For the Love of Freedom
Miners, Trappers, Hunting Guides, and Homesteaders:
An Ethnographic Overview and Assessment

Appendix A:
Annotated Bibliography of Non-Native History and Culture of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve

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Incorporating excerpts from:
T. Haynes and W. Simeone, Upper Tanana Ethnographic Overview and Assessment, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve: Annotated Bibliography, and
R. Lahoff, T. Thornton, and D. Deur, Yakutat Tlingit Ethnographic Overview and Assessment, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve: Annotated Bibliography
Note: The contractor completed work on this annotated bibliography in May 2015. It has been edited for publication as an appendix to *For the Love of Freedom – Miners, Trappers, Hunting Guides, and Homesteaders: An Ethnographic Overview and Assessment.*
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This annotated bibliography of the non-Native people associated with Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve was prepared as the first phase of a larger project to produce an Ethnographic Overview and Assessment (EOA) of the non-Native culture and history of the region, including but not limited to miners, trappers, homesteaders, and sport hunting guides. EOAs are National Park Service baseline cultural resource reports that review and analyze “accessible archival and documentary data on park ethnographic resources and the groups who traditionally define such cultural and natural features as significant to their ethnic heritage and cultural viability.”1 The National Park Service defines “traditionally associated peoples” as follows: “Social/cultural entities such as tribes, communities, and kinship units, as well as park neighbors, traditional residents, and former residents who remain attached to a park area despite having relocated, are ‘traditionally associated’ with a park when 1) the entity regards park resources essential to its development and continued identity as a culturally distinct people 2) the association has endured for at least two generations (40 years) and 3) the association began prior to establishment of the park.”2

Previous annotated and general bibliographies for the Wrangell-St. Elias region were very helpful in preparing this bibliography and include Wright (1991), Hunt (1996), and, critically important, recent annotated bibliographies focusing on Native people of the area by Haynes and Simeone (2007) and Lahoff, Thornton, and Deur (2012).3 Special emphasis in the current bibliography was placed on increasingly accessible online materials from libraries, museums, archives, and agencies, specifically focusing on non-Native residents and occupational groups traditionally associated with Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. Search methodologies were refined through Boolean searches of keywords in various combinations of places, persons, and occupations. The annotated bibliography brings the topic of non-Native resident history and culture into sharper relief; it also reflects the limitations and gaps in the ethnographic record and suggests new avenues for research.

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3 References to the Yakutat Tlingit annotated bibliography in this document are to a draft dated 2012. The annotated bibliography for Yakutat Tlingit and Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve: An Ethnographic Overview and Assessment was subsequently completed in August 2015.
INTRODUCTION

This annotated bibliography builds upon the bibliographies from two earlier ethnographic overviews and assessments for Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve focusing on the Alaska Native cultures and communities that have lived in the area for centuries longer than the comparatively new arrivals that are the focus of this study. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980, which established Alaska’s “new” parks, including Wrangell-St. Elias, specifically includes language in its “Findings” (Section 801) providing for continued subsistence uses on public lands by rural residents, both Native and non-Native.

Developing an annotated bibliography for the non-Native people traditionally associated with Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve requires condensation of a large body of historical and cultural literature, literary sleuthing, and cautious inference. The literature concerning the Wrangell-St. Elias area is substantial; however, teasing out the ethnographic characteristics of the specifically non-Native communities is difficult. In the anthropological literature, the traditional focus has been the area’s Alaska Native cultures, languages, and history. The historical literature, on the other hand, has tended to focus on the larger sweep of historical events and personages that have impacted the area, with particular emphasis on major industries like mining, fishing, road and pipeline construction, as well as on the establishment of the park. The literature on subsistence, meanwhile, both as a life way and as enshrined in state and federal laws and regulations, has varied greatly in the degree to which non-Native qualitative and quantitative information has been teased from broader studies. Sometimes Native versus non-Native information relating to fish and game harvests, methods, and means is distinguished, and at other times inferences can only be drawn with reference to broader community profile data, area of residence, length of residence, and so on.

Similarly, there are not clear delineations of identity between and within the non-Native population: the residents of this historic last frontier are typical of rural people throughout Alaska, wearing many hats in getting a living in a tough environment where cash is often short, job opportunities limited, and costs of basic supplies and amenities very expensive. It is also a land of great opportunity for those seeking a challenging, unique, and fulfilling way of life living closely with a natural environment and its resources. But the degree to which there is a shared cultural or occupational identity is an open question. In the early days of territorial history, it was not uncommon for non-Natives to identify with old-world ethnic identities; for example, a mining camp might have an enclave named “Swedetown.” In more recent times, those identifications seem unlikely.

Local non-Native residents are not of one mind, one experience, or one cultural, religious, or political identity, but in the literature, the memoirs, and the first-person voices of the oral record, we find remarkable commonalities that together tell a broader story of not just Alaska but also the American experience, the frontier, and the ways in which people come to embrace and adapt to their physical and social environment with profound love, respect, and attachment. In that sense, they tell a universal story of the transformation of “wilderness” into “homeland.”

The bibliographic record shows non-Natives coming to the area historically for its natural resources: fish, furs, minerals, big game, and mountains. They also came because it served as a
trail, telegraph, road, and pipeline corridor stretching from the coast to interior Alaska and the Yukon. The Wrangell-St. Elias area was both a destination and a critically important throughway to other “prospects,” whether in mining, trapping, construction or the dream of a plot of land to scratch out a living. A small number stayed, while many others left as soon as their money was made, or, more typically, when the hardships and disappointments drove them off.

The bibliographic material shows those who stayed often adapted and flourished through flexibility and adaptation to local opportunities: some arriving prospectors gained local knowledge and adopted the Wrangell-St. Elias area as their home; in other cases, mine workers stayed on after claims were played out and became homesteaders, fiercely attached to their adopted homeland; others arrived as pilots for the fledgling airline industry and eventually became lodge owners, guides, and transporters; some fur trappers and traders became full time transporters, big game guides, or fur farmers; sometimes road or pipeline construction workers stayed on, long after the work was gone, making this area home whether they meant to or not; some arrived as missionaries, teachers, or health aides and found themselves bound to the area for its intangible rewards; service industries that support the more charismatic “traditional” occupants and occupations are sometimes overlooked for their vitally important contributions to the cultural and historical development of the area – the shopkeepers, outfitters, transporters, gas station owners, and campground owners to name a few. Even less discussed but just as deeply enmeshed in the local cultural context are all the agency personnel who may have arrived for a “job” but found a life – be they employees of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR), the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), or the National Park Service (NPS).

Visitors and tourists, those who come but do not stay, are and have been vitally important to a cash poor and seasonally challenged local economy: on the one hand, they are “customers” who spend money in a cash poor place; on the other hand they are potential competitors for local subsistence resources and an intrusion into the qualities of life so valued by its full-time residents. Just as the Copper River and Northwestern Railway brought newcomers to the area and spawned new businesses, services, and development before closing down when the Kennecott mines were played out, the newly established park is both a draw and boon to the local economy and a perceived threat to the very values, resources, and lifestyles that many non-Natives sought when they first came to the area.

Given the biographical, cultural, historical, and occupational diversity of non-Natives making a home in or otherwise associated with Wrangell-St. Elias, common themes may be inferred but are often tacit and refractory rather than explicitly stated. One common theme shared by many of those traditionally associated with the Wrangell-St. Elias area is that they hold the American cultural “mainstream” – variously labeled as “Euroamerican,” “white,” or “western” or, as here, “non-Native” – at some distance, physically of course, but culturally and philosophically as well. The literature shows that many sought out this “last frontier” specifically to get away from or to distinguish themselves from centers of power whether they were company bosses or government bureaucrats. While there is by no means a single mindset, there seem to be many commonalities in ethos and aspiration: a desire for “freedom” and the ability to carve out a unique life in a hard land, to live by one’s own lights, to raise a family of capable and adaptive children, to live on their own terms at the margins of the fast-moving society. In doing so, they are living
expressions of a “frontier” culture with deep historical roots in American society in one of the last places on earth where a pioneering spirit continues to thrive.

The issue of how non-Native people construe, embrace, or reject their shared “culture” has seldom been explored in the literature found here. Considerable sleuthing is required to tease out distinctly non-Native information in the anthropological literature – the issue has only recently been “problematicized,” leaving us to make inferences from historical literature, agency reports, community profiles, life stories, and memoirs. Many of the early accounts were keen on documenting what they could of the “exotic” Native people and cultures they encountered, while their own assumptions, worldviews, and cultural precepts are often unstated, taken as self-evident or mundane by the writer, and yet jarringly obvious and intriguing to the modern reader. And while the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) gave rise to a superb literature documenting Native communities and their cultural and spiritual ties to the region, the non-Native experience is sometimes treated parenthetically, consigned to a single chapter, footnote, addendum, or afterthought. Still, embedded in this literature we can find commonalities of experience and perspective among non-Natives who are living at some distance from both the dominant society and from their Native neighbors, while drawing from both cultures as “pioneers” in a historically “new” land.

This bibliography can be considered thorough but by no means exhaustive. It is by necessity a derivative document that builds upon and incorporates previous documentation efforts while revealing many “data gaps,” unanswered questions, and themes for further research. Meanwhile, several references, collections, and agencies are of such importance to merit special mention here. The works (individually annotated in the bibliography itself) of William Hunt, Holly Reckord, Geoff Bleakley, Frank Norris, William Simeone, Terry Haynes, and Rachel Lahoff, Thomas Thornton, and Douglas Deur (who together produced the recent draft of the *Yakutat Tlingit Annotated Bibliography*) are all critically important.

Equally valuable are the works of state and federal agencies, including Alaska Department of Fish and Game Subsistence Division, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, and Alaska Department of Economic and Community Development on the state side; and the National Park Service (and especially the staff of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve), the Bureau of Land Management, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service on the federal side. The most important collections and repositories relating to Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve include the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Rasmuson Library, the University of Alaska Anchorage/Alaska Pacific University (UAA/APU) Consortium Library, the Alaska Resources Library and Information Services (ARLIS), the Z.J. Loussac Public Library in Anchorage, and the Alaska State Library in Juneau. These repositories hold most of the relevant published and unpublished materials including books, articles, manuscript collections, oral history recordings, maps, photographs, and archival films.

A crucial resource for first person accounts by non-Natives concerning their experience in the area is oral history recordings held by the Oral History Program at UAF’s Rasmuson Library in Fairbanks and specifically the “Wrangell-St. Elias Project Jukebox,” an accessible online oral history project focusing on people associated with the park. These recordings are essential listening, supported with text, photographs, maps and other contextual material. The UAF Oral
History Program also has been the repository of choice for many agencies, community groups, and projects that rely on oral history as well as public testimony. This statewide collection of oral history projects can be accessed at http://jukebox.uaf.edu.

