson's first wife died, he married his second Dena'ina wife, Agafia Trefon, the 17-year old daughter of Trefon Balluta and Mary Ann Trefon of Tanalian Point. Brown Carlson was 47 years old. Brown and Agafia's daughter, Ida, was born in 1927. Brown had a stepson, Charlie Evan Trefon, who was Agafia's son. Agafia died suddenly in 1928. She was seven months pregnant and her family thought she had appendicitis. After his mother died Charlie lived with his grandmother, Mary Ann Trefon and at some point in his youth, he lived with Brown for seven years. Carlson's cabin was about 15 miles northeast of Tanalian Point, on the north side of Lake Clark near the Portage Creek placers. The Carlson cabin was in the midst of what in 1920 was called Portage Creek village.

His daughter Ida, stated that her father said Lake Clark reminded him of his birthplace in the Midt-Telemark region of Norway more than any other place he had seen in his world-wide travels.

Carlson fished for either the Alaska Packers Association at Diamond J cannery on the lower Kvichak River or the North Alaska Salmon Company cannery at the mouth of the Alagnak River during the first three or four years he was in the Bay. During the winters of 1900–1905, he trapped and possibly lived at Koggiung village, next to Diamond J. Other people have stated that Carlson was at Kijik Village in 1902 when the "Great Sickness" was causing significant illness and death and he and Jack Hobson cared for the sick and dying in the village.

Apparently he fished for salmon in the Bristol Bay until around 1932, after which he preferred to stay at Lake Clark tending his garden which was known for abundant strawberry and potato crops. Brown was an excellent trapper. He trapped in Lake Clark Pass, Lachbuna Lake, the Kijik River valley northeast of Miller Lake and back to his home, which was also known as Brown's Landing, from the late 1950s.

In physical appearance Brown was about 5'6", very fit, trim, and strong. He was extremely proud of his agility, strength, stamina and heartiness. His diet consisted of salt salmon, potatoes, white bread, and prunes in the winter, in the summer, he ate fresh strawberries and
Ida Carlson Meyer drives a small tractor hauling a wagon load of logs which were to be three-sided on Fred Bowman’s sawmill and used in the construction of the Tommy and Ida Carlson Meyer’s home about 150 yards west of Brown Carlson’s cabin. The Meyer’s cabin is now owned by the Coray-Kahn family. Photograph courtesy of Ida Carlson Meyer Crater, H-89.

Brown had a large brown dog that was an overgrown sled dog. When Brown walked his trap line, the dog would pull a folding L.L. Bean sled. One of Brown’s dogs fell off a cliff near the northeast end of Lake Clark while they were walking the trap line.

As for Brown’s personality, he was a happy-go-lucky fellow, very friendly and given to talking to himself. As Brown grew older, he lived by himself and got into the habit of yelling toward the mountains near his home, listening for the echo to rebound. Katie Trefon Hill Wilson, was Brown’s sister-in-law, and she said when he walked his trapline he would frequently yell-out “Hello Mr. Ptarmigan, Old Brown is back in the country!” This was a strategy Brown used to let brown bears know he was in the country.

Brown liked to show off his strength and gymnastic skills. He could set large brown bear traps by getting under his cache and using his back pressed against the floor of the four foot high cache for leverage. Once while standing on the dock at Nondalton someone remarked to Brown, in a good natured way, that he was too old to do back flips, so he promptly did a flip, at the time, he was in his late 60s. At the trailhead of the Newhalen Portage near Seversen’s Roadhouse, someone once bet Brown he could not pack a 200-pound load over the six-mile trail without stopping, Brown took him up on the wager, and won. Another time, some of Brown’s cronies pulled a prank on him by secretly filling a steamer trunk he was going to pack with sacks of sand and Brown packed it over the portage thinking it was full of bags of sugar. When Brown reached the landing on the Newhalen River he was mortified by what his friends had done, but he cooled down when he discovered that his friends had taken all the sugar in their packs so Brown did not have to return to Iliamna to retrieve it.
A close-up of Brown Carlson's three storage caches at his place in 1941 photograph taken by Harry Baker. The Bakers were friends of Fred and Norma Bowman and worked at the Bowman mine. They eventually built their own cabin in Bartos Bay, east of Portage Creek in 1949. Left to right: Peggy Baker, Joe Thompson, Howard Bowman, Norma Bowman, and Fred Bowman. Photograph courtesy of Margaret Alsworth Clum, H-2713.
His first house burned down in 1939 and he re-built it that same year, with the help of Fred Bowman.\textsuperscript{153} He had a root cellar dug into a slight rise in back of his cabin where he could keep potatoes two years without sprouting, or so some his friends claimed. Brown was famous for talking to himself. Once someone came to visit him and before knocking heard voices in Brown's cabin shouting about whether or not there was salt and pepper in the stew. Come to find out, it was just Brown talking to himself. Brown used to sit on a hill in back of Nondalton talking to himself, usually in the spring when the hill was covered with beautiful wild flowers.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s Craig Coray spent several years growing up close to Brown Carlson and spent a great deal of time with him. On one occasion they were sitting at Brown's table while Brown was peeling potatoes. Brown's vision was very poor and when he finished peeling the potatoes he used both his hands and raked the peeled spuds into a cooking pot that was resting in his lap. Unfortunately, he also raked in peelings and his watch. Brown was primarily a trapper and he was a very excellent woodsman. When older, he trapped with Joe Thompson on the Chokotonk River from the east end of Little Lake Clark. They had a small shed-roofed line cabin immediately east of the lake to provide them over night shelter. The line cabin was about 20 miles east of Brown's Portage Creek cabin. Carlson had another line cabin on a small slough at the northeast end of the main part of Lake Clark, at the western end of Lake Clark Pass.

According to Al Woodward who knew Brown from the late 1940's to the early 1960's, Brown swore by the .30-30 model 94 Winchester rifle. He claimed the best place to shoot a bear was in the car—having done it at least once to a bruin that had entered his woodshed. Brown climbed up on the roof, put his rifle through a hole, and shot the beast in the car. It was a large grizzly and after he had skinned it, its hide covered a large wall. Brown claimed to have shot between six and eight grizzly bears a year, and he also set traps for them. During the 1920s and 1930s Brown made more than $3,500 trapping in one year. This was the peak of trapping, and fox fur coats where in great demand.

Even when he was an old man in his early 80s, he could still pack a case of canned milk at a run from an airplane up the beach to his house. The case weighed about 30 pounds. He always wore a cap and was not too particular about personal appearances or cleanliness. Be that as it may, he was a genuine character, and a friendly and down-to-earth man who had many friends and adventures in a long life. Many who knew him said Brown was a genial man with a light-hearted demeanor. Others have suggested that Brown could be difficult to get along with, particularly in his old age. Babe Alsworth said Brown (in old age) was suspicious that he was getting “taken” whenever he asked someone to get him something in Iliamna or Anchorage.

Late in life he was afflicted with cataracts and, since he had no one to chop his wood, pack his water, or fill his lamp as night came on, he had to spend his final years in an Anchorage nursing home. Unfortunately, he spent his last years in a small cubicle, an old codger who had become suspicious and cantankerous, a man who, after living for years and years self-sufficiently at Lake Clark, was like a fish out of water. He was survived by his daughter, Ida Carlson Meyer Crater, three grandchildren and one step-son, Charlie Trefon. Brown used to boast that he would out live all the other old sourdoughs around the lake, and he did. He was about 95 years old when he passed away in Anchorage in 1975. He had out lived his contemporaries on Lake Clark—Doc Dutton and Joe Kackley—by almost a quarter century.

\textsuperscript{153} Hoagland, op. cit., “Brown Carlson Complex.”
Chapter 7
Ida Carlson Meyer Crater
and Howard Bowman Recall
Brown Carlson

Met at [Seversen’s Roadhouse] a sure – enough sourdough from Clark Lakes – ‘Brown’ Carlson. Has been here 28 years (in Alaska 31), is 53 but looks 70, and is a bit ‘queer.’ Ask him how many white people live about the Clark Lakes – answer – ‘Oh, there’s a good many.’ Question – How many? Answer – ‘Well, let me see, there’s one, two, three – there’s four of us.’

Ales Hrdlička, anthropologist, Smithsonian Institution, July 17, 1931

Carlson’s daughter, Ida, was born in 1927. After her mother, Agafia, died in 1928 Brown Carlson never remarried and that situation caused problems in childcare for Ida. Brown Carlson frequently was away from his house for several days as he tended his trapline.

Once when Ida was a mere child, Brown left her alone in the cabin while he went on an overnight trip to check his trap line. Nondalton’s first permanent schoolteacher, William Leise, stopped by Carlson’s cabin and discovered Ida home alone. Rather than leave her in this dangerous situation, he took her back to his home in Old Nondalton, about 30 miles west. Howard Bowman recalled Brown telling him about this incident.

The schoolteacher came up from [Old] Nondalton in the spring of ’32 and found Brown’s…six year old by herself in his cabin. Brown was away running his line. He would be gone for another week or so and [William] Leise decided that wasn’t the best for a little girl to be. So he wrote Brown a note that would scorched the…man’s fingers if Brown could have read. He took the girl [Ida] as his own ward. He raised her in his household. Brown was very mad about that many years after the fact. But at the time it was good riddance. It was interesting, the family…that Ida was 17, 18 years old. She could probably do a lot of work. Then Brown got awfully upset about Leise stealing, kidnapping his daughter. In fact, he went into one of his berserker rages over it. He was running up and down the beach roaring, shouting and screaming. And a letter came for him, of course, which he couldn’t read, so we got to read it for him. His little daughter Ida had just gotten married to a GI. Brown went from berserker rage...
to a relatively normal human being in a matter of less than an hour. Tommy Meyer, the man she married, was a good husband to her and came out here and built a cabin which is now the Coray's house. Tommy was murdered in Bristol Bay. Some GIs, Air Force types from the Air Base (King Salmon) hit him up to have him buy them a bottle down in Naknek. Tommy was working as a cook in the canneries. He refused them, so they stuck a knife in his back and then threw him in the [King Salmon Creek]. Leaving the wife and many small children here. Ida was competent enough to go back Outside again, the problem. Lake Clark. How do you make a living? She went Outside and became, I believe, a keypunch operator or something of that sort. And later ... proceeded ... raising that family. And she has since remarried, a lot of personality there. A lot of person. Considering the rather harsh and uncompromising beginning of that person's life. To see them with major tragedies of this sort impresses. [sic].

In 1950 Brown Carlson and Fred and Norma Bowmans helped Tommy Meyer and Ida build a cabin near Brown's place. He, Ida and their children lived with Brown while building their own cabin, 200 yards to the west. In 1985, Ida (Meyer) Crater recalled building their cabin with the help of the Bowmans.

Yes, we built Coray's place, the cabin there, that one summer [1950]. We put that up. All of us worked at it. We went out and cut logs. We used the tractor and Bowman had a cart and we'd load the logs onto the cart and I'd drive them up to Bowman's; he had his sawmill up there; and he cut the logs on three sides and Tom and Dad [Brown Carlson] would stay in the woods getting the logs and I was driving the tractor. In fact, Mrs. Bowman took a picture of me one time when I was up there with a load of logs on.156

In 1956, Tommy Meyer was a cook for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in King Salmon when two airmen from the King Salmon Air Force Base stabbed him repeatedly in the back. The perpetrators were drunk at the time the crime was committed. They pled guilty to second-degree murder in U.S. District Court, in Anchorage, and each was sentenced to 17 years in prison with eight years suspended. Each prisoner was eligible for parole in three years.

Howard Bowman recounted a close call Carlson had in Lake Clark Pass while beaver trapping.

This was a beaver trapping trip and we were the only neighbors. Brown would stop in at our place. My mother made home brew. Brown should have been back and it was a little late and then it was a little later and he come in a week or so later than he should have been and wouldn't talk about it. He was very embarrassed. Something bothered him. Something hadn't went quite right. Two bottles of home brew later and he would talk about anything. And he finally owned up to just what had gone wrong. Coming down the river [Tlikakila] on the ice walking on snowshoes in the spring of the year, he had walked out on a place where the wind driven snow had covered a hole in the ice and he fell through with his pack, and his rifle, he was wearing snowshoes. He clawed and swam his way back up stream to the hole that he had fallen into, against the current. He got his pack out, he got his rifle out, he

156 Ida Carlson Crater, interviewed by Sara Hornberger, August 3, 1985; "Two Soldiers Are Sentenced For Murder," undated (circa 1957) from Anchorage Daily Times (?), copy in the LACL history files. Jay Hammond helped Tommy Meyer obtain employment as a cook for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in King Salmon that fateful summer. Jay mentioned he had seen a black bear hide at Brown Carlson's that Tommy had shot and it was the largest black bear Jay had ever seen, squaring 7 or 8 feet, Jay Hammond, conversations with the author, June 5, 1974.
[got] himself out, and then much to his dismay and disgust found that he had lost one snowshoe while down under the ice. The snow was very deep and very wet. You did not go 200 yards in that kind of snow without proper foot gear. So Brown had spent that extra week sitting there carving a replacement snowshoe from a piece of dry spruce with his trapper’s pocket knife. And that was what held him up. The snowshoe that he cut was an excellent thing, completely functional. He made it on the spot. It worked quite well. But he was so put out with himself being so inept to lose a snowshoe while he was under the ice.\textsuperscript{157}

Bowman also recounted something about the relationship between Carlson and Joe Thompson and the latter’s role in the decision to move Brown to a nursing home in Anchorage in the early 1960s.

In part, Joe Thompson helped with that. Joe was around and had quite a bit of contact with Brown. Brown had Norwegian – Joe Swedish, so there was contact, but there were also points of friction – animosity.\textsuperscript{158} For example, during WWII when they were both trapping up on Brown’s trapline on Big [Tlikakila] River, [they had] relatively heated discussions over the Norwegians and Swedes and Joe delighted in reading accounts of Count Quisling.\textsuperscript{159} And Brown would get mad and dispute this, and Joe would say, “Brown it right in the Readers Digest, read it yourself!” Brown was incapable of coping with existence on the lake. His vision was almost completely gone. He couldn’t see.\textsuperscript{160}

\textsuperscript{157} Howard Bowman, interviewed by Fred Hirschmann, October 21, 1985.
\textsuperscript{158} Joe Thompson’s father was born in Iowa and his mother was born in Norway.
\textsuperscript{159} Vidkun Quisling (1887-1945) was the Norwegian dictator during World War II and a Nazi collaborator. He was executed after the war for treason and other crimes.
\textsuperscript{160} Howard Bowman, op. cit.
Brown was known as a very fast fish splitter and Bowman elaborated on what that entailed.

Brown again loved to show off, but he would fillet a salmon a minute and these I am talking about were a nice neat fillet. This was not a butchered salmon, just as smooth as can be. All the bones were removed, no raggedness to it. All the fins were off. Everything was done just right. We provided the slabs [spruce] and some of the labor and helped put up the smoke house. The last one that was there. And we shared. We put up a few fish for his own use and we put up salmon for our dog teams that we had and for our own use. Brown would light a fire every morning for us, if we didn’t get down there soon enough to keep the flies off. All the smoke does is just to keep the flies away while the salmon are air curing, really. But you had to have smoke going, a little low smoke going from early in the morning until fairly late at night. Brown would kind of keep an eye on those fires.\textsuperscript{161}

Howard Bowman spoke about Brown’s woodcraft skills.

On that cabin of Brown’s, the lumber was cut for the roof and so forth on our saw mill, but those logs were hand hewed. Hewed ’em with an axe. The old boy was good with hand skills. He made his own boats. He made quite a big deal about going out and finding natural crooks in the wood. Not too shabby. He would dig spruce roots for the ribs in his round bottom boats. They were a round bottom boat with a squared off stern for an outboard motor. His technique was to paint them heavily with tar or spruce [pitch]. The canoe, he did not paddle it. He rowed it with his oars. Brown cut shavings, a little bit opposite the way I’ve seen anybody else….He cut shavings pulling the knife toward himself.\textsuperscript{162}

Bowman spoke about Carlson’s tralines.

He [Carlson] claims he went all the way to the glacier. Only point is which glacier? There are numerous glaciers in Lake Clark Pass, but there is only one spoke of as the “glacier” and that was the one that in 1936 when the two valley glaciers connect on just the other side of what they call Summit Lake. Summit Lake, at that time did not exist. You had two hanging valley glaciers. One went to Cook Inlet. One went toward Lake Clark [Bristol Bay]. As the glaciers receded, Summit Lake formed and now, of course, Summit Lake is the high spot that drains both ways…You had to go through at about [1,800] feet. Now you can do it at [1000-1200] feet.\textsuperscript{163}

Bowman spoke of Brown’s trapping skills and offered another version of the Carlson legend.

The man took beautiful care of his furs…That’s Brown Carlson’s red fox and this was Brown Carlson’s lynx. That is still a rather nice looking red fox. By God that was trapped in the fifties. The man took awfully good care of his furs and got top price for them…. The trading post was Seversen’s. It was located at what is now called Iliamna. Seversen’s out on the Point there, that was the only store, period, as far as we were concerned. There were no roads. You went across the portage with your dog team in the winter, [walked] across the trail in the summer time.
It brings to mind another minor Brown Carlson story. Again his bragging gets him in trouble. He told what a terrific guy he was with his canoe. That he rowed rather than paddled. And so, there were two landings on the portage on the [Newhalen] River. There was the upper landing above the rapids and then you went through a set of rapids. So Brown bragged that he was so good, he could run that with his canvas canoe. He could run rapids between the Upper Landing and the Lower Landing.\textsuperscript{164}

Howard Bowman on how Brynold Carlson became Brown Carlson.

He told me that his real name was Brynhold Carlson. I asked him why Brown? He said he had been signed on the ship’s papers as B. Carlson. Coming up from [Port Townsend or San Francisco] on a sailing vessel and somebody asked...as to what the B. stood for. He liked the word Brown, so he said his name was Brown. And he was known as Brown Carlson here in this part of the world. There are many stories of the old chap. He was not tall, 5’3” or 5’4” in height. Weighed perhaps 135 to 140 pounds soaking wet. But, he was in exceptional physical condition for a man of his years. Brown was still turning hand springs in his sixties. Anything would get him to do it. The people coming in and he would show off. His place was—you should have seen it...it probably similar to a farm in Norway...He kept the grass cut. He used a scythe, a hand scythe and he cut the grass in from his house so the area was fairly clearly mowed, not a lawn, but it wasn’t grass and brush. It was clean. There was a smoke house, of course, for putting up salmon. Potato patch, and a magnificent strawberry patch. Brown had no education. He could neither read nor write so much as his own name.\textsuperscript{165}

\textsuperscript{164} ibid. \textsuperscript{165} ibid.
A Vignette on Brown Carlson

I

da Carlson Meyer Crater, said Brown had invested $500 in Bering Sea Airways on May 20, 1936. Bush pilot Roy Dickson was the president and chief pilot. Other local investors of note were: Billy Hill, Gus Gretchen, Sr. (Mary Alsworth’s father), Martin Monsen, Sr., and Hans Seversen. Bering Sea Airways made a profit its first year of operation but merged with Art Woodley’s Airways and that in turn eventually became part of Delta Airlines. The fact that the volatile aviation industry attracted Brown Carlson’s interest and willingness to invest in the venture is indicative of how transformative commercial aviation was to the people of western Alaska and how rapidly it changed bush Alaska.

Every February, starting in 1936, Anchorage celebrated its central geographic and commercial prominence by hosting an annual Anchorage Fur Rendezvous which included all manner of winter sports competitions, dances, a carnival, and a large fur auction. The auction attracted trappers, and bush pilots flew in many trappers from western Alaska. In 1938 pilot Kenny Neese flew Brown Carlson to Anchorage with a big catch of lynx, red fox and river otter skins.

 Apparently Carlson next returned to Anchorage when bush pilot Oren Hudson flew him to town in February 1962 to see a doctor as he was losing his vision. At the time Carlson said the 1962 trip was his first trip to Anchorage in 30 years.

Carlson told a newspaper reporter that he had met a pioneering bush pilot about 1920 and informed him about the existence of Lake Clark Pass; however, Russel Merrill did not arrive in Anchorage until 1925. Merrill’s logbook indicates he used Iliamna Bay as his point of entry into the Bristol Bay region rather than Lake Clark Pass. The evidence indicates that Merrill’s successor, Matt Nieminen, piloting a Waco 10 made the first flight through Lake Clark Pass on September 12, 1930, Tanalian Point to Anchorage.

Brown claimed he shot 200 or 300 bears during his years on Lake Clark, that too should be taken with a grain of salt. It was not that Brown was a serial liar, but rather that he might exaggerate some of his accomplishments. Carlson was highly skilled at living in the Bristol Bay region. He was a high line fisherman, great trapper and hunter, he raised bumper crops of strawberries and potatoes, and he was a skilled woodsman.

His last several years of life were spent in an Anchorage nursing home and it must have been difficult for someone such as Brown Carlson who had formerly lived such a free existence to be confined to a nursing home 150 miles away from Lake Clark. His daughter Ida invited him to move to Washington State and live with her but he declined. Brown said that Lake Clark was “the best place in the world.” Ida Crater mentioned that Brown became upset when visitors from Lake Clark saw him at the nursing home. “Dad loved this place [Lake Clark] so much and it was like uprooting him from something that was just impossible to replace in a person’s life…”

ADT, September 13, 1930, 5.
ADT, February 21, 1962, 1.
ADT, February 21, 1962, 1, hereafter ADT.
ADT, August 3, 1985, 4.
Chapter 8
Self-Reliance: The Bowman Camp

A renewed interest in gold mining occurred in the 1930s, as the U.S. went off the gold standard in 1933 and the price of gold was no longer fixed. Gold prices rose, stimulating an increase in gold mining. Higher gold prices encouraged more investment in mechanized mining and provided incentives to accept higher transportation costs, including aviation access to remote mining sites, such as Portage Creek. Prospecting at Lake Clark increased in the late 1920s and 1930s. In 1934 a successful rancher and miner from Idaho, Harry Bowman, grew interested in the placer gold mining potential of Portage Creek. In 1934 Bowman and two friends filed on sixteen claims on the creek.

By law, a person could only stake two claims per month in a single recording district. After the locator, or person who actually filed a claim, had at least two people with him who helped stake claims and then acted as witnesses to the locator's signature. Because of restrictions on the number of claims staked by one person, their group of three people could file on six claims simply by alternating who signed as locator. Locators could then file a quit claim deed or sell the claim for a minimal amount of money. In this manner, one person could obtain several claims in a short amount of time. Another way to file on more than two claims was to hold a power of attorney for another, signing as locator in their name. This was a very common practice among miners. In order to hold a legally filed claim the locator was required to work the claim.

A "Proof of Labor" as "assessment" that described work done and attached a dollar value to that work had to be filed in the district recording office.\(^{172}\)

It is doubtful Harry Bowman and his two friends ever worked the claims he filed. No "Proof of Labor" forms were filed in Harry's name before his death in 1935.

Harry's son, Fred Bowman, was no stranger to Portage Creek and soon after his father's death he filed on the elder Bowman's claims. In addition, Fred filed on fourteen more mining claims, but ultimately he only obtained nine claims on the creek.

Fred Bowman was an old-time Alaskan who lived in Anchorage. He was a blacksmith and aircraft mechanic and owned Bowman Airways in Anchorage in the 1930s.

Fred invested in mining equipment and supplies and had his freight shipped to the major Alaska Packers Association cannery on Kvichak River, Diamond J. From there, it was likely brought to Seversen's Roadhouse on Hans Seversen's 37-foot gas boat, the Tern.

The equipment included a hydraulic mining outfit with a "giant" and powerful nozzle to wash dirt and gravel from gold-bearing material into sluice boxes, pipe and a Fordson tractor. The tractor started with gasoline and ran on kerosene, but fuel was a difficult commodity to obtain before the development of Babe Alsworth's 3,800-foot runway in 1950.

\(^{172}\) Ann Kain, National Register of Historic Places, "Bowman Mining Camp," undated, 16.
ABOVE: Fred Bowman drives his Fordson tractor up the trail from Brown Carlson’s place at Portage Creek village to the Bowman mining camp in 1941. Photograph courtesy of Margaret Alsworth Clum, H-2715.

The hydraulic giant brought to Portage Creek had a dual function. A wing dam was used to divert creek water into the giant to strip the overburden and wash the dirt through the sluice box. Secondly, the giant was used to power the winch. A system of cables running from the winch, through pulleys mounted on a gin pole and attached to a stone boat allowed for the easy removal of rocks and gravel from the mining “cut.” This in turn reduced the manpower needed for the mining operation. A rock moving rake designed and made by Bowman, later replaced the stone boat improving the efficiency of the operation on Portage Creek.173

In 1935, Fred Bowman leased his claims for a hydraulic mining operation on Portage Creek to the Stevenson Family and Art Stark, a promoter from Anchorage. However, the Stevenson outfit did not complete its first year’s operation. The next year, 1936, Fred Bowman moved his family to Portage Creek and took over the mining operations. The Bowman Camp was up and running and described in the Anchorage Daily Times in spring of 1937 in a story headlined, “Lake Clark Camp Plans Operation.” A party of miners working for Fred Bowman was prepared to commence hydraulic placer mining on Portage Creek. The miners included Mr. and Mrs. Bowman, Brown Carlson, Harry Bowman, Jr., Mrs. Frank Dorbandt, Jack Stahl and Al White. Carlson was reported to have lived on Portage Creek since 1904. The article mentions three other prospectors working around Ingersoll Creek (Lachbuna Lake-Kijik River drainage): Chester Whitehead, Charlie Swanson, and Hank Brine.174

When the United States entered World War II gold mining was considered nonessential to the war effort. The federal government supported industries essential for the war effort making military equipment such as steel, coal, rubber and machinery. Fred Bowman ceased operation on Portage Creek and each summer worked as a blacksmith in Bristol Bay’s canned salmon industry at the Libby, McNeill & Libby cannery at Libbyville on Kvichak Bay.

In 1946 Bowman restarted mining operations on Portage Creek using a bulldozer and hydraulic giant method and ground sluicing on the creek, thereby vastly increasing the amount of material he could process. Bowman continued to mine until 1954.175 He died of cancer in 1959. His widow, Norma Bowman, and her son Howard continued to run the placer mine, but age and shifting priorities caused the Bowmans to reduce their effort. Despite changing conditions, Howard Bowman continued to file “Proof of Labor” and successfully obtained a patent on four of nine Portage Creek claims in the 1980s.
Bowman's placer operation on Portage Creek c. 1937 with flume, penstock, hydraulic giant, and diversion channel.

While a student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, someone asked Howard Bowman if his family owned a gold mine. He replied: "They tell us we have a mine but we tell them we have a boulder laundry." Anecdote about the late Howard Bowman as told by Letitia Bowman. Photograph courtesy of Howard and Letitia Bowman, H-334.
Historian Ann Kain provided a succinct summary of the historic context of the Bowman Mining Camp in her draft nomination to the National Register of Historic Places:

The introduction and application of technology is evident in many resources at Bowman Camp, from construction techniques, to equipment, to the water storage system. Mining techniques changed from using basic and rudimentary equipment to more advanced hydraulic mining technology. Bowman Camp and mining operation is a reflection of the introduction and practiced application of technological advancement and the evolution of mining technology in the Lake Clark area.

Bowman established the first sawmill in the Lake Clark area. The sawmill played a major role in both the mining operation and camp. As a result, construction techniques at Bowman’s camp and the entire area changed, allowing wood framing techniques to replace traditional round log construction.

Milled lumber was especially important in constructing sluice boxes. To function both properly and...
profitably, a sluice box had to be securely constructed of milled lumber.

Another piece of equipment that had an impact on the camp was a Fordson tractor purchased by Fred Bowman. The tractor was a versatile piece of machinery that simplified operations of the camp. Aside from basic transportation, the tractor also ran the sawmill, as the power take-off device on the tractor could divert the tractor’s engine power to run the sawmill rather than the tractor. The tractor was also used to haul logs to the sawmill site, finished lumber to building sites, supplies to the sawmill site, and supplies between the camp and the mine.

Many tools and pieces of equipment located in the blacksmith’s shop provided insight into changes in technology. The collections of both hand-operated drills and grinders and electrically power drills and grinders indicated that there was no power source at the camp originally. According to Howard Bowman, the gasoline motor and generator in the shop were installed in the late 1940s or early 1950s. Until that time, all the work was done with hand tools.

The homemade forge was an example of the self-reliance possessed by miners and settlers in a remote area such as Lake Clark. It was much easier and faster to fashion items out of what they had rather than go through the difficulty of purchasing items and having them shipped.

The only hydraulic mining equipment at Lake Clark was at the Bowman operation. Like miners elsewhere, Bowman used equipment that made his work easier and more comfortable.

Bowman also worked to make living at Lake Clark more comfortable, such as his water storage system. A hydraulic ram collected water from the creek. The ram buckets emptied into a large storage tank. This device reduced the amount of time and energy required to maintain a supply of fresh water.

Two root cellars and caches for storing food contributed to the comfort of those living and working at Bowman Camp. Root cellars kept food cool and fresh. Caches stored food securely and kept it frozen in winter.

Bowman’s Camp on Portage Creek represented exploration and settlement based on gold prospecting and mining. The camp is a direct result of successful gold mining. All the elements of mining methodology are present at the “cut” and one can easily trace the advance in technology through the types of tools found in the blacksmith’s shop and equipment found at the mining area.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Kain, op. cit., 17-19; the Bowman Camp was never nominated to the National Register of Historic Places and is owned by the Bowman family.
Chapter 9
The Bonanza Creek Placers

The Bonanza Hills are approximately 38 miles north of Tanalian Point, but historically its prospecting and gold mining was closely related to the people living on Lake Clark and even Iliamna Lake; therefore, it is included in this work. Since 1980, with the establishment of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, a small portion of the northeastern section of the Bonanza Hills has fallen within the Preserve, though the vast majority of the hills belongs to the State of Alaska.

Unknown American prospectors were probably in the Bonanza Hills between the upper Mulchatna and Chilikadrotna rivers by the early 1880s. Writing in 1914, USGS geologist Philip Sidney Smith documented that "poling boats could ascend either fork of the Mulchatna for several miles above their junction." In 1914 Smith reported a small camp of six prospectors working the placers on Big Bonanza Creek.

Josiah Spurr first documented the names of three circa 1890 prospectors who worked in the Bonanza Hills: Harry Mellish, Percy Walker, and Al King. Spurr also listed a Mr. Murkle, who found gold in the Bonanza Hills in 1898. In 1909, G.C. Martin, a geologist with the USGS, met Hans Seversen on the Newhalen Portage and discussed the situation in the Bonanza Hills. Seversen said no money had been made on the Mulchatna River. He said the best prospect was on a tributary of the Middle Fork of the Mulchatna, the Chilikadrotna. That tributary was probably Ptarmigan Creek which heads in the Bonanza Hills and had several early-twentieth-century prospectors working on it. Seversen told Martin that Chris Hansen and Nels Johansen had the most productive prospect, and it panned out at $4 to $5 dollars per day in coarse gold.

J.W. Walker also reported to Martin that during the summer of 1909, 16 men had been prospecting the Bonanza Hills and that six men planned to winter in the Hills or Ptarmigan Creek. Walker said the way Lake Clark prospectors accessed the Bonanza Hills was north from Portage Bay, north of Keyes Point, across the Chulitna River and north of Tutna Lake. The trail next went through Caribou Pass to the Chilikadrotna River (the Middle Fork) which was crossed and north into the Bonanza Hills.

During the first decade of the twentieth century there was prospecting activity in the Bonanza Hills. In June 1910, Jack Kinney of Chekok, on the north shore of Iliamna Lake, located gold on a bench overlooking Bonanza Creek. An anonymous writer described the activities where Bonanza and Little Bonanza Creeks connect.

The first ten pans washed averaged forty cents to the pan, and the [?] piece weighed 28 cents. The bench is about 85 feet high and steep enough to permit the lowering of the gravel to the creek by a sliding car. Kinney worked about 125 yards of gravel and cleaned up nearly thirteen ounces of gold. This bench is not large enough to warrant the expense of bringing water up to it. So far as known there is no permanent frost in any of the gravels of the upper courses of this watershed. However, pick and shovel methods have reached their limit, as the flow of water is so
heavy through the gravels that it is impossible to sink to a
depth of more than ten to fifteen feet even with modern
pumps...Pans running ten cents are not uncommon, but
the ordinary pick and shovel and sluice box methods...will
not be successful...Probably more systematic prospecting
has been done on this stream than on any of the others of
the Mulchatna drainage, and an average estimate of some
half dozen prospectors who have spent considerable time
on this stream [Bonanza Creek] places the value to be re-
covered from these gravels at about $1.50 per yard.180

Three important miners living at Tanalian Point by the
summer of 1911 were J.W. Walker, a mining engineer, and his two part-
ers, Doc Dutton and Joe Kackley. They also worked the Bonanza
Hills placers and the nearby Ptarmigan Creek in the years immedi-
ately before World War I, most intensely between 1908 and 1914.
Some of the individuals who filed on claims on the Bonanza Hills
or Mulchatna River were: Jack Webster, an Australian living at Old
Iliamna; Jacob Ridgeway of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Chris Hanson
of Old Iliamna who took gold from Tom Creek; the brothers Holly and
Sam Foss of Old Iliamna and their cousin Sophus Hendrickson; Dr.
Henry O. Schaleben of Old Iliamna and his brother-in-law Rudolph
Ramslund; A.W. "Bert" Young, who filed on an early homestead on
Chekok Bay on Iliamna Lake in 1913; Gilbert W. Chambers who was
an associate of Doc and Joe at Tanalian Point; A.S. Tulloch of Tanalian
Point; Jack Kinney of Chekok, Dr. Linius French from Nushagak Bay;
Frank Brown, a mining engineer from the Old Iliamna-Lake Clark
country, who was associated with J.W. Walker, Tanalian Point and
Kasna Creek; Thomas Hanmore, O.B. Millett, Phineas Kackley and
Jennie Miller.181

181 Ellanna and Hornberger, op. cit., 4-22.
The close connection between the settlement of Tanalian Point and mining on Bonanza Creek was noted in the Iliamna mining records. For example, on October 10, 1913, J.W. Walker, Doc Dutton and Joe Kackley documented they worked 117 days on Bonanza and Little Bonanza creeks improving their mining claims. They built two bridges, whipsawed timber for a cache roof, built a shop and dug 250 feet of ditches.\textsuperscript{182}

Terry Gill, a placer miner on Bonanza Creek between 1958 and 1984, documented the claims staked and worked near the confluence of Bonanza Creek and Little Bonanza Creek.\textsuperscript{183}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bonanza Creek 1912</th>
<th>Little Bonanza Creek</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 J.W. Bullock</td>
<td>1 J.W. Walker (mouth of Little Bonanza Creek)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Frank Brown</td>
<td>2 N.C. Walker</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Gilbert Chambers</td>
<td>3 Teresa Millett</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Bert Young</td>
<td>A Chris Hanson</td>
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<td>5 Bert Young</td>
<td>B O.B. Millett</td>
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<th>Discovery Teresa Millett</th>
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<td>Above</td>
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<tr>
<td>1A Jack Kinney</td>
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<tr>
<td>J.W. Walker</td>
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<td>N.C. Walker</td>
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<td>O.M. Dutton</td>
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<td>Joe Kackley</td>
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<td>Arthur S. Tulloch</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Hollie Foss</td>
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<td>B Sam [?] Foss</td>
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Little Bonanza Creek comes into Bonanza Creek between 3 and 4 Below.

\textsuperscript{182} Historical Books Project, Iliamna Mining Book, District 320-Iliamna, General Index Proof of Labor Records, October 10, 1913, 27, 02 Roll 24; Iliamna B320-00004, Vol. 0, 98, 363, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Recorders Office.

\textsuperscript{183} Terry Gill Papers, copy in the LACL History Files at Field Headquarters, Port Alsworth, Alaska.
Terry Gill said that J.W. Walker, whom he called Wally Walker, had discovered the Kasna Creek copper deposit, but other sources say Hicks or von Hardenburg discovered the Kasna Creek copper deposits in 1901 or 1902. Gill believed Walker was a mining engineer who came to Lake Clark from Nome. Mrs. Teresa Millett lists Walker, Dutton and Kackley stopping at her Millett’s Point home, likely on their way to Lake Clark, in 1906 and 1907, respectively.184 Gill stated that Doc Dutton, a veteran of the Klondike Gold rush, was a rather fussy prospector as he sought $5 gold ground. When gold was worth $20 per ounce Dutton wanted a prospect where four cubic yards of dirt moved would yield an ounce of gold.185

In the pre-aviation days of the early twentieth century, access to the Bonanza Hills was not easy. During the summer it was an arduous hike north of the Portage Bay on Lake Clark through the mountains and across several streams including the Middle Fork of the Mulchatna River, the Chilikadrotna River. Travel by dog team in the winter was much easier, if trail conditions were good, particularly if a trail had already been broken. Fred Roehl, Jr., stated that one time trail conditions were near perfect, and he and some friends who had been hunting and trapping around Bonanza Creek mushed dogs all the way to Old Nondalton in one long day, a distance of about 50 miles.187

Another trip to the Bonanza Hills from Tanalian Point during the winter was documented by miner Arthur S. Tulloch, who was a partner of Doc, Joe and Walker. Tulloch took scores of informative photographs around Lake Clark and Iliamna circa 1910–1913. On the reverse of a photograph of a cache they built at Tutna Lake he recounted a harrowing February trek. Tutna Lake was on the divide going toward the Mulchatna River from Lake Clark and was a bit less than halfway from the lake to the Bonanza Hills.

Our main cache or storehouse at [Tutna] Lake built of logs split in two with whipsaw smooth side on the inside, sets on posts 7 ft. high to prevent bear, wolverine, and field mice from getting in and destroying provisions, when we leave we remove the ladder, Feb. 2nd 1910 Doc [Dutton], Judge [a dog] and I narrowly escaped freezing to death within 75 yards of this place. Had traveled 18 miles pulling a sleigh weighing 205 lbs. over an open country without a tree to break the wind. It was 70 below zero and considerable wind. We arrived 1 & ½ hours after dark. Judge could not see or hear and could hardly stand up. I was but little better with a great effort kept from dropping into an unconscious condition like going to sleep. Did not feel cold or suffer any. A drink of even water would have been of great value. We had no nourishment or drink all day. Worked extremely hard.188

Oliver B. Millett was a neighbor of Jack Kinney’s on Iliamna Lake, a veteran miner from the Klondike and Nome before coming out to the Iliamna–Lake Clark country by 1904.189 He was one of the first locators on Bonanza Creek and spent five years working the six claims he and his wife, Teresa, held. First Millett dug a 14-foot shaft along Bonanza Creek near its confluence with Little Bonanza Creek, but he could not keep up with the ground water pouring in the shaft and his hand pump was inadequate, so Millett made an open cut 80 feet above the 14-foot shaft. Millett was reported to have taken $400 of gold from 100 cubic yards. During the mid-1920s, Millett hauled in a four-inch hand drill and another hand pump, but the results were inconclusive, at best, and Millett continued only with assessment work for the next several years.

184 Millett, op. cit.; Terry and Victoria Gill, interview with Sara Hornberger, August 29, 1984.
185 Ibid.
186 In the early twentieth century people, both Euroamericans and some Dena’ina, including Andrew Balluta spoke of the three branches of the Mulchatna River. The main stem, the Mulchatna River, heading at Turquoise Lake, the Middle Fork was the Chilikadrotna River, flowing from Lower Twin Lakes and the Little Mulchatna River, heading at Fishtrap Lake.
187 Fred Roehl, Jr., conversations with the author, April 14, 1994 and March 29, 1995.
188 Caption written on the reverse of Photograph No. 37, Arthur S. Tulloch Collection Album 148, Alaska Historical Library, Juneau.
In the early 1930s Millett optioned 76 placer claims on Bonanza Creek. In 1934 he was unsuccessful in interesting a mining company in working Bonanza Creek, but in 1935 he was able to interest an acquaintance from the Bristol Bay region, William "Billy" Hill, a fisherman, boat builder, trapper, and cannery winter watchman.

Hill and his partners, such as George Seversen of Iliamna, Charlie Denison of Lake Clark and Walter Wassenkari, purchased an Airplane Placer Drill and had it flown to Mesa Mountain near the upper Chilchitna River by bush pilot Roy Dickson during the winter of 1935–1936. Other parts of the airplane drill were hauled to the site by several dog teams from Nondalton. Hill and his partners drilled a few test holes but the prospect languished due to lack of capital. After the partnership dissolved, Hill got the claims and the drill and Denison received the sawmill, boiler, and engine.

One of the young fellows who accompanied Charlie Denison to the Chilchitna River in the mid-1930s was Martin "Poykin" Johnson of Naknek, who lived at Tanalian Point from the fall of 1935 to 1939. Charlie Denison would average two trips per winter. They would travel into the Chilchitna River country by dog team shortly after freeze-up and then come back to Tanalian Point for Christmas. Then they would return to the Chilchitna in January after Russian Christmas for more drilling and return home for Easter. The route they traveled after leaving Lake Clark was up the Chulitna River 25 miles to Long Lake and then crossed over the divide to Tutna Lake. Then they followed a fork of the Chilchitna River through Caribou Pass toward the Chilikadrotna River and the Bonanza Hills. On their first trip to the Chilchitna River they stayed with Charlie Wolfe in his cabin at Johnson Slough on the Chulitna River. They made skis from birch trees and used them in the Bonanza Hills. They used the Airplane Placer Drill, a four-inch bit with five-inch casing, to drill to bedrock in their search for gold.

Poykin recalled the men frequently slept outside on -40 degree nights. They cut a large number of spruce boughs and put canvas on top of the boughs, laid their sleeping bags on the canvas and then rolled the canvas over the top of them and slept the night through to the next morning.

Some interest in the area was manifested after World War II, but it was not until 1958–1959 when Terry and Victoria Gill of Anchorage staked five miles of ground along Bonanza Creek, that any more concerted placer mining occurred. But even then it was a hard-scrabble "Mom and Pop" operation. For the Gills, it was more about the lifestyle than production. They did not get rich placer mining in the Bonanza Hills. As a matter of fact, they never owned their own house in Anchorage, but typically divided their time between their mining camp on Bonanza Creek, their log cabin at Port Alsworth and house sitting. The Gills retrieved the Airplane Drill from the Chilchitna River and brought it over land to the valley of Bonanza Creek sometime in 1963. Sam Alexie and Paul Cusma, Sr., both from Nondalton, operated it for Gill near Tom Creek, but the drill never located a bonanza of color on bedrock.
Jack Bailey stands next to his fully loaded sled and resting dogs in the Iliamna-Lake Clark country in the late 1920s. Bailey came to Tanalian Point and was befriended by Doc Dutton and Joe Kackley. He was set up in trapping cabins at the mouth of Current Creek and the head of Little Lake Clark during the years 1925-1927. Photograph courtesy of Tamar Bailey, H-1581.
Chapter 10
The Birth of Tanalian Point

... Mom [Yenlu Nudlash Seversen] got sick when she had [Martin Seversen]. I used to be really scared that something would happen to my Mom. That was in [Old] Nondalton [before 1925]. And she had a baby and she had trouble with her breast, swolled up and, gosh, I used to go behind the door and just pray for her to get well. And, then, old Doc Dutton was a doctor. They thought of him as a doctor. Maybe it was because he was named Doc. Everytime Mama got sick like that, they sent for Doc Dutton. I don't know what he did to her, but she got well. The milk caked in her breast and it swelled up. My Dad [Hans Seversen] always sent for him by dogteam or boat. Must have been when your Dad [Martin Seversen] was born ... [October 16, 1925].

Mary Seversen Wassenkari Clark, 1985.

The First Documented Euroamerican to travel to what is now Port Alsworth, but was formerly known as Tanalian Point, was Hugh Rodman (1859-1940) in 1898. Rodman described his baidarka travel on Sixmile Lake and Lake Clark and packing in from Hardenburg Bay to Kontrashibuna Lake.

Ten miles of paddling across the small lake [Sixmile Lake] and through a short stretch of a river took us into Kijik [Lake Clark] a long sheet of water from four to ten miles wide and with heavily wooded shores and surrounded by mountains rising six or seven thousand feet, the shores are beautiful with . . . , violets, peas and other flowers not familiar to me while the mountains with the varying greens of spruce, alder, birch, grass and moss make a picture not easily forgotten. At four P.M. and about 35 miles from last night's camp Nicolai [Riktorov] stopped at the base of a mountain [Tanalian Mountain] saying that beyond the mountain was a lake [Kontrashibuna Lake] and that somewhere beyond the lake were the mountains we sought,"

...off to the right was the sound of falling water [Tanalian Falls] which we rightly judged to be the outlet of the 'lake beyond the mountain' and by that we picked a way; it wasn't pleasant; over logs and through brush and clouds of mosquitoes, with the men falling into moss holes and the bidarka [baidarka] hanging in the trees but we finally made the four miles over the mountain slope, found ourselves on the calm water of the lake outlet [Kontrashibuna Lake] and paddling seven or eight miles along the lake shore were by eleven o'clock camped on the lake shore.... Onion Lake or it should be for great beds of wild onions grow about it.... A clear morning shows a region of small glaciers lying among granite peaks with a sea of mountain tops in all directions but eastward; there the view is cut off by a mass of rock and ice rising 1,500 or 2,000 feet above us and which no doubt is one of the high mountains west of Iliamna Volcano...."
We have returned to Onion Lake [Kontrashibuna Lake] and tomorrow will go on to Kijik for a talk with the sick man who hunted in these hills. Onion Lake is twenty miles long with great stretches of gravel beaches that are literally cut to pieces by moose, caribou, and bear tracks; ducks are everywhere upon it, and in the dense woods about it are numberless grouse which as the ground rises give way to ptarmigan; there are no salmon in the lake outlet, Onion River [Tanalian River] is impassable, but Vasilli [Riktorov] says it is full of trout weighing ten, fifteen, and twenty pounds and other fish with duck-like bills which I take to be pike...[After crossing Kijik Lake, Lake Clark, Rodman visits Kijik village.] The sick man is dying of consumption as indeed are all of these people...Nicolai's capital Nikhkak [historic Kijik village] is not impressive, two barabaras, two or three caches built up on posts, a banya or sweat-house, ...a small church and an extensive graveyard with many new graves...The church is a small log affair built by the Natives when they were more numerous than they are now.197

 Apparently the first Euroamericans to live around the mouth of the Tanalian River arrived about 1895. According to Bureau of Fisheries personnel who visited Lake Clark in 1925 when the red salmon escapement to Iliamna Lake and Lake Clark was abysmally low,

No salmon were seen along the lake shore, and on the Tanalian Beach in the lake, near the mouth of Tanalian Creek there was a total failure, the first in 30 years to the knowledge of white men living there. These men endeavored to get the winter supply of salmon for themselves and dogs from Kijik, but had salted only 1 ½ barrels in two weeks ...198

This would indicate that Euroamericans were knowledgeable about salmon escapement around Tanalian Point from 1895, although Hugh Rodman never mentions their presence when he visited the lake in 1898. It is quite likely no white men were living at Tanalian Point when the Rodman party paddled by on the lake.

By the summer of 1902, botanist Martin Gorman documents Charles T. Brooks and Harry Hicks in the Lake Clark area working for the Trans-Alaska Company on the Newhalen Portage finishing
construction of Roadhouse No. 2. Brooks and Hicks likely discovered the Kasna Creek copper deposit in 1901 or 1902.

William L. von Hardenburg, and perhaps his partner, Harry B. Nelson, were reported to have built a cabin on the south side of Hardenburg Bay on property that is now owned by Mark and Sandy Lang. It is likely the cabin was built about 1906; no trace of the cabin remains, but it was visible in the 1950s and 1960s.199

The first prospectors who lived on Lake Clark or at Tanalian Point or Kasna Creek did not become permanent residents and were mostly anonymous, except for people like Brooks and his Dena’ina wife Yenlu Nudlash, and Hicks and his Dena’ina wife Ada, who only lived in the Iliamna-Lake Clark country for a few years between 1901 and about 1908. The honor of being the first permanent residents would be held by J. W. Walker, Doc Dutton, Joe Kackley, and the Trefon Balluta family, and it appears that they moved to Tanalian Point from Old Iliamna and Old Nondalton respectively between about 1906 and 1911.

On the reverse of one of Arthur S. Tulloch’s photographs of a large beaver house that appears to be located near Tanalian Point, he describes an interesting series of events.

Beaver house out of which I caught 5 beaver and ate the flesh which was very fine eating. ... The water channel in front of this house the boys called Wet Ass Slough. We fell a tree across for a foot bridge and I was the first to cross, the tree trembled from the water pressure on the limbs and I had 80 lbs. strapped to my pack and fell in and while I do not think I was in any danger the boys were much frightened and rescued me promptly. I could not swim with the heavy weight on my back but think I could have got out alone. I kept my feet above water by kicking and they pulled me out feet first.

199 Wayne “Bee” Alsworth, Sr., various conversations with the author, 1974 to present.
I discovered this house April 17, 1909 when I drove two moose past the ice. I over took them about 5 miles from here and killed them both and the boys were angry. We only needed one but we had a chance later to give away the meat and did [not] let it spoil.200

It would seem that Walker and his friends spent the bulk of the winter at Old Iliamna because it was easier living there than it was at Tanalian Point. But as the days grew longer, they moved to their Tanalian Point cabin for spring beaver trapping before they began their prospecting in the summer. It seems plausible that Walker and his “boys” built a small cabin at Tanalian Point sometime after 1906-1907, when they were documented as stopping off at O.B. and Teresa Millitt’s place on the north shore of Iliamna Lake.201

For example, in one of Frank Brown’s memorandum booklets there is a list of kitchen furnishings, such as pots and pans, forks, spoons and knives sold to Doc Dutton on September 28, 1911, indicating he might have been outfitting a cabin at Tanalian Point.202 Another Tulloch photograph shows the original Dutton-Kackley log cabin with a new, attached, framed room circa 1911.203

Mrs. Teresa Millett notes that Doc and Joe stopped by Millett’s Point on May 30, 1906 or 1907, and Peter Anderson, and that J.W. Walker came by in 1906.204 It is quite possible that the prospectors were on their way to Lake Clark and they stopped at Millett’s Point to visit and rest on their arduous journey.

Walker and Dutton both kept journals, and, as has been documented after Dutton’s death in 1949, Ray Brower purchased the Dutton-Kackley site from Elmer Gustafson. Gustafson grew too old to take care of himself and went Outside to live with his son in California. Longtime residents Floyd Denison and Chester Whitehead reported to LACL historian Sara Hornberger that Brower burned the Walker and Dutton journals, diaries and photographs before selling the site to Roger and Emoreen “Randy” Briggs in 1955.205

However, apparently Brower did not burn all of J.W. Walker’s journals, because Mrs. Briggs referred to their existence in one of her Christmas letters from Lake Clark in the late 1950s. She quoted Walker as saying when he and the “boys,” Doc and Joe, returned to their cabin at Tanalian Point on April 2, 1912, they found a wolverine had chewed a hole in the door and entered the cabin. This implies that they wintered at Old Iliamna around 1910—where they were all counted in the U.S. Census—probably because it was easier living there than at the more-remote Tanalian Point. At Old Iliamna they had better contact with Seward, via Iliamna Bay, and groceries were more easily obtained than at Tanalian. Transportation between Seward and Old Iliamna was relatively easier than between Seward and remote Tanalian Point.

Once Walker, Doc and Joe learned how to put up and store enough food and wood for a winter at Tanalian Point, they left Old Iliamna and established themselves at Lake Clark. No doubt, part of learning how to survive would have included consulting Trefon Balluta and his wife Mary Ann Trefon on Lake Clark about how to preserve large numbers of red salmon.

In 1925, a young trapper by the name of Jack Bailey came to Tanalian Point and was befriended by Dutton and Kackley. Bailey wrote about their lifestyle on Lake Clark.
Doc Dutton and Joe Kackley... lived off the country. They joined up as partners in Dawson, Canada. While in Dawson, Joe would go up river from there cut logs, make a raft of them, kill four or five moose, and put them on the log raft and float them back down to Dawson. There were always plenty of eager customers waiting for him to pay five dollars for each of the house logs and one dollar a pound for the moose meat. Doc just prospected, but like a lot of others, never found anything. After a year at Dawson, they left and ended up at Tanalian Point on Lake Clark, where they built a nice two-story log house and cleared a large space for a garden. They summer followed half of the garden each year, fertilizing with salmon by making a furrow and laying the salmon head to tail in the furrow and then covering. They grew potatoes, cabbage, carrots, rutabagas, radishes and rhubarb. They would pick blueberries and cranberries for winter use, also dry salmon for themselves and the dogs, kill three or four Dall sheep, a moose and a black bear for its grease. The bear grease was blended with moose tallow for their lard. Each spring they would cross the lake to the Chulitna River, make a camp and stay there about three weeks killing ducks and geese. Always a ten gallon barrel of geese was salted down for winter’s use at home. One can see with all this various kinds of food, they lived like kings. During the winter, Joe trapped away from their home, having a trapping cabin about ten miles away. From the furs, they got enough cash to buy clothes, flour, sugar and other staples, and the few other things they needed. They had been partners for 30 years when I met them and during all those years, had kept a daily diary that included the names and addresses of everyone that had come into the country. They got along like two peas in a pod; Joe being the ambitious type and Doc a story teller, getting out of as much work as possible.