Also very important for oral history is the Alaska Trappers Association collection, which has several key interviews from the area which are annotated in the bibliography. Lastly, for general profiles of communities in the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve area, the State of Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development Community Affairs Division provides comprehensive data including community location, population, taxes, climate, history, culture, demographics, utilities, schools, health care, economy, transportation, and major local contacts for each community: https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/dera/DCRAExternal/.

Except where explicitly cited, quotations within the annotations are drawn from the source text to provide a sampling of both the content of the entry as well as the style and context in which it appears.

**METHODOLOGY**

This bibliography was prepared with the aim of identifying crucial resources, materials, books, manuscript collections, photographs and other media and the locations of repositories where such material can be found. A list of materials for review was generated in stages, beginning with already known key references and in some cases annotated from previous work. Much of this material was reviewed and then further annotated, incorporated with attribution, or both. As libraries, museums, government agencies, and other repositories increasingly “go digital,” the internet has opened access to materials that heretofore have been little known and even less consulted, a fact which both creates new opportunities for researchers and complicates efforts to gather comprehensive information. The general search for information in both library search catalogs and online began with a keyword list of communities that are eligible to engage in subsistence uses in the national park based on a customary and traditional pattern of use (also known as resident zone communities), historical events, places, and “traditional occupations” of the park area. The goal was to identify major themes and materials necessary for the Ethnographic Overview and Assessment, which is itself a synopsis aimed at a general understanding and documentation of existing resources rather than a definitive final word on the subject.

The digitization of collections has opened access to vast stores of information that less than two decades ago were unthinkable, and the universe of information grows with every new catalog entry, collection guide, or digitized photograph that not long ago would not have been visible except by an in-person visit to the library or archive. Library search catalogs now instantaneously scour every repository in the state of Alaska, every media type, and every collection index. Agencies now post decades of research reports, technical papers, and public hearing summaries online as searchable texts that can be downloaded in an instant. Oral history recordings and archival film collections that often languished on shelves are increasingly available with the click of a mouse. Increasingly the democratization of access is also showing itself in the democratization of authorship; a homesteader in the Wrangells can instantly share gardening tips or wildlife observations from their remote outpost. Far flung communities and
people are now able to share, politic, organize, plan, and define themselves online, and researchers can gain insight into local issues and culture from the virtual “chatter” that in earlier times might – at best – have been an announcement broadcast on the “Caribou Clatters” radio program or a poster tacked to the wall of the local grocery.

It is now possible for a researcher to search and download the contents of a public hearing related to ANCSA Section 17(d)(2) in Copper Center from 1973, or watch archival film clips of suction dredge operations from the early 1900s posted on YouTube. The “Google Books” service has complete, previously unpublished manuscripts from 1898ers whose words might otherwise be completely overlooked by all except area specialists and archivists. And the public comments on proposed projects or new conservation units from decades ago can now be instantly accessed, searched, and linked to persons still living in the area. Online obituaries forever memorialize people perhaps known locally but otherwise obscured by vastness of space and time, and old newspaper articles previously consigned to the microfiche reader now instantly find new life and circulation via digital access.

In this age of greatly expanded information, there are new challenges in search strategies as well. When searching by a community name in combination with traditional occupations, for example, it is insufficient to search by the terms “McCarthy” and “mines.” One keystroke can make a world of difference; searching “mines,” “mining” and “miners” will sometimes bring up dramatically different results. Consequently, this annotated bibliography can by no means be considered “comprehensive,” though every effort has been made to hit the highlights and to exercise diligence to ensure that the bibliography provides critically important resources.

The author compiled this material from afar, and in some cases this both limited access to materials and required reliance on “metadata” such as library catalog indices and online guides to the collection, meaning that some references are more accurately considered the menu rather than the meal: interested readers and researchers should always look to the primary source materials with this bibliography as a road map. In addition to the online search and download strategy, Fairbanks, Alaska, researcher Lynn Horvath provided invaluable assistance in tracking down resources, copying materials, and undertaking the vitally important gumshoe tactic of consulting the experts in person – librarians, archivists, collections managers, and oral historians who helped refine the search strategy and identify important sources that are not yet visible online either because of use restrictions or because they are accessioned but not yet catalogued. There remains no online substitute for these efforts for the serious researcher. If additional funds were available for the development of this annotated bibliography, similar in-person research would be undertaken in Anchorage, Juneau, and even repositories in the state of Washington. At the same time, digital access can identify and refine search strategies before visiting a library, making for an efficient use of both the archivist’s and the researcher’s time when they arrive at the research room. And for the general reader, this bibliography serves as a good beginning.

This annotated bibliography was the first step in preparing an Ethnographic Overview and Assessment of the non-Native people with traditional and occupational ties to Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. Previous annotated and general bibliographies for the region that were very helpful in preparing this bibliography include Wright (1991) and Hunt (1996). More recent annotated bibliographies focusing on Native people of the area by Haynes and Simeone
(2007) and Lahoff, Thornton, and Deur (2012) are here excerpted with attribution. For each bibliographic reference, excerpted annotations from other works appear before additional annotation added in the current work. Only those sources with clear relevance to the non-Native ethnographic and ethnohistorical record are included here, but each of the works cited above should be considered essential reading for any comprehensive understanding of the region and those who have made it their home. Finally, in deference to those who may wish to protect their privacy and “online” obscurity, both the bibliographic annotations and suggestions for future research avoid naming specific individuals except as reflected in the publically available literature.

“Abercrombie describes his 1884 expedition to gather detailed information about the Native people in the Copper and Tanana river drainages, and to record other information about these areas that would be useful to the military should its presence be needed in the region. The expedition did not have direct contact with people in the upper Tanana region. This report contains descriptions of the ‘Copper River Indians’ and ‘Colcharnies’ of the upper Copper River area, and refers to trade networks of the latter with adjoining Native groups, including the ‘Tanana Indians’” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“The primary objective of this 1898 expedition was to explore as much of the ‘Copper River district’ as possible between Valdez and the Slana valley-Mentasta Pass area. Abercrombie estimated that about 300 Indians in four bands (‘Tazlena,’ ‘Gakona,’ ‘Klutena,’ and ‘Chettyna’) then resided in the Copper River Valley. He speaks sympathetically about the Native people in the face of an influx of white people and alcohol, and as they endured competition for and a decline in game populations due to the demands of the newcomers” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“Described by Ainsworth as ‘more than a family photo album and less than an ethnography,’ this book combines oral and written history and photographs to produce a short, insightful history of Mentasta Village, an Upper Ahtna village situated near the southern border of upper Tanana Athabascan territory. The potlatch ceremony is described, as are significant accomplishments of the village matriarch, Katie John, who will forever be linked with a court case that extended the federal government’s subsistence management jurisdiction into certain navigable waters in Alaska and set the stage for establishment of a culture camp at Batzulnetas. A videotape with the same title as the book was produced and presents much of the same information” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

In addition to providing first person accounts of the Upper Ahtna culture and history during a century of episodic and often rapid change, the book also sheds considerable light on non-Native history and culture. Stories of the massacre at Batzulnetas of Russians are still widely shared, as are stories of prospectors, traders, missionaries and road builders. When the 97th Regiment of the Corps of Engineers arrived to extend the Tok Cutoff road, many Native elders today recall that “the first white man I ever saw was black.”

This 1901 annual report of the USDA Office of Experiment Stations contains a section from Isaac Jones on the reconnaissance of Alaska’s interior along the trail from Eagle to Valdez. It includes a discussion of the Copper River region, as well as notes on the Copper River country by Captain W.R. Abercrombie. The report contains interesting notes and observations of the Native and non-Native residents and visitors to the area, including tensions between miners and growing proposals for bringing agriculture into the area: the miners were concerned that agriculture would threaten or impede mining activities. Copper Center was promoted as the best place for an Agricultural Station with the Tazlina River area as the “best agricultural region in the Copper River Valley.”


This 1906 annual report of the USDA Alaska Agricultural Experiment Stations contains a chapter on the work of the Copper Center Station, including subsections on the station garden, nursery, grasses, and field crops. The report suggests that hay and oats could be profitably grown but that the short season and early frost potential prevented all but the earliest seeded plants from reaching maturity and going to seed.


This online, searchable database provides comprehensive statewide data relating to communities throughout Alaska, including location, population, taxes, climate, history, culture, demography, utilities, schools, health care, economy, transportation, and major local contacts for each community. It is an essential tool for understanding local communities and was regularly queried in the preparation of this annotated bibliography. The community overviews are good thumbnail sketches of communities and their history. Sections on population include data by race and ethnicity, which helps establish the numerical, geographical, and community-affiliation parameters of non-Native residents, with the important caveat that some residents live outside the boundaries of official census areas and are thus not counted in the census. One section of particular interest for future research on non-Native culture and history of the Wrangell-St. Elias area is Business Licenses, which provides information on contemporary economic activity, opportunity, and the focus of local communities and residents.


This 1994 report prepared by the ADF&G ANILCA Coordination Program examines historical materials relating to subsistence access methods, means, and locations for Wrangell-St. Elias. It identifies important historical precedents in the use of aircraft to access parklands for subsistence
purposes prior to park establishment. It points out that aircraft are in some cases the only practical means of access and more economically feasible for area residents than any other mode of travel/access.


The Alaska Department of Fish and Game provides public access to reports, publications and technical papers with statewide coverage and decades of material through a searchable e-library with downloadable report summaries as well as complete reports in pdf format.


“In the 1990s, ADNR began researching and adjudicating routes that appear to qualify as public rights-of-way under federal Revised Statute 2477 from the Mining Act of 1866 (RS 2477). To successfully document an RS 2477 right-of-way on a historic route, the route must be shown to have been constructed or used when the land was unreserved federal land. Route documentation includes historic maps, USGS bulletins and reports, and other sources. ADNR has concluded that about 647 of the 2,000 routes researched to date qualify under the RS 2477 statute.

The RS 2477 Project Case Files contain descriptions of and historical documentation for numerous trails in the upper Tanana/Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve study area, including but not limited to: RST 12 (Nabesna-Chisana); RST 83 (Batzulnetas-Suslota Pass); RST 162 (Batzulnetas-Nabesna River); RST 188 (Slana-Tanana Crossing); RST 307 (Mentasta-Tetlin Trail); RTS 321 (Nabesna-Northway); RST 333 (Tanana Crossing-Grundler); RST 374 (Nabesna-Canadian Border); RST 439 (Nabesna-Chisana Route 2); RST 440 (Mentasta-Slate Creek); RST 656 (Dennison Fork); RST 1567 (Copper River); RST 1572 (Tuck Creek); RST 1852 (Tetlin-Alaska Highway); RST 1854 (Ladue River); and RST 1865 (Last Tetlin/Nandell’s Village-Tetlin)” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

Alaska Digital Archives. (n.d.). http://vilda.alaska.edu/cdm/search

The Alaska Digital Archives is a web-accessible and searchable catalog of collections, repositories, and multimedia materials found in archives and libraries throughout the state of Alaska, including Alaska Moving Image Preservation Association, Alaska State Archives, Alaska State LAM Interactive Exhibits, Alaska State Library-Document Collection, Alaska State Library Historical Collections, Alaska State Museum-Sheldon Jackson Museum-Sitka, Anchorage Museum of Rasmuson Center, Government Documents and Maps, Igiugig, Petersburg Public Library, Seward Community Library Museum, Sitka Tribe of Alaska and Sitka Historical Society, University of Alaska Anchorage Archives and Special Collections, University of Alaska Fairbanks, and University of Alaska Museum of the North. Search terms for the Wrangell-St. Elias area returns hundreds of results including historical photos and collections, texts, archival film, and maps. The digital collection grows as materials are accessioned. Use restrictions and requirements are specific to the materials and repositories.

This web-accessible collection maintained by the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation includes inductee biographies of several Wrangell-St. Elias area miners ranging from the ‘98ers to the present, and includes prospectors, placer miners, and industrial mining inductees. See especially William Crawford Douglas (1889-1979), the “preeminent manager of the Kennecott-Alaska Operation,” as well as Martin Radovan (1881-1975), who worked as a machinist for Kennecott and as hydraulic mining operator at Dan Creek near McCarthy, and eventually became a prospector/miner at Glacier Creek near the Chitistone River.


“Canadian Justice Thomas R. Berger conducted public hearings of the Alaska Native Review Commission in several Alaska communities to review the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, including one in Tanacross on April 30, 1984. Residents from Tanacross and other upper Tanana communities gave testimony. Publication restrictions apply to the material on these sound recordings but they are available for review” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

Maintained at the University of Alaska Rasmuson Library Alaska and Polar Regions Department, this collection includes all recordings from the Berger Commission Hearings that were held to gather first person accounts from those directly affected by the ANCSA land settlement. The materials are indexed by name, village, and topics and the hearings were held in Chitina, Copper Center, Gulkana, Northway, Tanacross, Tetlin, and Yakutat. While mostly focused on Alaska Native testimony, some non-Native residents also testified on behalf of themselves or organizations.


Housed at the Alaska State Library Historical Collections, this photograph collection includes images of the construction of roads, bridges, and trails and the crews who worked on them. The material may be viewed but not photocopied and includes a “Guide to the Collection.” Requests to publish or reproduce materials are to be directed to the staff librarian.


Alaska Trappers Association is a statewide organization whose website includes a history of the organization, membership lists, oral history interviews with interviewee bios, and an educational section with modules on trapping techniques, cabin construction, trapping heritage, and Alaska Trapper Magazine. It also maintains an excellent collection of interviews with prominent Alaska trappers with short biographies prefacing digitized audio files, which are available in excerpt form for free and full audio for purchase. The collection includes material from trappers from the
Wrangell-St. Elias region, including but not limited to Dean Wilson Sr., June Moore, and Lenora Conkle. The Alaska Trappers Association has collected over 150 interviews to date.


“Kirsteatter first came to Alaska as a member of the Air Force in 1943 and returned to stay in 1945. A long-time resident of Healy Lake, he was married for many years to an Athabascan woman from that community. Kirsteatter gained a reputation for his success in trapping and denning wolves, and in this recording discusses his experiences trapping in the Fortymile country for nearly 50 years. He acknowledges his respect for the upper Tanana Athabascan elders and their traditional skills in harvesting wildlife” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“Wilson was raised in the Northway area and later moved to the Copper River Basin. He discusses his experiences as a trapper, hunter, and well-known fur buyer. Wilson speaks highly of Walter Northway regarding his many skills and talents as a leader and of his brother, Steven Northway. The upper Tanana Athabascan practice of killing wolves in their dens is discussed” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


Allan’s dissertation chronicles the anti-park resistance movement that developed on the eve of the establishment of the new ANILCA parks in Alaska. As case examples, he examines events and circumstances of resistance in Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, Yukon Charley Rivers National Preserve, and Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. The dissertation is an even-handed and compelling discussion and illustrates the historical depth and consistency of strong local resistance to the very idea of national parks and the continuing fears of a “land lock-up” that would end their way of life. It also shows how other locals had more nuanced perspectives and viewed new parks with a mixture of concern and anticipation of new opportunities. The manuscript also vividly describes the pressure cooker atmosphere for park officials as they navigated threats and refusal of service in area the local restaurants and hotels.


“Austin and his companions were lured north to the Klondike Gold Rush by the promises of instant wealth, as were many other adventurous Americans of their generation. This informative diary covers a 3-year period from 1897 to 1900 and chronicles the experiences of the Austin party on the trail and while prospecting along the way between Valdez and the Fortymile River area” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).
Hunt (1996) has an extended section derived from Austin’s diary chronicling his and other non-Native attempts to navigate the Tazlina River, overwintering in the area, and setting fish traps which, as Native locals suggested, would be and were swept away completely in high water.


“In this volume, Bancroft provides a description of the northwest coast and its history. In compiling this book, he used information gained from having access to Hudson’s Bay Company accounts, as well as government records and the private papers of James Douglas, Simon Fraser, John Stuart and other fur traders and explorers. He covers a multitude of topics, including previous explorations of the northwest coast, the natural geography of the region, maritime fur-trade and specific voyages to the area. He also discusses the availability of various wildlife species, particularly in relation to fur hunting. There are mentions of ‘Indians’ throughout the volume, specifically chapter seventeen, entitled ‘Relative Attitudes of Fur-Traders and Natives’” (Lahoff, Thornton, and Deur 2012).


“In this volume, Bancroft describes Alaska as a resource-rich region that had not yet supported a significant white population. He covers the history of Alaska, including the period of Russian contact and subsequent influence. He also describes specific voyages to the region, such as those of the Promyshleniki and Chirikof among others. He also has several chapters that discuss trade in the region and rivalries between companies. Native populations are discussed in reference to contact with explorers, such as the attack at Sitka. Of particular interest is chapter thirty, which describes Alaskan fisheries and the various species in the region, including salmon, candlefish and cod” (Lahoff, Thornton, and Deur 2012).


“This report contains moose harvest data for 1960 for communities in the upper Tanana region, based on surveys conducted by Alaska Department of Fish and Game personnel. The data are characterized as being “indicative of the yearly take of moose.” Harvest levels reported for upper Tanana communities are as follows: Tetlin (30); Northway (18); Tanacross (14); Dot Lake (4); and Tok (34)” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

The general report on game investigations in Alaska for 1960-61 includes information for Southcentral Alaska, Copper River Delta, Yakutat, as well as Interior Alaska. The findings indicated some significant differences in hunter success rate. The success rates were much higher for those hunters who had better access due to transportation technology such as the use of aircraft and who relied on professional guides. Local hunters with more restricted access limited
to the front country near roads were less successful. Additionally, moose availability was the key factor in success rate: late season hunters were 100 percent more successful than early season hunters, owing to greater moose movement as they enter the rut. Conflicts between hunting seasons and school and work schedules are a common complaint in many areas of the state.


This recent (2010) dissertation provides a detailed historical account of the construction of the WAMCATS line and demonstrates the special challenges of laying and maintaining the cable communications system in the far north. Like other technical achievements in Alaska, innovation and adaptation was the key to success. The “caching” of materials proved problematic, as cable cached during the summer months became completely encased in ice in places, and when workers used crowbars to free it, they inadvertently nicked the cable, resulting in failure once water got in and refroze the following winter: “when the wire shrunk in the intense cold, it broke at every nick.” Additionally, the dissertation addresses differences in the speed of installation by military personnel based on work schedules ill-suited to Alaska conditions. While progress from Fort Liscum north was rapid, the line south from Fort Egbert saw virtually no progress in 1901 owing to the local garrison commander’s unwillingness to work his crews in the winter due to the extreme cold. This meant that materials were moved during the summer months, “the most difficult time to move anything in the Alaskan bush.” When Lieutenant William Mitchell took over, he instead followed the successful example of Captain Brunnell overseeing the southern section, “moving large quantities of forage, food and construction supplies to caches along the construction route and continuing construction during the winter,” after which work on the northern section sped up, and the two lines met near Tanana Crossing in August 1902.


Tok author Donna Blasor-Bernhardt shares personal stories of those who participated in and were affected by the building of the Alaska Highway. Historical reconstructions of life in Tok during the building of the Alaska Highway are interspersed with reference to her own experience driving the Alcan as a child and later living in a tent in the Tok area in 1977.


This short book uses first person accounts and correspondence to establish that the naming of Tok came from the name not of the Tok River, but rather from a husky pup who was named after the river. Captain Andrew F. McMeekin of the 97th Engineering Regiment, US Corps of Engineers, adopted the husky and the whole regiment was much attached to this dog, as well as a “pet” bear cub named “Dynamite.” Photos of Tok and Dynamite are included. Eventually the dog was run over by heavy machinery, causing much grief over the loss.

This online history of the Valdez Trail is available on the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve website. Bleakley, (retired) park historian, provides a short history of the trail and surrounding area, divided into periods including indigenous use from 1800-1890, American exploration period from 1885-1898, construction of the Valdez Trail 1898-1906, maintenance and use of the trail 1907-1919, and maintenance of the Richardson Road 1920-1945. The author summarizes the important role of the Valdez Trail in providing the first overland access to interior Alaska, following indigenous routes first documented in literature by American explorers and prospectors.


“This detailed history of the Chisana Mining District, which originated with the ‘Chisana Stampede’ in 1913, is derived from secondary sources and interviews with people who lived and worked there. Occasional reference is made to the Native population of the Chisana region. Of the 148 residents counted in the 1920 census for the Chisana District, 105 were Alaska Natives. Their first names and ages are recorded in an appendix to the report. [Note: A revised and expanded version of this report was published in 2005 and can be accessed on the Internet at: http://www.nps.gov/archive/wrst/chisana.htm” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

In addition to providing a finely textured history of Chisana as a well-preserved example of the development of placer mining in Alaska, Bleakley describes the unique historical context for the area that shaped Chisana’s brief boom as the largest log cabin settlement in the territory: timing, since in 1913 the world was at peace and allowed participation in greater numbers than would have been the case during wartime; and new transportation access, as the newly completed Copper River and Northwestern Railway and “vastly improved” Valdez Trail facilitated access as never before.


“This administrative history discusses the major issues and debates that occurred around the formation of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. Chapter two, section seven focuses on subsistence within the park, both of natives and non-Natives. There is mention of traditional subsistence techniques and practices of native inhabitants of the region. Chapter three, section eighteen deals with cultural resources within the park. The author discusses archaeological sites, both historic and prehistoric, including the important prehistoric site of Dry Bay” (Lahoff, Thornton, and Deur 2012).

This recent News-Miner article identifies the Gakona Lodge and its predecessor, “Doyle’s Roadhouse,” as representing “one of the oldest continuously operating roadhouse operation in interior Alaska,” with “surviving buildings from three distinct time periods,” all linked in their service to locals, temporary workers, and tourists lured to the area for work, access, and enjoyment of the area’s resources.