There was a Native family [the Trefons] living a hundred yards from Doc and Joe’s place. The husband had died several years before. Joe gave the woman one of the sheep as they helped her out with food and clothing at times. They each had a child by her. Pete, nine years old was Doc’s son, and Kitty, five years old was Joe’s daughter. They both looked like their fathers.... I helped them fall and cut up some trees for their winter’s wood, which they would bring to their woodshed by dog team later when there was snow.207

In another Briggs Christmas letter, Randy Briggs offered a lengthy quote from J.W. Walker’s alleged “burned journal” on the fall-out of the June 6, 1912, eruption of Katmai’s Novarupta Volcano, one of the greatest volcanic explosions ever recorded. J.W. Walker recorded in his journal the aftermath of Novarupta’s fallout on Lake Clark.

June 6 Broke camp in afternoon. Came to small bay above Portage Creek. Thunder storms. June 7 still thundering and cloudy head wind the thundering has developed to be volcano explosions fast and furious sky full of sulphur smoke. Two earthquakes. June 8 Saturday still booming to south more smoky sky and earthquakes. June 9 Sunday still booming and shaking and ashes beginning to fall. Ground getting white. Sky turned chocolate color tonight strong shock. June 10 Ashes still falling no wind explosions further apart. Built fence [at Tanalian Point]. June 11 Cleared up a little finished fence.208

206 Kackley’s trapping cabin was a few miles up the main tributary at the southeast end of Kontrashibuna Lake. Macnab, op. cit., 46-47; Alex Trefon, conversation with the author, January 21, 1992.


Doc Dutton, left, Joe Kackley, center and Charlie Wolff, right, process subsistence red salmon on the beach at Tanalian Point c. 1932-1937. Charlie Wolff was a prospector and trapper who built a cabin just west of the mouth of the Tanalian River in 1929.

Photograph courtesy of Agnes Trefon Cusma, H-44.

This is the only first-hand account known to exist of a Lake Clark resident describing the eruption of Novarupta between June 6 and 11, 1912, as witnessed from the lake which is about 90 miles north of Novarupta.

A few months earlier, on February 6, 1912, Walker applied for the first homestead on Lake Clark—160 acres on the south bank of the Tanalian River, on the eastern shore of Lake Clark. The homestead location was done on January 1, 1912, and witnessed by Kackley and Dutton, both men still listing their post office as Old Iliamna village.

Within a few years, Walker moved to the Snug Harbor cannery on Cook Inlet. Doc and Joe never followed through on the paperwork, so the 160-acre Walker homestead application became null and void, though that didn’t seem to bother them. But Doc and Joe lived out their lives on Walker’s homestead, some 37 years, all that time without title to the land.

With a few exceptions, the years 1913 to 1921 are fairly devoid of documentation about life at Tanalian Point. We do know Pete Trefon was born at Tanalian Point in 1914, and his sister, Katie Trefon, was born in 1919. Another birth was Helen Wood in 1917, who would become Helen Herrmann of Naknek and Anchorage in her adult years. Helen’s parents were Edwin Wood, a schoolteacher, perhaps born in Schenectady, New York, in 1867 and Anna Anastasia, a Native woman from the Stony River country. In 1899 Wood was a civilian employee for the U.S. Army expedition led by Captain William R. Abercrombie, sent to build a road north from Valdez to Copper Center and Eagle City on the Yukon River. Wood was a packer in the enterprise, and the crew opened about 100 miles of trail through the bush for pack horses. In 1900 Wood was involved in the Nome gold rush, and he was around Seattle in 1910, before turning up at Tanalian Point with his pregnant wife Anna in 1917. The Wood Family did not stay around Tanalian Point for long. Wood died in Alaska in 1926. Wood is an example of the majority of prospectors who passed through the Lake Clark country and did not put down roots, like most Euroamerican prospectors who came in search for riches. Anna Anastasia and her daughter Helen lived out their lives in Alaska, though, mostly in the Naknek-Kvichak district.

Thomas Hanmore was a well-educated businessman who worked for the Alaska Commercial Company in Tyonek in the early 1890s. He helped promote mining around Cook Inlet and in the Iliamna-Lake Clark country in the early 20th century. He subscribed to several magazines, among them Scientific American, The Literary Digest, The American Review of Reviews and Forest and Stream. Hanmore must have passed on the used magazines to Doc and Joe at Tanalian Point.

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because there were several copies of them in the attic of their cabin at Tanalian Point in 2009. They cover the World War I years. When Hanmore’s vision failed, rather than be a burden to his neighbors at Old Iliamna, he committed suicide at his cabin in the village in 1917.

Alexander Leggatt visited Tanalian Point in 1911 while en route to the Kasna Creek copper claims on Kontrashibuna Lake to assess the claims for the owner. He met Walker, Dutton and Kackley but did not note anything in particular about the settlement. Apparently, his photographs have not survived into the present century.

Walter R. Crane, a mining engineer at Pennsylvania State University, stopped by Tanalian Point in 1913 while on an assessment trip to Kasna Creek but his report is not known to exist.

George A. Parks visited Tanalian Point and Kasna Creek in September 1914. He was probably working for the United States General Land Office. He was the Alaska territorial governor between 1925 and 1933. Parks took a few photographs around Lake Clark, but none of Tanalian Point.

Walker, Dutton and Kackley built their story-and-a-half log house at Tanalian Point sometime in the early teens, probably about 1913–1914. It was still standing in 1921 when Colonel A.J. “Sandy” Macnab and Frederick K. Vreeland came to Lake Clark from New York City on a big game hunt. Macnab and Vreeland photographed the log house.

Life in the early years of Tanalian Point revolved around life-sustaining subsistence activities, such as hunting, fishing, gardening, trapping, berry picking and wood cutting.

J.W. Walker wrote a letter from Lake Clark to Tullock in Gary, Indiana telling him of the goings-on around Lake Clark.

Tanalian Point Nov. 25, 1911
Mr. A.S. Tulloch
Gary Indiana

Dear Friend Tulloch:

Your letter and pictures received sometime ago and this mail brought us the papers and flag for “Secar.” We took turns and read the papers all through to each other for fear we would miss something. Joe is figuring on splitting out a straight spruce and we are going to take our sick tent and make a flying machine…

Joe and I have our outfit put up and waiting for the wind to stop blowing to cross lake. We are on way to Tutna Lake to try for a few marten skins for a set of furs. If we can’t get marten look out for fox.

There is no news to tell you. Mulchatna is still at a stand still. It seems everybody wants the other fellow to do the digging. We are going to run a drain on Portage Creek next spring. Brown and Gleason took out some good money last year. I had a drill sent from home and we intend to put it on Bonanza Creek next year. A short time will determine how far it is to Bedrock.

The grouse rabbits and ptarmakin [sic] are plentiful everywhere now…. We had a duck hunt on Chulitna this fall and got all we wanted. While we were camped in the old place (where you and Tom camped) a fat bull moose walked out on the bar on the island in river and I got action. It wasn’t far to pack as we dragged the carcass without skinning it in the boat and took it home.

Let us hear from you and any thing we can do for you or send you from here just demand it

Yours very truly,

Walker and The Boys

On August 12, 1921, Colonel Macnab and Fred Vreeland of New York City paddled up to Tanalian Point and off-loaded their Old Town canoe in front of the Dutton-Kackley house. Macnab was on leave from his post at Camp Benning, Georgia, where he commanded the U.S. Army's 25th Infantry Regiment. During World War I, he had been on General John Pershing's staff in France. Vreeland was an electrical engineer and inventor whose office and laboratory was in New York City. Both visitors were ardent outdoorsmen and were members of the Camp Fire Club and The Explorers Club of New York City.

Macnab kept a diary of their Lake Clark trip and Vreeland took more than one hundred photographs of people and places around Alaska. Particularly noteworthy are his images around Iliamna and Lake Clark.

Macnab wrote on August 12, 1921:

Start about 9. Lake like glass, no wind – make about 20 miles to Tanalian Point, where we meet Doc Dutton, who was very glad to see us. Stayed with him in his house – house, not cabin. Two Indian women came in for a visit after supper. All the Indians around here seem to know English quite well. [Next day] climb the hill at Tanalian Point 4000 feet – to get some observations. Hard climb. Not much of a view. Fred took some observations.

After spending a few weeks canoeing and hiking around Lake Clark Macnab and Vreeland returned to Tanalian Point on September 7.

We reach the lake by noon – lunch – pack up canoe and reach Doc Dutton's place by 5:30. Doc seems glad to see us, and we sure are glad to taste his cooking again. We brought over six spruce hens killed this morning. Doc says he will be glad to go up to Kontrashibuna lake for sheep. Some have been seen from the home recently. The Indians and Indian kids also seem glad to see us again.

When Macnab and Vreeland left Lake Clark on September 21, they left their canoe for Doc and Joe at the landing on the Newhalen Portage. Later Joe Kackley brought the canoe to Tanalian Point and it was used by the Trefon boys, Pete and Alec, for beaver trapping on the Chulitna River. Before Doc Dutton passed away he gave the canoe to Fred Bowman and the canoe ultimately rotted away at the Bowman Camp—the remnants were last seen there about 1995.

The next detailed account of life at Tanalian Point is the Jack Bailey account quoted earlier which documents the years 1925 and 1926. It offers more details of life on Lake Clark immediately before the arrival of air travel and the sudden opening of an area that had long been very difficult to access.

Oral histories provide more information about life at Tanalian Point in the decades of the 1920s through 1940s.

The Trefon Balluta family was buffeted by the winds of change hitting all the Inland Dena’ina in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as forces beyond their control began to permeate their previously isolated lands. More Euroamerican prospectors moving into Dena’ina country, the rise of trading posts in the Iliamna area, and Bristol Bay cannery fish traps reducing the number of fish coming up the Kvichak and Mulchatna rivers impacted Dena’ina subsistence. Finally, the “Great Sickness” epidemic of 1901–1902 reduced the population of Kijik village by about 25%. The epidemic’s effect on more remote Dena’ina populations is impossible to assess, but it might have been considerable. After the epidemic, Kijik, the Mulchatna villages, Telaquana and even Qeghlilen villages were eventually abandoned. However, only Kijik was documented to have suffered directly from the “Great Sickness.” The other villages were very remote, had their share of illnesses, and saw their salmon runs reduced by commercial

211 Macnab, op cit., 30, 31.
212 Ibid, op cit., 45.
fishing in the Nushagak drainage.

The Trefon Balluta family lived at Old Nondalton for a time before moving in 1911 to Tanalian Point, to live near a few prospectors who they had met a few years previously, probably at Old Iliamna.121 Trefon Balluta wanted his son Gabriel to go to school at Old Iliamna and wanted to be near a church at Old Nondalton.124 Apparently Trefon Balluta did not care for life at Old Iliamna, preferring Lake Clark. He also asked Doc and Joe to teach his son Gabriel reading, writing, and math.

Trefon Balluta was highly regarded by other Dena'ina and the prospectors who hired him for packing and guiding them through the country to the Bonanza Hills. A circa 1908 photograph shows Balluta with Oliver Millett and his wife Teresa and son Hugh in the Bonanza Hills with miners and three other Dena'ina men: Grasim Balluta, Marka Karshekoff, and Yako Evan. Trefon Balluta’s peers gave him the nickname “one who walks fast,” a testament to his hiking prowess. A family story relates when Balluta ran out of tea and sugar at his home around Telaquana Lake he would walk 50 miles south along the Telaquana Trail to Kijik village in one day to replenish his larder. The Lake Clark Dena’ina living in mountainous terrain as they did, were known as prodigious hikers and great bear hunters who regularly killed brown bears with spears around the fish ponds on the sprawling Kijik River delta. Newcomers like the Milletts, Walker, Dutton and Kackley would naturally have been drawn to someone like Trefon Balluta and his sons Gabriel and Wassillie, who exemplified all those positive attributes, including great woodcraft skills.125

In about 1911 Old Iliamna merchant and Bristol Bay fisherman Pete Anderson and his Dena’ina wife, Agafia, moved to Tanalian Point about the same time that Walker, Dutton and Kackley moved from Old Iliamna. About this time the Anderson family had a small store at Old Nondalton. Pete and Agafia filed on mining claims on the Kijik River in 1912 and on Portage Creek in 1913. The Anderson cabin was located where the Floyd Denison cabin was built in 1935, immediately west of the Dutton-Kackley site. In 1917 the Andersons moved to Naknek where Pete worked for the Naknek Packing Company cannery as a watchman.126

Based on the 1920 U.S. Census, the only people living at Tanalian Point with Doc, Joe, Trefon Balluta and Mary Ann were the Balluta children: Gabriel, Wassillie, Agafia, Alex, Peter and Katherine. An older daughter, Alexandra, was married to Harvey Drew about 1919 and the couple was presumably living around Seversen’s Roadhouse near the trailhead for the Newhalen Portage, although they might have been living at Portage Creek or were out in the bush trapping when the census was taken.127

213 Elianna and Hornberger, op. cit., 4-62.
214 Elianna and Balluta, op cit., 278.
215 ibid.,118.

The first Euroamerican to marry into the Inland Dena’ina was Jack Hobson, who also acted as a culture-broker by introducing his Dena’ina kinfolk to work at Diamond J cannery circa 1901–1902. In the early twentieth century, Hobson married Tatiana Constantine of Qeghnilen village on the Stony River. In 1915 Hobson, like Trefon Balluta and Pete Anderson, moved his family to the Lake Clark country because life was easier than on the remote Stony River. The Hobsons relocated to Old Nondalton on Sixmile Lake.

In 1920, Gabriel Trefon married Hobson’s daughter Katherine. Their first child, Agnes, was born in 1921. As an adult Gabriel liked to be the first in his village to obtain new machines and appliances that made life a bit easier. For example, Gabriel was the first Dena’ina on Lake Clark to have an outboard motor. In 1926 or 1927, he purchased a two-and-one-half horsepower Johnson outboard. He also had one of the first Coleman lamps when they became available in the mid-1920s, having used a pearl oil lamp previously. Katherine Hobson Trefon was the first woman in Old Nondalton to have a gasoline-powered washing machine. Gabriel had the first generator or “light plant” and was the first in Nondalton to obtain a snowmobile in about 1960.

Alex Trefon was born in 1912 someplace on Lake Clark. The older brothers, Gabriel and Wassillie, were born at Telaquana in 1897 and 1898 respectively. Agafia Trefon was born in 1907 perhaps at Telaquana Lake.

Over time, the Trefon Balluta family would have shown the sourdoughs the best places to obtain various seasonally occurring resources: for example, where to fish for salmon in the fall on the Kijik River delta or where on the lower Chulitna River the ducks and geese were most plentiful. Similarly, Dutton and Kackley would have taught the Trefon Balluta family how to raise a vegetable garden and store root crops in a root cellar. They apparently read newspapers, magazines and, books. The following periodicals were found in their cabin’s attic during a rehabilitation: The Valdez Miner, The Valdez Daily Prospector and The Great Divide, National Land, Oil, and Mining Paper. For their time and place, Doc and Joe were relatively well educated, particularly Dutton, who apparently wrote all the letters for the two of them. Doc and Joe taught many of the people of Old Nondalton how to garden. In effect, the hamlet of Tanalian Point was a biracial community that was based on an interdependent relationship between its members.

The following letter describes Tanalian Point in the late 1920s from Doc Dutton’s perspective:

August 29, 1927
Tanalian Point, Alaska

A.S. Tuloch Grand Marais, Michigan.

... We have a Good House and are taking life Easy. We have a fine Garden, all kinds of Vegetables, wish you were here to Put in the Winter with us. We are put on a limit of 20 Beaver to the man but that is Good Enough. Ours Everaged $32.50 but we got all Large Ones. Joe would set away from their House and we wouldn’t get any small ones. We had a good patch last winter and Prices are Good. Hansie Severens is running a Trading Post at the Beach where the Trail starts over to Nondalton. His sales will run over $37,000 this spring. He is on Easy Street. Joe and I & Brown Carlsen are all ready to go down to Hanses for our winter supplies. We get all Heavy stuff up by Dog Team. We get up Flour, Sugar and all of the Heavy stuff a year ahead. We can now get almost anything we want. Lots of Sheep up Brooks Lake, no Trouble to get our Winters meat. Course Carabo & Moose are all most everywhere, same as Black & Brown Bear. When we come back from the Beach we are going over to Chulitna.
Ducks & Geese fine Shooting but we can Kill Enough in a few hours to Do us and our Friends. I have wished for your old Browning Automatic many times when they came to fast for my Remington but its Dandy. Joe uses the old 12 Gague Winchester pump but he gets them. We have a find Old Town Main Canoe 19 ft. overall. It’s a Beauty. It was a Present from “Col” A.J. McNab U.S.A. & Fred K. Vreeland of New York. They were in for a Hunt, had a fine time, Got some fine Specimens. I went along and Cooked for them. Secar is still on Deck. Will tell him hellow for you when I see him. He has the Flag you sent him, but like the Rest of us is getting old...

I wish you were here for Supper. We are going to have Mt. Sheep Stake and Cranberry Sauce. I believe you could do justice to it. Walker has been in the Salmon & Clam Canning Bus for years, got married and I guess is getting along Some way. We havent seen him for years. We here from him once in a while...

Will write you again before Navigation Closes and tell you about our Fall Hunt and other News...

O.M. Dutton and J.E. Kackley

Alex Trefon said his father died when he was 9 years old, in 1921 or 1922, of tuberculosis. Other sources put Trefon Balluta's death in 1923. He died and was buried at Old Nondalton. Mary Ann continued to raise her three youngest children at Tanalian Point until she left for Nondalton in the early 1940s. Russian Orthodox priests suggested to Gabriel and his brothers that they use their late father’s first name as their surname.

Like most of those Euroamericans who followed them to permanent residency on Lake Clark, Brown Carlson, Jack Hobson, Doc Dutton and Joe Kackley all participated to one degree or another in the Bristol Bay salmon fishery and then returned to their Lake Clark homes after fishing season ended in mid-July. For example, in 1923 Doc worked on a cannery tug boat, the Leona K as a cook at $150 per month while Joe was hired as a tallyman, counting salmon on a scow in Kvichak Bay. They made a combined $600 in two months' work. They usually engaged in subsistence hunting and fishing and trapped and prospected the balance of the year. As the men grew older, they stopped commercial fishing in Bristol Bay and they ceased prospecting, and largely devoted their energies to tending their gardens and putting up subsistence fish and hunting. Joe was a guide for people like Alexander Leggatt, Hannah Breece and Dennis Winn of the Bureau of Fisheries and likely other undocumented visitors to Lake Clark.

In about 1929, Charlie Wolff, formerly an Iditarod miner, moved to Lake Clark and built a cabin just west of the mouth of the Tanalian River. Wolff was born in Michigan and was about 53 years old. In addition to trapping and prospecting, he commercial fished in Bristol Bay. Wolff had three trapping cabins in the Chulitna River valley and occasionally trapped with Charlie Denison.

After Wolff left Tanalian Point, probably in the early 1940s, he moved to Anchorage and worked on a military base, before moving to Dillingham where he ran an apartment building just before his death. It is reported that Wolff was involved with the Red Top Mine on the east bank of the Wood River, two miles downstream of Aleknagik. The cinnabar deposit was discovered by Frank H. Waskey in 1941 and became a mercury retorting site in 1954-1955. The site is now abandoned, but is monitored as a hazardous waste site for mercury and oil-contaminated soils.

Another Euroamerican settler who moved to Lake Clark

224 Ellanna and Balluta, op. cit., 279.
226 Ellanna and Hornberger, op. cit., 4-40, 4-41.
around this time was Samson “Sam” Turner. He had been a private in the U.S. Army during World War I and suffered from post-traumatic stress syndrome. He was a very eccentric man who upon obtaining a new pair of shoe-packs would cut small holes in the toes of the boot. When asked why he did that Sam replied, “To let the water out.”

Once in the early 1960s when Lonnie Alsworth was weathered in at Sam’s place at the mouth of the Chulitna River supper time rolled around and Lonnie asked Sam, “What’s for dinner Sam?” Sam told Lonnie to go to the wind break and bring in the pot of spaghetti. Lonnie dutifully went to the windbreak and lifted the cover off the pot and noticed on top of spaghetti Sam’s false teeth and spoon.

Turner kept goats and lived for the most part off the land. The people of Nondalton liked Sam and appreciated his subsistence lifestyle and his simple and gentle nature. Turner had a big vegetable garden and ate ducks and pike that he would harvested practically right out his front door. Sam liked to listen to the radio so he could keep up on national and world news. Pilot Oren Hudson kept him supplied with radio batteries.

Sam died of a heart attack while his brothers were visiting him in 1966. Subsequently, Frank Bell purchased the Turner property from the estate and then sold Sam’s old place to Chuck and Sara Hornberger in 1969. The Hornbergers moved to the property in 1971 and lived there many years running Koksetna Wilderness Lodge.

Charlie Denison was born September 15, 1884, in Pawnee, Oklahoma. His father was Douglass Denison and his mother was Ella Canaday Denison. Denison previously worked in the forests of the Pacific Northwest, logging with steam-powered donkey engines. His son Floyd was born in British Columbia in 1907, but the family moved to Oregon by 1910.

By 1934, Charlie Denison relocated west of the mouth of the Tanalian River about one mile west of Doc and Joe’s house.

Floyd and Lena Denison purchased Wassillie Trefon’s cache at Tanalian Point about 1934 or 1935. Wassillie disassembled his log house and rafted the logs to Old Nondalton where he rebuilt it. Floyd, with the help of Alex Trefon, whipsawed lumber and built a log house immediately west of the draw at Doc and Joe’s place.

In the winter of 1934–35, Charlie and Floyd brought in a steam engine and boiler that they had obtained previously from Libby’s Lockanok cannery at the mouth of the Alagnak River. Apparently, the engine and boiler were transported from the cannery to Seversen’s Roadhouse on Iliamna Lake in a gas boat belonging to Hans Seversen in the fall of 1934. That winter Charlie made a large double-ended wooden sleigh with iron runners to hold the boiler and the steam engine.

Sometime in the mid-1930s Charlie and Billy Hill went into partnership in a prospecting venture in the Bonanza Hills. They purchased an Airplane Placer Drill for drilling into bedrock. They had pilot Roy Dickson fly the drill in, landing on Mesa Mountain.
that point, dog teams from Nondalton moved the drill components to the Chulitna River country.

In a 1978 interview, Floyd Denison recalled the steam-powered sawmill and the daunting challenge it presented to haul the steam outfit up to Lake Clark.

We got a sawmill going along about...we had a little steam outfit...going about...’36 I guess in full operation...we got it by boat up as far as Iliamna and then it took all the dogs in the country to haul that steam engine and that motor across. We had to make a special trail...but...the original nice big school in Nondalton we saw it right there [in 1941].”

“Now really the first sawmill ever [to] operate on Lake Clark was up at Portage Creek [Bowman’s Camp] ... There was a fellow...Art Stark he was kind of a promoter [he had] ...a little sawmill. And had it shipped in from Bristol Bay and clear up to Portage Creek...and they sawed lumber...for sluice boxes...[etc.] there.

Was the Fred Bowman Camp sawmill the first sawmill to operate on Lake Clark or was it the Denison sawmill? The documentary evidence is divided. In the park’s history files relating to the historic photograph collection, there is ample testimony that the Denison mill began operating “approximately” in 1938.

The same source states that the Denison sawmill was brought into Lake Clark in the winter of 1934–35. National Park Service historian Alison Hoagland states that the Bowman sawmill was already operating at Portage Creek in 1937–38, when she says the Denison sawmill was hauled to Lake Clark from Seversen’s Roadhouse.

233 Floyd Denison, ibid., 2, 18. Floyd Denison refers to the six-mile Newhalen Portage when he says “across.”


235 Hoagland, op. cit., “Charles Denison Complex.”
Floyd Denison's log house was built in 1935, a few years before his father got his steam-powered sawmill up and running. Floyd Denison had the first radio communications from Lake Clark with the outside world. He worked for McGee Airways and Star Airlines and the U.S. Weather Bureau. Photograph courtesy of LACL Collections.

The late Pedro Bay elder Gus Jensen recalled participating in hauling the Denison steam boiler and engine to Denison’s over the Newhalen Portage.

I remember old Charlie Denison from up at Lake Clark was trying to haul a 1,200 pound boiler home from [Seversen’s] Roadhouse for his sawmill. His son Floyd had 13 big dogs that time – he used to brag he threw away 80 and 90 pounders – but he got stuck on a little hill before he got out of sight, and couldn’t break the sled loose again.

There were some other teams around, and we drove over to see if we could help. Floyd and Charlie had hooked a fish boat anchor line onto a big, birch horse sled 8 or 9 feet wide, so we put some more heavy lines together and hooked our teams end-to-end in front of Floyd’s.

Young Harvey Drew had great big mixed-breed dogs – Saint Bernard, husky, malamute, German shepherd – and I was running nine big mail dogs. Gillie Jacko had a bunch of Airdales – we put them clear up at the front. All told we had 35 dogs hooked in together.

When we yelled and they jumped, that boiler started to move easy as if it was sitting on glare ice. Those Airdales of Gillie’s were up front barking and yapping, and that sled mowed down everything in its path – snapped dry trees 8 and 10 inches through like they were kindling. I don’t think many people realized how powerful that many dogs hooked up together are.236

Charlie did not expect his sawmill to be a money-making business, but rather to furnish him and his friends around Lake Clark with a source of dimensional lumber, which was a wise decision in a place as cash-starved as Depression-era Lake Clark. After World War

II, the America economy began to boom, and the Lake Clark country benefited as more money came into the area. Denison sawed for shares of lumber. People brought in logs and then generally assisted Denison in sawing. Charlie got a third, the helper got a third and the "saw" received a third.237 But Denison charged some money for lumber, as noted in his wife's diary of August 2, 1950: "Chas Trefon came along and paid $80 for sawing."238 Charlie Trefon was a Bristol Bay fisherman and the cash he paid Denison was probably from his earnings as a commercial fisherman.

Another post-war customer for Denison's lumber was guide Bud Branham. Branham built the area's first sport fishing lodge dedicated solely to fishing on Iliamna Lake, near Kokhanok Falls, in 1949. Denison sawed all the lumber for the lodge on his steam-powered mill, and Branham flew the lumber in his Grumman 44 Widgeon from Lake Clark to Kokhanok. Denison also went to the building site and helped Branham construct the lodge.239

Most of the framed buildings in the newly settled Nondalton were built with dimensional lumber sawn on the Denison sawmill. The mill was operating by at least 1938 and possibly a year or two earlier. It was little used after Charlie Denison's death in 1959. The set-up burned in 1962 during a grass fire and never ran again. The Denison steam boiler and engine is now on exhibit at the Port Alsworth Visitor Center.

Before the Denison and Bowman saw mills began operating in the late 1930s, all buildings on Lake Clark were made of logs. After the advent of the sawmill, framed lumber became the building material of choice on Lake Clark.

In March 1939, Doc and Joe's house burned down. In the summer of 1939, Charlie Denison three-sided logs for them, and Joe Thompson built an exact replica of their log house on the same location. They were helped by Alex Trefon. When he was a small boy, Alex also helped build Doc and Joe's root cellar. Apparently Charlie charged Doc and Joe $316 for the work, because Helen Denison's diary entry for December 30, 1945, states that Babe Alsworth and Joe Thompson came to Denison's with Doc's part of the bill for $158.75, which was probably half of what was owed. The balance for the late Joe Kackley's half came from his estate.240

Once the Denisons moved to Tanalian Point, the tempo of life around the lake sped up, because the frequency of airplane flights brought easy access for people and supplies. One new technological innovation that especially impacted Doc and Joe was their acquisition

238 Helen Beeman Denison, Five Year Diary, August 2, 1950, copy in LACL the history files. Headquarters, Port Alsworth, Alaska.
240 Alex Trefon, conversation with the author, January 21, 1992; the Joe Kackley will, copy in the LACL history files.
of a radio. Floyd Denison recalled this eventful time:

The first bush pilot I remember was Matt Nieminen. It was the first mail service to come through Lake Clark Pass. It was Pan Am. He brought the AM three band radio receiver I ordered for two old trappers, Joe Kackley and Doc Dutton at Tanalian Point. My wife and I were trapping at Current River. Nieminen stopped and told us he had the radio. So the next day we went down lake to Tanalian Point and hooked antenna, battery and set it up for them. When I turned the radio on KFQD was giving the news. Old Doc looked at Joe and then said if the dam thing never says another word its paid for itself already, Big eyes both [of them]... Some years later their house burned. My father had [the] first sawmill. So Doc and Joe built a new house with logs sawed on 3 sides. They built it exactly like their house that burned ...Then I get them a Zenith radio and windmill generator to charge the 6 volt battery. The windmill was still standing 4 years ago.241

The early 1930s were times of great change to the people living around Lake Clark as aviation began to open up the country to new people and to freight shipments and shortened the travel time between remote locations from weeks to hours. In 1921 it took visitors Colonel Macnab and Fred Vreeland 13 days to travel between Anchorage and Tanalian Point. After Matt Nieminen's first landing in 1930 at Doc and Joe's Tanalian Point camp, it was generally an hour-and-a-half flying time between the two locations which are 150 miles apart. The result was that more people came to visit Lake Clark and more came to hunt and fish.242 Doc Dutton kept a journal with a list of who visited and the date of the visit, but that journal has not survived. One example is revealed in a letter written by Alex Trefon from Tanalian Point on September 12, 1938, to Fred Bowman at Portage Creek where Trefon told Bowman he had some 2x8s at the Bowman sawmill he would retrieve after he returned from guiding two sheep hunters on a hunt at Brooks Lake. “Brooks Lake” was the common usage around Lake Clark in that period for Kontrashibuna Lake, by both Euroamericans and some Dena’ina.243

With the advent of commercial aviation, more people could more readily access Lake Clark from Anchorage and other points. In addition, more goods and services could reach Lake Clark, and residents of Tanalian Point and Lake Clark could more easily obtain consumer goods, groceries and alcohol. Katie Trefon Hill Wilson said that once aircraft began to land at Tanalian Point on a frequent basis, bottles of whisky found their way into this isolated realm with dire consequences for many local people, including some of her own brothers.244

By the late 1930s, the Floyd Denison family was living across the draw from Doc and Joe, and Floyd was radioing the Lake Clark and Lake Clark Pass weather to Star Airways in Anchorage. Floyd described his situation in a 1978 interview.

...we try to get our freight in the winter...until the airplanes come when the airplanes first started coming through there [Tanalian Point] which was the Goldstar then Alaska Star and finally Alaska Airlines I work for them. Even those other [pilots] when they started hauling [freight]. I remember McGee Airways, Cowboy Oscar Winchell he hauled in [the] first load of flour for my neighbors, Old Doc and Joe, [for] three and a half cents a pound, [in 1932]. He hauled [a] thousand pounds of flour from Iliamna [Seversen's Roadhouse] to Tanalian Point. For about $35.00, then it got

241 Floyd Denison, “Recollections,” August 14, 1980; KFQD was the first radio station in Alaska beginning in 1924.
242 One example was the guide and sheep hunter that pilot Kenny Neese flew out of Kontrashibuna Lake to Iliamna in 1933 cited elsewhere.
243 Alex Trefon, Sr., letter to Fred Bowman, September 12, 1938, copy in the LACL history files. Brooks Lake was unofficially named after miner C.T. Brooks.
244 Katie Trefon Hill Wilson, various personal conversations with the author in the 1970s and 1980s.
to be four cents [per pound]. It was four cents for a long time, it was four cents when I left there [in 1941].

But then after I got my weather station along with my radio station for the weather bureau...Alaska Airlines supplied me with gasoline and when they had a plane down that way that wasn't doing so much they hauled my freight from Iliamna....then if they had a vacant seat then my wife or the kids [could go] to town [Anchorage]....it was a pretty good deal because they only give gas and oil but the salary was only $75.00 a month. But of course $75.00 a month...went long ways in those days. At that time we could buy a case of gasoline at a trading post [Seversen's] for five dollars, a sack of flour was $10 dollars and that [was a] hundred pound sack.245

Floyd and Lena had two daughters, LaVerne and Shirley, the latter was born at Tanalian Point, with nurse Norma Bowman helping with the delivery. Lena Denison had the first clothes washing machine on Lake Clark in the mid-1930s, a gasoline-powered Maytag wringer-washer.246

In 1936, when Floyd began radio transmissions, it was reported that Tanalian Point extended 50 or 60 feet farther out into the lake then it does at present making for a good place to view up lake to observe the head of Lake Clark Pass.247 Linius McGee, owner of McGee Airways, purchased a Collins 32-B, 40 watt, Morse code transmitter and set Floyd up to broadcast Lake Clark weather to the McGee's Anchorage office. Floyd had to have a gasoline-powered generator to power the transmitter. Later McGee Airways was sold to Star Airlines.

By the late 1930s, Floyd began talking over the radio to all pilots flying over Lake Clark, and his services were greatly appreciated by the airmen. Floyd received a letter from the Secretary of the Interior commending him for his fine work.248 Floyd was a very active Amateur Radio (Ham radio) operator in the 1930s and early 1940s at his Tanalian Point home. Lena Denison wrote an acquaintance in 1940 after they had moved to Anchorage, “Although he [Floyd] isn’t fond of daily work, he misses his radio-hamming a great deal. Not much chance to Ham here [Anchorage].”249

246 LaVerne Denison Larson, telephone conversation with the author, February 3, 2014. LaVerne Denison was born in Oregon and her sister Shirley was born in 1937 at Tanalian Point with Norma Bowman, R.N. traveling from Portage Creek to assist Lena and Floyd with the birth. LaVerne Denison Larson, e-mail message to the author February 3, 2014.
247 One of Floyd's main duties as radio operator for McGee Airways and later Star Airlines was to estimate if Lake Clark Pass was open on its western end so pilots could plan accordingly.
248 A cursory online search of the correspondence of Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes Papers did not locate a letter to Floyd Denison, but a more thorough search might discover such a letter.
249 Mrs. Floyd (Lena) Denison, letter to Corey Ford, December 6, 1940, The Papers of Corey Ford in Dartmouth College Library, ML-30, Box 6, folder 6-13.
Eventually Floyd was a licensed radio operator and soon purchased a Harvey 80-T radio. He had two radio call signs: KINV and K7CNW. On September 9, 1940, Floyd and Lena and their two daughters moved to Anchorage, where Floyd worked as a carpenter at Elmendorf Field (later Elmendorf Air Force Base), and Lena opened a restaurant. Housing was so short in Anchorage that Floyd had to build a home for his family.

Floyd missed his life at Lake Clark. Apparently an Army major asked Floyd if he owned the station at Lake Clark and told him that the Army needed the station to remain open, as America’s involvement in World War II deepened, to provide weather and pilot reports. If Floyd did not re-open the Tanalian Point radio station, then the Army would, so Floyd and Lena sold their restaurant and returned to Lake Clark.

But soon after returning to Lake Clark, Floyd and Lena sold their radio station at Tanalian Point to Alaska Airlines. That was an opportunity for Jim and Glenna Kennedy. They sold their cabin on the north shore of Lake Clark to Babe and Mary Alsworth, and Jim Kennedy took over Floyd’s radio station. Jim was a pilot, and he used the outwash plain of Dry Creek as a landing strip.

During World War II, the Floyd Denison family spent their summers at Nakeen Cannery on the west side of the mouth of the Kvichak River where Floyd fished and Lena cooked and cleaned the cannery superintendent’s house.

Jim and Glenna Kennedy ran the radio station at Tanalian Point during most of the war years but left the lake in 1947. After the Kennedys left, Bob and Bernie Hadfield lived in the Denison house and operated the radio for some time before returning to Naknek in 1949. After the Hadfields left, the Tanalian Point radio station ceased to operate. In the spring of 1949 Mary Alsworth took over the Weather Bureau’s job from her home on Hardenburg Bay. Her radio call sign was KXC-54.

In 1984, Floyd Denison told historian Sara Hornberger the following anecdote circa 1938–1940.

When Floyd was operating a headquarters on Lake Clark for Star Airlines, a place to keep the planes overnight was a problem. If weather was good they would just keep them in front of Floyd’s place. There was a time when they could take the planes up the little creek where Trefons had their smokehouse but it silted up and they could no longer use it. Usually they would taxi the planes over into Hardenburg Bay. Floyd could taxi the planes and he would go over in the mornings and bring them back to his place. He felt like he could fly them given a chance. His experience with sailboats enabled him to handle the planes on water. One morning John Walatka got in with him when he brought the plane over and got in the right seat and said, ‘Okay, let’s go get another load of building materials.’ So Floyd pushed the throttle in and had the plane on the step by the time he crossed over the Tanalian River at which time Walatka pulled the throttle back and said ‘You know, Floyd, this is Bert Rouff’s best plane. I’m sure you could fly it, but if anything happened to this plane [Travel Air] we’d be in trouble.’

Floyd Denison spent much of the 1970s living with his elderly stepmother at her place south of the Tanalian River. He died in Anchorage in 1986.
Chapter 11
Doc and Joe, Lake Clark Pioneers

TIS MONROE “DOC” DUTTON AND JONAS “JOE” Elmer Kackley were the first permanent residents of Tanalian Point. They likely first visited Lake Clark around the summer of 1906 or 1907 before gradually moving over to Tanalian Point about the spring of 1911 from their home at Old Iliamna.

They apparently had been partners in the Klondike gold fields during the years 1896–1898, and they had worked in Cook Inlet, Oil Bay and Iniskin Bay in the very early twentieth century before moving to Old Iliamna village. After they resided at Old Iliamna, they prospected in the Lake Clark country, probably specifically Kasna Creek, about ten miles southeast of Tanalian Point, Portage Creek, 15 miles northeast of Tanalian Point, and the Bonanza Hills, about 38 miles north of Tanalian Point.

After building a cabin and clearing land at Tanalian Point, they set themselves up in a subsistence lifestyle, aided by Trefon Balluta and his wife Mary Ann Trefon who apparently also moved to Tanalian Point from Old Iliamna or Old Nondalton in 1911.

Doc and Joe lived at Tanalian Point another 38 years and became well known and valued friends, neighbors and mentors to all who followed. Most importantly, they became good friends with the Lake Clark Dena’ina, winning their respect and admiration for the harmonious relationship between the two old “sourdoughs” and the people of Nondalton.

Doc Dutton: Sourdough, Raconteur, Chronicler, Cook

Doc Dutton was born in Indiana to Lucrecia A. Dutton and George C. Dutton in November 1859. His father was born in New York State, and, like most Americans in the mid-nineteenth century, was apparently a farmer. He died in 1907.
near Lexington, Nebraska. Doc’s mother’s maiden name was Lucrecia A. ‘Lucia’ Kronkright. She was born in 1832 in Vermont. She died in 1898 while Dutton was seeking his fortune in the Klondike.

George C. Dutton arrived in Juniata, Adams County, Nebraska, in March 1878. In April 1881, George Dutton had business affairs in Lake County, near Crown Point, Indiana, which was likely the birthplace of Doc Dutton. In October 1881, the George Dutton family moved north from Juniata to Dawson County, Nebraska, perhaps to the town of Cozad, Nebraska. Doc Dutton had 12 years of schooling, likely received in Indiana before moving to Nebraska in 1878. There is no documentation that Doc Dutton went on to higher education or received any formal medical training.

By July 1870, Otis Dutton, age 11, no longer lived with his parents and five siblings in Merriville, Indiana, but by 1880 Otis was once again living with them on their farm in Cozad, Nebraska, between Gothenburg and Lexington, Nebraska. In 1889 Dutton lived in Portland, Oregon, and in the city directory he was listed as living in a boarding house and employed as a travel agent. So it would seem while Dutton was in his twenties and early thirties he was in sales, but there is no indication that he received any training for a career in medicine.

Dutton next appears in the historic record in the early 1890s in Spokane, Washington, city directories for the years 1890 to 1896. There are two listings for Dutton but it is not known which years he was living in Spokane. One year Dutton was a salesman for the Spokane Implement Company and living in a rooming house; and the next year he was a traveling salesman for F.G. Hanna, another agricultural implement company, and lived in another rooming house.

Once the news of the Klondike gold rush hit Seattle in 1897, thousands of people flocked to Skagway and trekked into the Klondike country. Both Doc Dutton and Joe Kackley were part of the human tide of gold seekers who flooded into the Yukon country. Many Klondikers moved on to Alaska after washing out in Canada, though most returned to United States. Doc and Joe were stalwart representatives of the Alaskan group. Ultimately they came to Lake Clark and found their slice of paradise. They put down roots and rusticated at Tanalian Point until the end of their days. Whenever a visitor was ready to leave their house, Doc used to say, “Come back, you know the trail,” a fitting epitaph for Doc and Joe. In 1900, Doc Dutton was 43 years old and living with Mary Baskerville in a mining camp called Porcupine City, Alaska, near present-day Haines. In 1898 gold had been discovered near the camp and a small rush ensued. Dutton must have been one of the gold seekers. He gave his address as Cozad, Nebraska. Nothing else is known of Baskerville.

In the early twentieth century, Doc Dutton was on Cook Inlet, working on the west side, at Iniskin Bay and Oil Bay, prospecting and drilling for oil, perhaps as early as 1901, but certainly by 1903. According to a contemporary article, Dr. O.M. Dutton, was one of a large number of men coming to Alaska from Outside and was “again to spend the summer delving after oil at Iniskin Bay,” which suggests he was exploring for oil previous to 1904. Dutton was “a heavy stockholder and one of the most untiring workers” at Oil Bay on Cook Inlet. Dutton worked for August Bowser, the foreman at Oil Bay for the Alaska Petroleum Company. Bowser had been drilling for oil at Oil Bay since 1899. Dutton owned stock in the company and he recorded more oil claims in the area. The oil was said by the promoters to be similar to a high grade lubricating oil. A well had been drilled to 1,050 feet in 1903, but financial problems plagued the project.
In a September 16, 1905, article in the *Seward Gateway* Dr. O.M. Dutton and George W. Dutton of Cook Inlet Development Company had passed through Seward on the *Dora* on their way to Valdez to transfer to the *Excelsior* for a voyage to Seattle. The article stated the Messrs. Dutton were not related but managed the Cook Inlet Development Company, and that the company “has an expensive oil plant on the petroleum ground which was discovered five years ago. A regular output for the market could be produced but the company managers prefer to continue their efforts to development until they are certain of the basis upon which they can get their product to the market.”

Some sources state Kackley also worked in the Cook Inlet oil fields with Doc Dutton. G.C. Martin encountered Doc Dutton at Oil Bay in 1903. Kackley’s exact whereabouts during the first few years of the twentieth century are unclear. Dutton, however, appears to have spent his summers in Cook Inlet in search of oil and his winters in the Pacific Northwest involved in other ventures.

In 1905, Dutton was caught up in a famous episode in the sailing career of the Alaska Steamship Company’s *Dora*, known as “The Bull Dog of the North.” The 112-foot wooden steamer also had auxiliary sails. The *Dora* lost power on December 30, 1905, off Chignik, on the Pacific side of the lower Alaska Peninsula and drifted incommunicado for the next 55 days before it finally limped into Port Angeles, Washington, on February 23, 1906. A passenger on board the *Dora* wrote on December 10, 1905 that the ship had been anchored in Iliamna Bay for one week waiting for the weather to calm down in order to off-load freight for George Dutton and O.M. Dutton. On December 17, the *Dora* was still in Iliamna Bay trying to off-load an air compressor and a horse for George Dutton. After that task was finished, the *Dora* steamed to Iniskin Bay and off-loaded a dog and a ton of freight for Dr. Dutton.

Finally on December 20, 1905 the *Dora* was able to get into Iniskin Bay and land Dr. Dutton and his young Chesapeake retriever “Sport.” The *Dora* then steamed to Kodiak, but on the way to Chignik, its boiler stopped working and the ship began the “Big Drift” across the Gulf of Alaska and as far south as the mouth of the Columbia River. No one was lost on board the *Dora*, but it is safe to assume that Doc Dutton was mighty glad he got off the steamer at Iniskin Bay rather than be part of the “Big Drift.”

Perhaps the next time Doc Dutton is documented is in 1909 as a “physician contractor for medical care” working for the Porter Brothers Construction Company of Portland, Oregon, and Spokane, Washington. The medical contracting company was called the Dutton and Russell Company.

In an article in the *Oregon Historical Quarterly* from 1968 entitled “Bubble Skinner,” by James Morrell and Gile French, the authors document one Doc Dutton of the Dutton and Russell Company. The authors write about a trip to a construction camp near present-day Madras, Oregon, in 1909. Laborers from the Porter Brothers had been lured away from their railway construction jobs in the Deschutes River canyon on the Oregon Trunk line by an illegal saloon, housed in a wall tent, known as a “blind pig.” The Porter Brothers felt the “blind pig” presented both moral and economic challenges, and they were determined to rid themselves of the saloon that was undermining progress on railroad line construction along the Deschutes River by luring their workers to drunkenness.

Johnson Porter, one of the owners of the construction company, had Doc Dutton tie three sticks of dynamite together, attach a blasting

259 SWG, September 16, 1905, “Inlet Has Oil and Copper: Innerskin Bay Development Shows Both In Profusion.”
260 Ibid.
262 Ibid., 8; the Baileys, Seversen’s, 64; Millitt, op. cit., copy in the LACL history files.
Doc Dutton, left, Joe Kackley, center, and Corey Ford, right, examine a set of moose horns on the beach at Tanalian Point in 1940. A wind charger and converted Bristol Bay double-ender are seen in the right rear. The actual Tanalian Point of land is visible in the center background. Subsequently the relatively small point has eroded away and is no longer in existence in front of the Dutton-Kackley place. Photograph courtesy of Dartmouth College, Rauner Library, the Papers of Corey Ford, ML-30- Box 8, Folder B-17, H-2767.
cap and a fuse. Porter, Dutton and the young automobile driver, “the bubble skinner,” Jim Morrell, drove to the top of the nearby canyon above the “blind pig,” and Porter tossed the dynamite bomb down on the saloon. A loud explosion echoed off the Deschutes canyon walls. They drove to near-by Madras and later they saw the bedraggled bootleggers walking toward the stagecoach line carrying their few possessions. The bootleggers caught the next stage out of town, as the homemade bomb had destroyed their “blind pig” and broken open their barrel of hooch.

The next day, Johnson Porter, Doc Dutton and Jim Morrell had automobile magneto (electrical generator) troubles. While Morrell worked on the magneto, his nose began to bleed, and Doc Dutton had to work on him to stop the bleeding. Soon Morrell fixed the magneto, Porter cranked the car (a Studebaker-Garford), and the “bubble” started. The construction continued on schedule, the bootleggers were gone, and the “blind pig” was no longer luring workers away from their jobs.

There is no proof that the Doc Dutton in the above story and Otis M. “Doc” Dutton of Tanalian Point are the same person, but it is believed there is a very plausible case to be made that they are one and the same. The names are the same, the locations in Oregon and Washington consistent with O.M. Dutton’s statement that Portland, Oregon, was his old home and the fact that he lived in Spokane, Washington, from 1890 to 1896. He was referred to as “Doc” in the story above and his activities in Oregon for the Dutton and Russell Company medical contractors comport with him being called “Doctor” and “Doc” in Alaska. Lastly, Howard Bowman, who knew Doc Dutton very well at Tanalian Point in the 1930s and 1940s, stated that Doc was an expert in using dynamite which corresponds with the Doc Dutton in the story making a dynamite bomb.

O.M. Dutton appears to have spent part of the year 1909 working on the Oregon Trunk line, before returning to Old Iliamna where he was counted in the 1910 Federal Census which was taken in January 1910. Until 1911, Doc Dutton was not all-in for Alaska; instead he traveled frequently between the Pacific Northwest and Alaska, forever searching for the elusive pot of gold.265 As a boy, Howard Bowman spent a great deal of time with Doc and Joe hearing their stories and said that Doc was not a real doctor, but the term “Doc” was merely honorary. Howard said Doc told great stories. Babe Alsworth said Doc Dutton had done some medical work before he came to Lake Clark and the evidence of that seems to be true. Not that he was a formerly trained medical doctor but, rather, he had some practical experience in Oregon and Alaska before moving to Lake Clark.266

One resource Doc had, that most Euroamericans on the Alaska frontier in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries lacked, was a high school education. Based on his surviving letters which have been located in upstate New York and Michigan, Doc must have written many letters from Tanalian Point. He taught some of the Trefon children the three Rs, and he insisted that Howard Bowman write letters to his father and mother, who spent the fishing season in the early 1940s at Libbyville and Graveyard Cannery on Kvichak Bay. In sum, Doc Dutton was a person who liked to read, he wrote letters, he told interesting stories and he understood the importance of educating youth.

Dutton appears, in his younger working years, to have been one of those people who are always seeking a pot of gold over the next mountain, as demonstrated by his frequent wild goose chases in hopes of securing his fortune. His early careers in the Klondike and Alaska offer many examples of his pursuit of the next big strike. Dutton seems to have kept one foot in the Pacific Northwest and one in Alaska, until he put both feet into Alaska soon after 1910. His move to Tanalian Point with Walker and Kackley in 1911 shows he finally committed to a permanent life around Lake Clark. As far as is known, he only made one trip Outside after 1909, to visit a brother in either Oregon or

266 Howard Bowman, interviewed by the author, September 3, 1992; Babe Alsworth, interviewed by Jay S. Hammond in Jay Hammond’s Alaska, August 1987.
After 1911, Doc Dutton and Joe Kackley spent the rest of their lives at Tanalian Point. It is not known if Joe ever went Outside on a visit. However, J.W. Walker, their nominal boss, left sometime in the teens for the Snug Harbor cannery and eventually to Kodiak, where he died in 1938.

After Joe died in December 1944, Elmer Gustafson, who had moved to Charlie Wolfe’s cabin from Naknek in 1942, moved in with Doc as his caregiver. Dutton was 85, and he was used to living with another person, so Gustafson helped him out a great deal around the house and garden and with putting up salmon. In addition, Elmer built a trapping cabin and cache at the mouth of Takoka Creek on Koniashibuna Lake and trapped that area.

After Doc died in March 1949, prospector Ray Brower moved in with Elmer in Doc and Joe’s old home. Brower had first come to Lake Clark to work for Fred Bowman on his placer mine at Portage Creek. Brower trapped in the winter and lived in several cabins around the lake. He built at least one cabin east of Portage Creek before moving in with Elmer at Tanalian Point about the same time the Port Alsworth post office was established. When Elmer started to show his age, his son came up from Petaluma, California, and took Elmer back with him. Elmer apparently lived out his final days in or around Petaluma.

It is thought that Elmer might have been left the Dutton-Kackley site by Doc on the condition he took care of Doc during his final years. No probated will has been located for Doc Dutton. Elmer sold the Dutton-Kackley site to Ray Brower when he returned to California with his son. In 1955, Brower sold the site to Roger and Emoreen Briggs. Before vacating the premises, Brower was reported by Floyd Denison and Chester Whitehead to have burned all of Doc’s diaries and Walker’s journals, a great loss to local history at Lake Clark. However, we do know that at least one of Walker’s 1912 journals escaped Brower’s burn, because Mrs. Randy Briggs quoted it at least twice in her annual Christmas letters.

Dutton died at his home at Tanalian Point on March 16, 1949, at the age of 90. Helen Beeman Denison noted in her journal, “Old Doc died,” and on March 18, “They buried Old Doc today.” The burial crew consisted of Steve Hobson, Bob Hadfield, Charlie Denison and Marion Mooter. The funeral party made a coffin for Doc and put it on a sled and pushed it down the lake about a mile west to an open hillside not far from Charlie and Helen’s house where a small burying ground had been established in 1941, with the death of Nellie Mae Alexander Denison and Joe Kackley in 1944. They had to clear the snow away from the site and kindle a fire to thaw the ground before they dug the grave. Doc and Joe are buried side by side on an old beach ridge above Lake Clark. In old age it seems Doc finally found his “pot of gold” in a life of rustication at Tanalian Point, a different kind of wealth from the material riches he sought so fervently earlier in life.

Joe Kackley, Outdoorsman

Jonas Elmer Kackley was born about 1860, probably in Buffalo Township, Noble County, in southeast Ohio to Samuel Kackley (1816–1889) and Rachel Russell Kackley (1819–?). The Kackleys were a farming family.