“Bowen, an Anglican missionary, accompanied the Han Indians in Eagle on a trip to Fort Reliance and a trading expedition toward the Tanana River in the winter of 1895. His unpublished journal contains observations recorded during these two trips, the second of which describes the Han playing a middleman role in the fur trade linking Athabascans from the Copper, Tanana, and Yukon rivers. Information from the journal is cited in Mishler and Simeone (2004)” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


This report on the growing commercial fisheries and canneries, as well as fur trapping and the evolution of fur farming in Alaska, was prepared in 1915 by the US Department of Commerce. One section discusses the Copper River region, as local residents reported difficulty in obtaining their stores of salmon for the lean winter months. The report suggests that “no actual suffering on the part of Natives” was observed, indicating that their concerns were more about the future with rising numbers of non-Natives exploiting this vital subsistence resource. In many ways this report has echoes down in the present, where local versus outsider access to subsistence resources continues to vex local communities and resource managers.


This haunting and very well written collection of essays and photographs is a work of creative non-fiction “about places at the edge of civilization where human lives and geography intersect.” The essays focus on two families seeking the Alaska beyond that described by the glossy brochures advertising Alaska’s natural wonders and wilderness. The two families settled respectively in the Slana and Minchumina areas. The Spears (Slana) and Hannan (Deadfish Lake) families were among America’s “last settlers” when the federal government opened up homesteading parcels in the early 1980s. The essays concerning the Spears family struggles in a very marginal environment and the rough and tumble community of Slana are also a reflection on the confrontations between the pioneering spirit and the often harsh realities of road accessible but very remote bush life.

“Brooks was a member of a geological expedition assigned to explore the Lower White River and Tanana River areas during the summer of 1898. He summarizes reports of previous expeditions and records his observations of the region and its inhabitants. Brooks observed the ‘easy communication’ the upper Tanana Indians from Mansfield Village have with the Copper River Indians and the ‘Ketchumstock Indians’ to the north. He depicts on a map and describes several overland routes connecting the White and upper Tanana river basins” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“The physical characteristics and historical uses of the upper Tanana River (from Tanacross to the Chisana River), Nabesna River, Chisana River, and selected creeks and lakes in the Northway area are described in this report. It focuses on water bodies affected by ANCSA village selection applications submitted by Northway Natives, Inc., and is the basis for navigability determination recommendations made by the BLM Alaska State Office for parts of the upper Tanana, Nabesna, and Chisana rivers. Although the Cole (1979) report cited below is critical of the Brown report and the attendant BLM navigability recommendations, the two reports collectively contain a great deal of information from a range of sources concerning the contact history in part of the upper Tanana region” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“This is the longer and unpublished paper from which Brown’s 1999 article (next entry) is derived, and draws upon published and unpublished sources, including archival information not available in Alaska. A Bureau of Land Management historian, Brown conducted the research for and wrote this report to address a longstanding dispute about the location of the western boundary of the Tetlin Indian Reserve: The BLM maintained that the Tanacross-Tetlin Trail formed the boundary, while the Tetlin Native Corporation insisted that the Valdez-Eagle Trail was the correct boundary. Brown describes the history of exploration and development of trails to and within the upper Tanana area, then details the role of trader John Hajdukovich in the eventual establishment of the Tetlin Indian Reserve by Executive Order. A final section of the report examines the efforts of the BLM and the BIA to modify the reserve boundaries and later to locate the boundaries as described in the Executive Order. The report, which is available at the ARLIS Library in Anchorage, does not examine Ahtna-upper Tanana Athabascan connections” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

“Brown details the relationship between the trader and US Commissioner John Hajdukovich and upper Tanana Athabascans, primarily those residing in Tetlin, in the second quarter of the 20th century. Derived from his unpublished paper (Brown 1984) and based on extensive archival research, this article focuses on the instrumental role Hajdukovich played in establishing the Tetlin Reserve and in bringing about economic and educational improvements to the people of Tetlin. No reference is made to the Ahtna people or the Copper River basin” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

This article describes Hajdukovich’s role in advocating for the Tetlin Preserve, Indian industrial education, and economic development in the face of encroaching non-Native culture and people. He is remembered as a trustworthy and trusting trader, an enlightened “assimilationist” who desired to create a viable fur farming industry to support locally relevant educational and economic opportunities for Native villagers.


This report from navigable waters specialist C. Michael Brown reviews the merits of a State of Alaska application for recordable disclaimer of interest in the Tazlina River and Tazlina Lake area. The State claimed the lands underlying the water bodies based on the “Equal Footing Doctrine, the Submerged Lands Act of 195, the Alaska Statehood Act, the Submerged Lands Act of 1988, and ‘any other legally cognizable reason.’’” The report is notable for its detailed, well written, and well sourced “history of use” ranging from traditional Native use all the way to the present. The recounting of early prospector Basil Austin’s experience overwintering in the area, and attempts at navigating the steep river in the spring and summer are especially noteworthy.


This recent publication focuses on homesteading and independent living on the last frontier, and features short chapters on activities and skills as shared by homesteaders themselves. Two chapters focus on residents of the Wrangell-St. Elias area: Ray Hooper, a Kenny Lake area homesteader who shares his knowledge in creating a first aid kit for bush life; and Keith Rowland, a longtime McCarthy resident who owns a log home near McCarthy at the confluence of the Kennicott and Nizina River, where he and his wife homeschooled their five children and where they run a 140 mile trapline with numerous smaller trapline loops owned by his now-grown children.

“The centerpiece of this collection of oral histories of current and former Healy Lake residents is a series of free-form narratives by Ellen Demit, who was born at Chena Village and adopted at a young age by a family in Healy Lake. Interviews with other village residents complement Demit’s account and provide detailed information not previously recorded about the history of Healy Lake. This project was conceived when Healy Lake was seeking ‘resident zone status’ for Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, which would qualify community residents to harvest fish and wildlife resources in the park for subsistence purposes without having to apply for individual permits. Interestingly, however, linkages between the Healy Lake people and the Upper Ahtna Athabascans and the Copper River Basin are not discussed. Seven tape recordings made for this project and some transcripts are filed in the Oral History collection in the Rasmuson Library at the University of Alaska Fairbanks” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

The volume includes oral history interviews with two non-Native long-term residents of Healy Lake who married local Native women.


This article discusses the decline in trapping as a professional occupation even as prices rise and the number of recreational trappers grows in recent times. Dean Wilson Jr., a Copper Valley trapper and son of the famed trapper and fur trader Dean Wilson Sr., discusses the steep learning curve of the successful trapper as well as the difficulty of continuing the trapping profession when prices are flat and operational costs have continually risen since the 1970s – particularly the costs of maintaining a trapping dog team and/or fuel costs for snowmachines.


“Mineral resources in the areas on the northeast side of the Wrangell and St. Elias mountains, including parts of the upper basins of the White and Chisana rivers are the focus of this article. Capps describes seven travel routes to the Chisana-White River district and characterizes the region as being ‘very sparsely populated with Indians,’ and limited to a few families living near lower Beaver Creek and to a small settlement on Cross Creek in the Chisana Valley” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

“Capps had a distinguished career as a USGS geologist in Alaska from 1907 to 1936. Best known for his work in the area that became Mt. McKinley National Park, Capps also was involved in some geological field investigations in the Copper River basin. Series 7 in this collection contains some photograph scrapbooks for the Copper and White River areas in 1908 (Box 9) and the Chisana-White River district in 1914 (Box 12)” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“This description of historical and contemporary fish and wildlife harvest and use patterns in Northway is based on fieldwork conducted in 1984-85. It was designed to address land use planning and resource management issues in the Northway area. Included in the analysis is a short discussion of the ongoing exchange of resources between Northway and Copper River Basin households, some of which is kinship-based. Case also describes the traditional territory of Athabascan bands with which Northway residents are affiliated” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


The Chititu mining records collection is available at the UAA/APU Consortium Library and a guide to the collection is available at http://consortiumlibrary.org/archives/FindingAids/hmc-0088.html. The Chititu mine operated in the Nizina Mining District near McCarthy and for most of its history was managed by Charles H. Kraemer. The guide to the collection describes a collection including correspondence with over 200 letters relating to operations, supplies, gold shipments, labor records and the effects of World War II on mining in Alaska.


Clarke moved as a teenager with his family to Alaska in 1947, when his father became a bush pilot for Merle “Mudhole” Smith and his Cordova Air Service. The stories and people who lived in the village of Chitina are shared from the perspective of a teenager. Important historical personages such as O.A. Nelson and Melvin Chase are discussed in this interesting account. Chitina at that time had already seen the Kennecott era of big, industrial mining come and go and nine years after the railroad had shut down.


“This collection consists of Cohen’s personal diaries, some correspondence, and newspaper clippings. Cohen was a Bureau of Indians Affairs educator in several rural Alaska communities,
including Chitina and for a short time in Tanacross. The Cohen family moved to Fairbanks in 1959. The diaries cover Alaska and BIA events from 1942 through 1964 from a personal perspective including the bombing of Dutch Harbor and the 1964 earthquake” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

Kenneth L. Cohen was a village teacher who taught in King Cove, Point Graham, Chitina, Shaktoolik, Kaltag, Tanacross, and Fairbanks. The collection includes diaries, correspondence, newspaper clippings, photographs, and personal papers. Access to the collection is limited to Alaska and Polar Regions Collection Research room hours.

**Cole, Terrence M. (1979). Historic Uses of the Chisana and Nabelsna Rivers, Alaska. Anchorage, AK: Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Lands.**

“Cole reconstructs the history of navigation on the Chisana and Nabelsna rivers, based upon an exhaustive review of historic documents and archival materials. Critical of and in part a response to a Bureau of Land Management navigability report for water bodies in the Northway area (see Brown 1979), Cole presents information missing from the BLM report (much of it derived from early 20th century newspaper accounts) to describe navigation routes and overland trails used by traders and explorers to access the Northway area from adjoining regions. Use of these trails and the two rivers by Upper Tanana Athabascans is described, including statements in BLM ANCSA files submitted by Walter Northway and other Northway residents in 1975. The Cole and Brown reports together provide a detailed look at transportation in and uses of the upper Tanana region - Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve borderland area in the first half of the 20th century” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


This first person account of a young man leaving a comfortable life as a pharmacist in Minnesota in seek gold in Alaska is a microcosm of both the promise and the difficulties faced by early prospectors hoping to strike it rich. Buoyed by often wildly exaggerated opportunities following the Klondike rush just a couple years earlier, Conger set off for Alaska in the hopes of gaining “enough wealth to sustain himself and his family for the rest of their lives.” The journals provide a description of his 19-month odyssey in Alaska, with accounts of descending the Klutina River, Copper Center, prospecting in the Chistochina District, mushing up the Copper River, and boating down the Nabelsna and Tanana Rivers. The Prologue and Introduction to the journals summarizes well-documented history of the area from secondary sources.