Nothing is known of Joe Kackley’s life until he came to the Klondike and became a market hunter. However, he did leave a modest amount of money in a Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, bank and perhaps he was a coal miner or worked in steel mills before heeding the call of the North and joining the gold rush to the Klondike in the late 1890s.


268 J.W. Walker (1876–1938) probably was originally from Gary, Indiana. His father ran a piano company there in the years 1909–1913. It is not known where Walker left Tanalian Point, but it must have been in the early 1910s. He worked for the Hemrich Packing Company at their Snug Harbor clam cannery for many years as general manager. Pacific Fisherman, “Hemrich Starts New Cannery,” undated. 44, Probate Court In the Matter of James Weir Walker, No. 166, February 14, 1938, Kodiak, Alaska, Alaska State Archives, Juneau, Alaska.

269 For a profile of Elmer Gustafson see the Bill Park letter in the Appendix page 180.

270 Ellanna and Hornberger, op. cit., 4-41.

271 Martha Trefon, conversation with the author, November 6, 2010.


Kackley is first documented by Arthur S. Tulloch in an annotation on a historic photograph circa 1911. The writer wrote on the margins of the photograph:

“Our camp at the mouth of Tanalian Creek on Lake Clark. Dock Dutton, squaw (sic), Tulloch with dog Judge, Joe Kackley with dog Shep. Joe Kackley was perfect worker, good cook, good trapper, and good whip sawyer.”

If Doc Dutton was an outspoken story teller who preferred inside work, Joe Kackley was quiet, self-effacing, physically vigorous and the consummate outdoorsman. His skill-set of frontier arts remains legendary in the area to this day. A cabin and cache, are the oldest documented standing structures within Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, still stand as mute testimony to Joe’s woodworking expertise. Howard Bowman remembered Joe as a walking prototype of an old English gentleman who had a great vegetable garden.

Joe did most of the outdoor work and Doc did most of the inside work on their property. According to the late Howard Bowman—who lived with Doc and Joe as a boy when his parents were away, Joe gave Doc a shave every morning.

Brown Carlson’s daughter, Ida, recounted an anecdote from her youth growing up at Tanalian Point in the 1930s about how Doc would playfully employ his skills to avoid outside strenuous labor. One day Ida was outside of Doc and Joe’s woodshed watching Doc saw firewood with a Swede saw. When Doc noticed Brown Carlson approaching in his skiff, Doc quickly put down the saw and went inside to start a batch of cookies. When Brown arrived, Doc told him if he sawed more stove wood, he would bake him some cookies. Brown agreed. Later Ida and her cousins and the adults all shared the cookies.

Another vignette from Ida was about the time Mary Ann Trefon was very mad at Doc Dutton over some issue. Mary Ann told Katie and Ida she was going to shoot Doc and stormed off for the Dutton-Kackley house with a .22 rifle in hand. Both Katie and Ida were mortified, and they prayed that Mary Ann would not shoot Old Doc. They waited for the sound of a gunshot, but it never came, and when Mary Ann returned, she was calm and nothing further was said about the incident. It is noteworthy that Joe was not the target of Mary Ann’s anger, but it is not surprising, as Doc was very outspoken in his opinions and Joe was reticent.

Kackley was a guide and transporter of people and goods around the Iliamna-Lake Clark country. For example, Joe acted as guide and transporter to mining engineer Alexander Leggatt on his 1911 trip from Butte, Montana to Kasna Creek. Joe met Leggatt at A.C. Point in outer Iliamna Bay and brought him safely to Kasna Creek on Kontrashibuna Lake in nine days. For a portion of the trip from Old Iliamna village to the Roadhouse Portage, Leggatt shared the boat and expense with the local schoolteacher, Hannah Breece, who was bound for the Nondalton fish village where she would set up a ten-week summer school for the second time. Kackley left Miss Breece at Roadhouse Portage for the arrival of a delegation of Nondalton men who would escort her over the Newhalen Portage, while he hurried along with Leggatt toward Tanalian Point and Kasna Creek.

On August 7, 1921, Colonel Macnab and Fred Vreeland met Joe Kackley at the mouth of the Newhalen River where Joe was awaiting the arrival of Dennis Winn of the Bureau of Fisheries. Kackley would guide Winn and his crew to Lake Clark, including the lower Tlikakila River, at the western end of Lake Clark Pass, to conduct salmon escapement surveys. On August 27 Macnab and Vreeland stopped by Kackley’s camp at the mouth of the Tlikakila River, but Winn and party, including Kackley, were away surveying salmon streams.

Although the above documented examples of Kackley acting as a guide and transporter are few, there can be little doubt that he did much more of that kind of work around Lake Clark. Newcomer Jack Bailey certainly mentioned all the help Kackley provided him when in 1925.

274 Arthur S. Tulloch Collection, PCA 148, Photo No. 1, Alaska State Historical Library, Juneau, Alaska.
277 Macnab, op. cit., 28 and 39.
and 1926, when he was a greenhorn setting up to hunt sheep and trap from cabins around Lake Clark. Kackley’s material help to Bailey was indispensable in the latter’s subsequent success as a trapper and fur buyer. Kackley subscribed to The Alaska Sportsman magazine and the July 1939 issue has survived to this day. His address was:

Joe Kackley
Dandelion Point
Lake Clark
Iliamna, Alaska

Joe Kackley’s will is a good example of the modest amount of wealth one of the first Euroamerican settlers had amassed by the time of his demise. Jim Kennedy, his wife Glenna, and Joe Thompson were the appraisers of the Kackley estate on December 19, 1945. Babe Alssworth of Hardenburg Bay, Lake Clark, Alaska was the estate’s administrator.

The Administrator was informed that $775.00 belonged to the Kackley estate in an account at the First National Bank at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and would be distributed through an administrator in that state. The Pittsburg account was ultimately distributed to 29 of Kackley’s heirs all of whom lived Outside, mostly in the Midwest. A final list of property items belonging to Otis M. Dutton and the late Jonas E. Kackley and their appraised value follows.

One house, furnishings and household goods $500.00.
One large cache on the ground $10.00.
One small cache $5.00.
One small wood shed, no value.
One root house $40.00.
One pump house and pump and hose $20.00.
One Zenith radio $25.00.
One Wind Charger $10.00.
One 6 volt battery $5.00.
One double barrel shotgun $10.00.
One 10 gauge shotgun $3.00.
One 12 gauge shotgun $12.00.
One .30-30 Winchester rifle $2.50.
One Winchester .22 Special $6.00.
One .22 rifle $5.00.
One .25-30 Winchester rifle $7.50.
One Colt .38 $20.00.
One canoe $20.00.
One small skiff and oars $20.00.
Two dozen assorted size and make steel traps $15.00.
One cross cut saw $2.50.
One Swede saw $3.50.
One small assorted carpenter tools $15.00.
Value of provisions on hand at time of Kackley’s death $30.00.
Cash on hand at time of death, half Kackley’s $781.00.
Kackley’s cash $1060.00.
Total cash of estate $846.05.
Balance due heirs of Joe Kackley $746.00.278

No records of Kackley or Dutton ever enrolling in Social Security system have been located. Joe Kackley died December 3, 1944, after fighting a house fire at his next-door neighbors, Floyd and Lena Denison’s house. Late that night, Joe suffered a heart attack and died in bed at the age of 83. He was the second person, after Nellie Mae Denison, to be buried in the little cemetery now known as the Kackley-Dutton-Denison Cemetery about a mile west of Tanalian Point. On June 8, 1946, Joe Thompson and Elmer Gustafson erected a white picket fence around Kackley’s grave.279

279 Helen Beeman Denison, op. cit., June 8, 1946.
Chapter 12
1939–1940 A Tanalian Point Vignette

The summer of 1940 saw the visit to Tanalian Point of Field & Stream writer-editor Dan Holland and writer-sportsmen Corey Ford and Alistair MacBain to sample the grayling fishing on the Tanalian River.

It is not known which air service brought the eastern sportsmen to Lake Clark and parked on the beach in front of Doc and Joe’s house at Tanalian Point. Based on the photographic record, the airplane had a single wing and might have been a Stinson SR-JR. Later when the men went to the Newhalen River to fish for rainbow trout, they were flown in one of Bert Rouff’s Bristol Bay Air Service floatplanes, probably a Travel Air. The men fished both the Tanalian River and the Newhalen River and took several photographs of their angling.

In the April 1941 issue of Field & Stream, Holland wrote of his trip to the Bristol Bay region and extolled the sport fishing paradise that was to be found on some of the region’s most prominent rivers: the Nushagak, Naknek, Kvichak, Alagnak, Copper and Talarik Creek. He did not mention anything in particular about Tanalian Point, but the party did move down to Nondalton where they fished for rainbow trout. Frank Dufresne, head of the Alaska Game Commission, was with them. Holland must have heard from Dufresne about the sport fishing history on the Newhalen River. The lower Newhalen River was first fished in 1937 and that his (Holland) party of Ford, MacBain and himself were the first sportsmen to fish rainbows on the upper Newhalen.280

Holland wrote that he met several people from Nondalton, including Chief Alexie Balluta, Nick Kolyaha, Alex Balluta and Bennie Trefon and likely Gabriel Trefon. Holland was aghast that some people from Nondalton fed their sled dogs rainbow trout. Holland felt people should feed sled dogs the more plentiful red salmon rather than

280 Dan Holland, “Ye Gods and Big Fish: Opening up new fishing territory where rainbows grow ‘more bigger than salmon,’” Field & Stream, April 1941, 15-17, 67-68.
more scarce rainbow trout. In addition, Holland was very disturbed by the trout tail bounty that was foisted on Alaskans by the Bureau of Fisheries in the late teens as a so-called conservation strategy to reduce the number of trout, since trout ate salmon eggs and fry. People were paid two-and-a-half cents per trout tail, and over the years, thousands and thousands of rainbow and Dolly Varden trout were netted in the Kvichak and Naknek drainages and killed for the bounty, particularly around Iliamna. For example, for the year 1929–1930 the Alaska Territorial legislature made payment to Bristol Bay residents to the tune of $12,500 for 251,000 “predatory” trout tails.281

Dennis Winn, bureau agent for the Bristol Bay region, wrote to Governor George Parks on February 24, 1933, saying that that the trout tail bounty was responsible for improving salmon runs and in addition had “contributed immeasurably to the support and welfare of the local permanent population, both whites and Natives ... practically all the permanent local inhabitants either fished personally for predatory trout or benefited from this activity. Economic conditions stimulated this work far beyond expectations.”282

During the 1920s and 1930s, most Lake Clark people who caught trout for the bounty exchanged their trout tails for credit at Hans Seversen’s roadhouse at Iliamna. Since there were few rainbow trout, Dolly Varden trout and arctic char around Lake Clark not many people netted trout for the bounty and those who did, fished on the upper Newhalen River. It was not until 1952 that the trout bounty was finally stopped. It had mainly been implemented to maximize salmon runs for the salmon industry, with little concern about how deleterious it was to the entire ecosystem. At the same time trout were bountied, so too were bald eagles, as they were deemed to be predators of the salmon.283

The visit of Dan Holland, Corey Ford and Alistair MacBain to Lake Clark was an example of improved access after the 1930s when aircraft travel became commonplace throughout Alaska. Another positive development from the advent of commercial aviation in southwest Alaska in the 1930s was that sick and injured people could, for the first time, be medevaced to Anchorage or Dillingham for hospitalization. Aircraft medevacs saved lives and eased suffering. Not only that, but occasionally medevacs brought people together, as was the case, in 1941 when bush pilot Babe Alsworth flew to Pilot Point on a medevac to haul an injured cannery worker to Dillingham. While at Pilot Point, Babe met his future wife, Mary Griechen, and they were married the following year.

In 1938, when Anton Balluta of Nondalton had appendicitis, a pilot who happened to be around flew him to the U.S. Public Hospital at Kanakanak for surgery, saving his life. After Anton returned home he slipped on the ice of Lake Clark and his incision opened. This time there were no bush pilots around, and he died of an infection. Cases like this were not uncommon in bush Alaska up until the 1960s and early 1970s, when improved communications coupled with more commercial pilots made remote life less risky.284

Another medevac on Lake Clark occurred at Tanalian Point sometime before 1939. An article in the magazine *Alaska Life* from August 1939 entitled “Sourdough Sky Skippers” related the many roles bush pilots played in improving the lives of the people of rural Alaska. A poorly identified photograph used to illustrate the article shows Joe Kackley pushing a stretcher bearing a patient into a McGee Airways floatplane on the beach in front of Doc and Joe’s at Tanalian Point.285

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281 Unrau, op. cit., 307.
282 Dennis Winn, Agent, Bureau of Fisheries to George A. Parks, Governor of Alaska, February 24, 1933, Record Group 101, File 26-2, Predatory Animal Control, Salmon, 1932, Alaska State Archives and Records Center, Juneau.
283 Bennett, op. cit., 52.
284 Ellanna and Balluta, op. cit., 185.
"The latch string [on the cabin door] is bleached by the weather, if you need it, take it."

Charlie Denison, on the early twentieth century Alaska ethos
Floyd Denison sits in front of wood piles at his home on Lake Clark, c. 1975. The house was originally built by Floyd's father Charlie in the late 1930s using lumber milled on the Denison steam-powered saw mill. Photograph courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Hill, H-904.

Joe Thompson stands in front of the last cabin he built in the Lake Clark country in 1962. The site is about one mile west of the mouth of Portage Creek on the north shore of Lake Clark. Thompson was an excellent woodsman, trapper, prospector and Bristol Bay fisherman who lived around Lake Clark from about 1937 to about 1971. Photograph courtesy of Claudine Coray Wright, H-1382.

Allen Woodward hews a wall log on the Earl Woodward Cabin at Hardenburg Bay, Port Alsworth, c. 1955. Woodward was one of the post-World War II veterans who owned recreational cabins on Lake Clark. Photograph courtesy of the Mr. and Mrs. Allen Woodward home movie collection.

David and Allen Barnett split red salmon at Brown Carlson's place about 1958. The Barnett family were Anchorage pioneers and perhaps the first Anchorage family to own a recreational cabin on Lake Clark. Photograph courtesy of the Bob and Bernie Barnett home movie collection.
Charlie Denison sits on his sawmill cradle in the mid-1950s about one mile west of the mouth of the Tanalian River. Denison was one of the most consequential of the early twentieth century settlers on Lake Clark by virtue of his steam-powered sawmill and friendship to all the people of Lake Clark. Photograph courtesy of LuVerne Denison Larson, H-1727.

ABOVE: Joe Thompson, left, Earl Woodward, center, and Charlie Denison, right, saw logs on the Denison steam-powered sawmill in c. 1955. Photograph courtesy of the Mr. and Mrs. Allen Woodward home movie collection.

LEFT: Charlie Denison, in white t-shirt, and Joe Thompson, in blue shirt, saw lumber on the Denison sawmill in 1956. The steam boiler stands in the right rear and the engine is in the center rear venting steam. Photograph courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Allen Woodward, H-684.
Lena Denison stands in front of the Dutton-Kackley House as it was re-built after burning in 1939. A converted Bristol Bay double-ender is seen in the background. Denison, who moved to Lake Clark in 1932, was probably the first person who arrived by air. Photograph courtesy of the Ron and Kathleen Meggitt home movie collection.

John Alsworth wears a parka his mother, Mary Alsworth, made for him while holding two fox skins he trapped around Port Alsworth. Mary Alsworth was an accomplished skin sewer and knitter. Photograph courtesy of John and Esther Alsworth, H-2798.

Mike Vandegrift, left, and Brown Carlson, visit at Hardenburg Bay in the mid to late 1940s. Babe and Mary Alsworth had probably recently moved to the location, as there are lots of airplane parts and other equipment about. Photograph courtesy of the Alsworth home movie collection.

Fred Bowman spitting salmon c. 1958 at Brown Carlson's Landing. Bowman was a miner who had the longest association with the Portage Creek placers, spanning the years 1932-1959. Photograph courtesy of the Bob and Bernie Barnett home movie collection.
ABOVE: The Alsworth family in their living room in 1961. Left to right: Lonnie, John, Babe, Mary, Glen, Margaret, Wayne. Photograph courtesy of Babe and Mary Alsworth, H-481 B.

BELOW: Wayne "Bee" Alsworth, left, and his brother Lonnie, right, stand on a fuel box, about 1951. Photograph courtesy of Margaret Alsworth Clum, H-2774.

ABOVE: Sara Hornberger in her greenhouse c. early 1980s at the Hornberger place at the mouth of the Chuitna River on Lake Clark. Hornberger was a long-time Bristol Bay area educator and administrator who was also the first park historian for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. Photograph courtesy of the National Park Service.

ABOVE: Alexan Trefon Drew photographed in the 1960s. Alexan was born at Kijik village in 1902 or 1904 and was the daughter of Trefon Balluta and Mary Ann Trefon. She was raised at Tanalian Point and was married to Portage Creek miner Harvey Drew in about 1919. Photograph courtesy of Al and Sheila Ring, H-2759.


FAR ABOVE: The Babe and Mary Alsworth homestead in October 1965. The big, light green house with aluminum roof is center back. In the foreground are a greenhouse, left, a D-4 Cat, center, and the ever-present wind-sock, right, which indicates a northwest wind was blowing. Photograph courtesy Babe and Mary Alsworth, H-480.

ABOVE: The Alsworth family in their living room in 1961. Left to right: Lonnie, John, Babe, Mary, Glen, Margaret, Wayne. Photograph courtesy of Babe and Mary Alsworth, H-481 B.
ABOVE: The Woodward Family, with Earl on the tiller and his son Allen standing by the ladder, loading family and friends on their Bristol Bay double-ender on Lake Clark west of Port Alsworth c. early 1960s. The Woodwards purchased Libby's No. 23 from the widow Claudine Coray after her husband John disappeared in a small airplane on Cook Inlet. Photograph courtesy of Allen and Marian Woodward, H-2756.

RIGHT, ABOVE: Governor Jay and Bella Hammond at the Western Governors' Conference in Anchorage in 1977. Jay and Bella spent their retirement years at their beloved homestead on Lake Clark from 1983 until Jay's death in August 2005. Bella continues to live at the homestead where she spends her time working on her flowers, reading and keeping up with current public policy. Photograph courtesy of Bella Hammond.

RIGHT, BELOW: Joe Thompson, left, remotely controls the D-4 Cat as it crosses Lake Clark on the ice in the late 1940s or early 1950s. Babe Alsworth rides on the right of the sled which is hauling two 55-gallon drums of fuel. The men were going across the lake to cut and haul spruce logs from the woods. Photograph courtesy of the Alsworth family home movies.
BELOW: Doc Dutton and Joe Kackley’s site at Tanalian Point photographed by Babe Alsworth soon after Dutton died in 1949. The raised cache on the left and the low green-roofed root cellar, on the right, are visible in the foreground. The first cabin Kackley built by 1909-1911 is partially visible in the center background. Photograph courtesy of Margaret Alsworth Clum, H-2785.

RIGHT, ABOVE: Pete Trefon, left, and his older brother, Gabriel, right, stand by Oren Hudson’s 90 HP Aronca Champ in the early 1950s on Sixmile Lake at Nondalton. The wolf and wolverine hides were obtained by aerial wolf hunting which was legal all over most Alaska in that era. Oren Hudson said Andrew Balluta was the best gunner he knew, “One shot one wolf,” said Hudson. Photograph courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Oren Hudson, H-367.

RIGHT, BELOW: Oren and Ruth Hudson hold their children—daughter Kerry, left, with Oren; son Kent, right, with Ruth. They stand in front of their Stinson SR-JR at their home on Sixmile Lake at Nondalton in 1953. Wolf, wolverine and river otter skins hang from the aircraft’s struts. Hudson, the first resident bush pilot to live in Nondalton, was a tireless flyer dedicated to serving the people around the Lake Clark-Niulama country from the 1950s until the early 2000s. Photograph courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Oren Hudson, H-364.
Chapter 13
Old Nondalton and Present-Day Nondalton

HANNAH BREECE WROTE THAT EPHEME Riktorov of Old Iliamna was a “Wise Man,” and he informed her about Dena’ina history. About historic Kijik, Epheme told her:

Quite a large Kenai [Dena’ina] settlement was established north of Lake Clark on a large river. The people were dying off so rapidly that the priests told them to move. They divided into two parts. One half chose Jackarr chief [Zackar Evanoff], and came to Nondalton, built a church, and made a village. The other half chose another chief, and went on to the Stony River where they built a new village also. If Iliamna is difficult of access—Nondalton is oblivion! Portage from A.C. Point to Iliamna fades away when compared to that from Iliamna to Nondalton. However in winter it is better. One young man [Gabriel Trefon ?] had been taught by prospectors also had attended school in Iliamna 20 days. He could read easy lessons in the Second Reader. Two others knew the alphabet. Aside from these there was a perfect blank.286

In 1930 the Old Nondalton school was established, but it was poorly attended, as most parents were still keeping up their traditional subsistence lives which required moving during the school year to maintain their far-flung hunting, fishing and trapping camps. Some families left school-age children with elderly people in the village so they could attend classes regularly, but many children dropped out of school after the sixth grade to help their parents with subsistence hunting, fishing, gathering and trapping activities.287

The Old Nondalton school was a 26x36 foot log building which Hans Seversen probably sold to the Bureau of Indian Affairs about 1930. The first school teachers were Mr. and Mrs. William Leise. In the 1931–1932 school year, 23 students attended class.288

With the encouragement of the first and second chiefs, the people of Old Nondalton, in about 1938, began to move a few miles to the west and gradually the old village was abandoned by about 1946. A number of issues precipitated the move to present-day Nondalton. First, a gravel bar formed in the lake in front of Old Nondalton, making landing boats in close proximity to the village impossible. Second, after being inhabited for nearly 30 years, firewood and building logs in the area were in short supply. Third, the site was on a hill, and the ground tended to stay frozen late in the spring with water running inconveniently through the village during break-up. Lastly, village lands immediately around the site were wearing out, and the cemetery was nearly full. It was time to move to a new location, and a site three miles to the west, near the mouth of the Newhalen River, was selected. A few houses were taken apart and reconstructed in the new village, and many new

286 Hannah Breece, letter to William T. Lopp, July 14, 1910, Record Group 75, Microfilm Roll 10, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska, Anchorage.
287 Breece, A Schoolteacher, 80.
288 Unrau, op. cit., 329, 484, 485.
The reindeer herd tended by the people of Old Nondaiton enclosed by a brush corral at upper Eagle Bay Creek on the north side of Iliamna Lake c. 1920s. Photograph courtesy of Helena Seversen Moses, H-277.
houses were built from lumber sawed on the Denison sawmill.\(^{289}\)

Gabriel Trefon was one of the first Dena’ina to relocate his home to the present-day Nondalton site. Within five years, the entire village population of the old village had joined his family at the new site.\(^{290}\)

Chief Zackar Evanoff was an old man in 1930 when he relinquished his position to the second chief Alexie Balluta. After the move to present-day Nondalton, Balluta selected Gabriel Trefon to become the second chief.\(^{291}\)

Like most dedicated schoolteachers John and Claudine Coray made significant contributions to the educational betterment of their students while they taught school in Nondalton during the years 1953 and 1954. However, John Coray surpassed those achievements when in the spring of 1954 he recorded several Nondalton men singing traditional Dena’ina songs. In so doing, Coray made the first audio recordings of Dena’ina speech and song thereby preserving this cultural legacy for future generations.

After Tommy Meyer was murdered in 1956 his widow Ida Carlson Meyer sold her log house and land to John and Claudine Coray. The Coray’s children and their children continue to be associated with their family place, the site of the early twentieth century mining camp of Portage Creek village, to this day. In 2007 Craig Coray, a composer and retired University of Alaska Anchorage music teacher remastered his father’s 1954 Nondalton recordings and wrote a book entitled, Dnaghlt’ana Qut’ana K’eli Ahdelyax (They Sing The Songs Of Many Peoples) that was published by the Kijik Corporation. The book includes a DVD recording of all the songs and Craig provides musical analyses and musical transcriptions.\(^{292}\)

Oren Hudson was the first resident bush pilot in Nondalton.

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\(^{290}\) Ellanna and Balluta, op. cit., 282.

\(^{291}\) Ibid., 282-283.

He and his wife, Ruth and two young children moved to Nondalton in about 1951. Ruth was a registered nurse with the U.S. Public Health Service and had worked throughout Alaska. Hudson was a tireless bush pilot who once made seven round-trip flights through Lake Clark Pass in one day, flying groceries to Nondalton after the village store ran out of food. The Hudsons built a log house and lived there five years, before moving to Iliamna 1956. The Hudsons enjoyed their life in Nondalton and made a large number of friends among the Lake Clark Dena’ina. Years later, Ruth Hudson said: “I have wonderful memories of snowshoeing to the village [Nondalton] with both babies in a backpack.” The Hudsons moved to Iliamna, because it was a more central location from which Oren could fly contract mail to the

Hannah Breece sits in the bow of Joe Kackley’s Bristol Bay salmon boat on the Iliamna River at Old Iliamna village before heading to Roadhouse Portage at present-day Iliamna in June 1911. Breece was being transported to Nondalton fish village to conduct her second summer school session. Mining engineer Alexander Leggatt was also going along with Kackley and Breece as he was heading to Kasna Creek to survey the claims. The two Iliamna Dena’ina are not identified.


In 1960, the first landing strip in Nondalton was bulldozed, but it could only accommodate small single-engine aircraft, such as Cessna-180s, 185s and 206s. It was not until the 1970s that a larger runway was built accommodate DC-3s.

Since the early 1950s, Nondalton has had the reputation of fielding several top-notch forest fire fighting crews each fire season. It might be apocryphal, but some suggest the fire fighting tradition began in Nondalton in the early 1950s when someone reported to Chief Gabriel Trefon that there was a wild fire burning near the Chilchitna River, and Trefon contacted Jim Scott in Homer. Scott worked at the BIA Homer office and was in charge of fire suppression on the Kenai Peninsula and in southwestern Alaska. Scott flew to Nondalton and organized some fire crews, thus starting the fire-fighting tradition in Nondalton.

In fact the tradition began as a result of the wild fire that began on July 4, 1953, around Doc Bly’s house on the east side of Hardenburg Bay at Port Alsworth. Jim Scott came to Nondalton to recruit a crew to fight the fire. However, since most of the men were in Bristol Bay commercial fishing, Scott’s crew was nearly all women. They came to Port Alsworth and fought the fire with people like Mike Vandegrift, who bulldozed fire breaks with the Alsworth D-4 Caterpillar. The main trail to Tanalian Falls was begun in response to the 1953 forest fire.

The Nondalton fire fighting crew spent a week suppressing the fire. Pilot Oren Hudson from Nondalton was involved in logistics. With this initial effort in 1953 at fire fighting around Port Alsworth, a 60-year-old village tradition was born in Nondalton.

295 Martha Trefon, conversation with the author, January 3, 2014; George Alexie, personal conversations with the author, December 9, 2013.
Chapter 14
Tanalian Point and Lake Clark

TANALIAN POINT GRADUALLY CHANGED AS THE 1940s unfolded and Babe and Mary Alsworth arrived on the north side of Lake Clark in 1942. Times were changing from the slow-paced era of dog sleds to the fast-paced aviation age. When the Alsworths moved to the south side of Lake Clark, about one mile east of Tanalian Point, in August 1944, it marked a new beginning for the first full-time resident commercial pilot, Babe Alsworth, on the lake.

Between 1942 and 1944, Alworth learned what the first resident pilot, Jim Kennedy, had learned in the late 1930s. It was impossible to maintain normal aircraft operations on the north side of Lake Clark with the prevailing east winds creating waves and gusts that frequently precluded secure airplane tie downs. The rocky Lake Clark shoreline was often a dangerous place to leave an airplane overnight, because sudden winds could produce big waves that could turn a floatplane into scrap metal in a matter of minutes.

Within a year and a half of moving to Lake Clark and purchasing Jim and Glenna Kennedy's cabin, Babe and Mary Alsworth realized they had to locate a better place on the lake if they intended to establish themselves in the air taxi business. It was obvious to Alsworth and his mechanic, Mike Vandegrift, that the best place for a floatplane operation was Hardenburg Bay, and it was apparent that the level ground running west from the bay would lend itself to a wheeled strip.

Harry Shawback, Sr., was a friend of Babe Alsworth from Minnesota and he helped develop the Alsworth homestead by operating the bulldozer and grader on the runway. Harry related Doc Dutton's amazement as the runway was carved out of the forest between Doc's house at Tanalian Point and Hardenburg Bay in the mid to late 1940s. Harry also recalled that Doc was very concerned that Soviet Communists were becoming a threat as the Cold War began.

The 1940 U.S. Census for Tanalian Point included the following people: Doc Dutton, Joe Kackley, Hans Smith, Floyd Denison, Lena Denison, LaVerne Denison, Shirley Denison, Alex Trefon, Sr., Marka Trefon, Alex Trefon, Jr., Irene Trefon, Charles Wolff, Charlie Denison, Nellie Mae Alexander Denison, Alexandra Penrose (Penny Moore ?), Mary Ann Trefon, Pete Trefon, Catherine Nudlash.

Living around the north side of Lake Clark in 1940 were: William Moore, Brown Carlson, Fred Bowman, Norma Bowman, Howard Bowman, Mrs. Dorbandt, Joe Thompson, Chester Whitehead, Mary Nudlash, Nick Nudlash, Mike Nudlash, Hazel Nudlash, Evan Nudlash, Antone Nudlash, Jim Kennedy, Glenna Kennedy, Barbara Kennedy, Samson Turner.

In 1942, when Mary Alsworth moved to the north side of Lake Clark, she documented people who had moved to the lake in the two years since the 1940 U.S. Census had been taken. The newcomers were: Carl Clark who lived at Bowman's Camp, Bill Park, and Margaret Moore (Charlie Denison's step-daughter). The Jim and Glenna Kennedy family had left Lake Clark for Naknek to run the Red Salmon Store.

In the fall of 1946, Bob and Bernie Hadfield and sons moved to Tanalian Point from Naknek. They took over the radio from the

Kennedys in 1947, when the Kennedys left the Floyd and Lena Denison place and moved to Anchorage so their two children could attend school. The Hadfields broadcast the weather several times per day, apparently to the United States Weather Bureau, until 1949, when they returned to Naknek. In the spring of 1949, Mary Alsworth took over the weather reporting station, frequently filing 13 reports per day to the Weather Bureau.300

Before returning to Naknek, the Hadfields built a framed house on Hardenburg Bay. After the Hadfields left Lake Clark, they sold their property to retired Alaska Game Commission game warden Carlos Carson and his wife Ona. The Carsons, who had retired to Seward, allowed Marion and Bertha Mooter and their son Mike, to stay in the place. Marion Mooter lost an arm while working on the Alaska Railroad and was known as “One-Arm” Mooter.301 Bertha Mooter was an R.N. With the help of Joe Thompson, the Mooters built a cabin just west of the mouth of the Tanalian River in the early 1950s.302 The Mooters left Lake Clark for Seward in 1963.303 The original Hadfield cabin burned while Ralph Gaetano owned it in the late 1960s. He eventually sold the property to the Ralph and Audrey Porter Family of Soldotna who, in turn, sold it to Ken and Lorraine Oswichek, who built the lodge known as Hunting and Fishing Unlimited beginning in 1976. The name of the lodge was changed in 1978 to Fishing Unlimited, and by 1980 they ceased big game hunting and concentrated on sport fishing.304

Eventually, the Oswicheks divorced and Lorraine ran the sport fishing lodge a few years before selling it to Merrill Wood, who ran it a few years before financial difficulties forced him to sell. The international relief organization Samaritan’s Purse purchased the lodge in 2010 and has spent approximately $2 million dollars remodeling and enhancing the property. It is now called Samaritan’s Lodge and caters to wounded veterans of America’s recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. “Fishing Unlimited” is now the name of a sport fishing lodge at another site in Port Alsworth owned by Martin Kviteng, who formerly was a pilot for the Oswicheks and Wood.

300 Glen Alsworth, Sr., conversation with the author, December 31, 2013.
301 During the early 1950s the following Registered Nurses lived around Lake Clark and Sixmile Lake: Norma Bowman, Helen Beeman Denison, Bertha Mooter, and Ruth Hudson.
302 Ellanna and Hornberger, op. cit., 4-47.
303 Bertha Mooter, interview with Charles F. Bunch and L.P. Cooper, February 14, 1979, 12, in the LACL history files; Allen Woodward, conversation with the author, January 2, 2014.
304 Bennett, op. cit., 247-248.
Chapter 15
Lake Clark Cabin Builders

The Bill Smith Cabin

Not much is known about Bill Smith except that he was reported to have come to Lake Clark from Juneau in about 1935, and he built a cabin on the north shore of the lake, west of the mouth of the Kijik River. Smith built this log house for his sister, Nellie Mae Alexander, and her family. Nellie Mae had two daughters, Margaret and Penelope and two sons, William H. Moore (1907–1970) and Thompson A. Moore (1908–1999). Nellie Mae was born in Montreal, Canada, in 1883. Bill Moore came to Lake Clark in 1935 to live with his uncle after spending time in the early 1930s diamond mining in the Belgium Congo. The Moores came from a prominent family in St. Louis, Missouri.

Nellie Mae Alexander worked at Hans Seversen’s Roadhouse in about 1937 and 1938. She was in charge of domestic services at the Roadhouse, and in 1937 Katie Trefon from Tanalian Point moved there to wait on tables, earning $30 for the one month she worked. Nellie Mae was Katie’s supervisor.

Charlie Denison married Nellie Mae Alexander in September 1938 at Pedro Bay. In 1941, Nellie Mae who was ill with cancer died. She was the first of five people to be buried at the small burial ground, the Kackley-Dutton-Denison cemetery, about one mile southwest of Tanalian Point. After Nellie Mae Denison was interred there, Joe Kackley was buried there in 1944, Doc Dutton in 1949, Helen Beeman Denison in 1952, and Charlie Denison in 1959.

Bill Smith left Lake Clark after Nellie Mae married Charlie Denison. For a time William Moore lived in a new framed house in back of the Denison place that Charlie had built for the Moore family. However, Moore and Denison were incompatible, so Moore moved back across the lake to the Bill Smith cabin to live with his brother.

The same year Nellie Mae Denison died, another tragedy befell the family. Floyd Denison related what happened on the beach at what is now known as Chulitna Lodge in 1941.

Pilot Morgan [Davis] flew a Bellanca for Star Airways and one time he brought supplies to my step-sister [Mary Moore, Mrs. Thompson A. Moore] and her husband Thompson. He liked to take pictures. He went on a little point so he could get a picture of the Bellanca on floats when it came by on the step. In order to do this he had to warm up the engine facing the beach. My step-sister thought of something and came running back to the plane. Morgan waved her away … shut the engine off, she kept coming and was split almost in half by the prop. Pilot Morgan [Davis] never [came] our way again. It was a terrible accident.

Mary Moore was buried immediately after the accident just beyond the high water mark on the lake shore near Chulitna Lodge. Her husband, Thompson Moore, and their young daughter, Marianne,
The Jim and Glenna Kennedy cabin as it appeared when Babe and Mary Alsworth first moved to the north side of Lake Clark in the summer of 1942. A ramp is visible on the beach to the left which might have been used to remove Kennedy’s floatplane or skiff from the water. Photograph courtesy of John and Esther Alsworth, H-2782.

left Lake Clark soon after, never to return. Within a few years Bill Moore sold the cabin to pilot John Walatka of Dillingham.

John Walatka was born in Oskaloosa, Iowa, in 1909. He learned to fly in 1924 when he was 15 years old. Walatka came to Alaska from Minnesota in 1938, after he was hired by Bert Rouff to fly a Travel Air 6000 on floats from Warroad, Minnesota, to Anchorage. Once in Alaska, Walatka flew for Rouff’s Bristol Bay Air Service until the end of 1941, when he worked briefly for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In 1942, he also flew for Morrison-Knudson on the Northway runway construction. Later that year he returned to Dillingham and worked to build up his own air taxi operation called Walatka Air Service. By 1946, Walatka had joined forces with Ray Petersen and Jim Dodson in the creation of Northern Consolidated Airlines.

In 1937, Bert Rouff had founded Bristol Bay Air Service and, after bringing up John Walatka from Minnesota in 1938, he recruited Babe Alsworth from Minnesota in 1939. Walatka previously soloed Babe in 1930 or 1932. Both friends originally moved to southwest Alaska to fly for Bristol Bay Air Service.

In the fall of 1942, John Walatka purchased the Bill Smith Cabin from William Moore. By 1950, Walatka and Ray Petersen were working together to develop their sport fishing business in Katmai National Monument at Brooks Camp, Kulik Lake, Battle Lake, Lake Grosvenor, and Nonvianuk Lake.

In 1943 while Walatka owned the Bill Smith Cabin he hired Joe Thompson and Chester Whitehead to disassemble the cabin and remove it from the terrace above the lake and rebuild it lower and closer to the high water mark on the lake shore.

In the late 1950s, Walatka sold the cabin to guide Glen Andrews who had earlier begun to build a lodge in Dice Bay, on the north side of Lake Clark. Andrews ran a big game hunting lodge at the old Bill Smith Cabin and called it Chulitna Lodge. He died in the early 1970s in an aircraft accident, and the property was sold to Hank Rust of Rust’s Flying Service in 1972, who continued to run a hunting lodge from the site. Sometime after 1975, Rust sold the property to a group of investors. The property is now owned by Bud Wilson of Anchorage and Dr. Sherman Silber of St. Louis, Missouri.

The Art and Helen Lee Cabin

In 1936, Art and Helen Lee built a cabin at the mouth of Tommy Creek, four miles east of Port Alsworth. Lee was a Bristol Bay commercial fisherman and friend of Jim Kennedy. Floyd Denison helped Art Lee build the cabin, as did Hugh Rae and his wife. Very little is known about the Hugh Rae family other than that he

309 Michael Moore, telephone conversation with the author, February 14, 2014.
eventually went to work for the Civilian Aeronautics Authority and spent time at Seversen's Roadhouse in the late 1930s.

Art and Helen Lee moved to Iliamna before Hans Seversen died in 1939 to assist in running Seversen's Roadhouse. A few years later, Lee founded Iliamna Trading Company which was the main store in the Iliamna-Lake Clark country in the 1940s and 1970s.

After retired school teacher Bill Park purchased the Lee Cabin in the early 1940s, he was a fixture on the lake until the early 1960s when he returned to his native state of Pennsylvania and passed away in the late 1960s. Park left his property to his friend Babe Alsworth, and Babe gave his daughter Margaret “Sis” Clum the site.

The Jim and Glenna Kennedy Cabin

Jim and Glenna Kennedy moved to Lake Clark in 1935. They built a cabin on the north shore of Lake Clark northeast of Tanalian Point. Anton Balluta, the father of National Park Service ranger Andrew Balluta, was an excellent log builder and he assisted Kennedy with the construction. They built a cruciform shaped log house utilizing short, 12-foot, logs, because good straight building logs were difficult to find around the site. The round logs were spiked into vertical round log corner posts, which was a common building technique at Lake Clark in the early twentieth century. All dimensional lumber used in the Kennedy Cabin was whipsawed, as Charlie Denison had not set up his steam-powered saw mill until the latter 1930s. The Kennedys lived at their cabin on Lake Clark for six years.

Kennedy was a Bristol Bay fisherman and a pilot. He did a limited amount of commercial flying around Lake Clark and Iliamna but found it very difficult to operate a plane off the beach in front of his cabin because the frequently strong, prevailing east winds made leaving his Aeronca Chief on floats overnight on the beach hazardous.

In mid-July 1943 Kennedy and George Seversen were flying near Upper Talarik Creek when they crashed. Although both men survived, each sustained serious injuries, Seversen's being life-changing. Apparently, Kennedy did much less flying after the accident.

The backgrounds of Jim and Glenna Kennedy remain obscure. However, it is known that Jim was born in Washington State in 1903 and Glenna was born in 1911 in Oregon. Jim fished in Bristol Bay and likely heard about Lake Clark while commercial fishing. Jim Kennedy was the first resident pilot on Lake Clark, but he was not in the same league with Babe Alsworth. Babe was a full-time commercial aviator who amassed more than 30,000 hours of Alaska bush flying. Kennedy sold his cabin to Babe and Mary Alsworth in 1942 and moved to Tanalian Point to live in Floyd and Lena Denison’s cabin. While living at Tanalian Point, Jim landed on the outwash plain of Dry Creek, a channel of the Tanalian River that was not as vegetated in the 1930s and 1940s as it is today. The Kennedys moved to Anchorage in 1947, so their children could go to school. Little is known about the Kennedys once they left Lake Clark.

Jim Kennedy is important to Lake Clark history because he was the first resident pilot on the lake and, as such, was a representative of the opening up of Lake Clark country to Euroamerican settlement and development. Kennedy did not make his living as a commercial pilot as Babe Alsworth would, perhaps because of the serious accident he and George Seversen experienced near Upper Talarik Creek.

Chester Whitehead 1903-1985

Chester Whitehead was born at Danvers, Illinois, in 1903. Nothing is known about his early years before he came to Lake Clark. Whitehead was a Bristol Bay commercial fisherman and cannery mechanic, trapper, prospector and sometime pilot. He lived on Lake Clark in eight different locations from the late-1930s to the mid-1970s.

311 Hoagland, op. cit., Jim Kennedy Complex; Ellanna, Hornberger, op. cit., 4-38 and 4-46.
Whitehead first began working for Red Salmon cannery in Naknek between March and October 1938. He worked the same schedule for Red Salmon cannery in 1939 and 1940. In 1941 and 1942 he set netted on the beach at Naknek before returning to Lake Clark, where he wintered. Whitehead also worked for the Pedersen Point cannery and Libby’s Graveyard and Libbyville canneries on Kvichak Bay.

In 1985, Chester Whitehead recounted his early years at Lake Clark.

1937, walked out from Ingersoll Lake [Lachbuna] early spring deep snow filled Portage Creek. Three of us in there with only 2 pair of snowshoes left mine for the others to use and walked out at first light, wearing hip boots. Snow frozen solid until about 9 or 10 A.M., about the first of June. Lake open. Bert Ruoff took me to Anchorage in his Stinson with floats. Stayed with Fred Bowman. … [Next year] Two of us came out with Roy Dickson in his Waco on skis in March to join a prospector to see the claims he had staked for an association I belonged to.

1938, then was on the lake part of each year from 1939 on … Roy Dickson talked me into going to the Bay for a summer. Worked with machinist crew at Red Salmon Cannery. Lived with Oscar Lundgren March to October. … Returned to Lake Clark each fall until time to go to the Bay, lived anywhere until 1941, built a cabin [with Joe Thompson’s help] near Brown Carlson with logs cut by Al White bought from Brown Carlson … Ray Brower and Joe Thompson worked together one summer for Fred Bowman at the [Bowman Camp] mine. Joe also worked one summer with Al White at the mine. Joe and Al were trapping on the Mulchatna [River] with headquarters at Ingersoll [Lachbuna] Lake and two other cabins. I left Anchorage with a tent and outfit in January after a belly operation performed the preceding month. Landed late on Ingersoll [Lake] late in the day, the two men happened to be home and saw the plane land while they were out on a short tralpine. Came looking for me the next morning and invited me to stay with them. The cabin had 4 bunks built against one wall. So I gladly move in with them and walked out to the Lake Clark in the spring of 1940, then to the Bay for fishing. Was on the lake [Clark] each year from then until I bought a plane and moved to Levelock, but always kept a place on the lake … I helped Babe and Mary [Alsworth] move to the lake from Packer’s Koggiuug Cannery [Diamond J] … [in 1942]. Stayed at their place while Mary went to Dillingham to have her first child. A bad thing for her. The child did not live long, had TB. I recognized that when they brought the baby home I did not say anything, nothing could be done at that time … Mary [Alsworth] will be your best source for the time after they moved there [Lake Clark]. She is a very superior type of person.314

In his later years Chester Whitehead spent summers at Port Alsworth and lived at Tanalian Point in 1974–1975, but retired soon after to Oregon and he spent time in Hawaii. He died in Salem, Oregon, on April 10, 1985.

Joe Thompson 1903–1982, Builder

Joe Thompson was born in Harriet-Lien Township, Burleigh County, North Dakota, in 1903. His father, Ole Thompson, was born in Lake Mills, Iowa, and his mother, Pauline Gunderson Thompson, was born in Norway. Joe was one of nine children. He apparently came to Lake Clark during the Great Depression in about 1937 or 1938.315

314 Chester Whitehead, op. cit.
315 Anon., “Ole and Pauline (Gunderson) Thompson,” Diamond Jubilee Committee, Claire and New
Joe Thompson was a prospector, trapper and woodsman-log builder extraordinaire who lived on Lake Clark until about 1971. Mary Alsworth reported that Thompson was living on Lake Clark in 1942 when the Alsworths moved to the lake from Koggiung, on the Bristol Bay coast. Thompson told a young guide in 1967 that he had come to Lake Clark from Fairbanks pulling a home-made toboggan one winter during the 1930s, a distance of about 400 miles.  

It seems more likely, however, that Thompson was flown to Lake Clark or that he came upriver by boat from Bristol Bay and hiked over the Newhalen Portage to Lake Clark. Early in his tenure at Lake Clark, he probably lived around Portage Creek, since he was reported by Chester Whitehead to have worked at Bowman’s Camp with Al White in 1939. Further reports say Thompson left Lake Clark in the early 1970s and returned to North Dakota, apparently Hankinson, to live with his elderly sister Lillian. He died in Traverse County, Minnesota, in April 1983. Joe was buried in Harriet-Lien Township, North Dakota.  

Joe was one of the most consequential early-twentieth-century Euroamerican settlers on Lake Clark, but not by the magnetism of his personality, for he was rather quiet and stoical. What impresses is the number of building projects and land clearing efforts he was involved in that have stood the test of time and still matter to people on Lake Clark.  

Around this time, 1939–1941, Thompson trapped from a cabin on College Creek near Lachbuna Lake (Ingersoll) with Chester Whitehead and Al White, who worked for the Bowmans at the placer mine on Portage Creek. It is reported that the men had two other line cabins within the drainage of the Mulchatna River. Their main cabin was about one-half mile up College Creek, on the north side of Lachbuna Lake. It had four bunks on one wall.  

On September 3, 1944, a U.S. Army B-24D Liberator blew up in mid-air at about 9,500 feet elevation southeast of Upper Tazimina Lake, about 10 miles south of Tanalian Point, killing six crew members and leaving six survivors. Joe Thompson and probably Chester Whitehead assisted Babe Alsworth rescuing four of the survivors. Pilot Alsworth dropped Thompson off on Lower Tazimina Lake, and Thompson packed survival gear to the four survivors. Then he helped the four get to the lake from which Alsworth flew them to the Seversen’s Roadhouse.  

In 1944, Babe and Mary Alsworth swapped the Jim Kennedy Cabin to Joe Thompson for logs he cut for them. The logs were eventually sawed and used in the Alsworth house on Hardenburg Bay.  

Babe Alsworth hired Thompson to assist his mechanic, Mike

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316 Jim Lund, e-mail message to the author, November 2, 2012.
317 Jim Lund, e-mail message to the author, November 13, 2012.
318 Ellanna and Hornberger, op. cit., 4-42; Mary Alsworth, “Notes and Dates,” undated but circa 1985, copy in the LACL history files.
319 See chapter on the Bomber Valley Incident on pages 142-145 for attribution.
Vandegrift, clearing land and grading the first airstrip on Lake Clark in the fall of 1944. In the late 1940s Thompson cut logs for the Alsworth homestead on the south side of the Kijik River delta. They used the D-4 Caterpillar to haul the logs out of the woods and to drag logs across the frozen lake to Hardenburg Bay. There are color home movies taken by Mike Vandegrift of Joe Thompson and Babe Alsworth driving the Alsworths’ D-4 Caterpillar across frozen Lake Clark to the Jim Kennedy Cabin, circa 1947, where Thompson was living, likely to cut and drag out saw-logs from the woods for rafting back to the Alsworth homestead for milling. The National Park Service has several historic photographs of Thompson building Alsworth’s wooden hangar, grading Alsworth’s air strip, sawing timbers with Charlie Denison on the steam-powered sawmill, and sawing lumber on Babe Alsworth’s sawmill with Doc Bly, Mike Vandegrift and Babe Alsworth.

Thompson assisted Vandegrift with constructing a large wooden hangar made with locally sawed white spruce lumber that the two men cut and milled on Babe Alsworth’s sawmill. The hangar was a spacious utilitarian structure, about 30x50 feet, part aircraft hangar and part shop. It was a local landmark until it was accidently burned in the early 1990s.320

Around 1950, Joe Thompson built a house for Marion and Bertha Mooter immediately west of the mouth of the Tanalian River.

In the mid-1950s, Thompson sold the Kennedy Cabin to Gabriel Trefon. Thompson apparently moved away from Lake Clark, perhaps around Bismarck, North Dakota, before returning to Lake Clark about 1961 and building another cabin. David Barnett said that Thompson built his cabin just east of Brown Carlson’s cabin in the early 1960s.321

The two-room cabin was made of peeled white spruce with square notches. The dimensions of the main room are 10 feet by 15 feet, with a 7 feet by 7 feet back room. The ceiling boards were hand hewn. The roof is covered with square galvanized shingles with a generous coating of tar between the seams. Thompson obtained the shingles from the Coray family’s homestead, about one mile to the northwest. He cut the gas cans with an axe, demonstrating his deftness with an axe and the myriad adaptations people employed for the metal 5-gallon gas cans in the Bristol Bay country.

While Thompson lived on the north side of Lake Clark at the Kennedy Cabin, he used to travel back and forth to the Alsworth homestead by rowing his skiff. Al Woodward said Thompson was a very skilled and competent outdoorsman. Thompson’s skills were in steady demand as more people moved to Lake Clark to build vacation homes. First he was an indispensable worker for the Alsworths in the growth of their homestead. In about 1945, he cut logs for Dr. Elmer Bly and was the primary builder of the Dr. Elmer Bly House, a National Register of Historic Places property on the “Point” in Hardenburg Bay. Later, in 1981, this house was the first office for the new Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.

In 1952–1953, Thompson cut logs for Earl Woodward and his son Allen and helped them build the Earl Woodward cabin. Thompson frequently helped Denison operate his steam-powered sawmill in the 1950s. Earlier, in the mid to late 1940s, he assisted Babe Alsworth and Mike Vandergrift in running the Alsworth sawmill, powered by the D-4 Caterpillar.322

In the early 1950s, Thompson was hired by Jay Hammond to cut logs for his new log home that the latter was building at the mouth of Miller Creek on the north side of Lake Clark. Hammond extolled Thompson’s abilities for hard work and stated that he had the knack of moving the largest Lake Clark white spruce logs with relative ease, using a peavey and rollers. Thompson would fell a

320 Glen Alsworth, Sr., conversation with the author, December 31, 2013.
321 Craig Coray, conversation with the author, August 9, 2012; Lake Clark National Park and Preserve Cabin Data, Joe Thompson Cabin C-84, in the LACL history files.
322 Al Woodward, conversations with the author 1975 to present.
Babe Alsworth holds two ptarmigan near his home at Koggiung, Diamond J cannery on the lower Kvichak River c. 1940. After Babe married Mary Griechen of Pilot Point in 1941 they lived at Koggiung before moving to Lake Clark in June 1942. Photograph courtesy Margaret Alsworth Clum, H-2733.

Tree and, after peeling it, move it on smaller log rollers to the beach. Then he would fashion log rafts to move to various spots on Lake Clark where they were needed for cabin logs or saw logs at Denison’s or Alsworth’s mills.

Jay Hammond, Mary Alsworth, Craig Coray, Allen Woodward, and David Barnett have all stated that Thompson spent long periods of time prospecting in the Lake Clark country each summer. Thompson was also a Bristol Bay commercial fisherman but the years of his involvement in the fishery are not known. Thompson might very well have become aware of Lake Clark while commercial fishing, or just as plausibly he might have moved to Lake Clark in the 1930s by an offer to work at the Bowman Camp.

Thompson was described by a number of people who knew him as honest, very hard working, serious, quiet, taciturn and possessing great integrity. Monroe Robinson, long time Lake Clark National Park volunteer, became acquainted with Thompson during the winter of 1970–1971 and said he seemed very content with his Spartan existence at Lake Clark. Thompson lived in a small cabin and had few material possessions but was very satisfied with his situation. He read magazines, enjoyed listening to preacher Garner Ted Armstrong on the radio and liked his coffee in volume and black.

Craig Coray, who spent a lot of time with Thompson in the 1960s and early 1970s, recalls him as a very good host who always had the coffee pot on. Craig said that Thompson, despite a bad stammer, was a very good storyteller, who had a ready laugh and was eager to talk about his prospecting activities around Lake Clark. Craig reported that while Thompson was living at his last home on Lake Clark, he had a small-scale placer operation at the base of small mountain east of his cabin.