Lenora’s Conkle’s personal account of hunting in Alaska describes her and her husband’s life as master guides, hunters, and lodge owners at Tanada and Wolf Lakes. She titles her book *Hunting: The Way It Was in Our Changing Alaska* “because nonresident hunting will soon be an activity of the past in the Wrangell Mountains and the Nutzotin Range.... More than likely,
subsistence hunting by residents will soon be eliminated from these areas, too.” She goes on to predict that NPS will “quietly eliminate” all types of hunting in the park and preserve. Lenora Conkle was also interviewed for Project Jukebox, which can be found at http://jukebox.uaf.edu/site7/project/644. Her accounts evoke similar sentiments across the region of residents, guides, hunters, miners, and homesteaders who worry over real or potential limitations to their ways of life with the establishment of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.


This recent book by Christine Cunningham is a “compilation of 17 of Alaska’s outstanding women hunters [that] profiles the unique backgrounds that led them to their passion for hunting.” The first chapter focuses on Sue Entsminger, who lives with her husband in the Mentasta Mountains south of Tok, where she has lived without electricity since 1976. The chapter describes a sheep hunt where Sue guided a young woman hunter and her retired (guide) father to the harvest of the woman’s first sheep. The profile of Sue is especially noteworthy in discussing her backcountry skills as a guide and passionate hunter, as well as her skills in fur trapping, skin sewing, and her strong connections with the Native people of the nearby village of Mentasta Village.


“These socioeconomic profiles were compiled for Northwest Alaska Pipeline Company in 1979-80, when planning was underway to build a natural gas pipeline from Prudhoe Bay to the Canadian border, then through Canada and terminating in the Midwestern U.S. Each ‘profile’ actually is a large detailed map of the community on one side and a detailed socioeconomic description of the community on the other. Subsistence use patterns are briefly described based primarily on published sources of information available at the time. Consequently, they are incomplete and may not reflect contemporary practices” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“A missionary of the Protestant Episcopal Church in interior Alaska from 1915 to 1925, Drane served as Archdeacon of the Yukon beginning in 1921. Materials in this collection include Drane’s unpublished biographical account of his experiences entitled, ‘A Circuit Rider on the Yukon or Life Among the Sourdoughs and Indians, Subarctic Alaska,’ which he wrote in 1930 while recuperating from tuberculosis. Setting aside the ethnic biases and stereotypes common at the time, Drane presents an insightful account of life in interior Alaska villages. Photographs documenting life in the area highlight this collection” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

“Ducker, a Bureau of Land Management historian, constructed this unpublished history of the Upper Yukon region primarily from secondary sources. It resembles Melody Webb’s The Last Frontier: A History of the Yukon Basin of Canada and Alaska (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985), but focuses on Alaska and covers some topics not addressed by Webb. Of particular interest is Ducker’s discussion of historical trails and travel routes in the upper Tanana region” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


Not reviewed. From the abstract: “This article focuses on Swedish immigrants and missionaries Jenny Olson and Edward Anton Rasmuson and their work for the Swedish Evangelical Mission Covenant of America in Yakutat, Alaska at the beginning of the 20th century. The author explains that Olson’s and Rasmuson’s descendants also worked in public service in Alaska, setting up the Rasmuson Foundation. She discusses their work with the Yakutat Tlingit Indians, examines their experiences with American citizenship, and explores how their humanitarian endeavors impacted both their lives and the lives of Alaskans.”


“Included in this account of Endicott’s hunting trip to Alaska in 1927 is a description of an historic potlatch in Healy Lake in the 1920s attended by Ahtna people. This potlatch was also reported in the July 25, 1927, issue of the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner. John Hajdukovich and several upper Tanana Athabascan men guided the Endicott party on their hunt in the Alaska Range. The book includes a picture of a young Charlie James from Tanacross” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“This document collection is housed in the Rasmuson Library archives and contains historical church records and other materials. Archdeacon Hudson Stuck’s diaries for the years 1904, 1905, and 1909-1918 are included. Permission must be obtained from the Episcopal Diocese of Alaska before these materials can be viewed” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


This obituary of Dean Wilson Sr. is also available online at legacy.com and offers tribute to the well-known trapper and fur trader. In 1963 Wilson married Ada Tega of Tanacross and they acquired land in the Kenny Lake area, where they built a home and raised their three sons, Dell, Rick, and Dean Jr. His widow Ada and one son and his family remain in the Kenny Lake area.
Wilson was well respected in both Native and non-Native communities for his skill and generosity in educating others about rural living and subsistence activities.


This report summarizes information about Copper River dip net and fish wheel fisheries in South-central Alaska. It contains important socioeconomic information about Copper River communities and compares and contrasts local versus nonlocal use of the fisheries in terms of harvest methods, locations, quantities, and methods of processing and preserving catch. The study showed significant differences in harvest strategies for salmon between longtime residents of the Copper Basin, having deep historical and cultural connections to the resource and generally having a higher household harvest versus fishers from outside the area. Locals typically fished using fish wheels, while nonlocal Alaska residents typically use dip nets, a distinction that continues to the present.


“This series of informative newspaper articles discusses the history of Healy Lake through published information and interviews Ferguson conducted with current residents. Included are some historic photographs borrowed from private collections” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


From the publisher’s book description: “Parallel Destinies is the North’s history in a microcosm, from wilderness to modernization. Through Montenegrin fur trader John Hajdukovich, Swedish roadhouse owner Rika Wallen and Interior Natives, Alaska evolves from trail to highway, from runners to telegraph and telephone. Researched in Montenegro, Sweden and Alaska, Parallel Destinies has archival photographs on every page as well as maps. Rika’s Roadhouse, a lodge built in Big Delta in 1914, was the hub of civilization between Fairbanks and the Canadian border between 1904 and 1942. John Hajdukovich, a Montenegrin, and the builder of Rika’s, was the law, a trader and the life support system to the Natives of the Upper Tanana River.

Hajdukovich was a force behind the 1930 Tetlin Indian Reserve and was the Interior’s best-known big game guide. Although never a successful miner, Hajdukovich prophesied there were enough minerals in the Goodpaster (home today of Pogo gold mine) and Tanana valleys to support generations of residents. A sort of John Muir and Johnny Appleseed personality, Hajdukovich was a father of today’s Tanana River Valley economy. A lone female, Rika Wallen kept a wilderness roadhouse, home base to Hajdukovich, which she ran 1917-1950s. She depended on the rabbits she shot, her garden and fields, apiary and dairy. Parallel Destinies is the parallel stories of the immigrants and Alaska Natives, a young land growing up. “
Oscar Frank, a Native man born in the Moose Creek area near Nabesna, recounts his life during periods of rapid change from relative isolation to the large influx of non-Natives during and after the construction of the Alaska Highway. He also explains how Christmas celebrations were adopted after the creation of the mission at Tanana Crossing around 1910, and adapted to reflect local Native culture. Frank worked as a freight boat operator for John Hajdukovich for $3 per day, $35 per week. He also engaged in a variety of other cash labor jobs, including work at Kennecott, Northway Airport, and trapping in the Nabesna area with a non-Native trapper from Washington state, Dale Wilson, father of the famed Alaskan trapper Dean Wilson Sr. He talks about the impact on Native people of the introduction of diseases with the influx of people during the construction of the highway.

Healy Lake resident Paul Kirsteatter, a non-Native who married an upper Tanana Athabascan woman, discusses his life in Alaska and describes the history of Healy Lake” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

Kirsteatter explains how his marriage to Margaret, a traditional Upper Tanana Native woman, helped each of them to learn about their respective cultures. He learned important subsistence skills from Margaret and local elders, and she learned English through him and from listening to the radio. He also tells a story about how Healy Village became aware of the importance of formal tribal recognition and protection of their land and resources: an Army maneuver near the village in the 1960s temporarily overran the area with soldiers and equipment, litter, and new trails, scaring away the local game and making hunting and trapping impossible.

This short article by Rylee Flint describes the adventures of her father who moved to Alaska in 1980 from New Jersey and eventually became a trapper at Gakona, with trapping partners Ed Green and Ken Uterson. She shares some of her father’s stories of hardship, danger, and occasional misadventure out on the trapline, concurring with her father’s view that a “dangerous adventure is a fun adventure.”

Patricia Ford came to Alaska in 1973 and found 8-1/2 acres with a view of the Wrangell Mountains, then returned a year later to establish a homestead there. She speaks of arriving as a newcomer yearning for escape from the “middle class suburban way of life that is spelled
TRAP.” She tells of the struggles to clear land for a garden and of harvesting logs to build their cabin. The article gives a good introduction to the challenges of building and living remotely, and the steep learning curve for the inexperienced newcomer, concluding “we have carved a beautiful cabin and working homestead for ourselves out of the tough Alaska wilderness.” The article expresses a common sentiment among homesteaders about the satisfactions and challenges of establishing a homestead in the wilderness. It is unclear where the homestead is located and the duration of their stay.


This personal account and memoir of two sisters who spent time in the Copper River is a fascinating account of life along the Copper River valley in the 1920s and 1930s. The sisters came to the area from the lower 48 after the older sister Aileen married a gold rush era trapper named Slim Williams. The account includes interesting observations about the area just as local Native communities were adapting to the “opening” of the country with cars, airplanes, and tourists.


“Gavin resided in Alaska from 1951 to 1969, and taught school in Eagle, Dot Lake, and several other communities. He recounts some of his experiences and presents vignettes of persons with whom he spent time or who he considers ‘personal heroes,’ including Andrew Isaac, and Abraham and Eva Luke of Dot Lake. The limited historical information presented is readily available in other publications, but this is an interesting personal memoir just the same” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

This self-published book is a memoir of the people and events encountered by Gavin while teaching in Alaska from 1951-1969. Many people known from the historical literature about Alaska are here “vignetted.” Chapter topics include roads, missions, postal service, telegraph, and mail transportation. Several section focus on his time at Dot Lake. John Hajdukovich is also remembered. The book was completed on a return visit to Eagle, Alaska in 1988, which he describes as much changed from his earlier days in Alaska.


“This work, prepared for the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southeast Region, provides a brief history of the Yakutat and Southern Railroad. The primary focus of the report is on the railroad itself, however, it contains short sections on the natural environment and prehistory of the Yakutat area. The richness of the flora and fauna in the region is discussed, as well as the significance of the area for a variety of Native groups, including Eyak and Tlingit peoples. The introduction of Russians into the area is also discussed in relation to the Native populations of Yakutat’” (Lahoff, Thornton, and Deur 2012).

“A missionary at the newly-established St. Timothy’s Episcopal Mission at Tanana Crossing, Graves describes conditions there and makes general observations about the local upper Tanana people. She labels them as being ‘extravagant’ but ‘industrious’ and doubts that furbearer trapping will provide them with sufficient income to purchase the western goods they desire. Graves believed the potlatch system should be abolished” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


This biography of pioneering Alaska aviator Harold Gillam Sr. tells the compelling story of Gillam’s major contribution to early Alaska aviation, the establishment of Gillam Airlines in the Copper River Region, and Gillam’s early days with the Alaska Road Commission work on the Nizina Bridge. It also includes comments from Bud Seltenreich, who was mentored by Gillam and eventually became his aircraft mechanic.