In the 1950s, Thompson was known to disappear on prospecting forays all over Lake Clark country for several weeks at a time. He had the reputation of being a very competent woodsman who could take care of himself in the bush without a companion or much gear.
The Dr. Elmer Bly House on the east side of Hardenburg Bay about 1949. The Bly House is on the National Register of Historic Places and is significant because it was one of the first homes, after the Alsworth homestead, to be built on Hardenburg Bay. It was the site of the first Lake Clark National Park and Preserve field headquarters in 1980. Photograph courtesy of Ann Bly Ringstad, H-1946.
Babe Alsworth cranks the "hurdy gurdy" (sic) lifting a log from Hardenburg Bay and onto a trailer pulled by the Ford-Ferguson tractor on the right, c. 1945-1947. Photograph courtesy of the Alsworth family home movie collection.

One summer day Thompson was alone in his cabin on a particularly warm day and he was frying a skillet full of bacon with the door open when he sensed something had entered the cabin. He quickly turned around holding the pan and seeing a brown bear walking toward him he threw the hot bacon and grease in the bear’s face. The shocked bear let out a yelp and ran out the door. 323

Thompson probably left Lake Clark in about 1971 after he sold the cabin to Lorne Simpson of Anchorage. Thompson never filed on the land, so the cabin was in trespass. It was reported that Thompson moved back to his native state of North Dakota to live with a sister.

Joe Thompson was a significant person in the history of Lake Clark from the late 1930s until 1971, when he left the area as an elderly man. Thompson arrived from the Lower 48 during the Great Depression and, because of his skills as a reliable and tireless woodworker, he apparently quickly obtained work from established residents of Lake Clark, such as the Doc Dutton and Joe Kackley cabin re-build, the Fred Bowman placer mine, the Charlie Denison sawmill, and the John Walatka cabin. By the mid 1940s, Thompson was an important participant in the building of the fledgling community of Port Alsworth by helping to build the Alsworth house, the 3,800-foot airstrip and the large wooden hangar. Later, Thompson went on to cut cabin logs for Dr. Bly, for the Jay Hammond homestead and for the Earl Woodward cabin. When Thompson was not working for wages around Lake Clark, he was engaged in other traditional economic pursuits that defined the Bristol Bay drainage during his time—summer commercial salmon fishing in the Bay, with the balance of the year “upriver” prospecting, trapping and subsisting off the land. In sum, Joe Thompson was a prime example of a man who reflected his era and his region to the fullest. He was a twentieth-century Euroamerican settler who humbly, and largely anonymously, contributed to the growth and development of the Lake Clark country. In 2014 there are at least five properties still in use and built by Joe or with his significant help; those structures are the Dutton-Kackley House, the Mooter House, the Elmer Bly House, the Babe and Mary Alsworth House and the Joe Thompson Cabin.

323 Allen Thompson, telephone conversation to the author, July 30, 2014.
Chapter 16
The Rise of Port Alsworth

BEFORE BABE AND MARY ALSWORTH MOVED to Hardenburg Bay in August 1944, very little human development had occurred in the picturesque bay. It is known that people had camped on the eastern shore at least 3800 to 4000 years ago by the charcoal, birch bark and flake scatter they left behind while chipping tools around a camp fire. We also know that other ancient Native people on Hardenburg Bay were working with obsidian that was sourced from a quarry site more than 380 miles north of Port Alsworth. Human history at Port Alsworth stretches back thousands of years, and the archeology of the place has hardly been scratched.

Over the years the Trefon Family had a wall tent and fish rack near where the Alsworths would build their new home, but their condition in August 1944 is not known.

William von Hardenburg’s tumble-down cabin was to the east of the slough that enters the bay from the south. The cabin was located near the Lang’s barn but had long since rotted away. Those three cultural features were the only handiwork of human beings that might have been visible in the bay in early 1944.

Babe Alsworth was born in Austin, Minnesota, in 1910. He learned to fly in Minnesota in the 1920s and began his flying career in the Bristol Bay region in 1939. His wife, Mary Griechen, was born at Pilot Point, Alaska, on the Bering Sea side of the Alaska Peninsula, about 300 miles southwest of Port Alsworth, in 1924. Her parents were Agrafina Griechen from Nushagak, Alaska, and Gust Griechen, Sr., a German-born winter watchman for the Alaska Packers Association cannery, Diamond U, at Pilot Point.

Mary Griechen first met Babe Alsworth in the spring of 1940 when Babe flew a medevac from the Pilot Point Alaska Packers Association (Del Monte) cannery for a young fellow who had fallen off a 60-foot high communications pole onto frozen ground. Babe flew the injured man to the Public Health Service hospital at Kanakanak, near Dillingham, but after several days he died of internal injuries.

Subsequently, flying for Bert Rouff’s Bristol Bay Air Service, Babe had occasion to return to the village where Mary Griechen lived. The two became better acquainted and were married on January 4, 1941, in Dillingham. One witness at the wedding was John Walatka, Babe’s old hometown friend from Austin, Minnesota, who had soloed Babe in 1930.

In May or June 1942, Babe and Mary Alsworth moved from Koggiung, on the lower Kvichak River, to the north shore of Lake Clark to the Jim Kennedy Cabin which they purchased. Kennedy was the first resident pilot on Lake Clark but after six years of fighting the annual rising and falling of Lake Clark’s level and the strong easterly wind-generated waves, Kennedy had had enough of trying to keep an airplane in front of his place and sold his home to Babe and Mary Alsworth.

While Kennedy envisioned more normal aircraft operations at Tanalian Point, namely wheeled landings on the delta of Dry Creek and securing his float plane in the protected Hardenburg Bay, the Alsworths at least had a good log cabin in which to begin their life at Lake Clark. Babe knew full well that operating on the beach on the north shore of Lake Clark would not be easy. It is likely that Kennedy had already told Babe about

324 Katie Trefon Hill Wilson, conversations with the author, October 20, 1993 and on other occasions.
the small lake west of the cabin in which one could land an airplane and know that it was secure from the vagaries of the winds and waves on Lake Clark. The only problem was that the little lake was two and a half miles away from the Kennedy Cabin, so Babe would have to begin and end each day with a hike of that length, not to mention packing freight and fuel to the lake for his airplane. Consequently, it was not surprising that Babe looked for another spot on Lake Clark to move to that would be more harmonious for aircraft operations.

John Walatka’s wife Lillian and their two-year-old daughter Johanna stayed with Mary Alsworth at the Alsworth’s cabin during the summer of 1942. They raised a big garden, put up salmon and enjoyed an idyllic summer. Their husbands were commercial flying for canneries in the Bristol Bay region nearly round the clock, yet they both probably had time to commercial fish for a few days during the peak of the run. The two pilots also made trips between Dillingham or Naknek and Anchorage via Lake Clark Pass. This was the first time Mary Alsworth visited Tanalian Point, and she recalled her first meeting with Doc and Joe, both in their 80s, rowing a skiff filled with rhubarb stalks to Charlie Denison’s place where the three of them were making rhubarb wine.

On July 12, 1943, the Alsworth’s first child, Leon, was born at Kanakanak Hospital. He lived less than a year and passed away on April 1, 1944. Babe spent much of the winter in Minnesota trying to secure an aircraft mechanic and an airplane to bring back to Lake Clark. The infant lived only a few weeks after Babe returned home and is buried on the terrace about 150 feet above the Kennedy Cabin.

Babe was successful in bringing a mechanical genius to Lake Clark, Myles “Mike” Vandegrift from Austin, Minnesota. Vandegrift flew a Taylor-Craft from Minnesota to Lake Clark in 1943. Mike would keep Babe’s airplanes in the air, including the newly acquired Stinson Junior, SR-JR. Also adept at construction, Vandegrift teamed with Lake Clark sourdough Joe Thompson to transform the wilderness at Hardenburg Bay into Babe and Mary Alsworth’s 160-acre homestead during the next six years.

Babe and Mike Vandegrift soon came to understand the difficulties of operating a flying service off the beach on the north shore of Lake Clark and began scouting around the lake for another location. They soon “found the ideal place,” in Mary Alsworth’s words—Hardenburg Bay, on the easterly shore of Lake Clark. Hardenburg Bay was named for Kasna Creek miner William von Hardenburg, who had a cabin on the south shore of the bay in the first decade of the twentieth century. The bay is beautifully protected with enough level space to the west for a runway. Mike Vandegrift surveyed the place, and he and Joe Thompson began to clear land. Mary wrote, “We hired Joe Thompson and he and Mike cleared enough land to build a shop near the water's edge. Lumber was bought from Charlie Denison and he also built a small place for Babe and I.”

Babe flew in parts of a sawmill from a cannery, likely Diamond J Koggiung, where Babe and Mary had formerly lived before moving to Lake Clark. Mike Vandegrift welded the sawmill together. Mike and Joe also built a small wooden scow to haul up the grader and a D-4 Cat from the landing on the middle Newhalen River. In 1944, the Alsworths brought up a Ford-Ferguson tractor from Naknek to pull stumps from the new runway that ran west from Alsworth’s cabins 1,500 feet. By 1949–1950, the runway had grown to 3,800 feet, and the first freight planes landed at Port Alsworth, Pacific Northern Airlines’ DC-3s and, later, Boxcars, C-46s, DC-6s and larger planes in 1952. The Alsworths’ runway was the second wheeled strip in the Iliamna-Lake Clark country. The first strip was the Iliamna airfield put in by a contractor for the U.S. Army Air Corps by 1944. Mary Alsworth recalled her first summer on Hardenburg Bay:

325 Mary Alsworth, conversations with the author, 1974-1994.

326 Mary Alsworth, "Notes and Dates," circa 1985, copies in LACL history files.
Loaded the boat with dogs, goats and ourselves and headed across at midnight when the lake was calm. So we started working clearing land to build a larger place. Mike and our guests stayed in tents. Eventually a larger place was built and we moved in. Mike had his room upstairs. Had enough ground cleared for a nice garden. We had the goats fenced in and they had a nice place to stay in. On June 21, 1945, our second son, Leon, Jr., was born.  

Mike Vandegrift and Joe Thompson were the primary builders of Port Alsworth from the mid 1940s to the early 1950s. Other friends who helped to build the Alsworth homestead, were Harry Shawback, Sr., Scott Mitchell, Marcellus King, Dr. Elmer Bly and Sam McRae. The first three were from Babe’s home state of Minnesota. Vandegrift and Thompson were both very mechanically inclined. Vandegrift was called a “mechanical genius” by the late Governor Jay S. Hammond, who knew him well and employed him at his homestead in the 1960s. In the 1940s and 1950s, Babe Alsworth flew a great deal and he kept his hired hands and friends supplied with all the materials and tools necessary to build the homestead. Babe was especially busy flying in Bristol Bay when the canneries were operating. Once winter set in, Babe’s schedule was more leisurely, except in January, during Russian Christmas, when he was busy flying people around to various villages in the Iliamna-Lake Clark country.  

Babe Alsworth, Mike Vandegrift, Joe Thompson and Dr. Elmer Bly were all instrumental in the growth and establishment of Port Alsworth. Babe filed on a 160-acre homestead in 1949, and supplied the direction and capital to build the Alsworth homestead. Mike and Joe supplied the building skills to build the homestead. Doc Bly helped saw lumber for the house, which was built between 1947 and 1952. In addition, it was Doc Bly who suggested to Mary Alsworth that when she applied for a post office, she should call the location of their new place Port Alsworth. The Port Alsworth post office was established in Babe and Mary Alsworth’s home in 1950 with Mary Alsworth as postmaster.  

Before the advent of commercial aviation, Lake Clark mail would be shipped from Outside via Old Iliamna’s post office and later Seversen’s Roadhouse at present-day Iliamna. After the advent of commercial aviation, by at least February 1945, according to Helen Beeman Denison, mail was flown from Anchorage to Iliamna, then from Iliamna to Tanalian Point by Babe Alsworth. The following 1945–1947 entries from the Helen Beeman Denison Diary are examples documenting how mail was brought in and how sick people were medevaced out in the aviation era, particularly after Babe Alsworth and Oren Hudson moved to Lake Clark and Sixmile Lake respectively.

February 11, 1945–To Alsworth’s & Doc’s by sled. Took some 20 letters.

327 Ibid.


329 Helen Beeman Denison, Journals, 1944-1952, copy in the LACL history files.
Harry Shawback, right, greases the D-4 Cat while on the left, Joe Thompson or Scott Mitchell work on the 1918-era grader during a pause in the construction of the Alsworth's 3,800-foot runway in the late 1940s. Photograph courtesy of Margaret Alsworth Clum, H-1769.
Lonnie Alsworth, left, visits Joe Thompson during construction of Babe Alsworth's hangar that was designed by Mike Vandegrift c. 1948. The "hurdy gurdy" (sic) is ready to lift the truss into place on top of the wall plates.

Photograph courtesy of Margaret Alsworth Clum, H-1804.

Babe Alsworth's hangar nearing completion in 1951-1952 at the Alsworth homestead on Lake Clark. The hangar was designed by Mike Vandegrift and built with white spruce lumber cut and milled locally. Joe Thompson assisted Vandegrift in the construction. It was accidentally burned to the ground in the mid-1990s. The plane in the hangar is a Navion.

Photograph courtesy of Margaret Alsworth Clum, H-2776.
February 16, 1945- Taking some letters to Alsworths. He was to Roadhouse twice yesterday. Some bumpy ride. Maybe freight & mail there.

January 25, 1946- Went down to Kennedy's Chas went on to Babe's with some letters.

February 16, 1946- Chas went to K's(Kennedy's) to see how snow is on the lake is. No mail as planes not able to land at Iliamna.

April 12, 1946- Went to Alsworth for mail. Got 2nd Class.

May 7, 1946- Babe came down for me about 1 P.M. So glad to get home. Girl born 15 minutes past midnight. Delivered baby girl for Agnes Trefon C [Cusma]. Almost transverse position. Left knee presentation with long labor which frightened them. Mother & baby fine.

June 7, 1946- Brown C. [Carlson] came along on way to Nondalton so Chas went with him to get mail.

February 4, 1947- Babe brought mail lots of cards etc.

February 21, 1947- Hadfield came after his potatoes. Chas took him home & brought back some mail, radio etc.

May 23, 1947- Chas went down to see why Babe did not go for pigs.

May 24, 1947 Babe went for pigs at 4:30 A.M. Chas went to Babe's in boat & brot them home.


August 7, 1947- Lary [Hill] still very ill. ... Sent word to Katie that Lary ill.

August 8, 1947- Katie flew in with Larry Rust. Lary very listless & whiny.

August 9, 1947- Katie took Lary to Anchorage to see doctor. Larry Rust took them.

April 9, 1951- [Oren] Hudson stopped with a couple of Natives. They wanted some seed potatoes.

May 3, 1951 Hudson came along brot 25 lb. sugar. Also mail. Wass [Trefon] came also.

April 11, 1952 Hudson delivered chain saw. Chas paid $200 down.

July 7, 1952 Hudson & [Forest] Jones brought up Dr. Davis. He prescribed some med. Having it sent from Bert's [an Anchorage drug store].

Before the advent of aviation people living around Lake Clark and Sixmile Lake received mail sporadically by dog team or boats or they went to Old Iliamna and later to present-day Iliamna, to Seversen's Roadhouse, to pick up their mail. Once Lake Clark had resident pilots, particularly Babe Alsworth by 1942–1945 and Oren Hudson by 1951, mail service was more regular.

Most all the people who lived around Lake Clark during the first 40 or 50 years of the twentieth century lived a fairly lean, yet ample existence, especially when compared to increased affluence at the end of the century. The earliest settlers subsisted off the land and augmented with some store-bought foodstuffs paid for with their limited cash income, or they traded using raw furs as the currency. Bush pilot Babe Alsworth was probably the first full-time resident with the ability to earn a substantial cash income from his own efforts. Commercial aviation enabled Babe to make a solid upper-middle-class living on Lake Clark.

Thompson and Vandegrift cut white spruce trees and sawed lumber for the Alsworth house. It was built "with a gambrel roof with cross gambrel" and had clapboard siding, from trees cut around the Tanalian River flood plain and the lower Kijik River delta. Joe Thompson used Babe's D-4 Cat to drag logs out of the woods. The logs from the Kijik delta were rafted together and towed by boat to Hardenburg Bay for milling. Babe also brought in a thickness planer.
and a tongue and groove machine to make finish lumber. The workers, Mike and Joe, also sawed lumber and built a large, two-story wooden hangar, with two small back rooms and a shop that provided Babe with many years of service, only to burn down in the early 1990s. It was 50 feet wide by 30 feet long, large enough to accommodate an airplane. Mike Vandegrift designed the hangar just as he did the large Alsworth house, including preparing actual blueprints for the house. By all accounts, Vandegrift was an amazing mechanic who had the skill of an engineer, if not a formal university degree in engineering.  

Mary Alsworth was very busy reporting the weather to King Salmon 12 or 13 times per day via her radio, KXC 54, and running the Port Alsworth post office. In addition to cooking, cleaning and raising her five children, she also taught the oldest three children with the Calvert correspondence school program before statehood. About 1956, Randy Briggs, who had young children of her own, ran a small school for her children and the three older Alsworth children and neighbor

332 Glen Alsworth, Sr., conversation with the author, December 31, 2013.
Glen Alsworth is Babe and Mary Alsworth's youngest child. Glen was born in 1954 and, like his older brothers, has had a long career in aviation. His air taxi business, Lake Clark Air, is a thriving Bristol Bay regional airline. During the summer, Glen might pilot a Beech 99, a Cessna-206 floatplane and a Stinson on tundra tires all in one day. In addition, he is the long-time mayor of the Lake and Peninsula Borough.

Mike Mooter. They were taught the Calvert course at her house. On dark stormy mornings, Babe would walk his children the mile to the Briggs house for class. It was a fitting location, since a few decades before on the very location, Doc Dutton taught the Trefon children their 3 Rs. Lonnie, Bee and Sis Alsworth only attended school one year with Mrs. Briggs. Thereafter, Mary Alsworth continued teaching the Calvert course to her children at her own home. After 1959 and statehood, the two youngest Alsworth children, John and Glen, were taught with the University of Nebraska correspondence school program by their mother, and they later went to Victory Bible School in Palmer, Alaska. In 1962, Sis Alsworth attended school in Wheelersburg, Ohio, while staying with the Harlan Willis family.

The Alsworths had goats, sheep, chickens, ducks, geese and horses in the early years of their homestead. Babe raised oats as part of the homestead stipulations to place a certain number of acres in cultivation. In addition, the Alsworths have always had a large productive vegetable garden and cellar to store their potato crop.

After raising their family and being highly regarded over the Bristol Bay region, Babe and Mary Alsworth retired to Hilo, Hawaii, in 1977. They had lived on Lake Clark since May 1942, where their welcome mat was always out for all travelers flying through Lake Clark Pass. Both Babe and Mary were extraordinary hosts to thousands of guests over their 35 years of full-time residency at Lake Clark.

At their farmstead near Hilo, they grew all manner of vegetables and had cows and chickens and were nearly self-sufficient. Yet they missed the lake and always returned for a few months each summer. Mary passed away in 1996 and Babe died in 2004. They are buried in the Alsworth Cemetery at Port Alsworth. Their passings were lamented by their family and all who had the good fortune to call them friends.

ON MARCH 8, 1945, CHARLIE DENISON MARRIED Helen Beeman, a nurse working at the U.S. Public Health Service hospital at Kanakanak near Dillingham. The marriage ceremony was conducted by Franklin Smith of Dillingham at Doc Dutton’s house. Helen’s diaries are very terse, but reading them one comes away with a sense for the pace of life as the old guard were fading from the scene and the newer, faster-paced life represented by Babe Alsworth and his airplanes was making life easier.  

In 1957, five years after Helen died, Charlie and Frieda Luft began exchanging letters between Lake Clark and California where Frieda lived. In 1957 Charlie proposed to Frieda by mail and she accepted and traveled to Lake Clark where they finally met for the first time. When Frieda arrived at Charlie’s, he had a minister at his house and they were married soon after. Charlie died two years later and Frieda loved living at Lake Clark, so she stayed in their house. Floyd Denison had just been divorced for the second time and he needed a home, so he left Anchorage and moved back to his father’s house and lived with Frieda until 1979 when Frieda returned to California to live with her son. She died at the age of 83 not long after leaving Lake Clark.

One of Charlie Denison’s personal traits was his perseverance in the face of daunting odds. In the same vein as Sisyphus, between the mid-1930s and the late 1950s Denison built three bridges across the Tanalian River only to have them wash out. His first bridge was a foot bridge made of logs. A second bridge was supported by log cribs filled with boulders, spanned with logs and decked over with planks sawed on his sawmill, that was in place in 1940, but soon washed out. Presumably, Joe Kackley, Pete and Alex Trefon, Charlie Wolfe, and Floyd Denison helped Charlie build the first two bridges. The third bridge was suspension bridge utilizing steel cable that was completed in late 1958 and washed out a few months after Charlie died, during late summer flooding brought about by torrential rains.

A few months after Charlie died Frieda sold some of the Denison parcel of land to Shorty and Alice Alberts. The elder Alberts and their two sons, Dick and Jim, built a house on the land. Shorty
became ill, and the entire family moved back to Michigan. Previously, Alice Alberts had a set net on the beach at South Naknek and had become acquainted with schoolteachers Dick and Lydia Randolph. In the early 1970s, Alice Alberts sold her Lake Clark property to Dick Randolph and his business partner Eugene Reed.  

Randolph and Reed hired logsmith Jack Ross from Fairbanks to build their log house about one mile west of the mouth of the Tanalian River. Ross and his wife Ethel moved to Lake Clark in August 1974. Jack Ross was a master log builder, but also much more; he was a master of all manner of mechanical skills and, very much like Mike Vandegrift, a mechanical genius. From the mid 1970s into the 1980s, Ross built several large log buildings on Lake Clark, including the Randolph-Reed House, Island Lodge for Glen and Sharon Van Valin, and Doug Butler's log house on the Lake Clark shore at Port Alsowrt that is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Graham. When Lake Clark National Park and Preserve was established in 1980, Ross became the maintenance foreman for the new park, a job he held until 1989. In his 90s today, Ross is still active in building projects at Lake Clark.

In the late 1950s or early 1960s Howard and Edna Fremlin built a log house on the island immediately northeast of Port Alsworth. They lived at their place one winter or so, then sold it to Frank Bell who in turn sold it to Nondalton schoolteachers Glen and Sharon Van Valin in 1966. The Van Valins established a sportfishing lodge at their new place and called it Island Lodge. In the late 1970s, they sold their place to Gary and Louise Pogany and a small parcel to the late Dr. David Dietz. The Dietz family built a cabin on the land and used it in the summer. The Van Valins moved up the lake to another island east of Portage Creek where Jack Ross built a large log lodge for them, which they also called Island Lodge. That property was sold in the late 1980s and is now owned by Richard and Alison Lausten.

After the 1965 death of Sam Turner, a WWI veteran who arrived in Lake Clark in 1932, Frank Bell purchased Sam's old place. In 1969 Bell sold his place at the mouth of the Chulitna River to Chuck and Sara Hornberger. The Hornbergers called their place Koksetna Wilderness Lodge and catered to bird watchers, hunters, fishermen and hikers. They had extensive vegetable gardens and a greenhouse, a root cellar, and much of their layout was powered by a wind charger. In the early 1990s, the Hornbergers sold the lodge to Jon and Julianne Cheney of California.

Frank Eckhart first came to Lake Clark in 1964 and was a Bristol Bay fisherman and cannyw winter watchman. He owned a five acre parcel of land just west of the Randolph-Reed property. Eckhart sold his land to a real estate agency which subdivided it into five, one-acre parcels and subsequently sold all of the lots. Hal and Grace Lindle and Tony and Pat Sardenga have built homes on two of these parcels. These lots are immediately east of the Kackley-Dutton-Denison Cemetery.

Jay Hammond first heard about Lake Clark when he met Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Denison in a hotel in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, and learned all about the scenic beauty of the lake. A year later, in 1947, he flew through Lake Clark Pass for the first time while working for guide Bud Branham on a bear hunt. Jay became more familiar with the lake while working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in subsequent years. At first Hammond wanted to build a cabin at Telaquana Lake in the early 1950s, but because it was more difficult to access than Lake Clark he sold his partly built cabin to his fellow Fish and Wildlife Service employee Dick Straty and decided to find a location on Lake Clark. Hammond solicited the recommendations of Brown Carlson, Joe Thompson and Art Lee, and they all suggested he consider the mouth of Miller Creek. Jay Hammond began work on a cabin at the mouth of Miller Creek, with the assistance of Jimmy Drew, in 1952. Over the years, various people have contributed to

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338 Ibid., 4-47 and 4-48.
339 Marie Fremlin, telephone conversation with the author, August 21, 2013.
340 Ellanna and Hornberger, op. cit., 4-48, 4-50.
341 Ibid., 4-38 and 4-50.
342 Jimmy Drew's (1928-2012) mother was Alexan Trefon Drew who was born at Kijik in 1904 and raised at Tanalian Point. His father was Harvey Drew, a Portage Creek miner circa 1914.
the construction of the Hammond Homestead that is now overseen by Bella Hammond. Some of those who made important contributions to the growth of the homestead were brothers Jim and Tom Stanton in the early 1960s, Mike Vandegrift in the late 1960s, Monroe Robinson in the early 1970s, John Branson between 1974 and 1984, and brothers Art and Chris Mannix from Talkeetna in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Hammond was an excellent log builder in his own right and over the years built many improvements to his homestead.

In the early 1960s, Mike Vandegrift and his wife Viola lived in a small cabin at the site while working on a larger log home for the Hammonds. During the fall and early winter of 1964-1965, Jay and Bella Hammond and their two daughters, Heidi and Dana, lived at their Lake Clark homestead before moving to Juneau for the Alaska legislative session. Naknek remained their primary residence, but after leaving the governor’s office in late 1982, the Hammonds retired to their Lake Clark homestead.

Over the years, Babe and Mary Alsworth leased several small parcels of land from their homestead to friends who wanted to build houses on Lake Clark. For example, in the early to mid 1970s, land was leased to John and Lois Davis and Bill and Norma Johnson of Soldotna. A large parcel was given to the Tanalian Bible Camp about 1970.

In the early 1980s, Babe and Mary’s son Wayne “Bee” Alsworth, Sr., began to develop his 160-acre Native allotment. He built a 4,400-foot runway more or less parallel to the original Babe Alsworth runway, but south of it and separated by about 1,000 feet. Bee also subdivided his Native allotment and sold all the one-acre lots and some larger blocks. Some of the first people to purchase lots from Bee Alsworth were Hollis and Pam Twitchell, Mark and Sandy Lang, Dave and Jacque Wilder, Ed and Kathie Painter and Mark and Sharon Mullins, to name but a few.

Mahlon Troyer obtained a leased parcel from Babe Alworth and built a cabin on it, but after his son was drowned in Hardenburg Bay, the Troyers relinquished the lease and moved away. Some years later Bee then made an arrangement with Ralph Nabinger and he and his wife Patty now own a home on the parcel.

John and Esther Alsworth have a home on Lake Clark at Port Alsworth.

In 1985 Bee Alsworth and his wife Betty sold their home and a 17-acre parcel to the National Park Service. The building is now the field headquarters for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.

Bee also sold a lakefront house he made after sawing all the lumber on the Alsworth sawmill in the 1970s to an Anchorage dentist. About the year 2000, the international relief organization, Samaritan’s Purse, purchased the house, and it is now used as staff quarters and for visitors.

Babe and Mary Alsworth’s youngest son, Glen, and his wife Patty, took over Bee’s rather low-key commercial flying and lodging services. With their son, Glen Alsworth, Jr., and his wife Leyla, they have made it a thriving business.

Laddie and Glenda Elliott, Patty Alsworth’s parents, built a log home at Port Alsworth in the late 1970s, and have been essential to the day-to-day operations of The Farm Lodge over these many years.

In 1966, Vernard E. Jones began a very controversial land claim on Lake Clark, a five-acre parcel adjacent to the historic Kijik village chapel, the Precious and Life Giving Cross and the village cemetery. Eventually, the Bureau of Land Management, the Kijik Corporation and Mr. Jones settled the dispute. The corporation paid a sum of money, and Mr. Jones relinquished his claim. The five-acre parcel is now owned by the Kijik Corporation.
ON SEPTEMBER 3, 1944, APPROXIMATELY 40 MILES northwest of present-day Iliamna village, a U.S. Army Corps B-24 D Liberator bomber belonging to the 404th Bomber Squadron of the Eleventh Air Force, with a 12-man crew aboard, blew up at 9500 feet elevation as a result of a fire and explosion in the number two engine. The Liberator was flying between Elmendorf Field, Anchorage, and Adak Island. At the time of the incident, the weather was high overcast with lower overcast and broken clouds and the aircraft was flying on instruments. Six crew members were killed in the explosion while six others bailed out and survived, landing on a mountainside about two to three miles east of Chekok Lake. Those airmen who survived had time to put on their parachutes, while those who died did not. The pilot, 2nd Lieutenant Robert Geatches, stayed with the plane, trying to put it in a dive to extinguish the flames. The aircraft blew apart with him still in the pilot’s seat. The airplane broke into four large parts and countless smaller pieces.

The six surviving crew members parachuted onto a mountainside in what is now known locally as Bomber Valley, but it took three days before all six were reunited, downstream, on September 6. One of their number was exhausted and had sore feet, so three others stayed with the semi-invalid. Lieutenant William Grace, assistant photographic officer of the Eleventh Army Air Force, and Sergeant Robert W. Smith, gunner, who were not injured, walked ahead in hopes of finding help on September 8. By this time the survivors were

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348 Aircraft Accident And Incident Reports 1941-1948, concerning accident of B-24D, No. 41-23973, HQ/AFHRA, Maxwell AFB, Alabama.
2nd Lieutenant Robert Geatches was the pilot of the ill-fated B-24D that blew-up in mid-air southeast of Tanalian Point on September 3, 1944 en-route to Adak from Elmendorf Field in Anchorage. Of the twelve men on board only the six who had time to put on their parachutes survived the explosion and subsequent ten day ordeal while hiking toward Iliamna with minimal shelter and only water and berries for sustenance. Photograph courtesy John Erickson, H-2753.

downstream of Bomber Valley Creek and were likely past Chekok Lake, which would have been to their left as they proceeded downstream on the left bank of the stream until it joined the Tazimina River, between Upper and Lower Tazimina lakes. Once on the Tazimina River and approaching the eastern head of Lower Tazimina Lake, the crew members would have found the hiking rather challenging due to a thick forest and low, wet ground. Hiking along Lower Tazimina Lake would have been easier for the survivors, as it was more open, drier ground. The four other airmen proceeded downstream at a slow pace, because their injured crewmate had severely tender feet, all of them were very hungry and they were feeling the effects of exposure.

Lieutenant Grace and Sergeant Smith must have hiked west along the south shore of Lower Tazimina Lake, continued west beyond the end of the lake, crossed another flat section of about six miles and gradually ascended the northwestern slope of Roadhouse Mountain, arriving on the summit by September 12. On the morning of September 13, Grace and Smith saw “two rows of white buildings and two radio towers. This proved to be Iliamna.”

Describing the rudimentary government associated facilities of the Iliamna airfield in fall 1944, Grace could only have been on the summit of Roadhouse Mountain. By late afternoon, Grace and Smith reached the air base and were taken to the radio station where Grace radioed Elmendorf Field that there were six surviving crew members of the crashed B-24 of September 3— two at Iliamna and four others still out in the bush. When Grace and Smith arrived in Iliamna, bush pilot Babe Alsworth was at Seversen’s Roadhouse with Joe Thompson and another trapper, perhaps Chester Whitehead, as observers. Babe was flying his Stinson SR-JR on floats. He likely was taking part in the search for the downed bomber and the crew.

Babe and Mary Alsworth had moved from the north side of Lake Clark to Hardenburg Bay on the south side less than a month

349 Statement of William J. Grace, concerning accident of B-24D, No. 41-23973, Aircraft Accident and Incident Reports, including Survival Intelligence, 1941 Thur 1948, 5, HQ/AFHRA, Maxwell AFB, Alabama.
earlier, on August 9, 1944. They had been living on Lake Clark since May or June 1942, and Babe was thoroughly familiar with the Lake Clark-Iliamna country. Alsworth had received a draft deferment because his occupation was deemed an essential service in rural Alaska during World War II.\footnote{Babe Alsworth interviewed by Jay S. Hammond, Jay Hammond’s Alaska, August 1987.}

Babe flew the route that Grace and Smith described to him and quickly located the other four crewmen. They were: 2nd Lieutenant Robert Moss, Sergeant Llewellyn G. Thiel, Staff Sergeant Oscar Windham, and Staff Sergeant Martin Woogan. Babe likely encountered the four men near Lower Tazimina Lake. He flew over them low and slow and yelled out the window, “The lake, the lake,” pointing in the direction he wanted them to head.\footnote{ADT, “Six Airmen Missing Near Mt. Iliamna,” September 16, 1944, 8.} Joe Thompson and perhaps Whitehead packed the men to the float plane and gave them rations and cigarettes. Babe made two trips to fly the four crewmen to Seversen’s Roadhouse. On September 14, the survivors were picked up by an Army Air Corps transport and flown to Elmendorf Field, eleven days after the initial accident.\footnote{Morton Puner, “Rescue in Alaska,” December 29, 1944, Yank Alaska Edition, Vol. 3, No. 28, 6.}

Those who died in the aircraft crash were: 2nd Lieutenant Robert Geatches, 2nd Lieutenant Richard R. Chapman, 2nd Lieutenant James S. Lawrence, Staff Sergeant Lyle G. Stratham, Sergeant John A. Eubanks, and Sergeant Roy Roth.\footnote{The Milwaukee Journal, “Trekked 150 Miles in Alaska After Plane Exploded in Air,” September 16, 1944.}

Contemporary newspaper articles stated that the surviving airmen hiked 150 miles to Iliamna, but a more accurate assessment of the distance is 39 miles. However, it probably felt like 150 miles to the survivors who were unfamiliar with hiking on muskeg and tundra, fording glacial mountain torrents, coping with no-see-ums, white sox and wind-driven fall rains. The survivors had no rain gear, were sheltered only by their ragged parachutes and had only berries and water to quench their thirst and assuage their hunger pains. Initially the men did not eat berries because they feared they might be poisonous, but once they tried them, they ate nothing but moss berries until they were rescued.\footnote{Wayne “Bee” Alsworth, op. cit.}

If Lieutenant Grace and Sergeant Smith had not been able to walk to Iliamna, all the surviving airmen might have died of exposure.\footnote{Wayne “Bee” Alsworth, op. cit.} Had the survivors had the presence of mind to take the time to locate the four large pieces of aircraft wreckage before beginning their trek downstream, they would have found survival gear that would have made their trek to Iliamna more tolerable. The main sections of the fuselage did not burn, and the survival gear was intact. But in the aftermath of the sudden catastrophic accident, the ensuing chaos,
shock, death, and the disparate parachute landings, their reactions are understandable.

By late September a land party had reached the wreckage and found the four large pieces of wreckage were within a mile radius of where the survivors likely had landed. Lieutenant Grace wrote:

Our first error in judgement was our failure to make a suitably thorough search for the wreckage of the airplane. It appeared to all of us from what we saw as we came down in chutes that the plane had disintegrated to such an extent that we would find nothing that could be put to use. ... In one of those sections were the emergency transmitter, still in working condition, and emergency rations, still edible. All of us are now in agreement that it would have been wiser to have spread out as much as possible and to have made a planned search of the area. It is a certainty that we would have found the wreckage within two days time and much hardship would have been eliminated. ... There was small game everywhere and if there had been a gun we could have eaten better than in many mess halls. 356

People who were living at Iliamna village at the time of the accident stated that by the time the Army recovery team reached the crash scene, bears had eaten some of the human remains. Consequently, it would have been difficult for the survivors to remain at the accident scene without being harassed by brown bears. 357

The significance of the September 3, 1944, B-24 Liberator crash in the Lake Clark area is that it brought World War II realities to a remote region that was far removed from the death and destruction of the war in Europe and Asia, but relatively close to the Aleutian Theater of operations against the Japanese. In addition, it demonstrated the efficacy of commercial aviation in an Alaskan bush search and rescue operation.

The people living around Lake Clark and Iliamna were also associated with the Second World War by having a fair number of men serving in the U.S. Army in the Aleutian campaign, such as Pete Trefon, Macy Hobson, Gus Jensen, Buck Delkittie and Nels Hedlund. Others, such as Doc Dutton, Lena Denison and Sam and Sophie Foss at Pedro Bay were all apparently observers for any Japanese aircraft that might be prowling around the Lake Clark-Iliamna area. 358

Finally, it is noteworthy to take stock of the career of the Liberator and its crew in previous combat roles. The 28th Bombardment Composite, 404th Bombardment Squadron flew long-range bombing missions in the Aleutians in 1942 and 1943. After the Japanese were driven from the Aleutian Islands in 1943, the 404th bombed Japanese targets in the Kurile Islands in 1944. 359 Captain Geatches flew the B-24 Liberator on these perilous, long-range bombing runs over the north Pacific. He and the other airmen on these missions were genuine heroes.

356 Statement of William J. Grace, op. cit., 11-12.
359 http://www.davidkusel.com/veteran/v-strathman.htm
Chapter 19
The Genesis of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve

The following summary is largely based on G. Frank Williss's administrative history, "Do Things Right the First Time": Administrative History, The National Park Service and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980, with special emphasis on how the Lake Clark area became a national park. I have attempted to put Williss's work in my own words, but the ideas and themes are Williss's and should not be considered my own. I have also used large blocks of direct verbatim text from Williss's book.

For most of the twentieth century, the only people who knew anything about Lake Clark were the Dena'ina Athabascans who had lived there for more than one thousand years, plus a very small group of sportsmen, geologists and biologists from federal agencies and some Alaskans. The following expository narrative attempts to follow how the Lake Clark country traveled from a state of *terra incognita* to national park status.

National Park Service (NPS) planning activities begun in 1950 led to the realization that the Service was not sufficiently represented in Alaska, and that the agency knew very little about the resources and potential park lands within the territory.\(^360\)

The National Park Service commenced the Alaska Recreational Survey in 1950 and completed it in 1954. The intent of the survey was to develop long-range plans to protect some of Alaska's natural, cultural, scenic and recreational resources. Two other goals of the survey were to develop park and recreational services for Alaskans and to help develop tourist infrastructure.

The survey was headed by George Collins (1903–2000), a visionary National Park Service planner. The survey team soon discovered that the National Park Service's lack of overall Alaska knowledge was a major gap so the agency set about rectifying the situation. For example, during the next few years the Alaska Recreational Survey sponsored studies on tourism and geology in Alaska and a biological study of Katmai National Monument. In addition, in 1952, the survey group first studied and proposed a wilderness park on the north end of the Alaska-Yukon border that culminated in the creation of the Arctic Wildlife Refuge in 1960.\(^361\) Overall, the George Collins-led survey contributed a great deal to the general body of scientifically based knowledge of Alaska and to preservation and recreational goals of the Service in Alaska.

In 1952 another National Park Service survey was conducted on Alaska history, archeology and ethnography. Later in 1961 Charles Snell, a National Park Service historian, visited 45 historic sites in Alaska.\(^362\)

In 1954, John M. Kauffmann, a park planner and writer in Washington, D.C., wrote boundary histories of Katmai National Monument, Glacier Bay and Mount McKinley National Park. By the 1970s, Kauffmann was living in Anchorage and was a member of the Alaska Task Force with special responsibilities for planning what


\(^{361}\) Ibid., 30.

\(^{362}\) Ibid., 31.
would become Gates of the Arctic National Park and, to a lesser extent, planning for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.

In 1956, National Park Service director Conrad L. Wirth commissioned a broad program, Mission 66, that was meant to improve all Park Service units and services throughout the nation. Mission 66 provided funding for improvements in Glacier Bay, Mount McKinley and Katmai. Mission 66 also called for new park areas to be created nationwide, including in Alaska.363

In 1958, an early federal agency reference to Lake Clark as a truly exceptional place appeared in the book, *Landscapes of Alaska: The Alaska Range, Their Geologic Evolution* edited by Howel Williams and written by Clyde Wahrhaftig, a geologist with USGS. Wahrhaftig mentioned that USGS explorer-geologist Stephen R. Capps had explored the Alaska Range and “found immense glaciers and beautiful lakes, some of which, particularly Lake Clark and Lake Chakachamna, he ranked among the most beautiful bodies of water in the world.”364

In 1960, as part of a broad national effort, George Collins hired Roger Allin, who had lived in Anchorage between 1951 and 1959 while working as a biologist-pilot for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Allin was to create a recreational plan for Alaska identifying potential park areas which should be preserved by federal, state, and local governments. Part of Allin’s material was incorporated in the 1964 NPS book *Parks For America*, but the book did not emphasize all of Alaska’s potential natural and cultural resources worthy of national park status, perhaps because of political pressures from Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall.365 The book mentioned only two Alaska proposals by name: Saint Elias-Wrangell Mountains at 800,000 acres and Lake Clark Pass National Park at 330,000 acres.366

While working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service during the 1950s, Roger Allin flew all over the territory in the course of his duties, becoming very familiar with much of Alaska’s splendid scenic resources. Allin was project leader for all Fish and Wildlife Service matters dealing with sport fishing in south central Alaska, and he assisted wildlife personnel in aerial game counts and predator control activities. Allin is an unsung hero in the struggle to preserve Alaska wilderness for future generations of Americans. At his own initiative, and in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management, he identified for future consideration 226 public sites, many of which later became the nucleus of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) parks.367 Allin’s top three locations for future park status were: the Wood-Tikchik Lakes area, now an Alaska State Park unit, the Lake Clark area, and the Arrigetch Peaks-John River region in what is now Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve.368

In 1962, Roger Allin returned to Alaska in the company of Ted Swem, an NPS planner from Washington, D.C., on the latter’s first trip to Alaska. Swem and Allin were part of a joint federal-state survey of the Wood-Tikchik country as a potential park.369 While flying to the Bristol Bay region through Lake Clark Pass, Swem was awed with the spectacular beauty of the Chigmit Mountains. This fact was to auger well for the eventual creation of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.370

The following year, 1963, Ted Swem returned to Alaska to learn more about potential parklands. This time he brought the Minnesota nature writer, Sigurd F. Olson, to do more reconnaissance of the Katmai area, the Wood-Tikchik area and Lake Clark Pass. Olson was a member of the National Park System Advisory Board (from 1959 to 1965).

Although Mission 66 helped put Alaska national park issues

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363 Ibid., 32.
365 John M. Kauffmann, interview with Frank Norris, April 29, 1999. The formal title was called *Parks for America: A Survey of Park and Related Resources in the Fifty States and a Preliminary Plan*.
366 Willis, op. cit., 32-33.
367 Roger Allin, letter to Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel, February 9, 1970, copy in the LACL history files.
369 Willis, op. cit., 33.
370 Ibid., 35.
more into the consciousness of NPS brass in Washington, D.C., the institutional knowledge of Alaska's potential and its issues was still insufficient to meet the coming challenges of more assertively proposing new park units in Alaska, which had become a state in early 1959. In 1964, John Kauffmann came to Alaska assist cinematographer Norman G. Dyhrenfurth in the making of the film Magnificence of Trust about parks in Alaska. Kauffmann was dismayed by the Service's lack of a forward-looking plan for its role in the future of the young state's development. Once back in Washington at NPS headquarters, Kauffmann wrote a "white paper" that was highly critical of the Service's lack of foresight in protecting some of the magnificent Alaska wilderness. He wrote: "Indeed, after more than forty years as an organization, the Service is the Cheechako of all federal agencies at work in Alaska.

In 1964, the assertive new director of the NPS, George B. Hartzog, Jr., shared Kauffmann's critique, because he, too, wanted to make the Service powerful enough to protect the nation's last, vast, unspoiled land before it fell victim to the relentless march of "progress." That same year, Ted Swem was selected by Director Hartzog as his assistant director for planning, to launch studies of potential new areas for inclusion into the national park system.

In November 1964, Hartzog appointed a task force of NPS staffers, those that had the most knowledge about Alaska, to study the best potential park areas in Alaska. Their report was entitled Alaskan Task Force Report: Operation Great Land. George Collins, now retired from the NPS, was chairman. Other members of the task force were Robert Luntey, Sigurd Olson, and Doris F. Leonard. John Kauffmann was editorial assistant. NPS historian G. Frank Williss, summarized the task force's work very succinctly.

"... the Task Force was most critical of the Service's past actions in Alaska. With full knowledge of the potential of Alaska, they wrote, the Service had done little, "except give lip service to the broad concept." Pointing out that total visitation to the Alaska areas was only a "pitiful" 42,131 in 1964, the Task Force warned that neither Alaskans, nor Americans generally, would support the Service's program in Alaska unless major steps were taken to correct past deficiencies. Concluding that "the time has come for action, not words," the group recommended that the Service take a far more active role in Alaska to establish a program of investigation, study, planning, and development and operation. Among the specific recommendations was Roger Allin identified Lake Clark as an area that should be a future national park in the 1950s as a Bureau of Land Management biologist and pilot stationed in Anchorage between 1951 and 1961. Later he became an NPS planner in the 1960s and recommended Lake Clark become a national park.
development of a broad history program; establishment of an Alaska office in Alaska; and cooperative ventures with Canada, state, and other federal agencies in Alaska. Finally, the group made a comprehensive evaluation of potential areas in Alaska, identifying thirty-nine zones and sites across the state which contained recreation, natural, and/or historic values. These zones and sites...would be given protection in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980.375

As an indication of the forward looking approach taken by George Collins and his Task Force members writing Operation Great Land, they had the wisdom and good judgment to plan ahead when considering Alaska wildlands.

Of special importance is the study and eventual establishment of numerous Recreational Areas... As tourism increases there will be an almost unlimited demand for more and different opportunities than national parks or monuments, state parks, or historic and archeological areas can supply. With hundreds of thousands and possibly millions of visitors in the future, there will be a need for many additional camping areas where hunting and fishing, boating, hiking, and other activities are possible. Here too is an opportunity as in all Recreational Areas to preserve scenic and cultural values which might otherwise be destroyed or deteriorated by helter-skelter unplanned developments. The time to survey such areas is now before private exploitation occurs and much of the land now available is appropriated by interests bent on making a quick profit at the expense of the terrain itself.376

One of the “Zones and Sites Containing Examples of Recreation, Natural, and Historic Resources Alaska 1965” was the Merrill Pass and Lake Clark Pass Zone.377

The significant values of this zone were encompassed in an area of about 175 miles long by 75 miles wide and were recommended to become part of the national park system. The task force characterized the zones: “Merrill Pass and Lake Clark Pass are two popular and highly important passes used by small aircraft in crossing the north end of the Aleutian Range. Precipitous mountains, spectacular glaciers, snowfields, waterfalls and land forms viewed from aircraft flying through either pass are probably unmatched in beauty elsewhere in Alaska. Twenty four glaciers supposedly occur in a distance of 24 miles in Lake Clark Pass.”378

In 1966, Roger Allin wrote an in-house planning document entitled “Alaska, A Plan for Action” in which he again identified the Lake Clark Pass area as a worthy national park unit. In his report Allin wrote about the virtues of Alaska generally, rather than specifically Lake Clark:

Here is a Great Land! A raw, untamed, endless expanse, where beyond the comforts and protections of the cities and roadways only the self-reliant are found, facing nature on her own terms. Here is a place where man is judged by what he is, not by what he has. Here is America’s last frontier, and the only truly expansive wilderness remaining under the U.S. flag. Its spectacular land forms, its majestic mountains, the vast expanses of tundra and forests, the innumerable fresh water sparkling lakes and

375 Ibid., 36.
378 Unrau, op. cit., 512.
streams, its abundance of game and fish, and the uniqueness of the additional personal freedoms found on this fringe of civilization, provide experiences, while commonplace in Alaska, not duplicated anywhere else in the United States or perhaps the world.

In the summer of 1965, Director Hartzog established a small Alaska field office for the NPS in Anchorage. In 1966, the Federal Field Committee for Development Planning in Alaska was formed within the U.S. Department of Commerce as a joint state-federal group to help the new state with long-range economic planning. It recommended that more national parks be created in Alaska to meet the needs of Americans. In 1967, Director Hartzog met with Alaska Governor Walter J. Hickel in an attempt to establish a cooperative planning effort with the state government to create parks in the Wood-Tikchik lakes, the Alatna-Kobuk area, and at Skagway. However, the governor only pursued the Skagway unit.

Also in 1967, Ted Swem began an important planning effort with new personnel at the Alaska Field Office in Anchorage to study potential park units in Alaska. Their efforts continued for three years, headed by historian Merrill Mattes, producing master plans for existing units, such as Mount McKinley, Glacier Bay, and Katmai, and new potential parks as well.

In addition, in 1967, Assistant Director Swem acting under the National Natural Landmark Program began to search for potential national natural landmarks in Alaska. Richard Prasil, an NPS planner involved in the search, garnered the cooperation of the University of Alaska and private researchers to conduct feasibility studies for thirteen locations, including the Arrigetch Peaks and Aniakchak Caldera. In 1968, Arrigetch Peaks and Aniakchak Crater became registered National Natural Landmarks. Several other sites in Alaska were studied to determine their significant resources, and this knowledge was essential in justifying land withdrawals required under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) in 1971.

Another important study of potential parklands in Alaska came in 1969 as a result of Interior Secretary Hickel's fourteen-member Alaska Park and Monuments Advisory Committee whose purpose was to offer advice on any new park proposals. Richard Stenmark, an NPS employee, was the Committee's executive secretary. Stenmark had prior Alaska experience as a park ranger at Mount McKinley National Park in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In November 1971, the Alaska Field Office drew up the "National Park System Alaska Plan" that listed potential Alaska park sites based on their historical, natural, and recreational values. Richard Stenmark essentially drew up the list that was meant for the parks advisory committee. It included seven historical sites, seventeen archeological sites, four recreational sites and ten natural areas. Among the ten natural areas was a proposed Lake Clark Pass National Monument. Most of these places were withdrawn by Secretary of the Interior Rogers C.B. Morton under terms of ANCSA in 1971.

Frank Williss sums up the activities of the NPS in Alaska during the 1960–1971 period very well by stating, ...the National Park Service had made substantial progress in its effort to reverse the long-standing neglect of Alaska parks. The existence of an Alaska office in Anchorage gave the Service a presence in the state that had been missing. Building on studies that went back to the 1930s, the Service had compiled an impressive body of
knowledge about Alaska and the park resources there, and had identified a considerable number of areas that met criteria for inclusion in the National Park System. For a variety of reasons, however, NPS officials had been unsuccessful in their efforts to bring additional areas into the system, save the small, 94,000-acre tract added to Katmai National Monument. Coincidentally, however, a bill was working its way through Congress, one that on the face of it had little to do with national parklands. Yet, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of December 18, 1971, would be the vehicle that would provide for parks in Alaska almost beyond the wildest dreams of anyone in the National Park Service.


The bill (ANCSA) had been a long time coming. As early as 1966, Congress had begun to recognize that a bill “dealing with Alaska Natives’ land problems” was needed. At about the same time, the Secretary of the Interior, as if in agreement, ordered the large-scale land freeze. Bills intending to deal with Native concerns had little chance for passage at first, but the remarkable discovery of oil on Alaska’s North Slope, announced in March 1968, made legislators realize that the Native land question had to be settled. The major oil companies soon concluded that a north-south pipeline was the most expeditious way to get the product to market. Without a land settlement, they knew that no pipeline would ever be laid across the Yukon River valley.

Over the next three years, the bill which became ANCSA was debated with growing intensity. Its original purpose was to determine which lands should be allotted to Alaska’s Natives, and how state land selections would be determined based on Native claims. It soon became apparent, however, that a third element—a national interest lands component—should be included as a provision within whatever bill emerged from Congress.

... What emerged from the process was a document which recognized the rights of Alaska’s Natives to 40,000,000 acres of land, and also paid them $925,500,000 for extinguishment of all previous aboriginal titles or claims to those titles. Most germane to Alaska’s national park units, section 17 (d) (2) of the act gave the Secretary of the Interior authority to withdraw up to 80,000,000 acres as so-called ‘national interest’ lands. These lands were to be managed as national parks, national forests, national wildlife refuges, or as wild and scenic rivers. In addition, section 17 (d)(1) called for the withdrawal of other public interest lands in the state, asking the Secretary to “review the public lands in Alaska and determine whether any portion of these lands should be withdrawn...to insure that the public interest...is properly protected.”

The act provided a series of timetables under which the various withdrawals were to be made. The Secretary of the Interior was given just 90 days to withdraw lands under the so-called ‘d-1’ provision, and nine months to withdraw lands under the ‘d-2’ provision. Lands not withdrawn would become available for selection by the State of Alaska or for appropriation under the public land
Two years after the act, any lands withdrawn under the ‘d-2’ provision that were not recommended as future national parks, refuges, forests, or wild and scenic rivers would be released for other uses. The areas that were so recommended as parks or other reservations had to be created within seven years after the act’s passage; otherwise, the land would be released for other uses.\(^{390}\)

Williss also places ANCSA passage in the NPS context.

Efforts to secure justice for the Native peoples of Alaska also set in motion events that would result in passage of one of the most significant pieces of conservation legislation in this nation’s history. Passage of an Alaska national interest lands conservation act would not be easy, but would come only after a nine-year struggle. For, the National Park Service participation in that effort would have important effects on the Service itself, and would result, too, in a thorough reappraisal of its approach to management of parklands in Alaska.\(^{391}\)

Soon after ANCSA was passed, Assistant Secretary Nathaniel P. Reed told Director Hartzog and the head of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife to begin identifying and rating preservation lands in Alaska.\(^{392}\) Director Hartzog selected Assistant Director Ted Swem to head the NPS effort and Richard Stenmark from the Anchorage NPS office to assist in the planning.\(^{393}\) In 1969, he became the executive secretary to Interior Secretary Hickel’s Alaska Parks and Monuments Advisory Committee, planning for future national parks in Alaska.\(^{394}\)

On January 2, 1972, Richard Stenmark went to Washington, D.C., and presented a draft plan with twelve new or enlarged natural areas and ten cultural sites. When the two lists were announced to the public, there was a mixed reaction, with those favoring conservation and preservation being generally supportive and the State of Alaska and pro-development forces being opposed.\(^{395}\)

Stenmark used the two-month-old National Park System Plan to designate national interest areas based on themes and values from the Plan. In addition to enlarging existing parks and monuments, such as Mount McKinley and Katmai, new conservation units would be created based on scenic, recreational, scientific and cultural resources. Within a few days, Stenmark developed a preliminary list of twenty-one national interest units. Among them was Lake Clark Pass area, comprised of 3,500,000 acres.\(^ {396}\) As historian Frank Williss noted:

The pros and cons of the proposed units were debated within the Interior Department agencies and recommendations were then forwarded to Secretary Rogers Morton. The proposed units were further debated and revised and then resubmitted to Secretary Morton. In addition, agency and department leaders heard from Native leaders, state of Alaska officials, conservationists, and other federal agencies with an interest in Alaska lands—Forest Service, U.S. Geological Survey, Bureau of Mines, Bureau of Indian Affairs. The comments of the various groups and agencies did have an important effect on the shape of the preliminary 17 (d) (2) withdrawals in March... In the final analysis, the preliminary d-2 withdrawals made in March 1972 would be the product of considerable negotiation and compromise. Pressures outside the Interior Department, not simply the assessment of resources

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391 Williss, op. cit., 93.
392 Ibid., 95–96.
393 Norris, op. cit., 157–158.
394 Williss, op. cit., 97.
395 Norris, op. cit., 158.
396 Williss, op. cit., 98.
values by agency professionals, determined the shape of those withdrawals.\textsuperscript{397}

In March 1972, Assistant Secretary Reed announced the Interior Department’s final recommendation for a withdrawal of about 80,000,000 acres under section 17 (d) (2) of ANCSA. Reed suggested that up to 38,865,000 acres of the d-2 land be made into new and expanded national parks in Alaska.\textsuperscript{398} The proposal for the Lake Clark Pass Study Area was to have 3,265,036 acres.\textsuperscript{399} Other lands were to become new wildlife refuges, national forests and wild and scenic rivers.

Predictably, conservationists in the nation and in Alaska were pleased with the withdrawals. But those who favored development were angry, especially those from the extractive industries, along with Alaskans from all walks of life. Willis summarized the Alaska reaction:

> The \textit{Anchorage Daily Times} conjured up the image of dark deeds by repeating the centuries-old warning—’Beware of the Ides of March.’ Congressman Nick Begich, who had played so critical a role in the passage of ANCSA in 1971, called it a ‘massive land grab,’ while Alaska Attorney General John Havelock referred to a ‘sell-out of the people in Alaska,’ and threatened to sue. Senator Ted Stevens, on the other hand, took a more conciliatory stance, and generally supported the Secretary, although he disagreed with the action in some regards.\textsuperscript{400}

Yet many Alaskans were neither for nor against the land withdrawals; instead, they wanted to see how the process would play out. For some, the idea of more national parks in Alaska was permissible, provided subsistence hunting, fishing, trapping and other customary and traditional subsistence activities were allowed. In addition, some local people saw new national parks sprouting up on their traditional lands as potential job opportunities and as the means to continue their customary and traditional subsistence activities. Nevertheless, most Alaskans were not initially enthusiastic about the new land withdrawals, but in time, many of those early critics would concede that new national parks and wildlife refuges were a good thing for the state and nation.

NPS planner Albert G. Henson was selected to manage the Alaska Task Force in Anchorage which was comprised of five permanent Anchorage-based planners and as many as 33 people stationed in Alaska for between four and six months in 1972 and 1973.\textsuperscript{401} The Task Force members were divided into four multi-disciplinary squads that each had a leader, interpretative planner, ecologist and landscape architect. A fifth team in the Task Force, led by NPS anthropologist Zorro Bradley, studied cultural resource areas, such as archeological and historical sites, and worked in conjunction with the Cooperative Park Studies Unit of the University of Alaska Fairbanks.\textsuperscript{402}

Part of the process of studying the (d-)2 land withdrawals was using the concept of "ecosystems" planning to understand how large pristine pieces of land could be managed sustainably. Many planning studies and surveys were conducted by other agencies, such as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, universities, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The teams prepared in-depth studies of various resources and management issues and master plans for each proposed conservation unit, along with legislative information and environmental impact statements that were mandated for all proposed units which would eventually be established. These studies, like others before them, would continue to greatly enhance the body of knowledge about the natural and cultural resources of Alaska.\textsuperscript{403}

\textsuperscript{397} Ibid., 100-101.
\textsuperscript{398} Ibid., 103.
\textsuperscript{399} Ibid., 105.
\textsuperscript{400} Ibid., 109.
\textsuperscript{401} Ibid., 112-113.
\textsuperscript{402} Ibid., 113.
\textsuperscript{403} Ibid., 114.
One such study, conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish, that occurred in the Lake Clark proposal during the field seasons of 1978 and 1979 was led by fisheries biologist Richard Russell. Russell stated in his report, "A Fisheries Inventory of Waters in the Lake Clark National Monument Area," that the study, "...was undertaken to provide baseline fisheries and human use data for State and Federal agencies involved in formulating land, water, and resource policies within the boundaries of the proposed Lake Clark National Park/Preserve. Funding and preliminary planning for the project was provided jointly by the U.S. NPS and the Department of Fish and Game... Salmon escapement surveys indicate waters of the proposed Park/Preserve include important spawning and rearing areas and contribute to commercially important salmon runs in Bristol Bay, Kuskokwim Bay and Cook Inlet ... The species data, human use information, and site specific characteristics cataloged should aid future resource managers in assessing proposed utilization, developments and changes. 404

In the summer of 1972 the NPS urged Secretary Morton to withdraw for further study some 48,945,800 acres of federal public land in Alaska for eleven, mostly new park units. The Lake Clark Pass proposal was more than a million acres larger than in the March proposals. 405

The summer of 1972, was so busy and hectic that the Task Force members generally only had time for fly-over inspections of the proposed areas, yet the agency did urge Secretary Morton to set boundaries that included complete drainages, intact ecosystems and important geological features. Biologist Francis S.L. Williamson was contracted by the NPS to write an evaluation of the Task Force's recommended land withdrawals in July 1972. As quoted by Williss, Williamson wrote that the eleven d-2 land units would,

...make available in perpetuity to the American people...adequate representation of the magnificence, grandeur and biological uniqueness of Alaska. The recreational and esthetic values of the total resource, [concluded Williamson], are boundless and collectively represent a broad cross section of all those features of our natural heritage that the NPS was established to provide. 406

The Joint Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission was mandated with the passage of ANCSA in 1971. It consisted of ten members, representing both preservation and pro-development interests, appointed by the Alaska's governor and had a major role in land allocation and planning during the tumultuous 1970s. The Commission's role was to advise the Interior Secretary on land withdrawals, advise the state of Alaska and Alaska Natives on their land selections, and to offer suggestions on conflict avoidance between state and Native land selections. 407

The Northern Alaska Planning Team, a BLM coordinated team of specialists from a variety of state and federal agencies that would plan for the land withdrawals, was assigned to the Planning Commission. One issue the planning team dealt with was conflicting land claims by state and Native corporations and villages. 408 Williss states that,

The commission had the responsibility of balancing all competing interests. When its recommendations were made public, however, it seemed to reflect, from

405 Williss, op. cit., 115.
406 Ibid., 117-118.
407 Ibid., 90-91.
408 Ibid., 120.
the perspective of NPS planners at least, a shift toward multiple-use and joint federal-state management from dominant use as represented in the National Park System. ... The commission made no specific recommendations regarding management or boundaries of areas... Overall, the effect on the Service's d-2 withdrawal recommendations was not as great as many feared it would be. However, the Commission's recommendations in at least three areas—Gates of the Arctic, Mount McKinley and Lake Clark—would have an impact when they were included in an out-of-court agreement that resolved the lawsuit filed by the State of Alaska in April 1972 over conflict between state selections and Secretary Morton's withdrawals. In a September 2 [1972] agreement with Secretary Morton the state agreed to drop its lawsuit and its claim to 42,000,000 acres of pre-selected land in return for immediate selection rights to lands...in the Brooks Range ... [and] south of Mount McKinley National Park. 409

On September 13, 1972, the Interior Secretary made his final d-2 land withdrawals for twenty-two areas for 79,300,000 acres of Alaska lands for study as potential national forests, national parks, wild and scenic rivers and wildlife refuges. The Lake Clark proposal was smaller than the July 1972 acreage because of the dual withdrawals by Native corporations and for d-2 lands. 410

The NPS's Alaska Task Force began to work on park conceptual plans, environmental impact statements and boundary adjustments soon after Secretary Morton's September 13 d-2 withdrawals were announced. In late 1972, NPS planners spread across Alaska to collect data needed for the planning documents. Williss states,

Often made in conjunction with people from other federal agencies, state, Joint Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission, and members of conservation organizations, [and universities] these inspection trips served, as well, to obtain the 'I've been there' experience traditionally required of key witnesses by congressional committees... As the study teams undertook more detailed analysis of the study areas they realized, that despite the previous studies, the level of available knowledge was often inadequate for their purposes. By way of example, ATF planners recognized from the very beginning that subsistence would be [a] significant question throughout the process. Yet, no hard data on the extent or location of that activity existed. 411

During the course of the 1960s and 1970s planning period that led to the passage of ANILCA on December 2, 1980, the Lake Clark proposal underwent several iterations of its acreage and its name. For example:

1964–1965: Merrill Pass and Lake Clark Pass Zone, 330,000 acres
November 1971: Lake Clark Pass National Monument, apprx. 3,500,000 acres
1972: Lake Clark Pass Study Area, 5,601,600 acres
January 1972: Lake Clark Pass, 3,500,000 acres
March 1972: Lake Clark Pass, 3,265,036 acres
June 1972: Lake Clark Pass, 4,462,920 acres
September 1972: Lake Clark National Pass, 3,725,620 acres
June 1973: Lake Clark National Forest (U.S. Forest Service), 4,200,000 acres
June 1973: Lake Clark National Park, 3,600,000 acres
December 1973: Lake Clark National Park, 2,610,000 acres

409 Ibid., 121-122.
410 Ibid., 123, 125.
411 Ibid., 131-132.
January 1977: Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, 7,500,000 acres
June 1977: Lake Clark NPS managed Federal Cooperative Area, 3,490,000 acres
August 1977: Lake Clark National Park, 2,500,000 acres
August 1977: Lake Clark National Preserve, 1,200,000 acres
December 1978: Lake Clark National Monument, 2,500,000 acres
December 1980: Lake Clark National Park, 2,439,000 acres
December 1980: Lake Clark National Preserve, 1,214,000 acres

In addition to the National Park Service's interest in preserving Alaska lands in conservation units, both the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), were studying the d-2 lands for possible inclusion into their systems. In 1972, the Forest Service proposed seven new national forests and additions to the Chugach and Tongass National Forests. The Forest Service plan called for removing Lake Clark from consideration as a national park. In April 1973, the BLM proposed multiple use units in the Chitina Valley, Iliamna, White Mountains, Fortymile and Noatak Planning Units. These proposals complicated matters, and over time, the Alaska Planning Group, chaired by Ted Swem of the NPS, worked out the details between Interior Department agencies and the Department of Agriculture.

The scenic beauty of Merrill Pass and Lake Clark Pass to its south caught the attention of National Park Service planners in the 1950s and 1960s and ultimately helped lead to the creation of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. In 1973, the proposed park consisted of the two passes, encompassing only 330,000 acres and was named Lake Clark Pass National Park.

On December 17, 1973, Secretary Morton’s proposal for new conservation units went to Congress for the 2,610,000-acre Lake Clark National Park. Subsistence uses on d-2 lands were to be permitted in all the new units, and even more controversial was a provision that continued sport hunting in some units, including Aniakchak and Lake Clark. The Secretary’s proposals drew quick negative responses from the State of Alaska and pro-development forces as a “lock-up” of Alaska wildlands. They much preferred more multiple-use units and fewer parks and refuges. Conservationists, on the other hand, were more divided in their opinion. The major national organizations, such as the Sierra Club and The Wilderness Society, were very critical of the allowance of sport hunting in some of the new national parks. Other groups, however, believed that continued sport hunting in the new Alaska national parks was reflective of the Service’s understanding that the agency had to tailor the new Alaska units to the unique character of Alaska. In 1973, Alaska Task Force member John Kauffmann went on a sheep hunt in the Brooks Range and later wrote that recreational hunting in some of the largest park proposals would be a genuine wilderness experience and proper in the huge new conservation units.

Regarding the attributes of a future Lake Clark National Park, the Secretary of the Interior said:

In the areas proposed for a national park, numerous valleys weave through a jumble of mountains. There is a maze of natural hiking routes, which permit surprisingly easy entrance to a spectacular mountain environment. The park encompasses still-smoking volcanoes, spectacular spires, and glaciers.

The park includes a portion of the Cook Inlet coastline, which ranges from gentle alluvial shapes in the north to deeply incised, spruce-covered coastal hills in the south.

Waterfowl, seabirds, trout, bear, moose, sheep and marine animals can be found in the park. Plant
communities range from coastal spruce and marsh to alpine meadows and lichen growth at high elevations...

Developments in the park will be located to maintain the ecological and scenic integrity of the area. The area will be managed as a natural area with the objective of preserving its scenic beauty, wilderness attributes, areas of scientific interest and plant and animal life.

The NPS also produced, in December 1973, a master plan for the proposed park and in it touted the area’s charms. The plan said the Lake Clark area had “wildly diverse resources collectively of national significance containing splendid examples of Alaska’s finest natural values.” 419 By the end of 1973 the three main purposes of the park identified by the NPS were:

To preserve a highly scenic area at the head of the Alaska Peninsula containing glaciers, lakes, passes, waterfalls, high mountain peaks, and associated biological, geological, and cultural resource values, and to provide for public use and benefit of those resources in ways that will protect the watershed required for perpetuation to the internationally important sockeye (red) salmon fishery resource.

To provide avenues for involvement of Natives of the region in the management and operation of the national park, with special emphasis on Native involvement in visitor services.

To enter into cooperative agreements which will be mutually beneficial to park and outside interests. 420

In addition, Secretary Morton’s 1973 proposal to Congress identified six, so-called “areas of ecological concern” that were adjacent to the park proposal and had resources that, if impaired, would adversely impact the park lands. The lands of concern were:

Approximately 40,000 acres of Cook Inlet region Native village deficiency land and Tuxedni Bay National Wildlife Refuge along the eastern side of the proposal in Cook Inlet. These lands are important sea bird nesting areas and valuable for marine mammal habitat.

Approximately 345,000 acres of Cook Inlet region Native village deficiency and regional deficiency lands in the vicinity of the Iniskin Peninsula and upper Pile River watershed, which are key areas for recreation, access and development.

Approximately 1,450,000 acres of Bristol Bay and Cook Inlet Native regional and village deficiency land, d-1, and State selection pending lands. This contains the lower end of Lake Clark and its many resources, Kikik Lake salmon spawning waters, Port Alsworth, development potential, archeological sites, caribou range, and scenic foregrounds.

Approximately 391,000 acres of State selected (pending) lands adjacent to the northwest corner of the proposal relating to watershed protection in the Stony River watershed.

Approximately 1,357,000 acres of regional deficiency, d-1, and State patent lands surrounding Chakachamna Lake. This lake is a key access point to the area. Scenic attractions include the volcano Mt. Spurr and Blockade Lake, plus numerous mountains and glaciers.

Approximately 100,000 acres of State lands on Redoubt Bay that are scenic forelands to the park proposal. 421

419 Unrau, Historic Resources Study, Draft, 511.
420 Ibid., 512.
421 Ibid., 512.
Willis cogently sums up the December 1973 Morton bill to Congress.

There is no doubt that the Morton proposal has serious shortcomings. It would have benefited from additional study and planning. The Secretary had...no choice but to submit the proposal on that date. Congress had mandated the date for submission of the proposals in ANCSA, however, unrealistic that date might have been.

In retrospect, it seems that, given the political considerations under which bureau and departmental officials worked, the need to listen to and balance all views, the state of knowledge of Alaskan areas, the all-too-limited time frame mandated by Congress for submission of recommendations, and uncertainty that existed regarding Native land selections, the Morton proposal went as far as was then possible. It defined areas upon which others would build. In the areas of ecological concern NPS and Department of the Interior officials had been able to make public what they considered to be ideal boundaries for the proposed park units. Later proposals would represent, in large part, extensions into those 1973 areas of ecological concern. Lastly, the recommendation of 83,000,000 acres broke a psychological barrier, by making a clear statement that the 80,000,000-acre limitation of section 17 (d) (2) did not bind the legislative recommendations of the Secretary of the Interior. It established, finally, a base below which any future administration would find it difficult to go.\textsuperscript{422}

Secretary Morton’s recommendations to Congress were the result of a great amount of planning by agency land managers and planners, plus input from the State of Alaska, Alaska Natives, and national and state conservation organizations, along with pro-development and other interested parties, such as Alaska big game guides. This recommendation represented real compromise and real conservation, yet it was insufficient to become law. Instead, the next seven years would see a wide array of bills introduced into Congress to resolve the ANCSA-mandated d-2 process. Ultimately, in 1980 when the law was enacted, it would be the largest single conservation measure in world history and the preparation leading up to its passage would make it the most studied and debated conservation law in American history.\textsuperscript{423}

A number of varied bills introduced in Congress between 1974 and 1976 aimed at resolving the d-2 lands issue. Some NPS staffers were hopeful that a version of Secretary Morton’s recommendations would soon become law. However, neither the Nixon nor the Ford administration was interested in passage and consequently there was no timely resolution of the issue.

In addition to the Morton proposals, conservationists backed a bill, the Joint Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission had their preferred version, the State of Alaska had a bill, and Senator Ted Stevens and Congressman Don Young introduced a bill called the “Alaska National Public Land Conservation Act,” that emphasized a multiple-use resolution to the d-2 controversy rather than a preservation-centered bill, such as the Morton bill.\textsuperscript{424} The Stevens-Young proposal was very similar to the State of Alaska’s bill and that of the Joint Federal State Commission, which would protect 66,800,000 acres as national parks, national forests and Wild and Scenic Rivers. The Stevens-Young proposal also secured eight transportation corridors to allow for mineral resource development and mandated state control of sport hunting and subsistence activities within the proposed conservation units.\textsuperscript{425} One unique feature of the Stevens-Young proposal was the creation of nine “Scenic Reserves” comprising more than 24,000,000 acres, including the 2,850,000-acre Iliamna reserve. This

\textsuperscript{422} Williss, op. cit., 154-155.
\textsuperscript{423} Ibid., 156.
\textsuperscript{424} Ibid., 157.
\textsuperscript{425} Ibid., 158.
provision was ardently supported by Alaska Governor Jay Hammond as being more conducive to the interests of local residents by allowing for greater management flexibility.\textsuperscript{426}

Generally, the 94th U.S. Congress did not provide a great deal of time for the Alaska d-2 lands, but in August 1975, members of the House Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation led by Congressman John Seiberling visited Alaska, including lands within the Lake Clark proposal, and returned to Washington with a heightened sense that some of the magnificent wildlands must be protected for future generations of Americans.\textsuperscript{427}

While at Lake Clark, the Congressional delegation made a stop at Dick Proenneke’s home on Twin Lakes. Starting in 1973, Proenneke’s uniquely Alaskan wilderness lifestyle had come to the attention of the public with the publication of \textit{One Man’s Wilderness}. The book chronicled a man going into the bush, building a log cabin using only hand-tools, and living in more or less harmony with his wilderness surroundings. Proenneke’s volume became a classic and an inspiration to conservationists and others who wanted to see a new national park created in the Lake Clark region.

Another form of media, the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) series NOVA of WGBH in Boston, sent a film crew to visit Proenneke in March 1978. He had a very prominent role in the NOVA show that aired on nation-wide television in June 1978 entitled “Alaska, The Closing Frontier.” Proenneke was an eloquent spokesman for the preservation of the Twin Lakes area and, hence, the Lake Clark proposal in general. With the increasing popularity of his book and the PBS show, Proenneke was becoming one of the best national spokesmen for Alaska lands preservation during the late 1970s. Proenneke noted that someone wrote to tell him that pro-development forces in Alaska had been very critical of the NOVA program, while a newspaper editorial stated that “Alaska, The Closing Frontier” dealt a “devastating blow” to the opponents of preservation of the d-2 lands.\textsuperscript{428}

Meantime, during the mid 1970s, the National Park Service and other federal agencies continued their laborious planning projects for the d-2 lands. By July 1974, the Interior Department had received some 6,000 public comments toward the final environmental statements for each of the 22 proposed conservation units [Williss, 160].\textsuperscript{429}

The draft Environmental Statement (DES) was open to public comment from December 18, 1973, to July 22, 1974, and the Lake Clark proposal received 205 letters, from which the final DES published 71. Comments came from the following entities: 17 federal agencies, one State of Alaska agency, three other government agencies, four Native corporations, 29 organizations, 146 individuals. Of the individual letters, 107 contained identical comments, suggesting they were a form letter.\textsuperscript{430}

During the next several years, a wide array of research reports and books were produced that dramatically increased the knowledge base about natural and cultural resources of Alaska, most specifically on the land withdrawals, destined to become conservation units. By 1978 more than 176 studies had been completed for the twenty-two areas, and 61 other studies were ongoing. The studies also made NPS managers acutely aware that Alaska was unique and that the park policies that worked in the Lower 48 would not necessarily be applicable with the new proposed parklands.\textsuperscript{431}

Interior Department staffers understood that amassing scientific and cultural information to provide background data for Congress and ultimately help manage the future conservations units might not be enough to assure passage of a d-2 lands bill. In 1973, Ted Swem and Al Henson of the National Park Service had the Alaska Planning Group start a public education campaign to more fully inform the

\textsuperscript{426} Ibid., 158-159.
\textsuperscript{427} Ibid., 159.
\textsuperscript{429} Williss, op. cit., 160.
\textsuperscript{430} Proposed Lake Clark National Park, Alaska Final Environmental Statement, circa 1975, 198.
\textsuperscript{431} Williss, op. cit., 133.
public, in and out of Alaska, about the issues and opportunities at stake in the Alaska lands debate. 432

The effort consisted of slide shows in some national parks about the possible new park units, hand-outs to visitors, newspaper and magazine articles, public speakers and two NPS movies, “Age of Alaska” and “One Man’s Alaska,” which were produced in 1977. 433 The latter movie documented Richard Proenneke building his log cabin at Twin Lakes, and it enhanced the public and national media’s understanding of the worthiness of the Lake Clark proposal for national park status. The movie was made by NPS personnel from the Harpers Ferry Center, who came to Twin Lakes to film Richard Proenneke at his cabin. In addition, as early as 1974, Proenneke was under contract with the NPS to take wildlife movies at Twin Lakes, and some of his footage was used in the NPS movie.

By late 1975, a major obstacle to the inclusion of the Lake Clark region as a possible future national park unit was a number of Native land claims along Lake Clark’s shoreline and along the Cook Inlet coastline. Frank Williss summed up the knotty problem,

In many ways the Cook Inlet episode is a micro­cosm of the larger struggle over Alaska’s lands, involving, as it did, conflicting claims over the land, differences in interpretation of the law (ANCSA), lawsuits, and the negotiated resolution of extraordinarily complex issues. The question at Cook Inlet revolved around the meaning of ‘lands of character similar’ (deficiency lands), which were to be withdrawn for regional and village selection when lands in the immediate vicinity were inadequate. In the Cook Inlet region, patterns of previous state selections and federal withdrawals prevented full entitlement. 434

In December 1973, Secretary Morton had made a total land withdrawal of close to 5,000,000 acres in the Cook Inlet region, of which 1,100,000 acres were in the proposed Lake Clark National Park. However, the local Native regional corporation, Cook Inlet Regional Incorporated (CIRI), felt that only 691,000 acres of the 1,100,000 acres was of a “character similar” and close enough to the Inlet villages to meet the requirements of ANCSA. Therefore they brought suit against Secretary Morton on March 21, 1973. This lawsuit created a protracted litigation that would momentarily cause the NPS to question the wisdom of pursuing a national park in the Lake Clark region. If CIRI’s legal arguments had prevailed in Federal Court, most of the parklands on Cook Inlet would have been removed from the park, resulting in one of the most diverse national parks being substantially diminished by the absence of 90% of its Pacific coastline.

Fortunately for the future of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, CIRI lost in Federal District Court, but the regional corporation appealed the case. Meanwhile Senator Henry Jackson of Washington state decided to help CIRI by introducing legislation that would give them the Cook Inlet parklands. At this time, the future for Lake Clark appeared to Interior Department lawyers and the interested public to be rather tenuous. 435

By April 1975, a complicated negotiation between the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the State of Alaska and CIRI moved toward the goal of an out-of-court settlement that would assure the creation of a “complete” Lake Clark National Park and satisfy the Natives’ land claims as well as various state interests. The Interior Department negotiators were headed by Assistant Interior Secretary Curtis E. Bohlen, Randy Jones from Ted Swem’s office and Bill Reffalt of Fish and Wildlife Service. In December 1975, the parties worked out a three-way land swap. The land exchange was codified as Public Law 94-204 on January 2, 1976. It provided land to Native corporations, such as the Beluga Coalfields, certain parcels in

432 Ibid., 161.
433 Ibid., 162.
434 Ibid., 163.
435 Ibid., 164.
the Kenai National Moose Range, development rights to a potential gold mine in the Johnson River area, and the right to concession operations in the future Lake Clark National Park. The State of Alaska was to obtain certain d-2 lands west of Iliamna, Campbell airstrip in Anchorage and land in the Talkeetna Mountains. \(^{436}\) Williss sums up the land exchange this way.

The agreement served to ‘purify’ the Park Service’s Lake Clark proposal, removing some inholdings and freeing 750,000 acres on the southside for possible inclusion in the park. By doing so, it effectively “nailed down” Lake Clark as a park unit. Afterwards there would be little controversy there. Of equal importance, the Cook Inlet Native Corporation agreed to publicly support the creation of a national park at Lake Clark. \(^{437}\)

Another very difficult issue facing park planners for many of the new park proposals was how to deal with the long tradition of sport hunting in Alaska. Since the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, as Alaska’s Euroamerican population increased, Alaska sport hunting and guided big game hunting had grown into a well-recognized tradition. In the case of the Lake Clark proposal, big game guiding and sport hunting on Alaska’s mainland had developed in the Cook Inlet region on the Kenai Peninsula, around Tuxedni Bay and the mouth of the Crescent River and Chinitna Bay by the 1890s. \(^{438}\)

In addition, much of the opposition to the creation of new parklands in Alaska came from the big game guiding industry and sport hunting interests who believed they would be “locked-out” of some of the best big game hunting grounds in Alaska. In October 1974, the NPS had first used the land category of a national “preserve” at Big Thicket, Texas, and Big Cypress, Florida, where a conservation unit protected particular resources but allowed hunting, fishing and even extractive industries, provided those activities did not harm natural biological and geological processes. In 1958, the NPS had first made a list of possible “preserves” to be protected, in the Lower 48. In 1969, Richard Gordon, an Alaskan conservationist, had urged the creation of a Gates of the Arctic preserve. In 1974, Senate staff members mentioned the “preserve” category might be an effective way to resolve the sport hunting issues in Alaska. \(^{439}\)

In January 1976, park service planners in Alaska were directed to consider varied management regimes for the Lake Clark proposal. After some consideration, planners decided to try the “preserve” approach. The planners called for a joint Lake Clark National Park at 1,800,000 acres and a preserve of 1,800,000 acres on the western flank of the park. Under this initial plan, the “hard park” would not allow hunting, subsistence activities, motorized transport or mineral entry. The preserve, on the other hand, would allow hunting, subsistence activities, snow machine access and mining in the Kontrashibuna Lake and Johnson River watersheds. \(^{440}\)

There was considerable debate about this topic among Alaska park planners, with some favoring the initial preserve proposal and others opposing, such as John Kauffmann, who felt mining should not be allowed on preserve lands and that the preserve lands should be protected for their natural resource values. Bryan Harry, the NPS Alaska director, supported the preserve concept but felt that subsistence activities should be continued in the “hard park” as well. \(^{441}\)

By March 1976, top NPS managers in Washington, D.C., accepted the preserve concept for Lake Clark and hoped to have a bill introduced in Congress that would bundle together Lake Clark with Aникихак Caldera National Monument and Preserve, Harding Icefield-Kenai Fjords National Monument and Aникихак Wild River,
to create several new conservation units in south central and south western Alaska. But in August 1976, when Congressman Goodloe Byron, who had visited Alaska in 1975 with Congressman Seiberling, put a bill in Congress, it was only for a Lake Clark National Park, with no mention of a preserve. The next year, in 1977, Congressman William Alexander introduced another version for a Lake Clark National Park, again minus the preserve, but for 7,500,000 acres. What mattered most, however, was that the "preserve" concept had been incorporated into NPS planning. When Congress finally addressed the d-2 lands issues in 1978, preserves would be part of the final House-passed bill. For the purposes of this study, Lake Clark National Park and Preserve was created on December 2, 1980.

Another important development in the history of the Lake Clark park proposal, one that occurred in January 1976, was the designation of Redoubt Volcano and Iliamna Volcano by U.S. Secretary of the Interior Thomas S. Kleppe as registered National Natural Landmarks (NNLs). Both volcanoes are in what is now Lake Clark National Park and Preserve and are a mere 25 miles apart. Both were seen by Captain James Cook in June 1778.

The NNL program was begun in 1962 with the following objectives:

... an excellent example of a classic symmetrical stratovolcano similar in appearance, composition, and volcanic history to the spectacular volcanoes that cap the Cascade Range of the Pacific Northwest. Volcanoes such as these are broad cone-shaped features that tower well above the surrounding terrain. Because it can be seen from Anchorage and Kenai and future eruptions could conceivably have an effect on (southcentral Alaska) it is nationally significant and ... eligible for designation as a National Natural Landmark.

Iliamna Volcano, 10,016 feet high, became an NNL in 1976 for all the same reasons Redoubt was registered. Iliamna Volcano is a more complicated volcano than is Redoubt, as it has four peaks that cover a three-mile-long ridge. Mount Iliamna constantly vents steam. Its eruptive history is not well known; however, it is thought to have last erupted in 1867. Since it has not had any recorded eruptions in the past 140 years, any Iliamna eruption has the potential to be a major disruption to the people and natural environment of south central Alaska.

As of 2002, only 587 NNL properties were recognized by the Secretary of the Interior.

USGS geologist Thomas P. Miller wrote the evaluations for Redoubt and Iliamna volcanoes and submitted them to the Secretary on May 14, 1973. The evaluations were part of the pre-park planning efforts undertaken by various Department of the Interior agencies to illuminate the diverse nationally significant resources within the national interest lands withdrawn under Section 17 (d) (2), of ANSCA.

Dr. Miller wrote that the 10,197-foot high Redoubt Volcano is...
During the years 1976–1977, the role of conservationists along with pro-development forces, such as the mining industry, forest products industry, Alaska big game guides, sport hunters and others, became more prominent in the legislative process to resolve the Alaska lands debate. In 1977, the mining industry created an “Alaska Resource Preservation” bill which was essentially designed to push multiple-use management over some 64,000,000 acres of federal public land, with only about 13,000,000 acres as new national parks. That same year the Joint Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission recommended that some 24,000,000 acres be put into the national park system, with no hunting and mining permitted in parks but allowed in national preserves. The Commission also recommended that a new joint federal-state management system be established on 31,000,000 acres of “National Land Reserves,” with ultimate management by one of the unspecified federal land agencies.\(^\text{448}\)

The Alaska Coalition was the name of the national umbrella conservation group with deep Alaskan roots and participation that would help move a strong d-2 lands bill through Congress. The Coalition had both formal and informal contacts with federal conservation agencies, such as with National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel. Williss stated the situation when he wrote: \(^\text{449}\)

> Beginning in late 1974, and often in consultation with Department of the Interior staff, conservation groups developed organizational relations, agreed to funding of the re-invigorated Alaska Coalition that would be responsible for shepherding a d-2 bill through Congress, establish priorities, developed a legislative strategy, and began work to build a political base that would, in the end, convince Congress of the desire of Americans everywhere for passage of a strong Alaska lands bill.\(^\text{449}\)

Jimmy Carter was elected President in 1976. During the campaign, he pledged to support the passage of an Alaska lands bill. In addition, Congressman Morris Udall was to become the new chairman of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, and Congressman John Seiberling would become chairman of the newly-created subcommittee on General Oversight and Alaska Lands. All three men were ardent conservationists, and this would bode well for the passage of a strong Alaska lands conservation bill.\(^\text{450}\)

Staff of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, with input from members of the Alaska Coalition, drew up a new bill that differed from Secretary Morton’s recommendations mainly in that it included agency work from 1973–1975 and took into account areas of ecological concern around unit proposals. In early January 1977, Congressman Udall, with seventy-five co-sponsors, introduced H.R. 39 that he touted as one of the most important bills in the history of American conservation.\(^\text{451}\) The bill would protect 115,300,000 acres of land in four federal systems, with the National Park Service receiving 64,100,000 acres and Lake Clark National Park and Preserve receiving some 7,500,000 acres. An Iliamna National Wildlife Range was to be administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.\(^\text{452}\)

One of the various names suggested for the Lake Clark proposal in 1975 was Telaquana Lake National Park and Lake Clark National Recreational Area. In 1978, these alternate names were suggested: Pluton Peaks National Park-Preserve, Rim of Fire National Park-Preserve, Crystal Peaks National Park-Preserve, Granite Peaks National Park-Preserve, Glacier-Volcanoes National Park-Preserve. These names went nowhere.\(^\text{453}\)

Sport hunting and mining were to be prohibited, but subsistence activities were to be permitted in “subsistence management zones,” and sport hunting was allowed in the national preserves in

\(^{448}\) Williss, op. cit., 170-171.

\(^{449}\) Ibid., 171.

\(^{450}\) Ibid., 172.

\(^{451}\) Ibid., 173.

\(^{452}\) Ibid., 173, 174, 179.

\(^{453}\) Lake Clark Creation Documents, Accession #LACL-00-192. On file at the Alaska Regional Curatorial Facility (ARCC), Anchorage, Alaska.
H.R. 39. Additionally, H.R. 39 provided for NPS management of Alaska wild and scenic rivers, and subsistence was to be regulated by “subsistence boards,” comprised of subsistence users. The most controversial provision in the bill was the creation of 145,000,000 acres of “instant wilderness,” without the normal public review process.

Supporters of H.R. 39, including Congressman Morris Udall, did not believe that the bill was the final word on the subject of federal public lands in Alaska, but they did think it would be a starting point to concentrate the minds of all the different interests to arrive at a final decision regarding the disposition of the public domain. The bill elicited an enormous reaction around Alaska and the nation.454

Williss succinctly summarizes the hue and cry that arose after H.R. 39 was introduced to Congress.

Alaskans, with the exception of the members of the conservation community, generally opposed the bill. The Alaska Federation of Natives, while agreeing to use the bill as a vehicle for amendments, expressed serious concerns regarding protection of subsistence, development options for Native corporations, and Native lands rights, as well as the large wilderness designations. Development industries and related groups—chambers of commerce, tourist industry, logging industry, miners, and recreation interests—all expressed varying degrees of opposition, and became the driving force behind the Citizens for Management of Alaska Lands (CMAL), a lobbying group formed to oppose the Udall bill and work for one more favorable toward development.455

During the early winter of 1977, Governor Jay Hammond, Senator Ted Stevens and Congressman Don Young received a great deal of input from concerned Alaskans, be they various pro-development forces, Native corporations or just regular state residents about the Udall bill. The result of numerous public and private meetings was a “consensus bill” that Senator Stevens introduced on June 30, 1977, S. 1787, that would place 75,000,000 acres in different management systems.456 There would be five new national parks created, but Lake Clark was not one of them. Instead the Lake Clark unit would be managed by the NPS in a federal cooperative multiple use system of 3,490,000 acres.457

The new Secretary of the Interior Cecil D. Andrus did not commit to support H.R.39 when he testified before Congress in April 1977. Nor did he say whether the administration would support Secretary Morton's recommendations, yet he did say the Carter Administration supported a robust d-2 lands bill. Secretary Andrus said: The establishment and protection of large land areas in Alaska as units of the four systems called for in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act is the highest environmental priority of this administration.458

NPS Director William J. Whalen suggested amendments to H. R. 39 that would create fourteen units that would add 50,919,000 acres to the National Park system including Lake Clark National Park at 2,500,000 acres and a Lake Clark National Preserve of 1,200,000 acres, for a total of 3,700,000 acres.459

In early July 1977 the NPS finished an analysis of the Udall bill. By August, Secretary Andrus had indicated that he would review both the Morton proposals and the Udall bill and make some recommendations, but he had decided that he would support a bill that preserved 85 to 90 million acres of Alaska d-2 lands.

On August 16, 1977 Secretary Andrus stated that he would use a modified version of the Udall bill to complete the ANCSA requirement in Section 17 (d) (2) to preserve a large part of Alaska...
Williss sums up Director Whalen’s position:

Whalen recommended ... NPS management of wild and scenic rivers only in National Park System areas. He urged recognition of valid existing rights, but opposition to all new mineral exploration, location, and leasing. He asserted that development of surface transportation corridors would result in damage to park resources. He opposed sport hunting in parks, but indicated that controlled sport hunting would be allowed in certain areas of high-hunting use in preserves. He supported ‘instant wilderness designation’ in Gates of the Arctic, Wrangell-Saint Elias, Admiralty Island, Lake Clark, Glacier Bay Kenai Fjords, and Denali, but argued that wilderness designation elsewhere should come only after appropriate studies.

The initial NPS consideration of subsistence occurred in 1973; subsequently, many detailed studies were conducted for each area under consideration for conservation unit status, during the mid and late 1970s. As part of the planning for the Lake Clark proposal, the NPS commissioned a report entitled Resource Use and Subsistence in the Vicinity of the Proposed Lake Clark National Park, Alaska and Additions to Katmai National Monument, by Steven R. Behnke. The author was employed by the University of Alaska. The report was produced by the Anthropology and Historic Preservation Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Alaska Fairbanks, in October 1978. The author lived at Port Alsworth with his wife and child for two years while he conducted fieldwork and wrote at Nondalton and Lake Clark in 1976–1978.

The purpose of the report

... [was] to describe the use of the land and resources by residents of the Lake Clark proposal area. A wide variety of fish, game and other local resources are harvested by the approximately 230 residents of Nondalton and Lake Clark, and many of their harvest activities occur within the National Park and Preserve proposals. These activities are important to people who live in the area, for there are few year-round employment opportunities. While most wage income is seasonal, local fish and game resources provide employment and food throughout the year. Local resources also have considerable social and cultural significance to most residents. 461

During the years 1973 through 1980, NPS planners studied subsistence issues and consulted Native leaders and held public hearings, so that by the time the 17 (d) (2) lands were finally dealt with by Congress, the concept of subsistence was firmly established as a legitimate activity to be preserved in the new proposals.

Behnke wrote of the important sociocultural values that subsistence activities provided local rural residents:

Use of the land and wildlife for subsistence is an important part of the cultural fabric of both Tanaina [Dena’ina] and non-Native ways of life in the Lake Clark area. Much of the history and cultural heritage of the people of Nondalton is related to subsistence activities and lands in the Lake Clark proposal. This is reflected in language, stories, place names, and peoples’ memories of the past. The land around Lake Clark is alive to the Nondalton...
Tanaina through their hunting and trapping experiences and through the stories and place names which pass along the accumulated history and environmental knowledge of the Tanaina. It is through present subsistence activities that these things are remembered, reinforced, and passed on to succeeding generations.

To white residents of the area, subsistence activities and resources have meanings of their own. The American pioneer heritage and its Alaskan version include a high valuation of hunting and use of wildlife for food. Among Lake Clark residents there is an element of 'back-to-the-land' thinking, valuing individualism and self-sufficiency. The use of local resources for subsistence fits neatly into these concepts and lifestyles. Some elements of subsistence living, such as methods of putting up smoked fish, have been adopted from Natives, while others have come from the whole spectrum of American pioneer heritage.

Secretary Andrus offered amendments for the Udall bill, but he stated that in spite of a slimmed down bill, “we can be certain that the crown jewels of Alaska—its most spectacular natural environments, recreation areas, and wildlife habitats,” will be protected. During the next eight months, rival bills were debated in Congress. Finally, on May 19, 1978, the House passed H.R. 39 resoundingly, 279 to 31.

Debate now switched to the Senate, as ANCSA mandated that the d-2 land issue be resolved by the end of 1978. Unfortunately, due to delaying tactics by Senators favoring a watered down preservation bill, and due to parliamentary confusion in the Senate and House, the 95th Congress adjourned in October without passage of a bill resolving the Alaska lands issue.

Due to the impasse Secretary Andrus acted on his authority to resolve the land issues that the Senate had been unable to complete before the ANCSA-imposed deadline of December 31, 1978 was reached. The Carter Administration had stated that it would secure, through administrative means, the d-2 lands if the Congress did not act in a timely fashion. There was considerable support in Congress and within the national public to protect the Alaska lands; among Alaskans, however, there was a great deal of opposition to any administration move. On November 14, the State of Alaska filed on 41,000,000 acres of land, including nearly 10,000,000 acres of lands slated for new conservation units. On November 16, Secretary Andrus withdrew 110,750,000 acres of land under authority of Section 204 (e) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

On December 1, 1978, using his presidential authority under the Antiquities Act, President Jimmy Carter created seventeen new Alaska national monuments consisting of 56,000,000 acres, including Lake Clark National Monument (to be managed by the National Park Service) at 2,500,000 acres. Additional acreage on the western portion of the Lake Clark proposal had been withdrawn and preserved by Secretary Andrus under section 204 (e) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

Williss writes about the fallout from President Carter’s bold use of the Antiquities Act:

President Carter emphasized that his action had been made necessary by Congress’ failure to act before expiration of 17 (d) (2), and was taken in anticipation that Congress would do so in the near future. That disclaimer, however, did not prevent a firestorm of protest in Alaska. State officials had already gone to court in an unsuccessful effort to prevent the Carter administration from exercising its withdrawal authorities. Senator Stevens ... introduced,

462 Unrau, op. cit., 523.
463 Williss, op. cit., 190.
464 Norris, op. cit., 190
465 ibid., 190.

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On December 1, 1978, using his presidential authority under the Antiquities Act, President Jimmy Carter created seventeen new Alaska national monuments consisting of 56,000,000 acres, including Lake Clark National Monument (to be managed by the National Park Service) at 2,500,000 acres. Additional acreage on the western portion of the Lake Clark proposal had been withdrawn and preserved by Secretary Andrus under section 204 (e) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

Williss writes about the fallout from President Carter’s bold use of the Antiquities Act:

President Carter emphasized that his action had been made necessary by Congress’ failure to act before expiration of 17 (d) (2), and was taken in anticipation that Congress would do so in the near future. That disclaimer, however, did not prevent a firestorm of protest in Alaska. State officials had already gone to court in an unsuccessful effort to prevent the Carter administration from exercising its withdrawal authorities. Senator Stevens ... introduced,
and later withdrew, an amendment that would have prevented use of the Antiquities Act to withdraw the d-2 lands. He and Senator Gravel would offer legislation to that effect the following year. 468

Williss went on:

Some Alaskans, the editors of the Anchorage Daily News, for example, took a more moderate stance and sought to remind Alaskans of the role that Senator [Mike] Gravel had played [using parliamentary delaying tactics] during the whole affair. State legislators, on the other hand, debated and finally rejected a plan to fund legal assistance for people charged with violating regulations in the new monuments. Citizens in Fairbanks burned President Carter in effigy and people living near Denali National Monument endeavored to engage in civil disobedience in the ‘Great Denali Trespass.’ The city council of Eagle, a small village on the Yukon River near Yukon–Charley Rivers National Monument, passed a resolution stating: “We do not intend to obey the directives and regulations of the National Park Service. The city council of the City of Eagle, Alaska, does not advocate violence, but we can be no more responsible for the actions of an individual citizen than we can be for any animal when it is cornered. The policy of the Eagle City Council shall be to offer no aid or assistance to the National Park Service or its employees while your current regulations are in effect.”

There were no similar protests in the vicinity of the newly proclaimed Lake Clark National Monument.

468 Ibid., 219.
469 Ibid., 219, 223.

Department of Interior personnel had long anticipated a backlash from Alaskans after President Carter invoked the Antiquities Act to protect the d-2 lands. Therefore they began writing management regulations for the monuments and printing maps that clearly delineated boundaries. On June 28, 1979, the Department of the Interior published final proposed regulations for the new monuments in Alaska. The regulations allowed for the use of aircraft access, the right to carry firearms, and traditional subsistence, sport hunting was not permitted in the new national monuments. 470

During 1979, the House and Senate worked on various bills and ultimately, after much compromise and a presidential election that transformed the political landscape, a bill emerged from Congress that President Carter would sign into law.

The Udall bill, H.R. 39, was reintroduced into Congress in January 1979, but this time it was more expansive and was known as the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1979. There was one pro-development bill, Congressman Jerry Huckaby’s substitute bill, which would have substantially watered down the amount of lands that President Carter had protected when he invoked the Antiquities Act in December 1978. The Huckaby substitute won passage in the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee over a revised bill closer to Congressman Udall’s H.R. 39, 22 to 21.

Soon Republican Congressman John Anderson joined Democratic Congressman Mo Udall in introducing a bipartisan substitute for the Huckaby version of the bill into the full House of Representatives. The opponents to the Udall-Anderson bill had enlisted the aid of the National Rifle Association (NRA) in the fight against protecting Alaska’s d-2 lands, thus diverting final resolution of federal public land in the 49th State, with an unnecessary fight over gun control. In so doing, the NRA claimed that passage of the Udall-Anderson bill would somehow curb hunting throughout the United States. However, once the NRA’s misrepresentation was made clear of

470 Ibid., 224.
what exactly the Udall-Anderson bill would do and would not do, the issue was made moot. As the House debate raged, the Huckaby bill was combined with the Breaux-Dingell bill, but the House voted to support the Udall-Anderson bill 268 to 157. The final house bill, the Udall-Anderson bill, passed 360 to 65. 471

Once again H.R. 39 moved to the Senate, where once again it faced tougher sledding than had been the case in the House. Key senators in the struggle over the passage of a comprehensive preservation bill in the Senate were Alaska’s two senators, Ted Stevens and Mike Gravel, plus Henry Jackson, Paul Tsongas, William Roth and Phil Hart, to name those most influential to the final outcome of the bill. Senator Stevens, sitting on the Senate Energy Committee, which was the main venue in the Senate for resolution of the issue, said that "settlement of the d-2 lands is the most important issue to face Alaska since it became a state." 472

Rival bills were used in the Senate. One, the Tsongas-Roth substitute, more closely resembled H. R. 39, while Senator Jackson’s bill S. 9 was supported by pro-development forces who were trying to diminish the overall scope of the House-passed bill. 473

Secretary Andrus attempted to get the Senate to act by stating he would withdraw permanently some 40,000,000 acres of lands he had reserved on an interim basis in 1978. In early February 1979, the Secretary followed through on his promise and withdrew the land he had promised under section 204 (e) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. He stated, “I'm glad the Senate is finally looking to scheduling the bill, but I am very concerned that the lateness of that date will lead to a stalemate in the closing days of the 96th Congress just as happened to its predecessor in 1978.” Within this withdrawal were wildlife refuges and "natural resource areas," including the 1,150,000-acre unit which would ultimately become Lake Clark National Preserve. 474

In July of 1979 the full Senate took up the d-2 lands issues. Both the preservation side and the pro-development side offered amendments on the Senate floor, and in spite of Senator Gravel’s delaying tactics, those supporting the strongest conservation bill possible were heartened by votes of 64–30, 66–30 and 62–33 opposed to weakening the existing bill. Williss sums up the charged Senate atmosphere this way:

For the participants...legislative progress of the Alaska lands bill must have been akin to riding a roller-coaster. Once again, Senator Stevens, recognizing that he was almost certain to lose, prevented a vote on the Hart and other amendments by introducing the first of eighteen secondary amendments. In so doing, the Alaska senator, who was under increasing pressure to block consideration of the bill altogether, forced Majority Leader Byrd to take the bill off the floor. He also set in motion a series of meetings between key senators and their staffs, from which Amendment No. 1961, a substitute for the Senate Energy Committee bill, would emerge. 475

On August 18, 1979, the Senate voted to accept Amendment 1961, 72 to 16 as the Senate version of the Alaska lands bill. On August 19, the Senate voted 78–14 to pass the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980. 476

During September, Senate and House negotiators attempted to reconcile their two versions of H.R. 39, but by early October, unable to agree on a compromise on the main issues, they stopped negotiating. However, national events in the fall of 1980 would bring forth a profound political change, as Ronald Reagan defeated President Carter in the general election and the Republicans took control of the Senate. President-elect Reagan was on record as being opposed

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471 ibid., 229-230.
472 ibid., 231.
473 ibid., 231.
474 ibid., 233-234.
475 ibid., 235.
476 ibid., 235.
to the d-2 lands bill. Therefore a saddened Congressman Mo Udall asked his House colleagues to accept the Senate version of H.R. 39, which they did. On December 2, 1980, President Carter signed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act into law, thus ending a nine-year struggle over Alaska lands. President Carter said at the time, “never before have we seized the opportunity to preserve so much of America’s natural and cultural heritage.”

Lake Clark National Park was created with 2,439,000 acres and Lake Clark National Preserve was endowed with 1,214,000 acres. They were combined to be known as Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. The major distinction between the park and preserve is that only subsistence hunting is permitted in the park while sport hunting is allowed in the preserve; otherwise the two units are managed the same way.

In 2005, at a speech commemorating the 25th anniversary of the passage of ANILCA in Anchorage, with President and Mrs. Carter in the audience, former Alaska governor Jay S. Hammond told the audience that critics of the law said President Carter had locked up Alaska lands. Governor Hammond said actually President Carter had locked open the land for future generations of Americans.

In the final analysis, the creation of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve proved to be far less intrusive, and more economically beneficial, than what those who had harshly criticized it had predicted. The creation of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve has benefited the local and state economy in increased tourism and has provided local people with good jobs and careers, both in the private sector and with federal employment. On the whole ANILCA has been good for Alaskans in that it has safeguarded traditional subsistence hunting and fishing while according tremendous recreational and educational opportunities in some of the most pristine lands and waters existing on the face of the earth.

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477 Ibid., 237.
The following summary is predominately a paraphrase of a voluminous file in the NPS Lands Division office at the Alaska Regional Office, in Anchorage.

A December 12, 1990, front page article in the Anchorage Daily News captioned, “Native Claim Upheld: Lake Clark Site To Go Private, Tanalian Inc.: Members of Alsworth Family Get Title to 2,240 Acres” announced to the public the resolution of a long running dispute between the National Park Service and the Leon “Babe” Alsworth family of Port Alsworth.