“This is the final in a series of three articles that describe the author’s experiences on the Valdez Trail in 1898 and includes occasional comments about the Indians of the area. Guiteau met Captain Abercrombie and later worked for him on road construction. This installment describes an outbreak of scurvy in the Copper River basin and the care provided for victims at a hospital in Copper Center. Guiteau also mentions a ‘chief of the Copper River Indians,’ who reported that many of his people were dying of hunger and sickness. Guiteau says the illness was tuberculosis and that nothing could be done for people who ‘have very little resistance to the disease’” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“Included in this archival collection are correspondence, business papers, ledgers, and journals containing information that reflect Hajdukovich’s varied occupations and interests during his many years in Alaska. The ledgers contain details about transactions with upper Tanana Indians who sold or traded furs at his trading posts in the upper Tanana region” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

Hajdukovich was a miner, fur trapper, trader, transporter, big game guide, and US Game Commissioner. Of particular interest are materials relating to his trading posts at Tetlin, Nubesna, Northway, Big Delta, and Tanana Crossing (Tanacross). Included are ledgers pertaining to customer accounts, mining, and store information.
This short report is attached to the authors’ copy of the Beck (1930) report cited above, and apparently was written by Hajdukovich in 1930. It contains detailed census data for residents of Nabesna Village, Tetlin, Last Tetlin, and Scotty Creek, and generally describes the reliance of the upper Tanana Indians on furs and game. Hajdukovich also makes his case for establishing a reservation at Tetlin” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


This community plan for Chitina, Alaska, was developed by the Community Planning Committee with the following community vision: “Chitina is striving to appreciate, preserve and build upon its wilderness, historic and cultural resources and heritage to create a free, safe, healthy and enjoyable community that thrives in an atmosphere of trust, respect of individuals and open communication.” The development plan reflects community efforts to adapt to changing circumstances, focused on local engagement, volunteerism, and cooperative efforts while emphasizing that economic development should be driven by the private sector.


“Halpin conducted thesis research in Tetlin in 1983-84, the primary purpose of which was to document the wild resource harvest and use patterns of Tetlin residents in the Tetlin area. Seasonality of harvest, methods and means, community harvest levels, and areas used were recorded, as were resource issues of concern to local residents and some geographic place names. Halpin indicates that several household heads in Tetlin were born and raised in the Copper River Basin and that there is a longstanding tradition of resource exchange between Tetlin and Ahtna communities” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


This report by US Commissioner H. Hansen provides an ethnographic sketch of the Yakutat and Dry Bay Natives at a time just after the beginning of the American period in Alaska and less than ten years after the arrival of large numbers of non-Natives that came after the discovery of “flour gold” on the ocean beaches of Khantaak Island and Logan Bluffs in 1887. During the early Russian period the Native population had been ruled by “iron rod,” leading to the Russians being driven out in a local uprising and massacre.
The Edward H. Harriman expedition in 1899 included three artists and twenty-five scientists representing a range of research interests, and, as a result, provided a very stimulating trip. One research party worked with John Muir at Glacier Bay collecting natural history specimens, but native settlements were visited briefly as well, including camps in Glacier Bay. This two volume work includes sections by various participants. Of particular interest are John Burroughs’ “Narrative of the Expedition,” John Muir’s “The Pacific Coast Glaciers,” and George Bird Grinnell’s “Natives of the Alaska Coast Region.” Other sections, by various expedition members, cover glaciers, exploration, birds, forests, geography, atmosphere, a volcano, the salmon industry, and fox farming (Theodoratus 2000) (Lahoff, Thornton, and Deur 2012).


Not reviewed. From the publisher’s note: “While copper seems less glamorous than gold, it may be far more important, as it was vital to the industrial revolution and indispensable for electrification. Kennecott Copper Corporation, at one time the largest producer of copper in the world, played a key role in economic and industrial development.... As a geologist with first-hand knowledge of mining, author Charles Hawley describes the technology behind the Kennecott story in a way that both specialists and the general reader will appreciate. He places Kennecott and the copper industry within their historical context and allows the reader to consider the controversial aspects of mineral discovery and sustainability.”


“Proposed construction of a natural gas pipeline through the upper Tanana region was projected to create a boom-and-bust economy in the early 1980s. With a goal of providing information that would facilitate medical services planning and minimize the negative consequences of the pipeline project on community health, a study was conducted to (1) describe existing medical services in the upper Tanana region; (2) identify existing health problems and medical services deficiencies in Native and non-Native communities; and (3) review the health and medical services impact of the Trans-Alaska Oil Pipeline construction project in the mid-1970s. The report makes recommendations designed to ensure that appropriate medical services are available to address both short-term needs during pipeline construction and over the long term” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

This study report is both retrospective and anticipatory, drawing lessons learned from the Alyeska Pipeline Impacts for use in planning for the potential natural gas pipeline. The report relies personal interviews as well as the record of then current issues and institutions emerging out the rapid “boom and bust” cycle of infrastructure development in the rural communities of
Tok, Dot Lake, Tanacross, Tetlin, and Northway. The report indicates that while there are positive and negative impacts of major development activities, the negative cultural and economic impacts are often minimized in favor of highlighting the often brief window of opportunity for labor and support services during the construction phase. Impacts to health and safety services in rural areas is often overlooked. Haynes concludes that the primarily non-Native community of Tok was better prepared than the other communities to benefit from the development, as well as to weather the “boom-bust” cycle of pipeline construction and maintenance.


“This dissertation examines the formal and informal supportive resources available to and used by elder residents of the upper Tanana region in order to continue living in their own homes, and evaluates the Upper Tanana Aging Program as a form of institutional support. Similarities and differences between Native and non-Native elders regarding their use of social supports and on other socioeconomic indices are discussed. Short biographical sketches are presented for several elders. Reference is made to kinship and social ties between the upper Tanana and Ahtna Athabascans” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

This unique dissertation on rural aging in Alaska utilized key informant interviews, participant observation, and qualitative life history documentation to provide first person accounts of Native and non-Native aging in the Upper Tanana area. Haynes shows that Native formal and informal aging social supports are more extensive and readily utilized than their non-Native counterparts, partly owing to differing value systems where some non-Natives seek support only as a very last resort, even where “old age” relief is available. Informal support systems exist and are utilized by both groups, with reciprocity among aging residents an important form of support and security.


“In 1984, the Alaska Board of Fisheries found that residents of Dot Lake had a customary and traditional use of Copper River salmon. The board also concluded that residents of Northway, Tanacross, Tetlin, and Tok probably had a similar pattern of use of Copper River salmon but requested additional data before making a final determination. Division of Subsistence staff conducted fieldwork in these four communities to document the seasonal round of resource harvest activities generally and their participation in the Copper River salmon fishery. The study concluded that there was historically and continues to be interaction between upper Tanana and Copper River basin communities for the purpose of harvesting certain fish and wildlife resources” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).
The annotated bibliography from this study has been extensively excerpted here, particularly for historical materials that summarize general area history. While the purpose of the annotated bibliography for Haynes and Simeone’s EOA is to document Upper Tanana Native history and culture, the same citations can be read for the non-Native historical and cultural content, including the tacit assumptions of the primarily non-Native authors.


“Sections 811 and 1110(a) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA) authorize continued access on federal public lands for subsistence and other traditional activities, respectively. Documentation of pre-ANILCA access routes is a necessary first step in protecting continuation of these public uses. In response to the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve and the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park Subsistence Resource Commission expressing interest in obtaining such documentation, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game conducted this study, both to document modes of pre-ANILCA access in the park area and to create a template for use in conducting similar studies in other federal conservation system units. This report contains (1) an overview of pre-ANILCA access routes and methods derived from personal interviews with current and former residents of the Copper River Basin and secondary sources; (2) an annotated bibliography of data sources consulted for the project; and (3) USGS topographical maps which depict access routes that were documented. Although the documentation does not extend into the upper Tanana region, travel routes commonly used in the northern periphery of Ahtna territory are identified” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

This 1995 report provides a good summary of park and preserve access as well as changes resulting from evolving resource use, transportation technology, and new administrative rules associated with the establishment of the park and preserve. Importantly, restrictions on aircraft use, combined with improvements in road systems, tracked vehicles, ATVs, and snowmachines may have had the inadvertent effect of concentrating hunting effort along the road systems, leading to greater competition for limited resources, including the Mentasta Caribou herd. Additionally, informal “neighborly” use of aircraft assistance by local residents in exchange for labor or other forms of reciprocity was disrupted by changing access requirements for subsistence. Meanwhile guided hunting using aircraft became more frequent and competitive with air taxi operators less forthcoming about landing locations and backcountry activities. Access history is divided into five distinct periods: Aboriginal period; Contact Period: 1732-1898; European Settlement: 1898-1940; Contemporary Period: 1940-1980; and The Post-ANILCA Period: 1981-Present.

“For this book, Heller compiled first-hand accounts from prospectors who ventured into the Alaska and Klondike gold fields in the last quarter of the 19th century. Some of these narratives describe the interactions between these men and the Native people they encountered. They are replete with the biases and prejudices typical of that period of American history, and undoubtedly contain some exaggerations. However, these accounts also offer insights into the early western contact period in some areas of Alaska, including the Fortymile region at the time gold was discovered there in the 1880s” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

These accounts demonstrate just how remote Alaska was in the 1880s, “truly the ‘last frontier.’” This volume includes the stories of traders, prospectors, miners, river boatman, mushers, trappers, missionaries, and explorers. Al Mayo and Walter Harper, Gordon Bettles, John Bremner, Frank Densmore, George Carmack, John Hughes, Joe Ladu, and Captain James Carroll are brought to life by the narrators, as are lesser known characters. One chapter tells of John A. Clark’s trip from “Valdez to Fairbanks in 1906 by bicycle.” These accounts provide a window not only on the practical challenges of Alaskan pioneering life, but also the overall cultural milieu and the persistent lure and promise of the “last frontier: “Sourdough Sagas is a valuable contribution to the larger saga of America. It will appeal to countless Americans not wholly reconciled to the benefits of civilization—the those who, while enjoying civilization’s creature comforts, still hold a nostalgic longing for a vanished era in which men pitted themselves against nature’s hazards and still yearn for the risks and challenges of an unspoiled wilderness” (Ernest Gruening, Foreword to the book).


“A sympathetic social history of inter-relations between Tlingits and their Russian and American colonizers during the critical and decisive early contact period” (Lahoff, Thornton, and Deur 2012).