On December 16, 1975, the Tanalian Incorporated Native Group filed a selection application, AA-11157, under a provision of Section 14 (h) (2) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), for certain lands around Port Alsworth. Tanalian Inc. was a corporation belonging to Mary Alsworth, the Native wife of Leon “Babe” Alsworth, and some of their children. The Alsworths began homesteading the area on August 9, 1944.478 The Alsworth family consisted of three generations and were enrolled members-at-large of the Bristol Bay Native Corporation (BBNC).479

Tanalian Inc. filed for status as an ANCSA Native Group before the 1980 establishment of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. When the Tanalian Incorporated Native Group land claim was filed in 1975, it was widely known that the Lake Clark region was under study as a future national park. Although there were numerous obstacles to the creation of a Lake Clark National Park in the form of conflicting land claims in the area, many local people felt park designation was all but inevitable. On December 1, 1978, President Carter invoked the Antiquities Act that created several new national monuments in Alaska, including Lake Clark National Monument. On December 2, 1980, President Carter signed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act which superseded his previous Antiquities Act proclamation, creating new national parks, including Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.

Congress had passed ANCSA on December 18, 1971, to provide “a fair and just settlement of all claims by Natives and Native groups of Alaska, based on aboriginal land claims.” Port Alsworth was not recognized in the Act as a Native village that would be subject to the Act’s terms.480 Section 14 (h) (2) of ANCSA, however, provided that a Native group that does not qualify as a Native village could receive a conveyance of an appropriate surface estate if the group incorporated under the laws of Alaska. The subsurface estate would be conveyed to the appropriate regional corporation.

On February 11, 1977, BLM made a decision determining the boundaries for the twelve Native regional corporations. Port Alsworth was found to be within the Cook Inlet Region, rather than BBNC.

478 Mary A. Alsworth, affidavit, March 6, 1978, in the LACL history files.
480 ANCSA Sec. 11(b)(1).
Despite that hydrographically, Lake Clark’s water drains westward into the Bristol Bay, not into Cook Inlet.\textsuperscript{481}

Tanalian Inc. appealed the decision because the regulations mandated that members of a Native group must be enrolled in the same regional corporation in which they are located. Tanalian Inc. claimed they should be within the borders of BBNC.\textsuperscript{482} Congress finally settled the issue in 1980 with the passage of ANILCA, where section 1416 amended ANCSA and declared that Natives enrolled to Port Alsworth were enrolled in BBNC and that such enrollment was final.

The history of the Tanalian Inc. Native Group and its efforts to gain recognition as an ANCSA Native group to obtain land conveyances is complicated. Litigation went on for at least 15 years and was a very complex case. To quote Interior Administrative Law Judge Harvey Sweitzer, “This case has had a long and complicated history which bears restating.”\textsuperscript{483} A synopsis of the case file follows.

The chief question was, did Tanalian Inc. meet all necessary criteria to be approved by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to select land around Lake Clark as a Native group? After a lengthy investigation, BIA issued a finding to the Alaska Native Claims Appeal Board (ANCAB) on March 5, 1979, stating that Tanalian Inc. was not eligible to select lands. The following reasons were given by BIA: members of Tanalian Inc. were not the majority of the population of Port Alsworth in April 1970, two members of the Alsworth family/Tanalian did not live continuously at Port Alsworth since April 1970, and lastly, no land was available to select.\textsuperscript{484}

Tanalian and BBNC appealed VIA’s ruling to Alaska Native Claims Appeal Board. The ANCAB suspended the appeals on May 29, 1979, to await new final regulations that would publish revised criteria to determine Native group status. On April 29, 1982, Secretary James Watt abolished the ANCAB and moved its duties to the Interior Board of Land Appeals.

On June 17, 1982, Interior Secretary Watt waived some non-statutory regulations and clarified other regulations about certifying Native groups for land selection eligibility.\textsuperscript{485} He ordered more fact-finding to resolve whether or not the members of Tanalian Inc. comprised a majority of population in its locale during the 1970 Federal Census.

A hearing was set at the Office of Hearings and Appeals for September 10, 1984, but was postponed several times to August 5, 1985, June 2, 1986 and June 23, 1986. Finally, on January 27, 1987, after Judge Sweitzer had heard and read briefs from lawyers for the BLM and Tanalian Inc., he ruled that Tanalian was eligible to select lands as a Native group under ANCSA.

The National Park Service then appealed Judge Sweitzer’s ruling to the IBLA. The Board ordered more fact-finding, with hearings to be held in Anchorage and Port Alsworth between May 16 and May 20, 1988. A final decision was to be rendered after all the facts were determined. All testimony and fact-finding was complete by September 19, 1988.\textsuperscript{486}

Because most of the difficulties determining that Tanalian Inc. was qualified as a Native group to select land had been removed by previous administrative actions by Secretary James Watt, the testimony and fact-finding focused on two main questions. First, what were the geographical boundaries of Tanalian Inc.’s locale, and second, on April 1, 1970, when the Census was taken, did the Alsworth family comprise the majority of the population in their area?\textsuperscript{487}

ANCSA defined a Native group as:

any tribe, band, clan, village, community or village association of Natives in Alaska composed of less than twenty-five Natives, who comprise a majority of residents of the locality.

\textsuperscript{481} National Park Service vs. Tanalian Inc., October 28, 1988, 2.
\textsuperscript{482} Ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{483} Ibid. 1.
\textsuperscript{484} Ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{485} Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{486} Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{487} Ibid., 4.
ANCSA regulations further define a Native group as:

more than 3 Natives, who comprise a majority of the residents of a locality and who have incorporated under the laws of the State of Alaska.

In making its initial determination in 1979, the BIA attempted to learn if all Tanalian Inc. members were enrolled in the locale where they lived. What were the exterior boundaries of that place, and where were all their permanent dwellings located? In addition, the BIA wanted to know what was the identifiable locale in which members of Tanalian Inc. lived. A Native group must be “a separate community, distinguishable from nearby communities, and must be composed of more than a single family of household.”

Tanalian Inc. initially stated that their locale was the original 153-acre Babe Alsworth homestead. The Interior Board of Land Appeals ruled that 153 acres was too small. On January 8, 1979, BIA investigators flew to Port Alsworth and later stated that:

while the Alsworth family were fairly concentrated the community as a whole was quite large and spread up and down the shore of Lake Clark.

On May 10, 1988, Tanalian Inc. agreed that the locality was larger than the original Babe Alsworth homestead. The locality rests within sections 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 of Township 1 N. Range 29 W.

In his October 28, 1988, decision Judge Sweitzer ruled that the Tanalian River was a natural border with Port Alsworth as it was not easily passable and it also formed a cultural boundary. His opinion was based on expert witness testimony from an anthropologist hired by Tanalian Inc. and another witness from the BIA.

Judge Sweitzer defined the boundaries for Port Alsworth as “on the west and south, the Tanalian River, on the north, by the shore of Lake Clark and on the east, by the eastern shore of Hardenburg Bay.” He said Tanalian’s locality was within the sections 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, and 10, Township 1 North, Range 29 West.

By defining the boundary this way, Judge Sweitzer did not include the people who have traditionally considered themselves part of the community of Port Alsworth, formally known as Tanalian Point, simply because they lived on the south or west side of the Tanalian River. The village was called Tanalian Point as early as about 1911 in a letter written by J.W. Walker. In 1912, he staked out the first homestead on Lake Clark. Babe and Mary Alsworth applied for a post office in 1950 under the name Port Alsworth. The earliest settlers at Tanalian Point are buried both on the peninsula of Tanalian River, on the east side of the Tanalian River, and on the west side of the river where the so-called Lindle cemetery is located.

In 1929, settlers began living on the west side of the Tanalian River, about one-quarter mile away from Tanalian Point and about one-and-a-quarter miles from what in 1944 would become the Alsworth homestead. In addition, there were at least three different bridges over the Tanalian River that connected the people on both sides of the river between the late 1930s and 1958, when the last one was washed away in a flood. In a letter written during the mid-1950s from Port Alsworth by Charlie Denison, who moved to Lake Clark in 1932, he speaks about building a bridge across the Tanalian River because it, “will be a valuable asset to our section of this community, as the Post Office is on the other side of the river...” Reading the Denison letter, one gets the impression that as far as Denison was concerned people on both sides of the river considered themselves belonging to the same community.
The 1970 Federal Census found 18 people in the Port Alsworth locality. However, Judge Sweitzer drew the boundary very close to the original Alsworth homestead, thus excluding people who lived on the west and south side of the Tanalian River. Judge Sweitzer attempted to learn if on April 1, 1970, members of Tanalian Inc. made up the majority of the population residing at Port Alsworth.

Judge Sweitzer ruled that the census taker probably took the census at Port Alsworth in mid-April 1970. In addition, he concluded that the six-member Thurston D. Delkittie, Jr. family, who were Natives, but not members of Tanalian Inc., resided at Port Alsworth when the census was taken, but not on April 1, 1970, when it would have counted for the purposes of determining if the Tanalian Inc., members were the majority of the local population. A BIA investigation from March 14, 1979, also concluded that the Delkittie family did not reside at Port Alsworth until about mid-April 1970.

The final list of residents of Port Alsworth who were members of Tanalian Inc., as of April 1, 1970 was: Mary A. Alsworth, Betty G. Alsworth, Wayne C. Alsworth, Sr., John H. Alsworth, Glen R. Alsworth, Wayne C. Alsworth, Jr. Leon “Babe” Alsworth was not a member of Tanalian Inc., but he resided at Port Alsworth.

Judge Sweitzer concluded his decision in National Park Service v. Tanalian, Inc. on October 28, 1988 with the following statements:

As of April 1, 1970, only seven persons actually resided within the locality of Tanalian, and six of those persons were members of Tanalian. Thus the members of Tanalian constituted a majority of the residents of the locality where the Native group Tanalian resides as of the critical census enumeration date in conformity with 43 CFR 2653.6 (a) (4). Accordingly, BIA’s decision to issue a certificate of ineligibility to Tanalian is found to be erroneous and it is hereby set aside. All else being regular, BIA is directed to issue Tanalian a certificate of eligibility pursuant to ANCSA, 43 U.S.C. 1613 (h) (2), 43 CFR 2653.6, and Secretarial Order No. 3083. … Because Tanalian is entitled to a certificate of eligibility, it is entitled to select up to 320 acres for each of the seven enrolled members of the group as of the date of the Native group allotment application, or up to a total of 2,240 acres, from available lands … Cook Inlet Region, Inc., the Native regional corporation within whose bounds Port Alsworth is located, acknowledges that lands within these sections have been made available for selection by Tanalian.

In August of 1990 the NPS and Tanalian Inc. entered into a settlement to resolve Tanalian’s land claims under ANCSA. The settlement provided for removal of the Park Service’s appeal of the eligibility of Tanalian Inc., as an ANCSA Native group and provided certain terms to minimize the impact of Tanalian Inc.’s subsequent land conveyances in Lake Clark National Park.

On September 28, 1990, the BIA certified that Tanalian Inc. was eligible for land selections under ANCSA. Pursuant to the August 1990 Settlement Agreement, as of December 17, 1990, the Service dropped its appeal of the OHA finding, that under ANCSA, Tanalian Inc. was eligible to select land in Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.

As dictated under Section 14 (h) (2) of ANCSA and Section 1416 (d) (1) of ANILCA, Tanalian Inc. received the surface estate only of its 2,240-acre land selections around Port Alsworth. The NPS retained ownership of the subsurface estate. The same amount of subsurface estate was conveyed to Bristol Bay Native Corporation from other federal lands outside of park land.

495 National Park Service vs. Tanalian Inc., 12.
496 Ibid., 16.
497 Ibid., 24-25.
498 Ibid., 25.
500 John M. Morehead, letter to Senator Ted Stevens, June 15, 1992, in the files of the National Park Service Land Resources Program Center, Alaska Region, Anchorage, Alaska.
One of the terms of the settlement was that Tanalian Inc. agreed not to select land inside the Kontrashibuna Power Site, known as PSR 485. Tanalian Inc. would not select land within one-quarter mile on either side of the centerline of the Tanalian River.

As a part of the settlement, NPS reserved a 50-foot-wide road easement around Hardenburg Bay providing access from the NPS’s 15.61-acre parcel that contains the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve field headquarters. The NPS also reserved two, 25-foot wide trail easements along each side of the Firebreak Trail and the High Trail that are commonly known as the Tanalian Falls Trail which connects the village of Port Alsworth with Tanalian Falls. The settlement also placed certain subdivision and land use restrictions on the lands conveyed to Tanalian Inc. These covenants were required to be included in any subsequent conveyance from Tanalian Inc. to another party.

Another provision of the settlement was possible acquisition of a conservation easement on lands conveyed to Tanalian Inc. 289 acres of mainland next to Port Alsworth and 40 acres on Hardenburg Bay, but this acquisition was not pursued by the NPS.501

Conservation groups opposed the settlement, arguing that the Service should contest the land claims to the last administrative level. On the other hand, generally speaking, the Alaska Congressional delegation has usually been opposed to the Interior Department appealing land claim decisions favorable to Native corporations and groups. The Service determined that the settlement, with its restrictions and limitations, provided a reasonable outcome to the issue of land conveyance to the Tanalian Inc. Native Group.

501 Ibid.
William von Hardenberg was the first to file on the Kasna Creek copper claims in 1906. He lived around Lake Clark between 1906 and 1908. Von Hardenberg was unsuccessful in his attempt to sell 3,000,000 shares of stock in his company, the Innuit Exploitation Company, which controlled the Kasna Creek claims. Rivals such as the estate of C.T. Brooks, Harry Hicks and Frank Brown all contested von Hardenberg’s aspirations for Kasna Creek. Ultimately, Kasna Creek was just not a very rich deposit. Von Hardenberg’s name lives on at Lake Clark as it is the official name for the bay upon which Port Alsworth was founded between 1944 and 1950.

Photo courtesy of the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of the New York Public Library.
Chapter 21

THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT SHEDS LIGHT ON how the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve’s field headquarters came to be sited at its particular location at Port Alsworth.

When Lake Clark National Park and Preserve was created, it was deemed imperative by park managers that a permanent base of operations needed to be established at Port Alsworth. The tiny community, hard by the shores of Lake Clark, was the physical and geographical hub of park operations, visitor and resident activity, having a 4,400-foot air strip, post office, school, float-plane base, and three lodges surrounded by the park and preserve. It provided a superb location to establish a field headquarters permanent park presence, to coordinate with the superintendent’s office in Anchorage.

The NPS established the field headquarters at Port Alsworth because its geographical and physical attributes met the logistical necessities of the agency, such as visitor safety and law enforcement, as operations could be easily launched by boat or aircraft from Port Alsworth. In addition, community outreach, through park interpretative programs and the establishment of a permanent NPS presence at Port Alsworth, was critically important in enabling the park to put down roots and gain credibility around Lake Clark and in the Bristol Bay region as a whole.

By the early 1980s the NPS presence had been established, but in a limited physical basis, at the Dr. Elmer Bly House on the Point in Hardenburg Bay. While the Point property accorded an excellent float plane base and was outstanding for staging boat operations, it was impractical for park visitors and staff to access from the main part of Port Alsworth, as it required a boat ride across Hardenburg Bay.

In 1985, Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Alsworth, Sr., approached park managers with a proposed solution. They wished to sell their land and move to Soldotna on the Kenai Peninsula, partly so their two children would have better educational opportunities. They were in the process of sub-dividing their 160-acre Native allotment on the west side of Hardenburg Bay, and proposed that a 15.6-acre tract at mid-point along a new 4,400-foot landing strip might be of interest to the Park Service. Park superintendent Paul Haertel characterized the proposed land acquisition as the highest priority in the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve Land Protection Plan.

The tract abutted the Wayne Alsworth gravel airfield which would be included in the price. The tract also had two residences, one of 2,000 square feet in size, two generator sheds (at a time when all residents and businesses had their own generators), a storage building, aircraft hangar, greenhouse, cache and well. The airstrip would provide ready access for fuel and freight flights to sustain ongoing park operations.

Superintendent Haertel wrote that the purchase of the Wayne, Sr., and Betty Alsworth tract was essential: “In summary, acquisition of

502 Paul Haertel, memorandum, December 19, 1985, in the files of the National Park Service Land Resources Program Center, Alaska Region, Anchorage.
A mid-to late-1940s image of Hardenburg Bay at the Alsworth homestead showing Babe's Taylorcraft float-plane and Ford tractor. Both the float-plane and the tractor were essential to the successful establishment of the Alsworth homestead. Photograph courtesy of John and Esther Alsworth, H-2791.

A 1949 photograph taken in front of the Alsworth's first home on Hardenburg Bay after a successful goose hunt. Left to right: Lonnie Alsworth, Joe Thompson holding Bee Alsworth, and Babe Alsworth. Photograph courtesy of John and Esther Alsworth, H-2795.

FAR RIGHT: Two Kasna Creek miners haul a sled on Kontrashibuna Lake on their way to Tanalian Point, circa 1912. Photo courtesy of the Alaska Historical Library, ASL PCA-148-121, Arthur S. Tulloch Collection, H-78.

this site is critical. The lifeblood of park operations will remain air access, appropriate landing sites and staging areas for field operations and visitor contact. The 15 acres is exceptionally well suited for these requirements.\textsuperscript{503}

In addition, the tract also provided ready access to the trailhead of the Tanalian Falls Trail, a magnificent 44-foot high waterfall that has long attracted visitors to Lake Clark. The tract also would come with a ready-made maintenance shop, staff housing and field offices.

Finally, the purchase of the property would satisfy the needs of the fledgling national park as it established its field headquarters and would preclude more development on adjacent unspoiled parkland. The investment to acquire the tract would also be far less than the cost to construct comparable facilities elsewhere.

On May 9, 1986, NPS Director William Penn Mott, Jr. approved the purchase price of $616,300 for the Wayne, Sr., and Betty Alsworth tract, and the sale occurred on July 29, 1986.\textsuperscript{504}

With the benefit of hindsight, the land acquisition that occurred almost thirty years ago can be evaluated by observing how the original Alsworth structures have been adapted for NPS use. The two residences are now park employee housing, one for a single family and the other a duplex. The hangar is now a maintenance shop, the storage building has been transformed into a visitor center. The two power sheds were reused as an evidence locker, for park rangers, and a paint shed, for the maintenance division. The greenhouse is used by park staff to grow vegetables for their own consumption. The original dug well was replaced by a drilled well. Over the years, the 15-acre tract has seen several new facilities erected to support park operations and employee housing. For instance, there is a sewer lagoon that handles all wastewater, a large boat storage building and three newly built (2007) duplexes for transient and seasonal employee housing.

\textsuperscript{503} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{504} Betty and Wayne "Bee" Alsworth, Sr., in the files of the National Park Service Land Resources Program Center, Alaska Region, Anchorage.
The following appendices contain additional first-hand accounts by people who lived twentieth-century Lake Clark history.

Two pieces were written by the author as nominations to the National Register of Historic Places. One details information about Dena'ina fish caches and how they elucidate the importance of red salmon to all people in the Bristol Bay region. The second details the history of Libby's No. 23 double-ender sail boat, documenting a major icon of the Bristol Bay commercial fishing industry and demonstrating how the all-pervasive, salmon-based ecosystem permeates the entire Bristol Bay region.
Appendices
Various Historic Accounts from Lake Clark and Environs

George Dutton to the Family of David C. Bowen, 1906

The following account illuminates the widespread perception in the Iliamna-Lake country that Otis M. “Doc” Dutton was a doctor. The letter is part of the Alaska Commercial Company records at the Archives of the Arctic and Polar Regions, Collections of the Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

Dutton P.O., Iliamna Bay
Alaska, August 13 – 1906

To The Family of
David C. Bowen,
Kodiak Alaska: –

It is with sorrow and regret that I have to convey to you the sad news of the death of David C. Bowen.

He died here July 27th at 7.10 o’clock P.M. He had contracted a very severe cold and it settled upon his lungs, particularly upon his left lung. This occurred in the month of June, so I had Dave down to the steamer landing here at Iliamna Bay so he could go to Kodiak on the Steamer Dora that was here June 28th, 29th or 30th, because in Kodiak he might get better medical treatment than here. But the Dora did not come on June 28th or 29th or 30th, nor on July 1st or 2nd or 3rd or 4th, in fact, she did not arrive here until July 10th, under her new schedule time on the Nushigak mail contract. All this time Dave was getting worse. On July 10th he was not strong enough to be moved and was confined to his bed. I had gone with a row boat (and took 5 of my men along to help) over to Inniskin Bay and then walked over to Oil Bay and got Dr. O.M. Dutton and brought him and all his medicines over here and he did all that he could to help Dave. Mr. S.A. Judd devoted all of his time nursing Mr. Bowen, and I helped him also and another man here. We were by his bedside constantly, giving him every attention we could both night and day. While we were able to relieve him, at times, yet the disease kept sapping his strength, little by little, until finally he became very weak. I wrote a letter to Captain Moore of the steamer Dora July 10th or 11th (not having seen him July 10th in Iliamna Bay because I was at Inniskin Bay getting Doctor O.M. Dutton) and I sent this letter to Captain Moore to Nushagak by way of Iliamna Lake in a Columbia river boat by Mr. Aurel Andersen explaining to Captain Moore that Mr. Bowen was here sick and that I was very anxious to have the Dora call here for him so he could get to Kodiak for possibly better medical treatment, or to possibly Seward if there were better facilities there. The Dora however did not call here on her return from Nushagak about Aug. 4th or 5th, and even if she had it would have been too late, for Mr. Bowen died July 24th. The disease was either pneumonia or consumption, possibly pneumonia at
first and then aggravated by an inclination to consumption in Dave's constitution. I did all I could, we all did, to relieve and cure Mr. Bowen, and I hope you will realize that we have and that we have not been neglectful of him.

His money for wages due will be sent from San Francisco by the office there to Mr. A.C. Goss, Kodiak, Alaska. On account of the San Francisco fire and earthquake, there will be a little delay in this, not much, as the fire has disarranged our business affairs there and it will put us behind a couple or three months, otherwise it will not effect us. Before Dave's death, he arranged with me to have his money sent from our San Francisco office to Mr. A.C. Goss, Kodiak, Alaska.

By the steamer Dora I will ship Dave's bag of clothing etc etc to Kodiak and as I do not know his folks there I will ship it in care of A.C. Goss or Fred Hames and they will see that it is properly delivered.

I remain
Most respectfully yours.
Geo. W. Dutton
Supt. Dutton Mining and Smelting Co.

Trip to [Kasna Creek] Alaska and Back
By Alexander Leggatt, 1911

In 1911 mining engineer Alexander Leggatt traveled from Butte, Montana to Kasna Creek on Kontrashibuna Lake, to assess the copper claims of owner Richard Edwards, of Houghton, Michigan. In so doing, Leggatt encountered just about every obstacle most pre-aviation era travelers had to deal with coming into the country from Outside. While Leggatt was in the Iliamna-Lake Clark area he met many of the people who would found Tanalian Point. For example, he traveled with Joe Kackley and Hannah Breece on one of her trips to set up the second summer school at the Nondalton fish village on the upper Newhalen River near Sixmile Lake. Reading Leggatt's account one will get a sense of the immense difficulties of travel to Lake Clark before aviation opened up the country in the 1930s. The trip report was made available for publication from the Butte-Silver Bow Public Archive, Butte, Montana.

Sailed from Seattle on S.S. Alameda, June 8th, 1911. Foggy, wet weather, but not stormy, although there was a heavy swell the first day out that put most of the cabin passengers in their bunks. Passed Cape Hinchinbrook on the morning of June 12, and reached Cordova that afternoon, staying four or five hours. Woke up next morning as we docked at Fort Liscum, across the bay from Valdez; landed at Valdez at 10 o'clock, walked four miles out to the glacier, and sailed about 4 o'clock. Found snow down to beach and town full of prospectors waiting to get out in the hills to find second Cliff mine, everyone cussing the late season. Called on Cyrus Harrington, deputy U.S. Mineral Surveyor, to get information about Iliamna country, but got none.

Arrived at Seward early in the morning of June 14th, and found the S.S. Dora was undergoing repairs, having knocked off part of her stern bucking ice in Bering Sea.
Dora completed repairs, coaled and loaded freight, and sailed the evening of the 16th, with about twenty-five passengers; having no reservation I was assigned a berth in one of the “bull-pens,” a room 7x7x10 feet with six berths, all full but one.

Weather dark and cloudy and foggy at sea, but cleared up about 10 o’clock the morning of the 17th, and, with a sea like oil the Dora raced along at 7 miles an hour to Seldovia, leaving there at 8:30 that evening, going up to Homer, a deserted coal camp, then turning across Cook Inlet for Iliamna Bay. Next morning was beautifully clear, and the lovely snow-covered cone of Chinabora Volcano, on St. Augustine Island, was plainly visible a few miles to our left, rising directly from the water, while Iliamna Volcano also snow covered but more irregular in outline, was occasionally to be seen through the gaps in the coast range, twenty miles to our right.

Anchored in Iliamna Bay at 9:30, and was landed at A.C. Point against a head wind and strong ebb tide. Was met by Joe Kackley, who had been instructed to meet anyone who might land for Kasna Creek and take them through.

Dr. H.O. Schaleben, Sup’t of Schools and Reindeer, was with me from Seattle; he formerly owned an interest in the Kasna Creek claims. Was at one time stationed at Iliamna and knew the country and all the white men in it, and gave me much assistance in the way of information and advice. From him I learned that Peter Morris [work foreman at the Kasna Creek property] had formed a partnership with J.W. Walker to do a freighting and trading business, and had turned in the launch Bina to the partnership. I also found out from him that it would not be possible to make the trip to Kasna Creek and back in time to catch the Dora on her return trip, so made no arrangements to have her call, expecting to get across Cook Inlet on the Bina. At A.C. Point [outer Iliamna Bay] we found Dr. Dutton and Mr. Chambers [Gilbert Chambers was a prospector who worked with Walker, Doc Dutton and Kackley] and in charge of the “Bina”, and they said she was leaking badly and they intended to pull her up on the beach at the June spring tide which they afterward did. Went to the head of the Bay [Iliamna Bay] that afternoon and spent the night. Dr. Schaleben left about midnight for Iliamna and sent Natives over for our baggage; we started in the morning and reached Iliamna [Old Iliamna village] about 1 o’clock. Spent the afternoon and next day at Iliamna, having a little difficulty in hiring Natives and a sail-boat to take us down the lake. Left Iliamna the morning of June 21st, accompanied by Miss Hannah Breece, Gov’t school-teacher, who wanted to go to Nundalton, and who shared the expense of the boat. High wind frightened the Natives, who are not very bold sailors, so we ran behind an island and spent the afternoon; left after supper and on reaching the open lake the wind was still too high, so we ran behind an island and camped for the night. Started about noon next day and sailed with a falling breeze to the Roadhouse Portage, about 20 miles. Here we found a camp of Aleuts who told us that the country was afire and the trail impassable, but Kackley went up the trail [Newhalen Portage] and found the fire was only on one side, so next morning we crossed, taking three Aleuts to pack our stuff; reached the Newhalen River about ten o’clock, found a boat had been left for us, so took advantage of a strong up-stream breeze and kept going. Sailed till about six o’clock, against a very strong current due to unusually high water for this season; had to unload and pack around the rapids and pull the boat up with a rope a distance of about 150 yards; rowed against the current till nearly ten o’clock, trying to reach Nundalton, then camped on the bank, turning in at midnight on the moss. At that hour it was not dark, simply twilight, and one could have read a newspaper by straining the eyes a little.

J.W. Walker, Morris’s partner, met us in the morning and we continued on the Nundalton fish-village, not more than a mile above our camp, stayed here till noon, then left for Tenalian Point with a fine sailing breeze; the fire in the tundra made so much smoke that nothing could be seen of the mountains. Reached Tenalian Point that night, nearly frozen from sitting still in the boat in the cold wind.

Morning of the 25th went as far as the lower end of
Big Evan Nudlash, his wife and sister and child. Big Evan worked at Kasna Creek as a blaster. The Nudlash family was the last Lake Clark Dena'ina family to live near Kijik village. Big Evan was a brother to Yenlu Brooks Seversen.


Kontrashibuna Lake, Walker and Kackley packing my baggage, but a head wind made it impossible to go up the lake in the small dory that was the only available boat, so returned to Tenalian. Next morning tried again, and found a slight favoring breeze, so started up the lake; half way up saw a boat coming down on the opposite side, which, in response to our shots and whistles, crossed, and we found Peter Morris and a native on their way to Tenalian for grub. They turned around and took me to Kasna Creek and Walker and Kackley went back to Tenalian. Spent the afternoon climbing over the claims, the next two days in making topographical and geological sketch and sizing up the surface generally, and the next two days taking samples and quartering them down.

Left Kasna Creek July 1st, left Tenalian July 2nd, had to camp one night on the beach [Lake Clark] because of head wind and reached Nundalton fish-village at noon the 3rd; here the wind rose and we had to lay over till the morning of the 5th, reached the [Roadhouse] Portage and got half way across that day but made effort to go further as there was no means of getting up the lake. Next day went on to the lake [Iliamna Lake], and that evening O.B. Millett, [from Millett's Point on the north shore of Iliamna Lake] a prospector, arrived on his way to Koggiung [site of a major Yup'ik village and Alaska Packers Association cannery on lower Kvichak River] to freight up supplies for Pete Anderson, the Nondalton trader. As Kackley was needed to help take in supplies to Kasna Creek, whose grub was almost out, he stayed here with Walker and Millet turned around and took me up the lake, reaching his house that same evening, and the mouth of the Iliamna River next night.

On our way up the lake we passed Dutton and Chambers on their way to Tenalian who said they had pulled the “Bina” up on the beach, but, as I had learned that the revenue cutter Thetis would be in to Iliamna Bay about July 12, to land the clerk of the U.S. Court on his way across to Koggiung, I figured I could get a lift out to some port on her.

At the mouth of Iliamna River we camped overnight, and there being no breeze next morning, I hired a Native to take me up in a dory, but his boat leaked like a basket, and as we met A.W. Young [Albert “Bert” Young was a prospector who filed on a homestead in Chekok Bay, Iliamna Lake in 1913] with his gasoline launch within half a mile, I got aboard her, and, going back for Millet, Young took us up to Iliamna in style. Spent the rest of that day and the next in [Old] Iliamna.

On the morning of the 10th, I sent all my baggage but one blanket, my slicker, gum boots, and Kodak, to the head of the bay [Iliamna Bay] by Native packers, took another Native as guide and to pack my stuff, and went seven miles to the Dutton copper property [Cottonwood Bay]; arrived about noon and spent the afternoon looking over the Dutton ground and a group of adjoining lead-silver claims owned by the Duryea brothers [Elbert and Bill Duryea, New York-born prospectors who lived at Cottonwood Bay], who were camped there. Started for the head of Cottonwood Bay next morning, got lost in the fog and snow on the summit of the mountains, found my guide knew no more about the road than I, and, taking a compass
course, finally reached the bay by following down the bed of a rocky
canyon, wading in and crossing a snow fed torrent that fell 1,200 feet
in less than two miles.

Left Cottonwood Bay at 3 o'clock next morning, reached the
head of Iliamna Bay at 5:20, and found that the Thetis had lay to ten
miles out and sent the clerk of the court in by boat at six o'clock the
night before; the boat simply landed him and his baggage on the beach
left immediately, and another man and a woman, the wife of a
prospector who wanted to get out, didn't even get a chance to talk to
the officer in charge of the boat. We then decided to wait for the Dora,
which we expected in on July 18th, with a local man who intended
bringing in a drilling outfit to prospect creek gravels in the Mulchatna
country, and on July 16th we moved down to A.C. Point. On the 18th
a gasoline launch came in with the information that the Dora had left
Seldovia for Kodiak the night of the 16th and would not call at Iliamna
Bay that trip.

The man who owned the gasoline launch was going up to
Lake Clark to see what the country was like, but would not consider
any offer to take us across to Seldovia, although I was willing to pay
$100.00, the lady $50.00 and the other man the regular fare, $15.00 to
get across Cook Inlet to a port where we could catch a regular steamer.
The Natives of Iliamna village were all at Koggiung working at the
canneries [Alaska Packers Association's Diamond J and Diamond
X canneries] or busy at their own fish-village [at the mouth of the
Iliamna River] getting ready for the summer salmon run, the white
men were almost all back in the interior, the "Bina" had been on the
beach in the hot sun for three weeks, parts of her engine had been
taken out and cached in Iliamna Village, and she was almost too big
to pull off anyway without the spring tide to help; the available boats
at Iliamna Bay were too small to attempt the Inlet in, as owing to the
strong tides and sudden winds it is a very dangerous stretch of water
for small craft, so considering everything, I concluded the best thing
to do was to cross the Peninsula, get to Nushagak [village], and catch
the Dora at the end of her run.

Left Iliamna Bay at 6 o'clock the morning of July 19th, reached
the village [Old Iliamna village] at noon, started from there at 2 o'clock
with Chris Neilsen [an Old Iliamna merchant] in his 6 horse-power
gasoline launch, and traveling all night, reached Koggiung at 1 o'clock
next afternoon, a distance of about 175 miles from sea to sea. Stopped
all night with Dr. Schaleben and had a hot bath and got my clothes
washed.

Not to lose any time or take any chances, I started next morn­
ing for Nushagak with A.W. Young's launch, in which he was taking Dr.
Schaleben's baggage and household goods, and Mr. Rudolf Ramsland,
the Doctor's brother-in-law, who was also going out. After spending
two days and nights on Bristol Bay, we entered Nushagak River the
evening of July 23rd, just as the engine broke down, but, with a fair
breeze sailed up with the flood tide, till, just before reaching Nushagak,
a thick fog dropped down and concealed the shore, so that we missed
the dock and were forced to anchor in the stream. Next morning a
howling off-shore gale prevented our landing, so we ran up the river
and anchored behind an island, and worked all day on the engine, but
with no success; next morning, the 25th, the gale continuing we ran
across the river and landed at the cannery of the Alaska-Portland Co.
[Alaska Portland Packers Company, now called the Peter Pan can­
nery in Dillingham], where we were hospitably received and got our
first warm meal since we left Koggiung. Next afternoon Ramsland and
myself were taken on one of the cannery tugs, down to the mouth of
the river, put on another tug belonging to the Nushagak cannery, and
after spending the night on her, finally landed at Nushagak the after­
noon of July 27th just as the Dora was signaled as coming to anchor
at the mouth of the river. Next day we went on board, and when the
Dora heaved anchor early in the morning of the 28th, I at last felt that I
would get out of Alaska. We reached Seward the morning of Aug. 7th,
and caught the Northwestern for Seattle sailing the night of August 8th,
landing in Seattle August 15th, after numerous delays.
Bill Park was a graduate of Pennsylvania State University and a territorial school teacher in the 1930s. About 1940, Park retired to Lake Clark and purchased the Art and Helen Lee Cabin at the mouth of Tommy Creek, four miles east of Hardenburg Bay. Subsequently he became a very close family friend of Babe and Mary Alsworth and their children. Late in life, he returned to Pennsylvania and died there in the 1960s, leaving his property to Babe Alsworth. A copy of the letter was provided Lake Clark National Park and Preserve by David Greenham, a descendant of Bill Park.

Port Alsworth
October 1, 1952

Dear Hal,

I have your letter of a month ago. To answer your question, Bill has not written me. I don't think too much of joint accounts. Tell him when he feels rich enough to pay something on account to give it to you in cash. You can put it in your safe deposit box marked "Held in trust for ***". If you die, it is not your estate. If you die, take it out and get rid of it and nobody knows anything about it. If Bill dies, we will forget it. I don't want the greedy uncle to get any of it. You hold some cash for me, do you not? I forget.

About coming outside, it would be nice to get together again—those of us who are left. But if you leave the first of the year it would be hardly worth while to come for Christmas. Besides, you are too busy. Except to see a few folks, I have no desire to visit the States ever again. On the other hand, something might happen to destroy this paradise. No telling what the army may do if Eisenhower is elected. He says there is something wrong with him and he must see a doctor. Last winter he had a doctor book to read and diagnosed his case as diabetes. This fall he went up to his cabin on Kontrashibuna Lake and came back the same day. That is some ten miles of pretty hard traveling. He knows there is something wrong with him, for after the trip he was tired. He could feel it in his legs. Elmer is the man who discovered the Bonniefield gold. His wife beat him out of all of it, and he came back to Alaska. He traveled all over the interior with dog team in winter, never stopping for cold, and with poleing boat or afoot in summer. Now he cannot figure out why he gets tired.

This fall he made several trips and packed a tent and camp outfit and food up to the mouth of Kontrashibuna. If Elmer has diabetes, I hope I get it if I live to be eighty.

What I was driving at, there is no use kidding ourselves. We
are getting old and there is no use getting young ideas. An old dog would like to run rabbits as he did when he was a pup, but he just can't do it. He gets stiff and tired.

To go on about Elmer, he never had mentioned his wife until one day last summer, when he told me all about it. "Got tam women. They are no tam goot." Just the same, Elmer is a mighty fine old Swede.

This last summer I spent a lot of time at Babe Als worth's helping at one thing or another. Farming did not prove a lucrative profession. Turnips grew fairly well, but not rutabagas or anything else. Mike and I planted about two boxes - 10-gal. gas cases that hold two 5-gal. cans - of potatoes. We dug thirteen boxes. Lettuce and celery grew some, but was tough and bitter. Here at camp where I cleared off a little patch the ground did not thaw out until July. I planted a few potatoes, and in most cases got my seed back - the potatoes never sprouted at all. Chinese cabbage did not grow to amount to anything. (How do you cook it?) Babe had some Petroski turnip seed that gave promising returns. Its chief advance is that it does not get wormy turnips. The whole summer was cold, with only three or four days that you could call it warm - most delightful weather as far as I am concerned, only things did not grow, not even mosquitoes. The first frost came Aug. 22, and several times since the beaver pond has been frozen over. Still a week or so ago when I was at Babe's last Elmer came with a bucket of fine strawberries that had developed and ripened after frost. We ate strawberry shortcake till we were ready to burst, something I bet you did not have.

Nobody got a moose. They are gone. They aint here. But there is wolf sign all over, and I think the wolves have them run out. I had fresh meat, for some hunters gave Babe a quarter of moose and some others a quarter of caribou. Also, spruce chickens are quite plentiful and I have chicken dinner whenever I want it.

I read a little about the campaign and hear a little occasionally on the radio. Nobody ever says anything significant. Eisenhower castigates the present administration, but he never mentions the fact that Roosevelt made Russia and he was a party to the proceedings. Neither one mentions the national debt or plans for paying it. Both put a soft pedal on excessive taxation and its resulting evils on corruption and of the declining value of money. Neither one gives any hint that he has ever read the Constitution. Neither touches the subject of our disgraceful war in Korea, or what is to be done about it. Of course it would not do to suggest its cause. Blah blah blah. A pox on both of them. They are birds of a feather, picked by the same gang. I can't stand that snaky, grinning General. I suppose he will be elected. And he will still consider himself a General. To hell with army men. But the new generation does not care, so to hell with them too. They will get what they ask for, which is just what is handed to them. Whip up the horses. We are going for a ride. And afterward, as Louis the someteenth said - the deluge.

Ole Bill With the Whiskers
Bill Park
Charlie Denison’s Letters to George and Ruth Arcand, 1954

Charlie Denison was a well-read man and an excellent raconteur who had nearly 50 years of Alaska experiences to draw on relating his adventures in the Koyukon and Bristol Bay regions prospecting, mining, sawing lumber and commercial fishing for salmon. The following letters were given to Lake Clark National Park and Preserve by Nondalton school teacher, Ron Richter, whose father, the late USGS geologist Don Richter, was a friend of George and Ruth Arcand. When the Arcands learned that Ron owned historic property at Port Alsworth, they gave him copies of Denison’s letters. Denison’s ample wit, breath of experience, and his plans for the future around Lake Clark are on display in his letters. The letters are published here courtesy of Ron and Linda Richter.

George & Ruth Arcand
Anchorage AAA –

Dec. 20 1954

Dear friends – Your lovely greeting card and note arrived this recent mail, and was so very pleased to hear from you.

This finds my area almost ‘snowbound’. Winter hit us about one week ago and has really poured it on for four days – gave us about 2 feet of snow, and now the temperature stands at 20 below.

That 20 below is O.K. but don’t care so much about that much snow.

You say you live about eight miles out of Anchorage on the O’Malley Road. Now you have one wondering if you have a real homestead. Really I know so very little about roads out of Anchorage but if I get up that way will surely find the O’Malley Road.

My wife [Helen Beeman Denison] passed away about 11 months ago, and I have indeed been a very lonely man since her passing – much of the time I had such an urge to just take my dog team and head for the wilderness and go and go, to where I don’t know. I have smothered out that idea, but to say the least I am very lonely here alone – Have had 3 excellent chances to sell my place at a very satisfactory price. Suppose I did sell, where would I go from here – Surely I would not find any place that that would suits me as this location does. Have had several invitations from relatives in Kentucky and Oklahoma, to come down there – Wouldn’t I look (?) sweltering in the heat, and trying to drink the half polluted water that country is infested with.

[Lake Clark]
No; Alaska for me – This country has been very, very good to me and I will not desert her now.

I have long been much interested in amateur photography – am especially interested in color photography. Made a little start in that direction last autumn, but am getting all squared away to really get going with it, by not later than June.

Ruth you remember the little green house here had tomatoes in it. I plan on tomatoes there again this coming summer – I do not use tobacco in any form, but just the same I grew that little green house literally full of tobacco last summer. You would need to see it to believe it. I give it all away to my neighbors – Now they want to do it again – It will be tomatoes this time.

You say you are the poorest correspondent in the world. Now may I suggest maybe a little practice would contribute to improvement. If you agree, suppose you make a start by writing me about your part of the O’Malley Road. Have you a homestead or what is the attraction? Guess pictures would tell a lot – By the way, believe I will have some color pictures I can spare you when they get back to me from the processors.

[I hope] this finds you folks happy, hearty, and prosperous. Would like so much to give you a call and see a little of your part of Alaska.

I love to meet people that love Alaska – They are really my kind – 50 years in this country has really made me feel at home. The one brief visit I made out to the states really taught me to stay up here where I belonged – So many cars I could hardly keep from getting rolled under –

Sometime possibly within a month I will send you a sample of my special brand of smoked cured salmon. Last summer I put up 200 No.2 cans of it – Then I wondered just why I did it – Soon after a Grumman Amphibian swooped down and landed right in front of my smoke house – It was an old friend of mine, Bud Branham of Rainy Pass Lodge. He wanted me to put up a ton of dog feed for him – could not (?) that as the salmon run was too light – anyway I came out with a can of my smoke cured salmon – He had 5 hunters from the states with him. They passed that can around – They sniffed and nibbled until the can was empty – I broke out another – it went the same way – Bud asked me how many cans of that I had – I told him of 200 – he said he would give me $200.00 for them (?) let him have 150 of the cans as I wanted some myself. Am telling you all this just to give you an idea what I have. Was told it would likely go over in a good way in many places in Anchorage.

Will send you some any way and if you care to shop around a little, will make it worth while for all concerned. A friend of mine right here told me he bought some up there at $2.00 per pound that was not as good as mine – A No. 2 can holds 1 lb. 4 oz. of my pack.

Looks like I was running over time with this missive – Hoping to hear from you with a bit of information about your part of the O’Malley road.

Wishing you the best of everything through a long and happy life together –

Sincerely, Charles Denison.

P.S. So Leslie is in Germany – No doubt you correspond with her – If so please send her my regards – Hope she is happy and well. C.D.

Port Alsworth, Alaska

Jan. 2, 1956

Dear Friends George and Ruth –

Some time ago received your very nice Holiday Greeting and note. – I am so very grateful to you for such kind thoughtfulness.

If I ever get up to Anchorage I will surely hunt you up and pay you a visit – I am sure it would be a most delightful experience.

Things have changed quite a bit since you and Leslie were here that 4th of July. I have neighbors now on each side of me, and two more coming, so you see at that rate this area will soon be heavily
populated, at least from the old Sourdough viewpoint – They are all nice people, so God likes Them, let Them come.

At The Indian Village of Nondalton, 30 miles down the lake, a young couple taught school there, and really fell in love with this lake and wanted to settle here. They were really filled with ambition and the pioneer spirit, and were just all-around fine people – They have 3 little boys. They are home-steading right here alongside me – He has a plane a small 2 seater; is getting an amphibian – a Seabee next spring. They are teaching this winter over on lower Cook Inlet at Port Graham – They plan on teaching another winter and quit it for keeps.

Their names – John and Claudine Coray – They have 3 goats – I am keeping them right here this winter for them. They all lived right here at my place last summer while working on their place. Will be here this coming summer a lot. They plan on a house of ample size and we expect to saw out the lumber for it at my mill next summer. So you see I have plenty of company and work to do, all for the good of somebody – I like it that way.

Via the radio, I hear of the husky snow fall up your way – That same storm passed over here, but only loosened up on about 10 inches of its snow.

Weather here so far this winter has been just very fine, lots of clear weather right threw. Right now it is crystal clear and 24 below zero.

My garden sure got a workout last summer. Claudine Coray cooked for me, and she sure played the garden up in grand style – Never before did I have such a spell of salad eating. Right now am planning on increasing the variety and amount, so that if possible, can increase the salad output for next summer. If you folks ever consider making a change, please let me know if you would ever consider coming this way – John would be only too glad to fly you down for a visit and a look around – We plan on eventually having a school. Also we plan on getting a John Deere Cat and dozer blade to clear some land and make a landing strip for wheel planes. We realize all this cannot be done over night, but this restless mind must be busy planning something.

Again I thank you so much for your kind thoughtfulness – may this new year bring you a full measure of health, happiness and prosperity.

Most sincerely
Charles Denison.

P.S. Do you hear from Leslie?

Port Alsworth, Alaska
March 24 – 1957

Dear George and Ruth –

We were immensely pleased to receive your nice long letter this last mail day – March 19–

We were delighted to know of your interest in the CoOperative Extension work. We most sincerely wish the day is not too far distant to have neighbors such as you folks.

We have only a 5 acre home site which is all we can handle – but I did file on 80 acres that lays right up to the 5 acre home site – I know now that I cannot fulfill the homestead requirements on that 80 acres.

Such being the case will gladly relinquish it to any one that wants it with the idea of going thru with it – As I get it, one must live on it at least half the time and have, in this case, 8 acres in cultivation – for a period of 5 years. I have dug around on it enough to know that much of it is most excellent deep soil – far better and deeper than any where on our 5 acre homesite.

Building material is quite easily procured here – my little saw mill is still in excellent working condition.

Just bring in the logs and we will soon have house material ready. On this homestead mentioned above is sufficient buildings for one to live in comfort for sometime.
Come see us any time. Stay as long as you like – take a good look around – Maybe you will see something that will fit your ideas. Most people living in the area make most of their cash fishing at Bristol Bay – Fish price is quite good now, and the run last season was good. Some natives living in this area made up to $9,000.00 last season – Half that amount is about normal –

Maybe you like boats – O.K. we can saw lumber and make any kind of boat desired. Have often wondered how an air plane engine would work on an ice sled – This lake is 50 miles long.

More about money making in this area – Any one that will take this 80 acre homestead can have this little mill of mine – All I would want for it would be some lumber occasionally mostly for my repair work – I also have a good planer – lumber here sells for $125.00 per thousand feet. I have been here a long time – saved lots of lumber and have never had enough lumber natives buy most of it. All slabs and saw dust stay with the mill when I saw logs others bring in – When they bring in logs I charge $40.00 per thousand or take half the lumber. In all such cases as stated above, all slabs and dust stays with the mill. When doing much sawing the slabs certainly contribute to one’s wood supply – however, here is wood and more wood – On this 80 acre homestead is an excellent long level area where one could easily bull-doze a fine landing strip for small planes – am sure one could get at least 2000 feet – I think more – The end of that homestead extends right up to a lovely beach just on around from where our home is – All along this beach is where we set our nets to catch our salmon for canning & drying.

We live at least 60 percent off the land and like it. Fresh vegetables stored for winter – potatoes, carrots, cabbage, rutabagas. Canned in glass & tin. Meat moose mostly – some caribou – salmon both fresh and smoked, also whitefish. And celery – the finest ever. Can keep all fresh vegetables until at least in Feb. I have developed a canned salmon that goes over big – it is smoked then cut in strips, packed in No 2 tins sealed. These into the pressure cooker – added is 2 tablespoons olive oil – at 10 pounds for 20 minutes. I get $1.25 per can – don’t know how many cans could sell as I never had enough to go around – No doubt you have heard of Bud Branham of Rainy Pass. He always takes 200 cans if I gave it. He passes it out to his guests – hunters & fishermen – outside sportsmen. Another way to make some money out here is to build a few cabins to rent to vacationers – have it at least partly furnished – furnish a boat. We really believe that could be developed to a modest extent as a supplement to ones income – as you can plainly see, most of this chatter of mine has been devoted to life as we know it on Lake Clark. – True it takes time and work – but, even so one is improving things for themselves – not putting in a life of toil for advancing the cause of others. It is yours to have & to hold – That is the glorified side of life as I know it in Alaska – This great land has been good to me, and I have no regrets after 52 years of it – Ruth, I hope Leslie got my last letter. I was not too well acquainted with her style of writing and was a wee bit afraid I did not get her address right.

If you folks ever have the urge to look this area over please do not pass us up – Our latch string is bleached by the weather – always out – am sure you will find a grand companion in my Frieda. Will be glad to hear from you anytime

Kindest regards to both of you –
Charles & Frieda Denison

Port Alsworth, Alaska
Lake Clark –
[circa 1958]

George and Ruth Arcand –

Dear friends – Like Ole Man River, Time just keeps rolling along – Frieda and I have been getting our holiday list of greetings in order and I find we need a little assistance in one item. I think it is a good guess that you are in constant touch with Leslie, and [in] the likelihood of her and her husband being transferred, I am taking the
Dear Friends George and Ruth –

Our first copy of *Organic Gardening + Farming* came to us in our weekly mail, last Friday the 4th – Really we did not know of such a wonderful magazine – We are so pleased with it. It is so full of just everything good – It gives us a wonderful lift. We are indeed so thankful to both of you for such thoughtful kindness.

Really we are getting the urge to get our fingers right into the warm fertile soil – We have our little 12 x 14 green house just about ready for planting.

Planting will begin about the 18th or 20th this month. We plan on making quite a bit at tomato raising this Season – Making preparations for at least 200 tomato plants, and really believe that we have it doped [figured out] just about right for a fairly successful venture. Will try it and if results warrant, will tell you the details. The weather and ice conditions here are such that ski landings are just a bit hazardous. Winter ice, due to very late freezeup did not get very thick, and we have had rain and wet snow, warm Aleutian winds, and just about everything that goes for making unsafe ice conditions here. Usually safe landings prevail until May 1st, and at times a week later.

At present there is no amateur Radio in this immediate vicinity – The nearest is 30 miles down country at the Kenai village of Nondalton.

The weather station I have here is only for precipitation and temperature, and I make only monthly reports by mail to Anchorage headquarters.

The weather and temperature, and I make only monthly reports by mail to Anchorage headquarters.

My son and family are here now and vows he is here to stay – sick and weary of the rat race as applied to installment living, and a host of uncertainties out in the states. He has just filed on a home site of 5 acres near here – plans on gardening – sawmill and fishing Bristol Bay. He is now busy with my chain saw and dog team getting in a good
supply of wood for the home fires and smoke house, also green house.

You mention the civil defense field phone. Now that is a subject of much interest to us – of interest in more ways than one. For one thing, I would like to, in some way be in a position to assist in reporting un-identified planes – I would like details on that subject, and if you can help in supplying that information we would indeed be very grateful – My son was in the U.S. Army for quite a session, had much experience with communications and motor vehicles – discharged as Sargent. I am sure he would be delighted to do his part in any such capacity.

Now Ruth, you remember where the plane landed that brought you and Leslie to these parts, that 4th of July some years ago? – Well our nearest neighbor lives right on this side of that river – right near where it pours into the lake – Their names are Marion + Bertha Mooter, have one son 10 years old – They have built up a very nice comfortable home – have a fine big garden. He is a retired rail road Engineer – Had an accident on the Alaska RR and lost his right arm right up at the shoulder – Bertha is an A1 nurse – worked at the Providence hospital 5 years before settling here –

My son is building about ¼ mile from us, and to be connected by phone would indeed be a wonderful convenience for our little community – Now listen to this – you will not believe it but it is true. During my 53 years in Alaska I have never used a phone, not even one time. Now if we had such an installation, believe me I may become a real addict.

Do you know Bud Branham and his brother Dennis Branham of Rainy Pass Lodge? They are good friends of ours and make many flights down this way each summer with hunters and fisherman. Each season they make three or four stops at our place just to show state-side people flowers and vegetables can grow in Alaska. They are always wanting to bring us things. Am sure they would gladly bring us any phones + wire that would be for us. Just in case you would ever have occasion to contact them their address is Rainy Pass Lodge- Box 759 Anchorage [printed address also taped in] Bud is the one that does most of the flying down this way with hunting and fishing parties.