“Conger and several friends from Minnesota ventured north to the Klondike Gold Rush in 1898. This book combines daily journal entries recorded by Conger during his trip with historical documentation from other sources. The Conger party landed in Valdez, and then hiked overland through the Copper River Basin and upper Tanana region to Eagle, where health problems forced Conger to return home. Local Indians searching for caches left behind by prospectors joined the Conger party on its trip through the Napesna River area. Chief David from ‘Tetling’s’ invited the Conger party to attend the burial of his wife and the ‘cry’ dance, which went on for 15 days. Conger traveled with the C.E. Griffith military expedition from the Tanana River near Tanacross to Eagle City. He observed ‘Lots of Indians’ at Lake Mansfield where there was an ‘Abundance of fish’, but noted that many Natives had died the previous winter” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

Not reviewed. From the guide to the collection: “Harry William Hoyt was born in Rochester, New York, in 1897. He came to Alaska in 1907 with his parents and his family owned and operated the Gulkana Road House on the Richardson Highway. He later worked as a master mechanic for the Alaska Road Commission from 1917-1936. He married Norma Jordet in 1934, who was a schoolteacher in Fairbanks. They moved to Anchorage in 1936, where they owned and operated Hoyt Motor Company until 1962. The collection includes hundreds of photographic prints and thousands of slides, many of the early period of life in and around the Gulkana Lodge area.”


Hunt’s historical resource study remains one of the best single sources for the history and culture of the Wrangell-St. Elias area from the Russian era to the present, with the chapters on gold mining, Kennecott, Chisana, transportation routes, towns and people, and changing use patterns. Each chapter theme provides a ready reference and summary well-grounded in the historical literature. The historical photographs enhance the text and help situate the reader in another place and time. The study also provides a thorough bibliography that categorizes the references according to type. The public documents and archival collections lists include sources not found in other area bibliographies and manuscripts.


This book highlights a fur farming “stampede” that is often overlooked in Alaska’s economic development. One chapter section profiles Charles Heideman, who was in charge of the Copper Center Agricultural Experiment station from 1907 to 1909 and a strong booster for the potential of fur farming in the area. He subsequently started his own Silver Fox farm on the Tazlina River, where he sold shares and vigorously promoted the industry, even writing “A Monograph of the Silver Fox.” “Alaska can and in time will raise the world’s fur supply,” he wrote, reflecting optimism about the future of fur farming that was widely shared among industry supporters, including President Teddy Roosevelt. Things did not turn out as successfully as he had hoped, and the industry never achieved what he and others believed it would.


This narrative, recounted elsewhere as well, gives a general account of the killing of Russians at Batzulnetas Village, a watershed event that effectively ended Russian incursions into the area. The motivation for the attack was ill-treatment of villagers by the Russians: “the first Russians
camp up the Copper River and up this way they were mean, they were hungry for blood. Those Russians were probably after fur or something like that.” The Russian’s reputation for singling out local leaders for harsh treatment and raiding caches is widely noted; as is the more cooperative and friendly approach of later American explorers such as Lieutenant Henry Allen: “he didn't bother nobody and the people treated him pretty good.”


Not reviewed. From the press release: “Swedish missionary Albin Johnson arrived in Alaska just before the turn of the twentieth century, thousands of miles from home and with just two weeks' worth of English classes under his belt. While he intended to work among the Tlingit tribes of Yakutat, he found himself in a wave of foreign arrivals as migrants poured into Alaska seeking economic opportunities and the chance at a different life. While Johnson came with pious intentions, others imposed Western values and vices, leaving disease and devastation in their wake.”


The VHS recordings from this land use planning hearing in Copper Center (1973) was transferred to DVD by the Alaska Film Archives program at UAF and include testimony from many local residents from Kenny Lake, Gulkana, Copper Center, Glennallen, McCarthy, Chitina, and Chistochina. Those testifying represent personal views, as well as various government, tribal, and private sector interests. The DVD is available for in-Library use only at the State Historical Library at Call # 0014 DVD Copper Center Discs 1-4.


This short article reports that Native corporations began taking out newspaper ads and sending letters to hunter, informing them that corporate lands may be off limits to hunting or require a special permit. Tanacross, for example, closed its lands to moose hunting by non-shareholders. The motivation was concern that there would not be enough moose to support the local villagers. These closures, and fear of them, has long been a reason why non-Native residents and non-local sport hunters were opposed to both ANCSA and ANILCA, and why Native villages around the area had begun charging trespass fees to mitigate the influx of hunters from Anchorage and Fairbanks who come to the area for moose and caribou hunting.


This collection consists of photographs from Dora Keen’s first successful ascent of Mt. Blackburn in 1912. Dora Keen was a pioneering alpinist who attended Bryn Mawr College and
went on to defy social conventions in her pursuit of mountaineering and travel throughout the world. She also pioneered the first use of dog teams in mountaineering during her first attempted ascent of Blackburn in 1911. A finding aid exists for this collection, and there are restrictions on use of the materials.


“This article describes the short-lived Chisana gold rush of 1913. The rush began after a Native man named [Chisana] Joe, who lived in the Chisana Valley, told prospectors where he had seen a ‘funny looking’ yellow hill at the mouth of Bonanza Creek. No other reference is made to the local Indians or to the impacts of the Chisana Stampede on them” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

The “Shushanna” (Chisana) gold rush is well documented here and described as something of a cautionary tale of outsized expectations and boosterism – inside and outside Alaska – that lured thousands of people to an area that few would profit from, and many more would quickly depart. The author suggests this experience dampened the breathless enthusiasm for later strikes such as Livengood that drew not thousands but hundreds of people. A few hardy prospectors and miners did find paying placer deposits at Chisana, and it continues to draw small numbers of seasonal occupants and in-holders to the present.


This highly readable account of McCarthy’s founding serves as an important addendum to the history of the Kennecott mines. McCarthy served as a kind of playground for mine workers, including prostitution, drinking, moonshining, and gambling. The book provides a window on the way McCarthy supported the mine workers during their time off, and was also a place that relieved them of their meager savings. John Barrett, founder of McCarthy, is profiled, as are other area personages and mining events in the broader area. The Shushanna (Chisana) strike is discussed, as are broader economic trends and occupations such as farming, guiding, and tourism. Kirchhoff also discusses McCarthy’s history after the closure of the Kennecott mines.


This is a 2000 recording with Fred Kirsteatter, son of Paul Kirsteatter who arrived in Alaska after World War II and married into the Native community of Healy Lake. Fred discusses his life of living in both worlds, of being well-educated in local subsistence practices as well as being college educated at Dartmouth College before returning home. He credits his mother’s teaching about traditional Native values and subsistence practices and his Western education for exposing him to the wider world and learning to interact with people from all walks of life. He used those strengths in returning to Healy Lake and working for the benefit of the community, helping to implement the ANCSA land settlement and promoting educational opportunities for youth.

“Kirsteatter responds to questions about his trapping experiences in the Healy Lake area and other parts of the upper Tanana region” (Haynes and Simeone 2007:206).


“Paul Kirsteatter arrived in Healy Lake after World War II and married an Athabascan woman from that community. He discusses his life in Healy Lake, local Native history and traditions, and subsistence practices of the upper Tanana, Ketchumstuk, and Healy Lake Indians. Kirsteatter is well-known as a very successful wolf trapper. Paul’s son, Fred, describes his childhood and his work with the Tanana Chiefs Conference and in the community” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

Paul Kirsteatter is representative of a small subset of non-Native people who successfully integrated themselves into Native communities and who essentially became bicultural in orientation, learning profound respect for local Native life ways and adaptations to subarctic environment: “I had the highest respect and I still do for the elders and I learned a lot about wildlife from the elders. And...I still admire them...how industrious they were and how they could get along without nothin’, and their survival here in a real harsh climate.” He also evinces the cultural reciprocity in helping his wife Margaret to learn English while she taught him about trapping and subsistence activities. He shares anecdotes about locally respected traders in the area, including traders John Hajdukovich and Stanley Young, and a school teacher Jack Singleton.


This “true crime” book aimed at the general reader focuses on the Pilgrim family’s move to the McCarthy area and the unfolding saga of their impact on area residents, battles with the National Park Service over access to inholdings, their rise to national status as a cause celeb for land rights activists nationwide, and the ultimate downfall of “Papa Pilgrim” as his crimes were exposed. The book is highly disturbing but compelling, and provides an intimate look at contemporary McCarthy and the continuing tensions and resentments toward the National Park Service that may have partly led to the Pilgrim’s initial celebrity in the community before the true dimensions of Pilgrim’s “madness” became clear.


Not reviewed. From the publisher’s book detail: “Judith Kleinfeld’s thoughtful study of the iconic American love of the frontier and its cultural influence. Kleinfeld considers the subject through three categories: rebellion, redemption, and rebirth; escape and healing; and utopian
community.... Kleinfeld argues that the frontier narrative enables Americans—born or immigrant—to live deliberately, to gather courage, and to take risks, face danger, and seize freedom rather than fear it.”

The topic of this book can be linked to Allan (2010) and Tyrrell (2002) for an exploration of the themes of “frontier,” rebellion, and choosing a life consistent with American ideals of self-reliance, independence, and living close to the wilderness environment. These might well be organizing themes for the way of life and foundational values that lure non-Natives to the Wrangell-St. Elias area.


The collection contains clippings, scrapbooks, photographs, publications and other materials from Robert and Wilma Knox’s life and journalism work in Alaska and elsewhere. There are a number of photographs from time spent in the Wrangell-St. Elias area along with trip diaries and topics including the 1964 Earthquake, Chilkoot Trail, and hiking and trails. A guide to the collection was compiled by Jeffrey Sinot in 2001 and updated by Arlene Schmuland in 2012. Some of the photographs can be accessed online in the Alaska Digital Archives.


“The Division of Subsistence conducted household surveys in Northway, Tetlin, Tanacross, Tok, and Dot Lake to record fish and wildlife harvest and use data for the period April 2004 to March 2005. Areas used for resource harvesting also were documented, but maps depicting these areas are not included in this report. This study responded to a request from the Department of Natural Resources for updated subsistence data to be used in evaluating the potential effects of construction and operation of a natural gas pipeline through the region” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“This draft report (as of May 2007) builds on Koskey’s 2006 study by adding fish and wildlife harvest and use data for Tanana River communities outside of the upper Tanana region. Healy Lake also provided some harvest data to the author for use in this report. Maps depicting areas used in the upper Tanana region for harvesting fish and wildlife resources were also compiled for Dot Lake, Northway, Tetlin, and Tanacross. Recommendations are made for additional research that would provide a more comprehensive picture of resource use patterns in the upper Tanana region that may be needed for management purposes” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

This updated subsistence harvest report brings harvest and use data in the Chistochina area to present, while effectively summarizing past use as well as the cultural, historical, and demographic factors relating to changing harvest, harvest success rates, and hunting effort: “Subsistence harvests were moderate yet diverse in 2009, and contributed a considerable portion of the community’s food supply…. Results … suggest a long-term trend toward lower subsistence harvests of large land mammals…. Reasons local households cited for these changes included reduced resource abundance, including changes in the location of moose and caribou, less sharing, work interference, competition, and regulations.”


This recent annotated bibliography of the Yakutat Tlingit has been excerpted here with citation.

[Editor’s note: The Annotated Bibliography for the Yakutat Tlingit EOA was finalized following the drafting of this annotated bibliography. The citation for the final version is as follows: Lahoff, Rachel, Thomas Thornton, and Douglas Deur. (2015). Yakutat Tlingit and Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve: An Ethnographic Overview and Assessment, Appendix A: Annotated Bibliography. Copper Center, AK: Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.]