I read with regret when you told of the cow moose you and George found dead – We will never know how many similar atrocious crimes have been committed by feather brained nit-wits that just want to kill something. Just cases of sub-standard intellect, I take it –

I am so proud of my Frieda, and the way she takes to this great beautiful land of ours – She feeds the birds, ravens, magpies, camp robbers + chickadees – yes the little squirrels and foxes. As many as 6 foxes at one time have been at her feeding stations. At one time I saw seven big black ravens at the kitchen door yelling for food – It was so cold and the snow was deep and all such wild life was really desperate.
We alleviated much suffering with our feeding program, and to do so is really a soul satisfying experience – Most every spring moose come right in just back of our garden to produce their young. One spring I knew of 3 different cow moose with their calves, all within 200 yards of our house. To us, this great land would lose much of its interest if the birds + animals were taken away.

Now folks – look out for a package at the P.O. I am sending you a package of 12 Wide World magazines. It is an adventure magazine printed in England – I feel sure you will enjoy them. We are well supplied with good reading – we subscribe to Readers Digest, Life – Saturday Evening Post + National Geographic and the latest addition, Organic Gardening + Farming –

Besides the above we have a library of over 500 good books on many interesting subjects.

We are getting material together to put a bridge across the river – it will be a valuable asset to our section of this community, as the Post Office is on the other side of the river – a bridge would, of course enable us to go for mail regardless of storms or ice conditions on the lake.

You asked about homestead land near here –

Well, it is non-existent now, but there is a beautiful home site near us that is open. It is right on the lake front – wonderful view, with a grove of lovely young birch and spruce as an immediate background. Garden ground is available but not on the homesite. Many people have been casting anxious eyes this way for the past 2 years.

At present there is no real homestead land available right on the lake front close by here – but back from the lake on the river, good locations can be found –

We could be delighted if you would, some nice day just “splash” down with a float plane right in front of our home, and be prepared to be with us for at least a few days. We have acceptable accommodations and rest assured it is yours in full and without stint when you come.

Please feel free to write any time on any subject of interest. Thanks again for the subscription to the lovely enlightening magazine –

Kindest regards to you both,

Frieda and Charles Denison

P.S. Concerning the above mentioned package – if it does not arrive with this letter, it will surely arrive about one week later – C.D.

Charlie Denison wrote the poem “My Alaska” while sitting on a mountain top about 15 miles north of Tutna Lake in the Chilchitna River country. It was copied by Claire Woodward in 1959. A copy was given to Lake Clark National Park by Allen Woodward.

My Alaska

Charlie Denison

1
Some day I hope to meet you
In this land where nature reigns
Where some of its gold is virgin yet
Untarnished by groans and stains

2
Where glaciers, mountains & forest prevail
Where the winters are silent & white
Where Malamutes leap to the cold, long trail
as he howls in his wolfish delight

3
Much has been penned & spoken
Much is yet to be said
Yet her vast domain is unconquered
and many who tried it are dead

4
It's a land where the moose and caribou roam
where the sun shines long each summer day
Where the grayling leap in the sparkling stream
and we're monarch of all we survey

5
Some survey with critical eye
Some with a heart of stone
But those who survey with a heart of love
my Alaska will claim them her own

6
Those who see not her beauty
Those seeking spoils alone
Forbid that they cross her border
She justly should hand them a stone

7
Those who love her are legion
They are always glad of your call
The latch string is bleached by the weather
They'll say: if you need it take it all
Katie Trefon was born and raised at Tanalian Point in 1919. When she was 18 she moved to Seversen's Roadhouse at present-day Iliamna where she worked the month of May 1937 and made $30 waiting on tables at the Roadhouse. Katie was given the equivalent of a third grade education by her neighbors, Doc Dutton and Joe Kackley, who taught her and her brothers, Pete and Alex, the three Rs. If they did well in their reading and mathematics, they would be rewarded with cookies. Her only formal education was during her visits to Nondalton after 1930, when there was a public school in session.

In 1937 she married Billy Hill, a Finnish-born Bristol Bay fisherman at Iliamna.505 Billy moved from Naknek to Iliamna in order to live closer to his prospects in the Chilchitna River drainage. Hill probably got to know Katie Trefon through friendships with her older brothers Gabriel, Wassillie, Alex and Pete Trefon. Wassillie and Pete worked with Billy on his Airplane Placer Drill when they were prospecting in the mid to late 1930s near the Chilchitna River. Billy and Katie had six children—Shirley, Frank, Robert, Peter, Lary and Karen.

Hill was a boat builder, a motor vessel captain, prospector, trapper and cannery winter watchman at Graveyard Cannery. He died suddenly at the Libbyville cannery in 1945. Later, Katie was remarried to Chester Wilson of Levelock and they had seven children—Edna, Chester, Ann, Richard, Kenny, Edward and Gloria.

Katie's mother, Mary Ann Trefon, was a big influence on her. Mary Ann was probably born in one of the Mulchatna villages, or perhaps around Tyonek, in about 1878. She was raised during a time of considerable change, as American traders and prospectors began to enter the Bristol Bay uplands and the Cook Inlet region.506 Mary Ann married Trefon Balluta in an arranged marriage at the age of 14.

505 Shirley Hill Nielsen, telephone conversation with the author, February 24, 2014.
506 Ellanna and Balluta, op. cit., 277.
in about 1892. Trefon Balluta was from the Mulchatna villages or Telaquana. Katie's cousin, Agnes Trefon Cusma, offered some interesting insights into her grandmother's underlying motivations which were documented in the book *The People of Nondalton*, by Linda J. Ellanna and Andrew Balluta.

"Mary Ann ... remembered never having anything when she was a girl. She always told Gabriel [her eldest son] about what it was like to have nothing. She was determined that her life would be different. Mary Ann used to tell Agnes to go into her cache. There were many things there, kettles and anything that you would use in a kitchen, all on shelves. She was not using the things that she stored there. Agnes remembered her saying, 'I don't care if they rot in here without anybody using them, because we never had anything when we were young.'" 507

When Mary Ann was young, times were frequently difficult because there was little food to eat. Some people resorted to following mouse tracks in the snow and robbing mouse dens of dried berries, mushrooms, fern fronds, and seeds. As a result of these childhood experiences, Mary Ann kept busy throughout the year obtaining various subsistence foods for her family. Mary Ann was a crack shot, and she fished and snared rabbits. She salted down ducks and geese from the Chulitna River flats in wooden barrels, and she frequently smoked water fowl and beaver meat to give it added flavor. In the 1920s, the Trefons occasionally got reindeer from the herd that grazed around Eagle Bay Creek and Whistlewing Bay, east of present-day Iliamna.

One of Mary Ann's sons, Wassillie, was born prematurely in a hunting camp in the Telaquana Lake country. She made a tiny fur wrap for the baby. She also boiled fish and added fish oil to breast milk to nurture her son and he survived and had a good life until he was drowned off Cut Bank in Kvichak Bay in 1958.

In 1975, Katie recalled her mother as, "really something," a person who was usually happy and upbeat, who taught her children subsistence skills and was always thinking and planning ahead and was one who stayed busy. 508

Katie Trefon Hill Wilson was a chip off the old block. She had many of her mother's qualities of intelligence, she was a hard-worker and loving mother who had expectations for her children to succeed in life. All her children were fine people. Some were educators, home makers, and another was a priest. All of Katie's children made at least part of their livelihood fishing for salmon in Bristol Bay. A copy of the interview was given to Lake Clark National Park and Preserve by Dorothy Hill. 508

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507 Ibid., 278.

An Interview of Katherine “Katie” Hill Wilson by Dorothy Hill, October 17, 1975.

Dorothy was married to the late Frank Hill.

KEY TO PARTICIPANTS
K: Katie Trefon Wilson
D: Dorothy Hill

D. Mom, what is your full maiden name?
K. Katherine Trefon.

D. And when were you born?
K. 1919 - born at Lake Clark - Tanalian Point

D. Can you tell me something about your brothers and sisters?
K. I have four brothers and two sisters. One died at a very early age; she had two kids, a girl and a boy.

D. Were all your brothers and sisters older than you?
K. Yes. I was the very last.

D. What was your mother's name?
K. Mary Ann Trefon

D. What was her ethnic origin?
K. My mother was full-blooded Indian.

D. What type of Indian?
K. Athabascan.

D. Where was she from?
K. She was from - I heard them say - between Tyonek and the Yukon area.

D. What do you remember about your childhood?
K. ... we stayed up at Lake Clark. It was easier to live. We had a garden. My mom prepared food for the winter for us there, us three kids; I and my two brothers [Alex and Pete Trefon]. Put up fish summertime - had dogs.

D. You moved to Tanalian Point from Nondalton?
K. Yeah.

D. Did your mother have land at Tanalian Point?
K. Yes, well, Native allotment. We just lived on there like everyone else did.

D. Did anyone else live around there?
K. Yes. Two old people, two white people lived by us [Doc Dutton and Joe Kackley].

D. Did your mother have any relatives around there?
K. No relatives. Just at Nondalton she had her sons, one of them married [Gabriel and Wassillie Trefon, Gabriel married Catherine Hobson in 1920; Wassillie Trefon was married to Mary Wassillie by 1930].

D. Do you remember your mother ever telling you how she came to Nondalton?
K. Yeah, they came from Stony River way, that area, like they used to travel back and forth a lot, Stony River over the Inlet [Cook] way. I guess really why they moved down because it was better living - because they had gardening, better fishing, stuff like that. So, I guess they all moved down to the lake [Lake Clark].

D. Did she ever tell you about her parents, your grandparents?
K. No. Her real parents didn't raise her. She was raised by her aunt the way she used to tell us. Her mom died when she was small and her aunt raised her.

D. Did you ever attend school?
No, but these two white people, one was Doc Dutton and one was Joe Kackley. They had little correspondence books for us. They taught us five days a week for a couple of hours a day. Sometimes in the evenings just let us read and write and stuff like that. And once in a great while we went to Nondalton to visit the school kids. I did anyway; my brothers, I don’t know, two of my brothers didn’t go to school either; the older ones did but we didn’t attend school down there.

D. Did you learn to read and write?

K. Yeah, at home there. That’s what I know now. Not much, but it sure helps. I glad to have it.

D. Did your mother know how to read and write?

K. No. She just learned how to write her name and that was it.

K. She was awfully smart.

D. Did you ever have any books in your home?
K. Yea, we had school books and stuff to read.

D. What type of home did you live in at Tanalian Point?

K. We had a log house with a kitchen-living room combined and a bedroom and a windbreak.

D. Who built your home?

K. [Trefon Balluta] before he passed away. They lived up there first [Tanalian Point]. They moved up there in [from Old Nondalton] 1911, built a home there, then he got sick, passed away. So I guess he just lived there, don’t ever go back to the village with us, so she had a hard time raising us.

D. What did your home look like on the inside?

K. Oh, just plain walls, log walls, caulked with moss. Kind of putty on the outside, (unreadable) cement mixed with sand used to caulk the seams.

D. What about the roof?

K. The roof, just boards that I could remember. Lapped over each other so they wouldn’t leak and they never leaked.

D. Nothing on top of the boards, then.

K. No.

D. What type of furniture in your home?

K. We had homemade [tables?] and chairs, homemade chairs made from birch, some spruce. We had a table made out of spruce and we had a woodstove, of course.

D. That’s how you heated your home?

K. Yes.

D. And how did you cook?

K. Oh, we cooked on that wood stove, good old cast iron wood stove. And we had a heater for the one living room-kitchen combined. When it was really cold, we lit that up and kept nice and warm.

D. Where did you get your water?

K. We just packed it from the beach, nice clear water.

D. That was the lake water?

K. Lake water.

D. What type of toilet facilities did you have?

K. We had outdoor facilities.

D. Did you have a steam bath?

K. Oh, yes, we had - those days when I grew up, we didn’t have stoves like they have now. Anyway, we used to light a fire - we had two rooms; one, the first room you come in there’s a big hole in the middle cut out and you build your fire there and you take your rocks from the steam bath out and pile it on till they get red hot
and you have a pincer thing - two boards together –

D. Like tongs?

K. Yeah, they pinch these rocks and the person sitting inside the steam bath has a shovel, wooden shovel, brings it outside the door and this person puts the hot rock on there so back and forth till they get it all in, pile it up in there. Then they hurry up and put the hot water in there and then they take a steam bath.

D. They throw the [?] water on the hot rocks?

K. It gets just as hot as now with a stove in there.

D. And there was a hole in the ceiling?

K. Yes, where you heat up the rocks so the smoke would go out. And there was no fire inside the other room, just the hot rocks. You continuously keep some hot rocks out there all the time so they can put them in there.

D. How did you cool off then?

K. We have a cooler, same place around there when that fire is, have benches around there and sit around there and cool off.

D. How often did you take a steam bath?

K. Oh, about three times - sometimes almost every night - summer months, fishing and stuff like that - it was always going.

D. How did you get your kerosene for your kerosene lamps?

K. Well, used to haul it from, used to go all the way to [Seversen's] Roadhouse at Iiamna. We called it Roadhouse store. Like summer time, we used to row down from our place to Nondalton, and go down river and walk across the [Newhalen] Portage if we ran out of stuff. We had our dog packs and ourselves. I was pretty young, I didn't pack very much, but I went along with Mom. My two brothers [Alex and Pete Trefon] We hauled our stuff over like that, packed it over the [Newhalen] Portage. And most of the time, winter time, we hauled it over the same way, a supply - enough for part of the summer. Winter time it wasn't too hard because dogs could go across there, dogs could haul the stuff over. Summer time was hard because it was hot and everything [we had] to pack across the portage.

D. Did you usually get most of your supplies from Roadhouse?

K. Yes.

D. How often did you go to Roadhouse for your supplies?

K. About twice a year.

D. You said you had your dog packs in the summer?

K. Yes.

D. Were these the dogs you used in the winter in your dog team?
K. [Yes.] Nice big dogs. They learned to behave. They'd walk along with you just like a person.

D. They weren't on a harness?

K. No. No leash or nothing. They just walk along with you. And you'd have a chain along with you and when you'd come to a village you'd tie them up. But they learn really fast and they were a lot of help.

D. How many dogs would you take?

K. We used to take about three - two or three.

D. What were their packs like?

K. Oh, just little square cloths made out of the stuff we made tents out of before, a canvas deal, and kind of a hole in the middle so can shove the stuff in the side and balance them just right and they had strings to tie them with so they wouldn't fall off. One right here for the neck, just like, almost like a horse—

D. They had strings around their stomach and strings around their neck?

K. Yes.

D. Did you make the packs for the dogs?

K. My mom did.

D. About how much could they carry in a pack?

K. Well, we never really loaded ours too much because poor dogs, you could see the back go way down like that, but I see people put a whole case of milk in their packs and that's 40 some pounds and they took the whole thing and their pack was pretty loaded. We took a lot of rests before we got to the other side.

D. About how many miles did they have to walk? [The Newhalen Portage is six miles long].

K. Let's see now, I don't really know, but I know it used to take about a couple of hours to go across there if you took your time. If you went faster than that---

D. And that is from the Portage below Nondalton to [the Roadhouse].

K. I'm pretty sure it's about—it must have been a good twenty miles anyway, across the Portage by walking. You say thirty miles by air nowadays so I really—seem like it would be about twenty miles. Then when we -- summer time we came down the river -- the swift river, so we landed where we call the landing place where everybody landed there, you know. Then when everybody— three, four people in a skiff, boat, rather, and we had oars, two sets oars, and we get back over in the river, you load all your stuff in there and the dogs [would ?] be running along side on the beach and there would be couple people walking pulling the rope up river and, of course, a couple of people in the skiff pushing it out away from the beach so it won't hit the banks and that's how they get it into still water and when you get it into still water then you can row. We row up to

Katie Trefon, right, and Helen Lee, left, stand in front of the Art and Helen Lee cabin at Tommy Creek on Lake Clark, four miles east of Tanalian Point c. 1936. Photograph courtesy of John Lee, H-502.
Nondalton, take a rest for a couple of days and then row home. It would take us about four hours to get home to Lake Clark, rowing.

D. From Nondalton?
K. [Yes], if we went straight. Sometimes, stopped for weather, you know, stayed overnight and camped.

D. What kind of a boat did you have?
K. Spruce made boat.

D. Who made your boats?
K. My mom bought some. She bought the boat from the village. She had it all that time, just kept it in good shape. She also made a canoe. She made a frame herself and put canvas on it. For short distance and stuff we used to row around in that, go berry picking. Every once in a while that canvas would wear out and my mom would recover it every once in a while. She would sew it and paint the seams. It was really good and had oars.

D. Where did she get the canvas from?
K. She got it from the store [Seversen’s Roadhouse].

D. What type of supplies did you buy from the store?
K. Oh mainly we bought like beans, rice, sugar, flour, and butter, milk, cocoa, fruits, all dried fruits, prunes, dried apples, figs, and raisins, about three-four kinds of dried fruits plus all our home picked berries, cranberries,---

D. Did you have a garden?
K. Yes, we had a garden.

D. What kinds of things did you grow in your garden?
K. We had potatoes, beets, carrots, rutabagas, turnips, cabbage, cauliflower.

D. Where did you get your seeds?
K. Evidently these people [Doc Dutton and Joe Kackley] that lived by us used to get them and we’d buy from them.

D. How did you get your meat?
K. Oh, we got our meat. We didn’t have much moose or caribou around so we just mostly, I remember, we lived off rabbits and spruce hens, spruce chickens and like, when we did get moose we used to salt it down, same with caribou meat. And ducks, we got ducks, we salted them too, so we had that.

D. What did you keep them in?
D. Did you always have plenty of meat?
K. Oh, yeah, I don’t remember being without meat. Wintertime we fished through the ice—got some grayling and white fish and what we called candlefish and then we had set hooks for ling cod and lake trout so we had fresh fish all the time whenever we wanted and had salt fish in barrels.\(^{509}\)

D. How did you fish through the ice?
K. We used to make fish hole below the place there a ways. [immediately west of the mouth of the Tanalian River] There were two ways we fished. We made some snares with end of a stick, the water wasn’t very deep, we used to bait the hole. We’d put our snare down there and the fish would come out from under the ice and start eating the eggs, we used to put the snare over its neck and pull it out and sometimes we’d fish with hooks, but most of the time with snares for white fish and stuff. And we used to set nets too under the ice and get quite a few that way.

D. How big of a net would you use?
K. My mom did. She trapped, yes. She had trapped some lynx, wolverine, fox. There wasn’t very much mink in that country, but she caught a few of those. Sometimes we used to go across the lake to what they call Chulitna. That’s where all the beavers and otters and muskrats and everything in that river were so we used to go and trap over there.

D. Did she trap for food?
K. That’s how she made her money to buy food, was from fur.

\(^{509}\) The Lake Clark Dena’ina people refer to the candlefish as being similar to the whitefish in taste, but more oily. Fish biologists call them round whitefish, \textit{Prosopium cylindraceum} (Pallas). The candlefish is rounder than other kinds of whitefish, it is actually shaped like a candle. The candlefish is also longer and rounder than a smelt or eulachon. Martha Trefon, conversation with the author, February 26, 2014; Russell, \textit{op. cit.}, 7, 104.
D. Who did she sell the furs to?

K. During the 1930s, Leo Koslosky, a fur trader from Anchorage, purchased furs from Doc and Joe, Brown Carlson and probably from the Trefons. Koslosky chartered bush pilots to fly him around the Bristol Bay region buying furs from trappers. [A company] used to send them out.

D. Perhaps Koslosky's? How did you fish in the summer time?

K. Oh, we set the net and ... We caught our salmon that way but at times when it used to blow like fall time if we wanted some fish, my mom had spear they called at the end of a stick—quite long stick and go where you see a salmon and spear it and got fish that way too.

D. Did she do that from a boat or from the shore?

K. No, from the shore, the bank, the bank of a river, sometimes in the water close to the beach.

D. Did you fish just for food then?

K. Yeah, ourselves and dogs.

D. How did you preserve it, how did you put the fish up?

K. Salmon, we smoked it. We even made fish oil from the heads. We used to boil the heads down until they were all mashed up and then there would be a whole bunch of grease on top and we'd skim it off and save it in cans. That would go good for dog food in winter time. It helped a lot. We had cans and cans of that.

D. You didn't use it for yourself?

K. We did. We did, too. Ate it with some fish. It is really nice clear oil almost like Wesson oil when you first skim it off.

D. What kind of fish was that?

K. Salmon.

D. Did you preserve any other kinds of fish?
The Trefon family at Tanalian Point in the early 1930s. Left to right: Katie, Agnes, Mary Ann, Pete, Charlie, and Mike Nudlash. Mike Nudlash lived on the north side of Lake Clark across from the Trefons. The two families visited frequently. Photograph courtesy of Agnes Trefon Cusma, H-19.

D. Did you ever sell your fish when you were growing up?
K. Sell fish? No.
D. You just caught fish for eating
K. Just to eat and for our dogs.
D. What did the cache look like that you had?
K. It was made out of logs with—and the posts were pretty long, about 4-5 feet off the ground up high so no animals could climb up there, you know, break into it. We had open gas cans for around the bottom so that the animals tried to climb up there they wouldn't—that would stop them.
D. Did you ever have any kind of fire at your home? Do you ever remember a fire?
K. No.
D. Never a disaster or anything that ruined the home?
K. No, not while I was growing up, but after I left home, my Mom lost her place, by fire. But that was started by soldiers and she lost everything, her cache, her house, everything, was burned up.
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so, but, she saved salt fish for eating—she always used to have a couple barrels ahead—she was worried about that time because in her time, too, I guess there was time when they didn't have salmon. That was the main diet anyway for the people. So, that year to survive our dogs and everything, we just put up like the three fish I was telling you about, the white fish, lake trout and grayling. We just filled up the smokehouse that summer with that fish. Mom used to always, spring time, she would fish for the dogs and we'd put a net out and we'd get all the fish we want from the lake for the dogs.

D. For bait?
K. For bait.
D. How did you smoke your fish?
K. Oh, we smoked it with cottonwood, birch, alders, just like we do now, smoke it.
D. How long did you smoke them?
K. I don't know—seemed like we smoked fish all summer, a whole month of it. But, then the way we used to do, we'd fill up the smoke house, see, and if we wanted it dry we'd take it down and pack it into our cache. We had a cache outside the smokehouse. We'd pack it in there in and lay in layers and they didn't even ever mold and then when you emptied that place where the fish were dried, you filled it up again and that way you'd have enough fish for ourselves and our dogs probably and almost for [a year?]. My mom was always prepared for bad years so she was never out of fish, she always saved fish from the year before. She always said that someday the salmon wouldn't come up.
K. There was a year where there was no fish. I remember, yes.
D. What did you do?
K. We caught one big king salmon, that's the only thing I remember, and...
Nondalton and Tanalian Point?

K. Yes, there was people living around the lake, across from us they called Kijik. That used to be old village, before, but it just come right down to just one family living there when I was growing up. Their name was Nudlash. I don’t know how to spell that. It is pretty long. And they had two girls and two boys. They had also a garden and lived just the way we did and they had a hard time because they didn’t really hustle like my mom did. And my mom used to go and help them quite a bit with groceries and [ ?].

D. Did you visit them very often?

K. Yeah, we used to row across there again with our boat. Part of the time it was pretty windy but my mom always made it. I remember being scared laying down in the boat, look out once in a while, see those big swells coming up.

D. Did you have any kind of a cabin on your boat?

K. No cabin, but she used to make a little tent, you know, in the bow, for us to lay in, keep dry if it was raining.

D. What kind of remains of a village was there at Kijik when you were a child? Could you see any buildings?

K. Just old log houses, you know, all pretty rotten. That’s all I could remember.

D. Did you ever hear why the people no longer lived there?

K. I think before when they had epidemic and the whole village, all the people, they get scared of that place, so they’ll move to a different place. They always thought maybe the ground was bad or something so they’d move again. I guess closer to the store, too, maybe, they had to go so far to Roadhouse to get groceries and stuff. I think that’s why they kept moving down, where the village [Nondalton] is now.

D. Did you ever visit with people anywhere else around the lake?

K. Let’s see there was about, only another one family – only two families that I know when I was growing up. There might have been more before my time, but at that time I was growing, there was another family across at Chulitna – we used to visit with them too.

D. Do you remember their name?

K. Pete Koktelash, I think their name was—all I could remember.

D. Do you ever remember any kind of illnesses or epidemics when you were a child?

K. Yeah, one time, we had epidemic—at our little place at Tanalian Point, we were all sick—just us three kids, you know, and our mom was pretty busy. She was a brave lady, I guess. She took a lot of
The Trefon kids visit Gabriel Trefon’s house at Old Nondalton in 1925. Left to right: Alex Trefon, George Seversen, Katie Trefon, Ben Trefon, Agnes Trefon, and Ida Carlson. Photograph courtesy of Agnes Trefon Cusma, H-48.

chances cause—her main medicine was this white moss you get from the swamp. She used to use that quite a bit for infections and stuff. She used to heat up rocks and put in a pan and put this moss over it and wherever we had an infection, she put our arm or hand or anything, even when we got hurt, she’d use that kind of medication. And turpentine, I can remember, she used quite a bit of that if we had a bad cut and—she was pretty brave. She had a little really sharp knife that she used to cut open these—when you get hurt you get a big puncture with blood and stuff, she used to open it up with the knife and get all the blood out and use again that steam and rocks and moss. I don’t know why she used it all the time, seemed like we didn’t get infected.

D. Did she have any kind of a name for that moss? [White sphagnum, the Dena’ina word is nan ggeya and red moss is called nan dasdeli, both were used medicinally by the Lake Clark Dena’ina.51]

K. No. Just white moss.

D. Did she have any other kind of home remedies?

K. Another thing I remember her doing, when we had strep throat, she used to mix up boric acid, liquid, you know, she used to make this wad of cotton on end of a stick, or gauze, and she used to clean out our throat with this. She used to wipe all the green stuff off, infection, and then let us gargle. And smear us with Vicks on our throats and that’s the only thing. We survived okay, seems like.

D. Did anyone ever have any broken bones?

K. No, but my brother, Alex, he hurt himself a couple of times. He smashed his foot one time. A birch tree came down on his foot and it mashed his toes. She took care of that, too. She had to cut off his shoe pack when he got home and the way she did it, she took him in the steam bath and made him good and dizzy from the heat and every time he fell asleep she’d cut between his toes, cut it open, because it blew up like a balloon with the blood; it didn’t really open up because of his skin, I guess. And she slit between all his toes and got all the blood out and used that old moss again. And then she wrapped it and it healed okay. And he was okay after that.

D. What did she use for bandages?

K. She had gauze and plaster. That was the main thing, and turpentine. She always used turpentine. Every time I got a bad cut, too, she’d pour turpentine in my fresh cut. That used to burn. But you never got infected, never.

D. When was the first time you ever saw a doctor or a nurse?

K. To tell you the truth, I never saw a doctor or nurse until I raised my family, moved to Levelock, the very first time a doctor came there. They’d take X-rays and stuff like that, TB tests, and all that, before that it was just home.

D. Everybody pretty much did their own—

K. Yeah, they all had their own ways of doing things—like when we

used to catch bad cold and cough, you know, my mom had this stuff they call mountain ash. [Mountain ash Sorbus scoputina, the Dena’ina word is binik lahi. The Dena’ina did not eat the mountain ash berries but boiled the berries and inner bark for a decoction.] She used to boil that and save it in bottles, like cough syrup. It looked just like tea and she put sugar in it, like we would drink that.

D. Is that from the mountain ash tree?
K. Yes. From the mountain ash tree. She used to save the leaves and boil that.

D. Was that the green leaves or after they dried?
K. She used to pick them when green and save them and when needed, she’d boil up some. That was our cough syrup.

D. Did you have anything like midwives?
K. Yeah.

D. Did your mother ever like to tell you stories?
K. Yes, she used to tell us some bedtime stories.

D. What kind of stories would she tell you?
K. Oh, just mainly about animals, stories—a lot of them I’ve forgot. I could remember stories about animals.

D. Was there any church activities in Nondalton?
K. Oh, yes, there were—that’s the big time I used to wait for is Easter. We used to go down there finally and we used to have good time—went to church for three days. Sometimes it seemed like we stood in church all day and half the night and after the third day was all over with and people used to have lots of fun. Us kids, we used to ring the bell for three days steady. Everybody take turn ringing the bell. Then we had a big feast, everybody cook up bunch of food, all different kind of food. They fast, see, forty days before Easter. That means you couldn’t eat butter, you couldn’t eat meat, you can eat dry fish and bread and stuff like that. They were really strong those days on their religion, but not any more.
D. This is Russian Orthodox?

K. Russian Orthodox.

D. Did they usually have a priest in Nondalton?

K. Yeah, they had a steady priest then. And, he really kept up—that was almost like uh, people really obeyed them, too, like if they got in trouble, and while they were forty days they weren't supposed to drink or gamble or anything like that and if they broke the rules they had to be punished in church. They used to put salt on the floor and they had to kneel on it a whole hour and that was their punishment. So everybody went by the rules pretty much. Sure a lot better than today.

D. Do you remember the priest’s name?

K. No. There was quite a few. The last one I remember was Vladimir Cusma—was his name, the last preacher I know. [Vladimir Cusma (1882-?) was not a priest, but he might have been a lay reader in the church].

D. Do you ever remember any weddings or funerals?

K. Yes, I remember a lot of funerals. I don’t remember any weddings. I never was down in Nondalton that much.

D. What were the funerals like?

K. Oh, funerals were—when a person passed away, in their own home, they would just leave the fire out and they’ll put this body by the holy picture, they have a holy picture, you know, in the corner, and they’ll keep them there overnight. And then they get them … ready till they get the coffin. Then they put him in church for three days total, you know, from time he passed away. Then they bury him and say the prayers and everything at the grave.

D. Do you ever remember any superstitions that the people had that they believed?

K. Oh, yeah, there was lots. Just about all kinds, I think.

D. Like what?

K. Well, anyway, every time I been complaining about these bears, I think back no, my mom always used to say, don’t talk about the bears, you know, they can hear you. You have to pray for them. So every time, it comes around now a bear, I think back to what my mom said. And when they caught a bear, they used to skin it and they used to dig one eye out and bury it. I don’t know why they did that but they always told us not to tease animals and stuff like that. They always said that they were humans once before and they turned to animals.

D. Did your mother ever talk about an after-life?

K. Oh, you mean born-again or something like that? Yeah, they believe in that quite a bit like, an old buddy pass away, they’ll say that one came back to you. You know, that’s why he’s acting this way towards you and stuff. And, same with children when they lost a child, sometime they figure the same one came back if they had another baby or so. They believe in that way, too.

D. What about other animals or fish? Did you have any superstitions related to fish or the animals you hunted?

K. Yeah, they had superstitions for fish, too. Only thing, well, the superstitions they had for fish were just for girls. I don’t know why—but, they just, superstition was, if a girl became a lady, you know, that she wasn’t supposed to clean fish or like walk over a salmon or fish like that. You can’t step over a fish and if that summer you got your period they wouldn’t even let you fool around with salmon, at all, at least for forty days.

D. Your mother believed in this?

K. She did with the other ones [Katie's older sisters, Alexandra and Agafia] but not with me. By that time, I was kind of spoiled you know. She didn’t punish me too much.

D. How many dogs did you have for your dog team?
K. Oh, we kept about eight dogs all the time. We raised dogs every year just to keep—get rid of the bad ones and keep new ones all the time. We had to have them for hauling wood and like winter time we'd go to Nondalton and hunting and hauling wood especially. They were pretty handy.

D. Did you ever help your mother get wood? How did you get the wood?

K. Oh, yes. We went to the timber and sawed them down, the trees. We wanted dry wood lot of times so before year—ahead of time, we'd cut around the tree and peel some of the bark so that by next year it would be dead and then we'd have our dry tree. That's mainly what we use for kindling and stuff. And but then we use quite a bit of birch but anything you can get ahold of, really. We hauled most of our wood in winter time so we'd have enough for summer.

D. Did you ever travel anyplace besides Nondalton or Iliamna when you were a child?

K. No, no, I didn't go anywhere. Just those two places.

D. How did your mother punish you if you did something wrong?

K. She mainly gave us a spanking. I didn't get much of it. I remem­ber once getting hit over the head with a broom. That was my last punishment. She gave me twenty dollars for that. And that was a funny thing, too. You'd laugh. She had a favorite dog. He was loose and I don't know what I was doing with a sugar bag, I just emptied it, a sugar sack that had some sugar lumps in it and I was out doors messing around with it and this dog grabbed it and swallowed it—just grabbed it out of my hand and swallowed it. I ran and told my mom and she got mad at me. So she hit me over the head with that broom. I was about fifteen then. That was my last hit, I think. I got pretty mad and I think I went away somewhere and pouted. My mom came looking for me. She was sorry after she did it and promised not to do it again. She told me just to forget about it. So she gave me twenty dollars. Biggest payday I'd ever had in my life.

D. Doesn't seem like you forgot it, though.

K. No, I never forgot it. My brothers, it seemed like she used to talk to them all the time, but I don't remember them getting whipped.

D. What kinds of things would they do to get in trouble?

K. Oh, mainly she warned them, you know, not to do this, like you might get hurt. Like what I said about Alex when he hurt his foot. That day she told him not to go out and they snuck away with an ax. She had to be with them and show them how you know. This time they went on their own and that's what happened. Stuff like that, she used to punish them for not minding.

D. Do you remember at all how the law and order was kept in Nondalton? Was it mainly by the church?

H-200- Brown Carlson, left, and Floyd Denison, right, sit in front of a string of red fox, martin, river otter and lynx furs at Denison's house at Tanalian Point c. 1938. Floyd and his wife Lena and Floyd's father, Charlie Denison moved to Lake Clark in 1932 and brought in many modern conveniences including radios, washing machines, and generators. Photograph courtesy the Floyd Dension Collection, H-65.
Katie Trefon Hill and her husband Billy Hill at Graveyard Cannery in 1940. Billy holds their son Frank and daughter Shirley stands in front of her mother. Catherine "Chumba" Nudlash is on the left. Photograph courtesy of Shirley Hill Nielsen, H-1277.

K. By the church.

D. They didn't have anything like policemen?

K. No. But they had a—mainly a guy that took care of the church was boss of the village, you know. Cause he used to have meetings with people, the young people and forever preaching to them you know, how to be, so that rule that they gave them in church is the only thing I think that kept things in order.

D. Do you ever remember anyone shooting anyone else or doing anything that was really against the law?

K. No, not when I was growing up. After I grew up there was a shooting and they blamed some village people, but they found the body up Chulitna, this person, but nothing was really done about it. They didn't know for sure if someone did it or if he did it himself.

D. Do you think people were pretty well behaved then?

K. They were and they all got along and helped each other real well.

D. How did you get your clothes when you were a child?

K. My mom made most of our clothes.

D. Out of what?

K. She ordered what they called [dry] goods now, we used to call it calico, and used to get all colors and she made my dresses and stuff out of that. And the boys they had their own stuff to make shirts and stuff out of. But like pants and stuff, she bought those at the store and she made some from left over—heavy pants and stuff from other people—gave them to her. She remade them. Made our coats and stuff like that.

D. Did she ever make anything out of skins?

K. Yes, she made some boots and stuff. Seemed like when we were growing up we were already coming out of this too much skins, cause I remember only wearing shoe packs and stuff like that. But they had some winter boots made out of caribou hide -- you know the leggings of the caribou.

D. Did your mother ever tell you about when she was a child how she got her clothing?

K. Yeah, they made their own clothes by flannel—red flannel and this stuff made out of jeans now—denim, blue denim. Used to make parkas out of that.
Floyd Denison Recalls the 1930s at Tanalian Point
Written by Floyd Denison August 14, 1986.

The first Bush Pilot I remember was Matt Nieminen winter 1932—It was the first mail service to come thru Lake Clark Pass. It was Pan Am but Pan Am never came again. He brought the first AM 3-band radio receiver I had ordered for two old trappers Joe Kackley & Doc Dutton at Tanalian Point 16 miles down lake.

Some years later their house burned—my father had the first saw mill—so Doc & Joe built a new house with logs sawed on 3 sides, they built it exactly like their house that burned—The house burned early in AM. I have a picture—we had to shovel snow on the wood shed to keep from burning—They had lots of old ammunition it sounded like 4th of July some times. Then I got them a Zenith radio & windmill generator to charge the 6V battery. The wind mill was still standing 4 years ago. Lots of bullet holes in it. The following is a list of Bush Pilots I met at Iliamna or who stopped at Tanalian Point, years ago before there was any landing fields.

Estle Call. Happy little man. Flew for McGee before McGee became Star Airways. The first time they stopped at the Point—we bought pork loin; Mary Ann Trefon, Katie's mother, got a new dress.

I met Bob Reeves in Cordova before my father and I sailed from Bristol Bay up Kvichak River and across Iliamna Lake with Old Jack Hobson and 2 of his boys, Macy and the oldest boy, Steve.

That winter (1932) Cowboy [Oscar] Winchell was flying for McGee. Many years later he had his own business and hangar at McGrath. I think he owned a Stinson, famous oldest Stinson of bush days.

Roy Dickson flew for Art Woodley—Woodley also flew Bristol Bay. He was the first to get a DC-3 a little later Alaska Star Air got a 14 passenger Lockheed Lode Star—Roy Dickson got money from old Brown Carlson and others on Bristol Bay run and bought a nice new Waco—Brown used to say he never got his money back.

Woodley’s DC-3 and Alaska Air flew these two planes in competition to Juneau. Lockheed Lode Star. My wife [Lena] and I lived at Tanalian Point.

Pilot Call continued to fly Lake Clark Iliamna Naknek and Dillingham route with passengers and what else he could get in the Stinson for several, 2?, years—When McGee sold out and became Star Flying, Cow Boy Winchell flew [the] same route for McGee Airways.

Roy Dickson was an early Pilot. He flew for Art Woodley using Travel Air planes with 330 HP. Art also flew this route Lake Clark Iliamna and Bristol Bay.

Roy bought a Waco and kept on flying same route. The money for the plane was put up by his customers. Much later he left Alaska to fly for some oil company [Philips Petroleum]. I heard he was killed flying the company B-26 [in 1958]. He had a brother, Frank, living in Anchorage who fished at Nakeen [cannery] Bristol Bay. Same co I fished for we used 30 ft sail boats. We got power boats in 1952. I sailed 20 yrs before we got power boats. I knew Joe Hurd, Al Andree and Ralph Anglisco and many other fishermen. I started [fishing] Bristol Bay 1932 Art kept flying to Bristol Bay. He was the first to get a DC-3 later he combined with Western. There was a Pilot McDonald who flew for Woodley. He married a Bagoy girl and went with Pan Am.

Johnny and Alfred Ball of Dillingham got a T-Craft. It came up on Alaska steam which brought cannery crew and supplies for the Nakeen Cannery. This was mid 1930s. They became quite an air service out of Dillingham. Another early Dillingham based Pilot was [Ken and his son Dick] Armstrong. There was also Matt Flensburg from Dillingham.

Another early pilot was Johnny Moore. He flew for Star Air Way. Later he flew for Hans Mirrow. They had a Tri-Motor Stinson. Right after WW II, Johnny flew Alaska Airway route to Japan. I first met Johnny at Lake Clark, Tanalian Point. He was flying a Bald—

Gren Collins pilot and game warden [Alaska Game Commission]. He covered Lake Clark-Iliamna and Bristol Bay. He is
still active at 78 year. He runs a summer fish camp [the Kvichak Club on the] Kvichak River close to where it leaves Iliamna Lake [Igiugig].

Pilot Morgan [Davis] flew for Star Airways and one time he brought supplies— to my step-sister and her husband, Alexander [Thompson A. Moore]. Alex liked to take pictures—He went on a little point so he could get a picture of the Bellanca on floats when it came by on the step in order to do this he had to warm up the engine facing the beach—My step-sister [Mary Moore] thought of something and came running back to the plane—Morgan [Davis] waved her away, shut the engine off—she kept coming and was split almost in half by the prop.

Pilot Morgan [Davis] never our way again. It was a terrible accident. Very gruesome.512

An old timer I remember was Nat Brown of Bethel—some times on his way out from Bethel to Anchorage—he stayed overnite with us at Tanalian Pt. Lake Clark (winter time). He had a silver Waco. He had a Burner from a camp stove fitted to heat his engine oil didn’t have to drain the oil—years later I rebuilt a Waco for him—His wife used to come up to the loft (old Star Air hangar, burned down) and helped me with restitching—we put fuel tanks in Lower Wings and with wobble pump he had 7 hrs cruise.

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512 Melvin Monsen, Sr., telephone conversation with author, July 13, 2015.
The Wassillie Trefon Dena'ina Fish Cache

The following account is the narrative portion of the nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for the Wassillie Trefon Cache. The cache was placed on the National Register in 2013. It was written by the author.

The Wassillie Trefon Dena'ina Fish Cache is located on exhibit about 30 meters (100') from the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve Visitor Center at Port Alsworth, Alaska. The cache is situated in an opening surrounded on three sides by a grove of birch, cottonwood and willow trees. There is one Dena'ina fish drying rack within 15' of the cache, which would have been a typical juxtaposition found at Dena'ina fish camps in earlier times. The cache was donated to the park in 2004 by Mr. and Mrs. Bill Trefon, Sr. whose father, Wassillie Trefon, (1898-1958) built the cache. There is also a small interpretive sign 20' south of the cache which informs park visitors of its cultural and historic significance. Ethnographer Cornelius Osgood quoted a nineteenth century born Dena'ina informant as saying; “In the Clark Lake area ... fish caches were neatly built of hewn logs and planks.”

The Trefon Cache is the quintessential Dena'ina fish cache in existence. According to noted linguist, Dr. James Kari, the Lake Clark Dena’ina might have used very old Dena’ina words debi or chu or “one that is covered” to describe caches like the Trefon Cache. Nondalton elder Gladys Evans off states elevated caches were called debi uteqdez, or “cache that is up high.” The Trefon Fish Cache is a small log food storage structure sitting on top of four posts that are 1 meter 42 centimeters (4'-8") off the ground. The wall logs have been hewed flat with an axe and adze and are held together with dovetail notches. The posts have been especially formed to prevent small animals such as mice and dogs and larger animals such as bears and wolverines from climbing into the cache to plunder the foodstuffs stowed inside. The gable roof is covered with sod. Access is by a notched log ladder 1 meter 70 centimeters (5'6") high, leaning against the front platform providing entry through a small plank hatch 57 centimeters wide by 78 centimeters high (22" by 30-1/2"). The small front platform is a continuation of the cache floor extending past the door and made of 8 centimeters (3") diameter white spruce poles notched into the sill logs. The platform is as wide as the interior of the cache and extends out 54 centimeters (21") and aids one entering and exiting the interior of the cache.

The Trefon Cache is made of white spruce, *Picea glauca*. The Dena’ina word for the tree is ch’vala or tree, indicating the high regard the Dena’ina had for white spruce.

The cache was built about 1920 on Lake Clark at the Trefon family fall-winter hunting and trapping camp at Nan Qelah or “mossy place,” now known as Miller Creek. The site was 3 miles east of historic Kijik village. It was a trailhead for the Telaquana Trail, a 50-mile long trail connecting historic Kijik village with Telaquana village. Mr. Trefon believes his father was aided in the construction of the cache by his father, Trefon Balluta (1858-1923) and his older brother Gabriel Trefon (1897-1963). The Trefon brothers were known as expert practitioners of Dena’ina woodcraft and building techniques.

The cache was used primarily to store dried salmon for human consumption and for sled dog food, however, occasionally dried moose meat was stored.

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516 Mary Alssworth, conversations with the author, 1992.
in the cache. On one occasion a brown bear smelled the dried moose meat and chewed and clawed a lower wall log in an attempt to gain access to the meat. The scarred and weathered logs offer mute testimony of the bear’s power in his futile efforts to breach the stoutly built cache.

The Wassillie Trefon Fish cache was removed from its original location because the Trefon family moved to Nondalton and disassembled the cache and set it up on the Newhalen River, only a few miles from their new home at a location of their summer fish camp. The Trefons valued the fish cache and realized that its continued utility was needed for the same reasons it had been built, namely as a secure dried fish storage. The cache is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places because of its significant architectural values. The cache is a rare example of traditional Dena’ina design and construction, none like it are known to exist. The cache has been restored in Dena’ina territory and its present location lends itself to continued protection and availability for study and viewing. The location of the cache near the Port Alsworth Visitor Center is less than one mile away from cache builder’s home in the early twentieth century at Tanalian Point, the original name for what is now officially known as Port Alsworth. The cache lies about 2,000 feet from the waters of Lake Clark. Historically, the cache was located much closer to the waters of Lake Clark or the Newhalen River. For example, it was about 100 feet away from the Newhalen River when it was last used by the Trefon Family at the Nondalton Fish Camp. Wassillie Trefon spent much of his youth and early adulthood at Tanalian Point. It is highly appropriate that the Wassillie Trefon Fish cache has been restored at Port Alsworth because when the cache was built in 1920 at Wassillie Trefon’s hunting camp at Miller Creek, eleven miles north of Tanalian Point, his family home was Tanalian Point. And so the cache has come full circle and is emblematic of the peripatetic nature of the Lake Clark Dena’ina and their caches and log homes during much of the twentieth century. Interestingly enough, for the past several years cache donors Mr. and Mrs. Bill Trefon have lived at Port Alsworth right next to Wassillie Trefon’s boyhood home at Tanalian Point (Port Alsworth). In the final analysis the cache is where it is because it is not reasonable to expect it to survive any other place than on park property, under the watchful eyes of the National Park Service. This is the reason the donors gave the cache to Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, to preserve, protect and interpret it for future generations of visitors.

Wassillie Trefon was an expert woodsman, well-practiced in all the traditional Dena’ina woodworking crafts that were still part and parcel of most Dena’ina men born in the late nineteenth century. Both he and his older brother Gabriel were known for being very capable of building any kind of structure or ad-hoc skin boat in the Dena’ina tradition of masters of woodcraft. Another brother, Alex Trefon, born in 1912, was also known in the Lake Clark-Iliamna area as a superb woodworker. The Trefon boys must have learned their woodworking skills from their father Trefon Balluta. The Trefon Cache is a fine example of Wassillie Trefon’s skill level and one of the few historic examples of the traditional Dena’ina style extant. In addition, Steve “Butch” Hobson Jr., who did the restoration of the cache, considered by most to possess the highest level of traditional woodworking skills of anyone in the village of Nondalton.

The Trefon Cache is a unique resource, as a largely intact example of a well-crafted traditional piece of Dena’ina vernacular architecture with a documented builder and a concise history of its use since about 1920. The Wassillie Trefon Fish Cache is the last example of a traditional Dena’ina Athabascan fish cache in the Lake Clark-Iliamna area. Indeed, it is very likely to be the best example of a southwestern Alaska Native log cache extant in the entire Bristol Bay region. While this kind of log fish cache formerly was ubiquitous in Dena’ina and inland Yup’ik villages, hunting and trapping camps and summer fish villages, they have now largely disappeared from the scene because of electricity. No doubt there are a few caches extant, but probably in states of neglect and decay. The Wassillie Trefon cache is constructed...
Wassillie Trefon (1897-1958) photographed about 1935 perhaps at Miller Creek on Lake Clark. He was born around Telaquana Lake and was a skilled Dena'ina hunter, trapper and log builder. As a young boy he was raised at Tanalian Point and frequently hunted sheep with Joe Kackley around Kontrashibuna Lake. He was drowned near Graveyard Cannery while commercial fishing in Kvichak Bay. Photo courtesy of Helena Seversen Moses, H-278.

The Trefons originally built their fish cache without the use of nails or spikes. By the early 1940s, Wassillie Trefon had stopped trapping along the Telaquana Trail and with the gradual creation of the new village of present-day Nondalton, he re-oriented his life closer to Nondalton, where the family moved in 1944–1945 from Old Nondalton. In the early 1940s, the Trefon family moved their cache from their Miller Creek hunting and trapping camp to Horseshoe Bend on the upper Newhalen River. Thus in the early 1940s, the Trefon Cache underwent the first of three moves. It is not known for certain what if any changes occurred to the appearance of the Trefon Cache after the initial move from Miller Creek. Wassillie Trefon dismantled the cache and hauled its pieces by boat to Horseshoe Bend, where it was rebuilt and used in conjunction with the all-important summer red salmon fishing season to store 2000 dried salmon annually. Bill Trefon recalls stacking thousands of dried red salmon in the cache during his boyhood years in the 1940s and 1950s. That the Trefons moved their fish cache two times attests that fish were plentiful in several locations in the Lake Clark drainage. Fish could be caught and dried and securely stored in multiple locations, and fish caches were easily disassembled and moved to other locations around the lake and rebuilt, all testimonials to the mobility of the Lake Clark Dena’ina people.

In the early 1950s, all the Nondalton families who had fish camps around Horseshoe Bend moved upriver to the present location of Nondalton Fish Camp at the head of the Newhalen River. It was at this time that the Trefon Cache was moved for a second time to Wassillie Trefon’s new fish camp. Changes were made to the original cache door and to the roof; however, it is not known with which move, the early 1940s or the early 1950s, the changes occurred.

With one of the moves the cache was re-roofed with sawed, one-inch boards and a new, full-sized, 2x4 ridge pole. The cache originally had four rafters. The lumber had been recently sawed on Charlie Denison’s steam-powered sawmill located on Lake Clark near Tanalian Point. The roof was covered with tin shingles that were originally flattened 5-gallon fuel cans, which became ubiquitous in the 1930s around southwestern Alaska when airplane flights became more common. Like many other Nondalton people, Wassillie Trefon worked with Charlie Denison sawing lumber; that is how he obtained boards from Denison for the ridge pole, roof and door. The last cache door was made of plywood and not well fitted. When it was put on the cache is not recalled, but it was likely in the late 1950s or 1960s.
Bill Trefon is certain that his father obtained the sawed lumber for cache roof and for the ridge pole from the Denison saw mill.

Helen Beeman Denison, the wife of Charlie Denison, kept daily journals while living on Lake Clark from 1945 to 1952. She made frequent mention of Wassillie Trefon working with Denison on the sawmill.

9-22-1950 “Hauled up 120 logs for Macy, Wass T. & H. Balluta”
9-24-1950 “Started on Wass T.’s logs.”
9-25-1950 “Sawed for Wass T. all day.”

In 1958 Wassillie Trefon was drowned while commercial fishing in Kvichak Bay; however, his family continued to reside in Nondalton and to use the fish cache at their summer fish camp. In the mid-1960s the gas can shingle roof began to leak, so Henry Trefon, Wassillie and Mary Trefon’s oldest son, covered the older roof with sheet aluminum, thus assuring its continued viability, even though the cache now spanned five decades and normally would have been rotten at that age.

Park personnel and Nondalton villagers moved the cache from its position sitting on four, 55-gallon drums, to a one-ton truck at the Trefon family fish camp within 100 feet from the head of the Newhalen River. The truck was driven onto a small barge and transported northeast on Lake Clark 22 miles to Port Alsworth in August 2004. At Port Alsworth, the truck was driven off the barge to an open shed near the park Visitor Center, and the cache was unloaded and stowed under the shed roof.

In 2005, historic architect Grant Crosby from the Alaska Support Office in Anchorage surveyed the Trefon Fish Cache and wrote a detailed restoration plan. In 2006, Steve Hobson, Jr. was hired to restore the Trefon Cache. Mr. Hobson is considered the foremost traditional Dena’ina wood worker from Nondalton, and his sister is married to Mr. Trefon.

Mr. Hobson restored the cache after consulting Mr. Trefon about its original appearance and subsequent changes it underwent at Horseshoe Bend and Nondalton Fish Village. In addition, he was guided by Mr. Crosby’s work plan. The basic idea was to restore the cache to what it looked like when it was built by Wassillie Trefon at Miller Creek circa 1920. For example, the original cache did not have a plywood door, as it did when the National Park Service took custody of it. Consultation with elders, such as Andrew Balluta, who remembered the cache in its early days, books such as *The Ethnography of the Tanaina* by Cornelius Osgood, and historic photographs led to rough-sawned, one-inch spruce boards held in place with a wooden bar. The photographs were not close enough and Andrew Balluta was not certain, so the group decided to match a traditional Dena’ina cache door in Osgood’s book, which was common before metal hinges became widely available at Lake Clark.

First Mr. Hobson deconstructed the cache from the roof to the sill logs; since there were no nails or spikes below the roof, it was not a difficult task. The aluminum roofing was removed. Next, the square tin gas can shingles were removed and finally the boards were taken off. The boards were mostly decayed and would not have supported a sod roof like the original covering. The roof boards were the only nailed items in the cache, having been nailed to the top of the eve logs and the ridgepole. The intact tin shingles were saved for interpretive purposes.

The logs comprising the two gable ends were attached together in an ingenious way by cutting 2-inch slots just below the ridge pole.
The slot in the ridge pole was very narrow at its bottom and wider toward the surface. A hewed stick, narrow at the bottom and wider at the surface was hammered into the slot and it held the entire gable end rigid. No nails or spikes were required. Mr. Hobson removed one of the hewed sticks and inadvertently broke it, and the other was fragile, so he replaced them with two of his own construction that are very similar to the originals. The original sticks were retained as educational specimens.

The wall logs were all sound except the two sill logs which had rotted on each end. They were replaced with new, hand-hewn sills by Mr. Hobson so as to be sure to carry the additional weight produced by the heavier roof. The gable ends both consisted of three, short, hewn logs. The walls from the eves to the sills both had five logs per side. The total number of logs in the cache walls is 26, of which only the sills are new. The original sill logs were saved as prime examples of superior woodworking with an axe.

Mr. Hobson made four traditional log posts for the cache to rest on. The posts were cut in a special way to make it difficult, if not impossible, for small animals to climb up to the foodstuffs. The posts stand 1 meter 42 centimeters (4 feet) above the ground. About 86 centimeters (34 inches) above the ground, the post is reduced in diameter from approximately 31 centimeters (12 inches) to about 15 centimeters (6 inches) in diameter and then it abruptly reverts to its natural diameter for the last 46 centimeters (18 inches) of its height. The abrupt junction of the reduced diameter and the natural diameter creates an impediment that discourages mice and other small animals from climbing.

The door was based on documentation from Cornelius Osgood's book *The Ethnography of the Tanaina*. “A small entrance is cut in the front wall of the [cache]. This may be closed by a plank door held in place by a cross bar.” Since the door on the Trefon Cache in 2004 was made of plywood and was hinged with two mismatched steel hinges, it was obviously not original. Mr. Hobson built a new door like doors he had seen other Nondalton elders build as a youngster in the 1940s and 1950s. The door was held in place with a spruce pole bar. In the dog sled era, large numbers of dogs were staked out around the Fish Camp to deter bears and wolverines from attacking the food. This allowed people to build their fish caches at the convenient height of four to five feet (1.22 to 1.52 meters) off the ground. Traditionally, fish caches would have been located handy to where red salmon were caught and processed. In the Lake Clark area, they would have been located within 50 to 100 feet of Lake Clark or the Newhalen River. The Trefon Cache's first location was 25 feet from the mouth of Miller Creek, and the last location where the Trefons used it was within 100 feet of the Newhalen River. The present location of the Trefon Fish Cache is on land owned by Lake Clark National Park and Preserve near the Visitor Center where it is handy to park visitors.

When the Trefon Fish Cache was removed from the family fish camp Nondalton Fish Village to Port Alsworth, it was resting on steel fuel drums a few feet off the ground. Therefore it was necessary to build a ladder for access. After consultation with elder Andrew Balluta, who, like Mr. Trefon, was born at the Miller Creek in the 1930s, it was recommended the cache be about 4 feet (1.42 meters) off the ground. Mr. Hobson constructed a traditional Dena’ina notched log ladder for access.

The historic architect recommended mounting 8 steel stabilizers on the interior corners, top and bottom, to tighten up the structure, and they were installed. The roof support system was entirely new and consisted of a spruce log ridgepole and three pole rafters on each side of the ridge. The rafters were sheeted with rough-sawed, white spruce, 1" boards, covered with two courses of tarpaper and topped with a solid rubberized covering. The roof was then covered with sod squares, in keeping with Mr. Trefon’s recollection of stories told by elders of the original cache’s appearance at Miller Creek.
With the arrival of prospectors in the early twentieth century, Dena’ina in the Lake Clark-Iliamna area dried red salmon and tied them into bundles of 40 fish for storage in fish caches, such as the Trefon Fish Cache. They sold and traded the bundles of dried fish to prospectors who used them to feed their sled dogs. Lake Clark Dena’ina also sold bundles of dry fish to Hans Seversen, who ran the most important trading post in the Lake Clark-Iliamna area. Seversen, in turn, sold the bundles of fish to his customers, including prospectors and other winter travelers.523

Colonel A.J. Macnab and Frederick K. Vreeland of New York City were at Lake Clark on a big game hunt in the summer of 1921. They began hiking up the Telaquana Trail from Miller Creek on August 29, 1921, and Macnab wrote: “We find ... the old trail at the mouth of the creek where there is an old cabin and two well-built caches—empty.” On August 31, Colonel Macnab again mentions the cache: “We reach the mouth of the creek [Miller Creek] ... store our surplus stuff in a well-built cache on stilts back of the cabin ... .”524 It would seem probable that one of the caches described by Colonel Macnab was the Trefon Fish Cache because the Trefon family began using Miller Creek as a hunting camp and as a jumping off place for their fall hunting and winter trapping on the Telaquana Trail after prospector W.H. Miller died about 1911.

The many moves of the Trefon Fish Cache were not out of the ordinary, but rather were a traditional pattern from at least the early American period for the Lake Clark Dena’ina Athabascan people. After the measles-influenza pandemic hit historic Kijik Village on Lake Clark in 1902, the surviving Dena’ina moved 25 miles southwest to establish Old Nondalton Village on Sixmile Lake by 1909. When the surviving “families moved, they dismantled the logs from most of their dwellings and floated them to the new village.”525 Wassillie Trefon’s father and mother, Trefon Balluta and Mary Ann Trefon, began their married life at Telaquana Village, fifty miles north of Lake Clark, in the late 1890s. But as many of the more far-flung Dena’ina villages were abandoned in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Dena’ina people concentrated their populations at Old Iliamna, historic Kijik, Old Nondalton and Stony River, and the Trefon Balluta family was part of that dynamic.

The Trefon-Ballutas lived at historic Kijik in 1900. In 1910, they lived at Old Iliamna so their oldest son, Gabriel, could attend school. In about 1912, they became the first Dena’ina family to live at Tanalian Point.

In 1920, they lived at Tanalian Point. After Wassillie was married in the mid-1930s, he dismantled his log house at Tanalian Point and transported the logs to Old Nondalton and rebuilt it. By the 1940s, the Trefon family had largely left Tanalian Point for Nondalton, except for fall fishing in Tanalian Point.526 In 1944–1945, Wassillie Trefon moved his family three miles west on Sixmile Lake to present-day Nondalton, as did most all the residents of Old Nondalton. Old Nondalton was a difficult place to live because when the lake level dropped in the fall, boats could only be accessed by walking through mud. Present-day Nondalton has a superior beach on which to leave skiffs.

The Inland Dena’ina people have long seemed to be willing and able to move houses and villages as circumstances dictated. For example, the Kijik National Historic Landmark is considered to be the largest intact Athabascan archeological site in Alaska. It is located three miles west of the mouth of Miller Creek where Wassillie Trefon built his fish cache, and consists of about 20 separate clusters and solitary semi-subterranean house depressions spread over more than 2500 acres. There are about 270 documented Dena’ina house depressions.527 The site represents Dena’ina life on Lake Clark for approximately the past 1000 years. Elders say their ancestors moved their homes after they cut all the firewood trees immediately adjacent to their villages.

In 1926, there was a very poor return of red salmon to Lake Clark,
so Gabriel Trefon led his family 70 miles north to Teluquana Lake where he had been born and where he knew there would be sufficient salmon to feed his family and their dogs for the year. In the late 1930s, Gabriel Trefon decided to move three miles west of Old Nondalton to the location of present-day Nondalton because the location was more advantageous for boat storage and access to both the trading post at Iliamna and the Bristol Bay commercial fishing industry. During the early to mid-1940s, other residents of Old Nondalton moved down to the new village and Old Nondalton, like historic Kijik village 30 years earlier, was gradually abandoned. Thus Inland Dena’ina people moved their residences and villages for a variety of reasons, namely to leave the scene of a devastating epidemic, to more readily obtain firewood, to have a superior physical location for their village and to more readily access trading and employment opportunities.

Therefore, it not unusual that the Trefon family moved their residences and structures, such as their log houses and caches, depending on the circumstances in their lives in a time of significant change for themselves and fellow Dena’ina. The twentieth-century Dena’ina people were highly mobile, and the Trefon family epitomized that fact. With the growth of physical amenities in the 1960s and 1970s, more people got part-time electrical power from personal generators and eventually full-time power from the Iliamna, Newhalen Nondalton Electric Cooperative by 1983. With full-time electric power came the widespread use of freezers in Nondalton and the diminution of the importance of traditional, hewn-log fish caches. Instead of storing dried salmon in the fish caches, Nondalton people froze the dry fish in their freezers or stored them in their windbreaks, since they were now dealing with hundreds of fish, rather than thousands as in the sled dog days. In addition, by the late 1970s, the fact that, like most of the people in Nondalton, the Trefon family no longer kept a dog team, meant they annually dried far fewer salmon than they previously had during the dog sled era. So although the freezer was far smaller than the Trefon Fish Cache, they no longer needed the cache to store their year’s supply of dried salmon for dog food. Thus in 2004, Mr. Trefon approached the National Park Service about donating the cache to be restored at the Visitor Center at Port Alsworth. The Trefon cache was the last and most intact Dena’ina fish cache extant in and around Nondalton and its fish village (summer fishing camp) and may even be the last, traditional, log fish cache in the entire Bristol Bay region, a region formerly known for its ubiquitous log caches.

528 Ellanna and Balluta, op. cit., 58, 64, 76, 80, 81, and 280.
In his book *Shelters, Shacks and Shanties, and How to Build Them*, Daniel C. Beard, “Father of the American Boy Scout movement,” described the “Susitna” cache, which looks very much like the Trefon Cache except it is much higher. He also documented a “Fred Vreeland” cache that employed posts similar to the Trefon Cache. Vreeland was Colonel Macnab’s traveling partner to Lake Clark in 1921 who, along with Belmore Browne and Herschel Parker, had firsthand experience observing Dena’ina architecture at Lake Clark and Cook Inlet. They were likely Beard’s sources of information.\(^{529}\)

The Dena’ina were known to have developed bark-lined underground fish caches in prehistoric times, but once the Russians and Kamchedal from the Kamchatka Peninsula introduced them to steel axes, adzes, saws and dovetail notches, they began to build above ground log caches, such as the Trefon Cache, in the early historic period of 1790 to 1820. They probably built even more after 1820, when Dena’ina-Russian warfare abated and the fur trade was in full force. Ivan Petroff mentioned Dena’ina log work in his 1884 book about Alaska, in conjunction with the Tenth Federal Census.\(^{530}\)

Moreover, historic photographs from western Alaska taken in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries of Alutiiq, Yup’ik or Athabascan settlements always show raised log caches.\(^{531}\) Traditionally crafted log caches are no longer seen in contemporary villages because people got rid of their dog teams when they acquired snow machines in the late 1970s. Village-wide electricity has also enabled people to run freezers to store dried and smoked salmon for human consumption rather than store them in a traditional log fish cache. Recent conversations with a number of people in various Bristol Bay villages, suggest there are no longer any viable log caches extant.

Folklorist/cultural anthropologist Susan W. Fair wrote an article “Story, Storage, and Symbol: Functional Cache Architecture, Cache Narratives, and Roadside Attractions” about the likely background and likely origins of Alaska Native caches.

“Elevated cache types include log or plank cache, open racks, platform caches, and tree caches. The high cabin-on-post cache was probably not an indigenous form among either Eskimos or Athabascans... Cabin-on-post caches are thought to have appeared in the 1870s, but the date may have been earlier, especially on the Kenai Peninsula... at Fort Yukon, and on the Seward Peninsula, all of which were frequented by traders from various nations. In the subarctic, high caches may not have been constructed until the arrival of the Western Union Telegraph Expedition in the mid-1860s, after which the structure were first portrayed in carved ivory, particularly on pipes made for sale. ... The cabin-on-post form may thus have been introduced by early traders, miners, or missionaries, who would have brought with them memories of the domestic and storage structures constructed in their homelands.”\(^{532}\)

The Lake Clark Dena’ina are an important band of the Dena’ina Indians of south central and southwestern Alaska. The Dena’ina bands apparently entered the Cook Inlet Basin and the Lake Clark region more than 1000 years ago from the interior of Alaska. When Captain James Cook encountered the Dena’ina on Cook Inlet in 1778, they also occupied the Susitna River drainage, the Kenai Peninsula, the northeastern part of Iliamna Lake, Lake Clark, the upper Mulchatna River, Whitefish and Telaquana Lakes, and the Stony River country. This was a huge landmass under Dena’ina hegemony.

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from Cook Inlet on the east, to the Bristol Bay uplands to the southwest and the headwaters of the Kuskokwim River to the north.

Some Dena’ina fish caches were larger than the Trefon cache and were supported by six posts instead of four to hold the extra weight. During the period 1880 to 1920, when many prospectors were traveling through Dena’ina country by dog sled searching for gold, they purchased large numbers of dried red salmon for dog food. The Dena’ina made bundles of 40 dried salmon and stored them in their caches; perhaps that was the reason the large six-leg cache was developed. In such cases, a Dena’ina family might put up 2500 to 3000 dried red salmon in a large cache. Or an individual might build two caches close together as Pete “Fedja” Delkittie did on the Newhalen River in the 1920s or 1930s.

In 1966, Dr. James W. VanStone excavated a Dena’ina fish cache at the Kijik Fish Camp, which had been abandoned between 1902 and 1909. The cache was probably built in the late nineteenth century, as only one cache leg was still standing when it was documented. Its similarities with the Trefon cache are many and it is worth quoting Dr. VanStone’s description as a means of comparison with the Trefon cache.

In its manner of construction, this cache, which was 2.75 m. square and rested on four posts, one of which was still standing at a height of 1.40 m. above the ground, appears to resemble almost exactly the type described by Osgood. One notable feature, somewhat more elaborate than Osgood’s description, is the construction of the posts on which the cache stood. They have an overhang about half way up, presumably to prevent small animals from climbing into the structure and getting at the materials stored there. At the top of these posts is a concave notch into which were fitted the four poles which formed the square floor and on which the superstructure of the cache rested. The floor itself appears to have been constructed of narrow poles with the bark removed placed at internals to allow for ventilation. Since many pieces of cut birch bark were found lying directly on these poles, it may be that the floor was covered with this material. On the other hand, the birch bark may have fallen in from the roof which was almost certainly covered with it.

The four walls of the cache were constructed of wide, hewn log planks, notched at the end. … the side walls were simply halved logs, some as much as 35 cm. wide, with the flat side facing in and the ends carefully notched. The end planks had been skillfully hewn and those at the front of the structure were as much as 42 cm. in width. The gabled sections at each end were grooved for vertical supports which may have run from the floor of the cache to the roof.

The structure almost certainly had an inverted V-shaped roof with a single ridge pole and short poles, like those used for the floor, running from the top wall log to the ridge. … As we have noted, the roof of the cache was almost certainly covered with birch bark and perhaps also sod. … The predominant impressions created by the remains of this cache are of solidarity, weight, and permanence.533

The VanStone description of the Kijik Lake Fish Camp Dena’ina fish cache sounds very similar to the Trefon fish cache, and conforms with Cornelius Osgood’s description of Lake Clark Dena’ina fish caches as being “neatly built of hewn logs and planks.”534

Other caches were also higher, especially if they were located in a remote area only visited in the winter for trapping. In that case they could be 9 or 10 feet off the ground. In one such example, a cache

534 Cornelius Osgood, op. cit., 66.
attributed to Ben Trefon, Sr., Wassillie Trefon’s nephew, on the middle Mulchatna River, spikes were driven diagonally down the four cache legs sticking out to deter climbing wolverines or black bears from reaching the raised cache.

The white spruce was a very fine building material, as it was relatively light and easily worked, yet quite strong. White spruce made excellent resilient and stout log caches, strong enough to deter brown bears and secure enough to keep mice and dogs from wasting the dried fish. White spruce protected from moisture will last at least 100 years. If exposed to constant moisture, it will rot in fewer than 25 years.\(^\text{535}\)

To prevent dry salmon from becoming moldy while stored in a cache, its walls and floor had spaces between the logs and poles to allow for the free flow of air. In addition, spruce boughs were also laid on the cache floor so the bundles of fish would be cushioned and have an air flow under them to prevent souring and mold growing on the dry fish.

Tools used to construct the cache were axes and adzes to hew the logs flat and hand saws to cut the dove tail notches. Axes were the most prized trade good a late eighteenth or early nineteenth century Dena’ina could own. When the Lake Clark Dena’ina obtained axes and saws is not known for certain, but they probably obtained them in their first contact with Russian fur hunters, the promyshleniki, in the 1790s. By the mid-nineteenth century, both axes and adzes were available to the Lake Clark Dena’ina through the fur trade. Both the Russian America Company and its successor, the Alaska Commercial Company, traded manufactured goods, such as axes, for furs from Dena’ina people at Kenai, Iliamna, Tyonek, Katmai Bay and Nushagak all during Trefon Balluta’s entire life. A Russian-trade axe head was discovered by Brown Carlson, Wassillie Trefon’s brother-in-law, in Carlson’s garden at Portage Creek village on Lake Clark five miles east of Miller Creek sometime between 1905 and 1960.\(^\text{536}\)

If Wassillie Trefon was assisted in building the log cache by his father and brother, then they probably could have completed the cache walls and floor in a week, with the sod roof and door taking somewhat longer. The Trefon cache is a model for a younger generation of Dena’ina builders and scholars who want to examine traditional Dena’ina woodcraft and architecture and replicate it for educational and practical reasons.

The origin of the above-ground log fish cache is thought to be Russian-influenced, as such structures were apparently common in Siberia. Once the Dena’ina obtained steel woodworking tools, they very quickly learned how to skillfully ply them in enhancing their lives. One of the leading scholars of Dena’ina ethnography, Alan Boraas of Kenai Peninsula College, provides some context to the fish cache.

The various dovetail notches were certainly introduced by Russians [and Russian Finns]. An interesting connection is that the 1787 Russian post of Redoubt St. George at the mouth of the Kasilof [River] had about 40 employees of whom about half were identified as Kamchedal, probably famous for their above ground caches and the culture was otherwise very similar to the Dena’ina (Raven mythology, clans, primary reliance of salmon) so the initial stimulus may have come from them as well as Russians.\(^\text{538}\)

535 Babe Alsworth, conversations with the author, 1974-1996.
536 Craig Coray, various conversations with the author, 1976.
538 Alan Boraas, e-mail message to the author, August 20, 2010.
Libby’s No. 23, the History of a Bristol Bay Double-ender Sailboat

The following is a version of the nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for Libby’s No. 23, a Bristol Bay double-ender. The 30-foot wooden sailboat was placed on the Register in 2013. This section was written by the author.

The Bristol Bay double-ender, also known as the Bristol Bay gillnetter, measures 29’6” long, 4’ deep and 9’2” wide. The wooden sailboat was formerly used in the world’s greatest commercial salmon fishery in southwestern Alaska on the Bering Sea. The boat is painted “Libby’s orange,” a butterscotch hued color that was unique to one of Libby’s salmon canneries, Graveyard Koggiung, on Kvichak Bay, where it worked in the first half of the twentieth century. There are block letters and numbers in black on the hull, stern and bow, port and starboard, which enabled identification at a distance. The boat is located about 100’ from the Visitor Center at Lake Clark National Park and Preserve in Port Alsworth, Alaska. The double-ender is on permanent display in a 20’ by 37’ boat shed where it can be viewed by park visitors. The boat shed is about 40’ from the Trefon cache. Immediately west of the boat shed, a small steam engine and boiler are exhibited, detailing another industrial artifact from the Bristol Bay commercial salmon fishery. It was brought to Lake Clark by dog team about 1934 and adapted for reuse to power the one of the region’s first sawmills for Charlie Denison at Tanalian Point.

Park managers sought to restore the double-ender to its formative, most significant, period demonstrating its original purpose as a commercial salmon fishing sailboat circa 1914 through 1951. It was part of the Libby, McNeill & Libby, Graveyard Koggiung cannery fishing fleet. Libby’s was second only to Alaska Packers Association as the largest salmon canning company. Libby operated plants throughout the coastal territory of Alaska in the early twentieth century and had five or six in Bristol Bay alone. Each boat had a Roman numeral incised in the forecastle on the port side of the mast ring. The park’s boat number is XXIII, or 23. Each salmon cannery in Bristol Bay had a unique paint scheme for its respective fishing fleets; Libby’s Graveyard cannery boats were “Libby’s orange.”

The bow and stern of double-ender boats are shaped similarly, hence the name double-ender. Libby’s No. 23, like all Libby’s double-enders, was sharp in the bow and sharp in the stern, according to fisherman Al Andree. They were good seaworthy boats that could pack a load of fish, frequently 1,500–2,000 five- or six-pound red salmon, and very occasionally 3,000 fish.

The double-ender is an open boat, carvel-built (planks meet at the end rather than overlap) with centerboard. The boat has bow decking forward 4’9” from the mast and only 20” aft decking. It has a washboard running along both the port and starboard sides, but only the bow deck is covered with canvas. It appears that when the boat was actively engaged in commercial fishing, its washboards were also covered by canvas. A 3” coaming runs along the inside edge of the washboards and the decked parts fore and aft, resulting in the inside of the boat being oval. It has four thwarts and two oarlocks on each side. Oars were carried but used only when fishing the gill net or if the sailboat was becalmed. The boat has a single mast and it is stepped in the forecastle just aft of the fore deck.

The sailboat was constructed from a variety of woods which are identified in a materials list for a boat written by an employee of the Alaska Packers Association, probably in the 1920s or 1930s. The keel was made of Australian Spotted Gum Eucalyptus maculate. The stem, rudder, apron, centerboard, floors and frame clamps were made of Indiana white oak Quercus alba. The coaming was made of Southern

APPENDICES 235

539 Libby, McNeill & Libby had six canneries in Bristol Bay: Ekuk, Egegik, Nushagak, Libbyville, Graveyard Koggiung, Lockanok.
red oak *Quercus borealis*. The boat frames or ribs were made of Indiana bending oak, which is likely white oak. Most of the boat planking was Port Orford white cedar *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*, with the exception of the top strake planking, which was clear spruce, perhaps white spruce *Picea glauca*. The centerboard case, mast, thwarts, beams, mast step, boom and sprit were all made of Douglas fir *Pseudotsuga menziesii*. No. 23 is most likely made of the same species of wood, as described above, but it is possible there were some slight variations based on availability. For example, in a two-part article entitled “I Sailed for Salmon in Bristol Bay,” by Al Andree as told to Jim Rearden in the July and August 1986 issues of *Alaska* magazine, the author states that frames were “Vermont steaming oak (white oak), planks were Port Orford cedar. Bowstem, keel and sternpost were usually iron bark *Eucalyptus wilkinsoniana*.”

The history of Libby’s No. 23 during its formative period of significance begins in 1914, when it was reported to have been built in a shipyard somewhere between San Francisco Bay and Puget Sound, for the Libby, McNeill & Libby Company, whose corporate office for its Alaska salmon canning operations was in Seattle. The sailboat would have been transported from Seattle on a sail square rigger, possibly the *Abner Coburn*, to the ship’s channel off the mouth of the Naknek River, and then lightered into Libby’s Graveyard Koggiung cannery, near the mouth of the Kvichak River, in 1914 or 1915. From that point on, the boat would have been part of the cannery salmon gillnet fishing fleet each summer and assigned a captain and boat puller for the season. The boat was owned by Libby’s, and its two-man crew would fish actively from about June 25th to July 15th or 20th, delivering their catch to Libby’s scows at anchorage in various parts of Kvichak Bay.

This first-hand account of a typical sailboat fishing year in Bristol Bay, chronicled by John Lundgren, Sr., who began fishing in sailboats just like Libby’s No. 23 in 1934, describes the work. Lundgren’s father was a cannery machinist and winter watchman at the Nornek cannery in Naknek starting in the early 1900s. John Lundgren was interviewed in 1980 at his home in Naknek, which is only about 12 miles south of Graveyard cannery. The following are direct quotes from Lundgren’s interview.

You had to rig all your boats up. You didn’t have any kind of winches or anything back then to load your nets onto the boat. You had to do it all by hand or pack it by hand trucks...You had a roller that was in the stern of the sailboat. One pulled the lead line and one pulled the cork line. It was all by hand...It was all linen nets, with cotton cork lines. Generally you went through three nets a season. By the end of the season they were pretty rotten. Once or twice a week you had to bluestone them. You had to salt them down anytime you let them lay very long to keep them from rotting...You went with the current generally, unless there was a strong wind. You made one drift and very rarely you got up and made the second drift. When it was calm you had oars, 14-foot oars to row...There was no radio. The only way you got help was to put an oilskin up on an oar. If you were in shallow water, no one could come in and help you. If you were swamping, generally you should have tied your mast and boom across the boat to keep it from rolling over. But many of them didn’t, and many of them drowned...Libby’s had good sailboats...They were all brought up with cannery ships on the decks...Once the boats were landed, they would be stored in warehouses each winter. They had steam winches to get them to the water and some of the canneries had slips and slid them into the water on
high tides...We had a tent up on the front of the boat [forecastle] that we pitched. When you wanted to dry up you pitched the tent and put some alcohol on the floor [and lit it] and it dried all the water up. You had a kerosene stove on the boats for cooking and heat...Most of the time in the later years you fished from 6 AM Monday till 6 PM Wednesday night or 6 AM Wednesday morning. Then you went back fishing from 6 PM Thursday night till 6 PM Saturday night. You had 24 (?) hours off on Sundays and 24 hours off Wednesdays...Generally, the superintendent hired a captain on a boat and most of the time allowed him to pick his partners. He had to approve who was the partner. Each man received the same pay. And it was men in those days, women weren't allowed. You didn't have to pay anything for the boats. You were an employee of the company...They lost a lot of lives some years. There was 17–18 fishermen drowned one year. Other years there was only two or three. A few fishermen drowned during the season and most of the time they were old timers because they took more chances on the flats.”

Libby's No. 23 is about 96 years old. The history of the boat was mostly passed down from the family of the first owner, John Coray, after its commercial fishing days were over. The second owners were father and son Earl and Allen Woodward, summer residents of Lake Clark. According to Coray’s son Craig, No. 23 fished both at Libbyville and Graveyard Koggjuung canneries on Kvichak Bay in Bristol Bay until the early 1950s. John Coray purchased No. 23 from Libby's Graveyard cannery in about 1952–1953. He mounted a small outboard engine on a transom and motored the boat up the 60-mile long Kvichak River and across Iliamna Lake to the small Dena'ina village of Pedro Bay where he and his wife, Claudine, were the first schoolteachers.

However, there are two more specific bits of history unique to Libby’s No. 23 extant that connect particular individuals who were long time Euroamerican residents and Alaska Native residents of the Bristol Bay region with the boat. The first piece of documentation is a copy of a “Boat List, Koggjuung 1937” that was donated to a contract historian for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve in the mid-1980s. It lists Libby's 1937 Graveyard Koggjuung cannery double-ender crews and their assigned boats. 70 boats fished for the cannery in 1937; No. 23 was fished by Naknek residents Emil Gustafson and Gust Jonsson. Both Gustafson and Jonsson were typical of the many Swedish immigrant fishermen who comprised a large portion of the Bristol Bay fishing fleet, and also typical, they put down roots in bay communities and established new lives in Alaska. During the 1930s, Jonsson trapped for several years with Sig Lundgren and Axel Erling at Brooks Lake in Katmai National Monument.

The other piece of evidence linking a Lake Clark Dena’ina to Libby’s No. 23 is the signature of Charlie Trefon and the year 1946 written in pencil under the bow deck in the forecastle. There is another name near Trefon’s which seems to be associated with it but it is illegible. In addition, “19-7” written near Trefon’s signature and the number “30,000” appears twice. It is not clear if the writer was referring to 30,000 salmon or 30,000 pounds of salmon or what specific date was meant, but it’s clear Trefon was documenting time he spent fishing the boat. Trefon, born at Tanalian Point, was also a trapper, subsistence hunter and fisherman and a prime example of a Native Alaskan who was deeply involved in the world’s greatest commercial salmon fishery in Bristol Bay.

Gustafson, Jonsson and Trefon are examples of both foreign-born and Native residents being united in their common occupation as...
commercial fishermen in Bristol Bay. The fishery was, and remains, the dominant renewable economic activity in the Bristol Bay region. These three men with their varied backgrounds are documented as having fished Libby’s No. 23, thereby connecting known individuals with the commercial fishery and with the boat.

In 1954, the Corays were teaching school at the Dena’ina village of Nondalton on Six Mile Lake near Lake Clark. John Coray had Libby’s No. 23 hauled on a trailer over the Newhalen Portage road from present-day Iliamna village to the upper Newhalen River. Then he motored into Sixmile Lake. Later the Corays moved up Lake Clark to the Charlie Denison homestead near Port Alsworth, and still later they moved further up Lake Clark to Portage Creek village. The double-ender was used around Lake Clark to haul the Corays and their three sons and belongings as they traveled on the lake. Mr. Coray died in a plane crash in 1959, and Mrs. Coray sold the double-ender to Earl Woodward soon after.

In the 1960s, Earl Woodward first used a 7hp Evinrude outboard and later an 18 hp Evinrude outboard engine on the stern. Earl Woodward apparently cut the original rudder in half lengthwise and used quarter inch steel cable on a pulley from the steering wheel to the rudder to steer the boat. Later Earl Woodward removed his first black plastic steering wheel and replaced it with a wooden wheel. According to Al Woodward, during the early to mid-1960s, his father Earl also removed three thwarts and the centerboard housing from the center of the boat to make it more spacious for hauling cargo. While the Woodwards owned No. 23, they also painted it a light green color. Each summer Allen and Earl Woodward launched No. 23 and used it on Lake Clark, and every fall the Woodwards winched the boat up onto their shipway for winter storage, through the 1970s. About 1981, due to changes in the family’s vacations, No. 23 was never again used on Lake Clark.

The Woodwards used the double-ender for freight hauling, hunting, firewood hauling and recreational trips during the 1960s and 1970s. The Woodwards stowed No. 23 under tarps on a log shipway off Hardenburg Bay near their two cabins at Port Alsworth. The boat was pulled up on the shipway with a five-ton Beebe Bros. of Seattle hand winch, circa 1925, that was originally used at Nakeen Cannery across the Kvichak River from Libby’s Graveyard Koggiung cannery. The winch also had a reversing cable mechanism with an anchor and pulley system which was used to launch No. 23 from the shipway back into the lake each summer. On one occasion in 1977, Earl Woodward loaned the boat to David Barnett, a long-time summer resident of Lake Clark, to haul freight from Port Alsworth to Portage Creek. Mr. Barnett documented the occasion by photographing No. 23 on Lake Clark.

Allen Woodward said Gust Griechen, who was living with his daughter, Mary Alsworth, at Port Alsworth in the 1960s, told him No. 23 was built for Libby McNeill & Libby Company in 1914. In 1913, Libby’s purchased the Graveyard Cannery from the Alaska Fisherman Packing Company. Graveyard had previously been a salmon salting station owned by Olsen & Company, before it was converted to a salmon cannery. Griechen was a longtime winter watchman for the Alaska Packers Association cannery at the Pilot Point Diamond U cannery, having first arrived at Nushagak in Bristol Bay in 1906. Griechen would be considered an expert in commercial fishing in Bristol Bay, and if he said No. 23 was built in 1914, then it would have to be considered true.

By the early 1980s, old age, illness and death altered the Woodward family summer vacations at Lake Clark. No. 23 was permanently stowed under tarps on the log shipway in front of the Earl Woodward Cabin. It remained on the shipway, gradually decaying until 1997, when Allen and Marian Woodward donated the boat to Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. Park staff hoped to restore the boat to its sailboat fishing days and possibly even sail it on Lake Clark as

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547 Claudine Coray Wright, telephone conversation with the author, May 22, 1998.
Libby's No. 23 Bristol Bay double-ender sailboat in 2010. Photograph courtesy of the author.
a living history and interpretative display. Park managers were motivated to preserve and restore the sailboat because of its close association with Bristol Bay commercial salmon fishing industry. One of the main reasons Congress and President Jimmy Carter selected the Lake Clark region as a national park was to help assure the preservation of the Bristol Bay salmon spawning grounds for future generations of Americans. When the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act became law in the waning days of 1980 it stated,

“The park and preserve shall be managed for the following purposes, among others: To protect the watershed necessary for the perpetuation of the red salmon fishery in Bristol Bay... and to protect habitat for populations of fish....”

The sailboat is worthy of preservation because of its direct link to the reason for the existence of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve in law. In addition, since the boat has been on Lake Clark since 1953 or 1954, it is an integral part of the park's preservation mandate.

During the winter of 1997, park employees moved the boat from Hardenburg Bay to an outside storage area on park property. At the new location, the aluminum conduit and chicken wire frame canvas canopy was removed from the bow deck nearly back to mid-ship. Debris such as broken plastic bailers, pieces of rotten canvas, leaves and rotten tarps were removed. The boat was thoroughly cleaned and fully aired out and dried before being covered with new tarps. These procedures stabilized the boat while a restoration plan was developed. The boat was in this situation for two years, 1998 and 1999, covered from direct exposure to rain and snow but not in a completely dry shed.

In 2000, the National Park Service purchased a weather port shelter to store the boat inside while the double-ender was surveyed and a restoration plan was written. In 2001, Lake Clark National Park and Preserve contracted former park maintenance foreman Jack Ross to build a boat cradle that stabilized the boat and allowed for worker safety while boat restoration proceeded. During the years 2002 to 2004, two layers of paint on the interior were analyzed and found to be lead-based—the original “Libby’s orange” and the light green paint the Woodwards had put over it. In the fall of 2003, a contractor removed the 1960s-era light green paint and much of the original orange paint.

In January 2004, state historian John C. Breiby of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Office of History and Archeology, traveled to Port Alsworth and surveyed No. 23. In February 2005, Mr. Breiby wrote a detailed work plan entitled “The Port Alsworth Bristol Bay Double-Ender: A Proposed Plan of Repair and Restoration for a Static Exhibit at Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.”

Mr. Breiby described the condition of the boat when he surveyed it on January 27, 2005.

The boat still appears to have retained its as-built shape. The keel has not hogged, nor are many of the frames (ribs) broken. This type of craft tends to develop numerous broken frames at the turn of the bilge. That is not to say that the boat is in great physical condition. It shows a considerable amount of rot, especially in the forefoot of the stems at bow and stern, where some of the hood ends of the planking have rotted away (at bow) or pulled away from the rabbet (at stern). There are several places where the plank butts have pulled away from the frame, evidence of rot in the frame behind it.

Several of the original fittings and structure have been removed or altered. Though this boat was not converted to an inboard engine, the centerboard trunk was removed, the centerboard slot plugged, and new floors were built over the top of the plug. The mast-step has also been removed, though the remaining floors still show the cutout...
in the area where the mast-step once lay. Floorboards have been removed, as have bin-boards for fish bins. Three out of four heavy thwarts have been removed. The fourth (aft) thwart was evidently also removed, but probably because the sides of the boat began to spread, it was scabbed back in again. The rudder was cut in half lengthwise and a bracket was built for an outboard motor onto its aft edge. The deck canvas has been removed from both fore- and side decks. In regards to the side decks, based on the paint scheme, the canvas appears to have been missing since before the boat quit fishing.

Several non-original additions have been made to the boat, such as a winch and (probably) the anchor line chocks on the bow deck; the outboard motor bracket on the rudder; a bracket of unknown use fastened to the side deck, with wood blocking immediately below in the starboard stern quarter. A number of short pieces of modern Electrical Metal Tubing fastened to tubing clamps have been installed towards the fore end of the deck coaming. These are possibly remnants of the canvas awning put on by the Woodwards in the 1960s.\(^{553}\)

Mr. Breiby wrote a thorough work plan for the boat, identifying both the shortcomings of the boat and how to ameliorate them. The boat plan provided suggestions to enhance the boat cradle to better able to improve structural support for the boat. The report also allowed for a possible boat shed where No. 23 would be on static display for park visitors. The Breiby assessment was perhaps the essential step in the process of preserving the integrity of the double-ender, identifying the problems and offering cost-effective remedies to the challenges facing the boat restorers as they repaired and replaced rotten wood and restored the boat to its original purpose as a Bristol Bay double-ender sailboat. The Breiby report also revealed the extent of dry rot along the keel and urged that No. 23 never be put back into the water but simply displayed as a static display.\(^{554}\)

In the late spring of 2005, craftsmen Monroe Robinson and Carl Kalb were contracted by the National Park Service to implement the Breiby boat plan. Although both men had little experience in wooden boat restoration, they were both highly accomplished at woodworking, including construction of fine furniture, houses, log bridges and log cabins. Mr. Robinson had recently led the restoration work on the Richard L. Proenneke Cabin. In addition, Mr. Robinson spent extensive time studying and photographing another Libby double-ender which was on display at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art and believed to have been fished at Libby’s Graveyard Koggiung just like No. 23. The museum double-ender was the role model park staff and the restorers intended to emulate in the restoration of No. 23.

Armed with the boat plan and knowledge gained at the museum, the restorers replaced the rotten planking and stabilized the other areas against further dry rot. They also rebuilt the interior partitions of the sailboat, including the fish bins and centerboard trunk. They rebuilt the three missing thwarts and mast step. They reinstalled the canvas deck covering on the bow, rebuilt the steering and net-pulling deck platform in the stern, and built a box for the bilge pump. The one omission of the Breiby boat plan was to provide for a rebuilt floor in the forecastle where the 2-man crew slept and ate.

After the restoration work was accomplished, National Park Service personnel chinked the spaces between the planking and applied two coats of (modern, containing no lead) “Libby’s orange” paint to the sailboat. Using information from elderly Bristol Bay sailboat fishermen and original paint chips, the original “Libby’s orange” color was duplicated by the Sherwin-Williams paint store in Anchorage, Alaska.

Historic photographs of other Libby’s Graveyard Koggiung

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554 Ibid.
cannery fish boats and elder testimonies were gathered to determine the correct hull location for the boat number and company initials. Elders who had fished sailboats were also consulted as to the correct color for the numbering and lettering on the sailboat. Stencils were made by Custom Design of Anchorage, Alaska, and the markings were painted on both sides of the hull, bow and stern.  

During the summer of 2004 or 2005, park maintenance staff constructed a boat shed designed by architects at the National Park Service Alaska Support Office to exhibit No. 23. The shed is unheated and is illuminated by natural light through windows and skylights. The shed has large, sliding, barn-style doors for ease in moving the boat in and out. Occasionally No. 23 is taken out of the boat shed, and the mast is stepped and the spritsail hoisted for park visitors. The rigging of the spritsail is informed by historian John Breiby's research and elderly sailboat fishermen's hands-on participation.

The historic appearance of the Bristol Bay double-ender No. 23 can be separated into two distinct periods of significance, in two distinct eras. The first period of significance occurred during its formative period between 1914 through 1951 when No. 23 was a working commercial salmon fishing boat at Libby's Graveyard Koggiung on Bristol Bay and painted "Libby's orange." The second phase of its life on the water was between 1953 and 1997 when it was used as a recreational-freighter on Iliamna Lake for one summer, then spent the rest of its active years on Lake Clark.

Besides the boat itself, there were few original accouterments with No. 23 when it was donated to Lake Clark National Park and Preserve in 1997. The two most significant original parts to survive with No. 23 were its mast and boom. They had been stored under the eves in the Earl Woodward Cabin and were in excellent condition. A small kerosene lamp, small kerosene fuel can, two 13-foot oars and four oar locks also came with the sailboat. The original rudder, which was apparently cut in half length-wise, also survived, but was modified when No. 23 was powered by a small outboard engine and cannot be used with the restored sailboat. Mr. Woodward has the original boat anchor at his home in Anchorage and has said he will donate it to the park for the exhibit. The bailer used to scoop up water from between the frames is original. Nothing else of the original sailboat paraphernalia except some small blocks used with the rigging survived into 1997. Other items surviving from the Woodward's ownership of the boat include their black plastic steering wheel and their later wooden steering wheel. Everything else associated with the working Bristol Bay double-ender fishing sailboat circa 1914 to 1951 was acquired by donation, loan and purchase.

The sailboat, on display at the park Visitor Center, is significant in the context of maritime history as associated with events that have broadly contributed to American history. From its 1914–1951 service in Alaskan commercial salmon fisheries to its 1950s–1970s use as a motorized recreation vehicle supporting modern Alaskan sport hunting, fishing and freight hauling, the boat represents a unique slice of history.

There are only about a dozen museum-quality Bristol Bay double-enders extant in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. From the early twentieth century to the early 1940s, thousands of these sailboats were manufactured in boat yards from San Francisco to Puget Sound. During the heyday of the Bristol Bay sailboat fishery, circa 1900 to 1951, each fishing season saw between 1,000 and 1,200 double-enders actively fishing at the mouths of the five great bay rivers: the Ugashik, the Egegik, the Naknek, the Kvichak and the Nushagak. Now there are no longer any Bristol Bay double-enders in service and only three museum-quality double-enders in the entire 55,000-square-mile Bristol Bay region. In short, Libby’s No. 23 is an extremely rare, intact cultural artifact, informing and educating people about the history of

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557 Tim Troll and John C. Breiby, interviews with the author, June 10, 2006.
the greatest commercial salmon fishery in the world, even though it has been away from the commercial fishing context for more than 57 years.

The fact that Libby’s No. 23 was long ago removed from its historic commercial fishing context on the Bering Sea’s Bristol Bay does not detract from its significance. There is a long history of Bristol Bay double-enders and their antecedent, the Columbia River salmon boat, being removed from their original cannery context and sailed upriver into some of the great lakes of southwestern Alaska.558

As early as 1897, prospector Hugh Rodman photographed a Columbia River salmon boat at the Denailina summer fish camp at the mouth of the Iliamna River about 120 miles northeast of Kvichak Bay. The boat was owned by the prominent Riktorov brothers of Old Iliamna village and used for transportation on Iliamna Lake.559

In about 1900, the Moravian missionary, John Schoechert, sailed a Columbia River salmon boat up the Wood River from the Kanulik cannery on Nushagak Bay to Lake Aleknagik to proselytize the local population.560

Dillingham residents, such as Butch Smith, sailed Bristol Bay double-enders up the Nushagak River at least as far as Ekwok village where he had a cabin. In 1934, Hjalmer “Booty” Olson sailed a double-ender up the Nushagak River to the Chichitnok River, more than 100 miles above Dillingham. Between the 1930s and 1960s, Anton Johnson routinely sailed his double-ender between Dillingham and Koliganek. In addition, during the 1930s, Klondike Johnson canvassed over a Bristol Bay double-ender, leaving only the stern open to the elements so he could steer, and sailed all the way from Dillingham to Bethel and on the Kuskokwim River.561

In 1901, prospectors Lemuel L. Bonham and Quincy Williams sailed a Columbia River salmon boat up the Kvichak River, across Iliamna Lake, and up the Iliamna River to Old Iliamna village, where they wintered.562

Joe Kackley and O.M. “Doc” Dutton also had a Columbia River salmon boat at Old Iliamna village and transported schoolteacher Hannah Breece to the Roadhouse Portage (now present-day Iliamna) in 1911 so she could set up a summer school at Old Nondalton, near Lake Clark.563

Tom Rasmussen, an early Euroamerican resident of Lake Clark, had a Columbia River salmon boat on Lake Clark by at least 1914.564

In the 1930s, Louis A. Gjouland, a commercial fisherman at Egegik, also used his Bristol Bay double-ender on Becharof Lake in support of his winter fur trapping activities.565

Trapper Bob Jenks sailed a double-ender into upper Ugashik Lake in 1936–1936 in support of his trapping activities.566

In the 1950s, the late Naknek elder Paul Chukan used a motorized Bristol Bay double-ender conversion to tow a regular double-ender into Naknek Lake, which was used to transport 2,000 to 3,000 dried red salmon back to Naknek. When the sailboat went upriver through the Naknek River rapids, it had to be pulled along the river bank by a number of men and boys with a tow rope.567

Ralph Angasan recalls accompanying his father, Trefon Angasan, in the 1950s on fall boat trips up the Naknek River in a Bristol Bay conversion on their way to put up spawned out red salmon near Naknek Lake at Ketevik. Ralph and others had to walk along the bank of the Naknek River with a tow rope to guide the double-ender through the rapids and into Naknek Lake.568

The Bristol Bay double-ender sailboat was the logical final

558 The Bristol Bay area lakes that saw Bristol Bay double-enders or Columbia River salmon boats on them were: Lake Alegknagik, Lake Clark, Iliamna, Naknek, Becharof, and Ugashik Lakes to cite the most prominent.
559 Hugh Rodman, op. cit. August 23, 1897.
560 John Schoechert photographic scrapbook at the Moravian Church Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.
561 Hjalmer Olson, telephone conversation with the author, November 12, 2010.
562 Lemuel E. Bonham to Grant and Elizabeth Bonham, March 10, 1901, copy in LACL history files.
563 Hannah Breece, A Schoolteacher. 146.
564 Alaska State Historical Library, George A. Parks Collection, PCA-24-580, Juneau, Alaska.
567 Allan Aspelund, telephone conversation with the author, November 10, 2010.
version of the Columbia River salmon boat. The Columbia River boat apparently originated with San Francisco boat builder J.J. Griffin, who built a boat in 1868 for a salmon fisherman. In 1869, George and Robert Hume, who had created the canned salmon industry in the Sacramento River a few years before, had Griffin build another salmon fishing boat. That same year, the Hume brothers took their boat to the Columbia River and established the canned salmon industry on that river in Oregon and Washington states and Vancouver, Canada. These gillnet sailboats were developed in the Pacific Northwest and designed solely to catch salmon.

Other maritime historians say the first of these boats might be Fraser River skiffs, 20-foot, flat-bottomed double-enders that apparently trace their roots back to the Great Lakes, where William Watts designed the Collingwood boat in the 1850s. The Collingwood boat was apparently identical to the Fraser River gillnet skiff and was also used on the Fraser River. The Fraser River skiff was first built in a boatyard at Vancouver in 1888 by Watts's son, Captain William Watts, and used on the Fraser River for salmon fishing. It is speculated that the Collingwood boat design might have been popular in San Francisco as the Columbia River salmon boat first built by J.J. Griffin.

These first gillnet boats were described as open dories, 22 to 23 feet long. However, by 1890 the salmon gillnetters were narrow decked and 26 or 27 feet long. In 1890, J.W. Collins wrote a report entitled "Fishing Vessels and Boats of the Pacific Coast" in which he described the Columbia River salmon boat. "It is an open, carvel-built, centerboard craft, sharp forward and aft, the ends being shaped nearly alike, moderately concave at and below the waterline, and with rather full convex lines above the water."

These boats were developed for the shallow, shoal waters of the Pacific Northwest.

As commercial salmon fishing increased on the Columbia River in the 1870s, the Columbia River salmon boats were mass-produced by San Francisco Bay boat builders for the salmon canneries. Soon boat builders on the Oregon coast began building salmon gillnetters to accommodate the shoal waters of the Columbia River Bar, and the boats grew in length to 26 feet with a 6-foot beam. Canners ordered large numbers of gillnetters and they were mass-produced by builders. Boat builders had to balance a seaworthy design with load-carrying capacity and sailing capabilities. Having similar bow and stern design allowed the Columbia River salmon boat to stay with the drifting gill nets in rough seas. Gill nets were drifted from the stern. Coupled with the current and tide, they tended to pull the boat stern-first through the water. The Columbia River boats had shallow keels and centerboards, which enabled them to drift over the many shoals and gravel bars of the lower Columbia River.

As the canned salmon industry moved up the west coast of British Columbia and Alaska, culminating in the Bristol Bay region of the Bering Sea by the mid-1880s, the Columbia River salmon boat came north. The first gillnetters to come to Bristol Bay were flat-bottomed and up to 25-feet in length, but over time they proved to be inadequate for Bristol Bay conditions. Tides in Bristol Bay were as high as 30 feet, and salmon returned to the bay in greater numbers over a shorter time-frame than on the Columbia River. The gillnetters needed to be bigger, to handle bigger loads of fish, and more rugged, to handle more severe seas. By the early twentieth century, the double-ender had evolved, becoming a longer, bigger, round-bottomed version of the Columbia River salmon boat that could pack a larger load, while retaining its shallow draft. Between about 1904 and 1912, the canneries began bringing up the 28- to 30-foot, round-bottom sailboats now known as Bristol Bay double-enders.

Libby's No. 23 is an authentic icon from the heyday of the Bristol Bay sailboat fishery, the world's last great salmon fishery, and is significant in maritime history. From 1914 and 1951 the sailboat was one of thousands owned by canneries manned by two-man crews.


571 Ibid., 45-47.

572 Al Andree and Jim Rearden, op. cit., 34; John Lundgren, Sr., op. cit., 60.
plying the dangerous waters of Bristol Bay in pursuit of the five kinds of Pacific salmon. Now, there are only about ten museum-quality double-enders in existence.

The Bristol Bay salmon fishery began in earnest in the late 1870s at Nushagak, when the Alaska Commercial Company directed John W. Clark to salt salmon in wooden barrels for the company’s fur seal hunters on the Pribilof Islands. In 1883, the first cannery was built on Nushagak Bay. By the late 1880s, the first Columbia River salmon boats had been brought to Bristol Bay, and, after salmon traps were increasingly regulated and finally banned in 1924, these boats became the primary means for catching commercial quantities of salmon for the canneries. But they proved to be inadequate to the demands of the Bristol Bay, and a bigger version was developed by boat builders in the Northwest, the Bristol Bay double-ender.

Every summer thousands of people came to Bristol Bay to engage in the greatest salmon fishery on Earth. The region became one of the most heterogeneous parts of the territory of Alaska with Native Yup’ik, Aleut and Indians working alongside northern Europeans, Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos and Latin Americans in a common endeavor of catching, processing and shipping millions of cases of salmon around the world. Bristol Bay Natives had their first exposure to a cash economy with their involvement with the fishery. Much of the cannery-related material culture was adapted for re-use by upriver people, particularly wooden dories. Columbia River salmon boats and even double-enders were sold to local people. Many of these sailboats were altered by local people to fill their needs upriver far from the salt water context of the commercial fishery. Beginning late in the nineteenth century and accelerating in the early twentieth century, several Columbia River salmon boats were used by local people to haul their families and freight from the tidewater to their home villages up river.

The fishing industry had a profound effect, for good and for ill, on the Bristol Bay Native people as it carried them into the modern world as the region’s predominant economic activity.

The development of the Bristol Bay salmon fishery represents western expansionism of United States capitalists into Alaska to exploit the rich fishery. The commercial fisheries were the most lucrative enterprise in Alaska history until the advent of North Slope oil development in the late 1970s. Libby’s No. 23 is a part of the material culture of the Bristol Bay sailboat fishery during the first half of the twentieth century, and, as such, it was part of the maritime history of the nation.

In 1997, Allen and Marian Woodward donated Libby’s No. 23 to Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, and from 2005–2006, the boat was restored from its recreational condition back to its commercial fishing origins. Libby’s No. 23 is now on permanent display in a boat shed near the Visitor Center at Lake Clark National Park and Preserve at Port Alsworth, Alaska. Preceding his donation of the boat, the Woodwards have been extraordinarily generous friends to Lake Clark National Park and Preserve for many decades. During the “monument years” of the park’s setup, in 1979 and 1980, Mr. Woodward sold the Dr. Elmer Bly House to a conservation organization which later sold it to the agency, once a budget for the new park was approved. Some years later, Mr. Woodward sold his late father’s cabin to the park, and still later, he sold his Priest Rock cabin to the park. Mr. Woodward, a World War II veteran naval aviator operating on aircraft carriers in the Pacific Theater, knowingly accepted less than market value for his properties, because he trusted the National Park Service would do a good job of preserving his and his parents’ cabins and the values of conservation, stewardship and historic preservation he espoused.

574 Unrau, op. cit., 170.
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Marion Mooter stands in the stern of his Bristol Bay conversion (double-ender) on Lake Clark in the early 1950s. This is the only photograph documenting the presence of G.I.s on Lake Clark recreating. They likely were based from sport fishing camps on the Newhalen River. Photograph courtesy of Mike Mooter. H-683.


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This book comes with a 30-minute DVD that further illuminates life in twentieth-century Lake Clark country with additional **still photographs not reproduced in the book** and excerpts from **home movies**, including the earliest known films of the area:

- **1927**: Pioneering aviator Russel Merrill filmed by Butler Greer, a big game hunter from California.

- **Late 1930s**: Star Airlines airplanes and the Denisons in their gardens filmed by Virgil Hanson, a radio repairman for Star Airlines.

- **1939**: Local residents filmed by John Meggitt, a Bristol Bay school teacher.

The DVD’s soundtrack includes **Dena’ina music** recorded by school teacher John Coray at Nondalton in the **mid-1950s**, the first ever recordings of Athabascan Indian music.
A 20th-Century Portrait of Lake Clark, Alaska, 1900–2000 is a view of everyday life as it developed over the last century in a number of Dena’ina villages and Euroamerican mining camps spread along the shores of Lake Clark and nearby lands. Human existence at Lake Clark is far different today than it was in the early 1900s, but the one constant is the stunning scenic beauty of the place.