This entry on the land rights website includes a photograph of the sign posted near the Slana NPS Ranger Station that reflects the common sentiment among non-Native communities impacted by the creation of Alaska’s ‘new parks’ such as Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve: “Slana Alaskans Unite founded in 1978 – preserving a way of life. With respect for this land, we utilize natural resources which provide for our food, shelter, and livelihood. Hunting, fishing, trapping, logging, and mining define our Alaska lifestyle. Slana Alaskans Unite was formed by people in this area to preserve and protect that lifestyle. We were here long before the National Park Service. We who make our home here ask that you respect this place, not as a park or National Playground, but as one of the last places on earth where a person can live as an integral part of a wild environment.”


Not reviewed. Subject terms include: Land Use--Alaska--Saint Elias Mountains--Natural Resources--Government Policy--Conservation of natural resources.

This feature article for the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner focuses on the ambitious entrepreneur Floyd Miller of Northway, “who has shaped its fragmented resources into a benign fiefdom that is slowly revitalizing the predominantly Native community of Nabesna Indians in a way that no welfare program could hope to duplicate.” Miller’s commercial interests included the Northway Lodge, bar and restaurant, the airport store, Northway Power and Light Inc., the airport maintenance service, the US Customs Service, and the school and bus operation. LaRocca suggests that Miller’s commercial interests provided employment opportunities the local Native community, “making him a prolific employer of local folk, and one trusted Native can be found managing each place of his multifaceted operation.”


The Subsistence Division of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game has evolved the best and most comprehensive harvest survey reports available, building upon decades of methodological innovation and integration of community profile data. In recent years distinctions between patterns of use and harvest by non-Native and Native communities have become more explicit and refined. The use pattern for the predominantly non-Native communities of Mentasta Pass and Slana/Nabesna show that subsistence dependence and harvest has grown while use areas and harvest emphases by species have changed along with availability. More generally, “subsistence uses of healthy fish and wildlife populations meaningfully link people to their past, are vital to the present health of each community, and encourage optimism about the future.... Local residents desire to continue subsistence activities, not only for themselves, but also for their children and other future generations.”


“The authors use secondary sources to describe the gold rush history of Valdez, which includes some information about the Ahtna Athabascans and the impacts they experienced consequent to the influx of prospectors and other travelers in the late 1800s. Comparable information is very limited for the upper Tanana Athabascans but we can infer that similar impacts might have occurred in parts of their homeland. Recurring themes noted in the historic accounts referenced by the authors are the generosity of the Ahtna people and the white prejudices toward Native people prevalent of the period” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

“This book represents the interdisciplinary journey of a group of researchers retracing the 1899 Harriman Expedition to the coast of Alaska. It is divided into five sections that cover distinct segments of the expedition. Part three, “Gulf of Alaska and Alaska Peninsula,” covers the group’s journey into Yakutat Bay and meetings with Yakutat Tlingit Tribal leaders. Traditional and contemporary subsistence customs and concerns are discussed, including the decline of the harbor seal” (Lahoff, Thornton, and Deur 2012).


This pre-park establishment report on the socioeconomic conditions of the Copper River region provides important baseline information, including who lives in the region, what lifestyles were prevalent, what economic trends were observed, and what directions of social change were underway. In addition to noting distinctions between Native and non-Native communities, the report subdivides local populations into several categories: coastal fishing families, white homesteaders, persons related to the Alaska Central Mission complex and its associated churches, small business families, families associated with the Department of Highways, the Federal Aviation Administration, and other government agencies, long-term residents working on the pipeline, and temporary pipeline workers. The report notes that “Anti-government sentiment is strong in the region. Numerous residents came to the Copper River region in order to escape government regulation.” The report also concludes that the establishment of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve “will increase seasonal job opportunities while potentially closing some public lands for local use, both for subsistence and for guided hunting.” The report is available at numerous Alaska repositories/libraries, including ARLIS, the State Historical Library, and UAA/APU Consortium Library.


This article tells the intriguing story of early 20th century efforts by “Alaska agents charged with ‘suppression of the liquor traffic among the natives of Alaska.” The article shows how this charge meant controlling not only Native access to liquor but also the non-Native bootleggers who supplied them, and that after Alaska voted to “go dry” territory-wide bootlegging became even more profitable, resulting in an increased workload for agents trying to staunch the lucrative trade. It also discusses McCarthy as a “hotbed of moonshining and bootlegging. There, a well-knit network of informers tipped off smugglers, and moonshiners. Telegrams between the field agent and the governor, who coordinated the agents' activities were sent in code.” It includes several stories of the cat and mouse game of bootleggers caching liquor outside of town when the agents came calling, and of agents occasionally seizing and destroying large quantities of moonshine while the moonshiners and bootleggers got away.

Not reviewed. From the Alaska State Library website: This collection of 61 “photoprints” is for in library use only. The collection includes photograph collections and papers from Lewis Adams Levensaler, George Cheever Hazelet, Charles H. Lighthall, and Henry Bratnober. The subject material includes Kennecott, Dan Creek, Shushanna, and mention of many local miners and geologists. Collection finding aid available online at http://www.library.state.ak.us/hist/hist_docs/finding_aids/PCA159.doc.


“Fish and wildlife harvest and use patterns in 1987-88 in the upper Tanana communities of Dot Lake, Northway, Tanacross, Tetlin, and Northway are described in this report. Based primarily on data recorded in household surveys conducted in 1988, the project was designed to provide information needed to assess the potential effects of construction and operation of the Over-the-Horizon Backscatter Radar Facility on subsistence activities in the upper Tanana region and Copper River Basin. One specific study objective was to assess historic and contemporary subsistence uses of 13 defined areas in the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. (See McMillan and Cuccarese 1988 for a summary of findings of a companion study conducted in the Copper River Basin, along with another version of the upper Tanana study findings)” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

The report was anticipated to be of use as baseline data for other future development in the area. The report summarizes primary conclusions: “Differences between household harvest levels were found to be associated with three household characteristics: length of time a household head resided in the local area, ethnicity of a household head, and number of people in the household. A fourth characteristic, total income of the household, was not found to have any single or clear relationship to the total household harvest level. Households headed by someone born within the region harvested about twice the amount of wild food as those households that were headed by someone born outside the region. Households headed by an Alaska Native harvested, on average, 2.4 times the amount of wild food as that harvested by non-Native households.”


This self-published memoir describes Margeson’s 1898 travels to the Copper River region Alaska in search of gold (see also William Williams for another account from a member of the same party from Connecticut), humbly prefacing his work with his justification for sharing his tale: “The reader will hardly need to be told that the writer has had no previous experience as a maker of books, nor has he any ambitions in that direction. But the unheard of scramble for gold in the Alaskan and Klondike regions during the season of 1898, in which every community,
almost, had its representatives, awakened such an interest in that far-away country that every newspaper item from that sections was eagerly devoured by almost every person, young and old.” Margeson’s engaging tale from heading north to his return provides some fascinating context for this already well-documented era of Alaska and area history. It also includes many day to day details about the life of prospectors and area residents during this early rush, the dangers faced, and the challenges and disappointments that led so many to sell their “outfit” and return to the lower 48 as soon as the opportunity arose. It also shares interesting observations about the women with “pluck” who were occasionally found along the trail: “Conspicuous upon the trail were several women who had gone to Alaska with their husbands, and nearly every day we would meet them trudging along in the snow, pushing with a stick placed against the rear end of a loaded sled, to assist their husbands with their loads. A few of them did no work but to cook for their husbands and care for the tent in their absence, while others went out and toiled on the trail all day, doing the work of a man...one woman on the trail felt at home at almost any kind of work, but seemed at her best when participating in some exciting adventure. She could guide a boat down the swiftest mountain stream equal to an Indian, and she seemed anxious for an opportunity to shoot the great Klutina River rapids. She would handle and shoot a rifle with the dexterity of an old hunter.”


“Fieldwork conducted in 1982 was the basis for this subsistence study of Dot Lake, the content of which is typical of Division of Subsistence reports published in the early 1980s. Martin presents a demographic profile of the community; describes the resources used, seasons of harvest, and harvest patterns; discusses the cultural significance of wild resources; and concludes with a presentation of contemporary resource issues. Maps depicting historic and contemporary resource harvest areas used by community residents are included. Historic ties between residents of Dot Lake and the Copper Basin are demonstrated by the residence of two elders in Dot Lake who were born and raised in the Copper River area and of two other elders who traveled extensively between the Tanana and Copper river drainages earlier in the 1900s” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

Dot Lake is a mixed Native and non-Native community in an area that was used seasonally by Upper Tanana Athabascans from George Lake and Tanacross, but with the construction of the Alaska Highway was used as a work camp called Sears City. The first non-Native household was established by Frank and Jackie Vogle who received a homesite and built a lodge, post office, and the Dot Lake Community Chapel. A licensed children’s center was later built by the Vogles, and closed in the 1990s. The present-day lodge constructed in 1973.

This case study from Dot Lake demonstrates how road accessibility (shared by most other Wrangell-St. Elias area communities) affects fishing and hunting by area residents, as well as the integration of subsistence and cash economies as part of a seamless adaptive strategy. The case study profile of a non-Native resident married to a Native resident represents an important example of a subset of non-Natives who thoroughly integrate with Native communities and
become part of social fabric of sharing, reciprocity, and cooperation in resource harvest and use, while also maintaining a big footing in the cash economy through wage labor.


This 1917 article, in two parts, provides a first person account from a renowned trophy hunter, photographer, and guide who came to the Wrangell-St. Elias Mountains in search of trophy sheep. The article illustrates how the area was home to trophy sheep in part due to the difficulty of access: “Prior to the construction of the Copper River & Northern Railway by the Guggenheim Syndicate to the Copper mines at the foot of the Kennicott Glacier 190 miles from Cordova, to get into this country around the headwaters of the Chitina river and the St. Elias Alps was practically an impossibility for any but the hardiest prospector.” The article is also interesting in that it also shows that guided hunting in the area has a century-long history, and that “adventure tourists” were coming into the area as soon as access became available-by boat, trail, airplane, automobile and, for a time, railway. McCracken himself was also a photographer who waxes eloquently about the satisfactions of using hunting skills to capture images of wildlife as opposed to trophy animals alone.


This issue of Alaska Geographic, written by Lucile McDonald in cooperation with the Puget Sound Maritime Historical Society and with an introduction by D.E. Skinner, traces the history of Alaska Steamships in the opening of Alaska’s rugged coastline to growing commerce. The history is particularly relevant in demonstrating how the technology of access is partly constrained by the physical environment, and partly determined by resource discoveries and the political/economic forces in play. The discussion of the accidents of circumstance, bad weather, and big money that led to Cordova being chosen over Katalla and Valdez as the coastal terminus for the Kennicott mine’s Copper River & Northern Railway provides a fascinating example of the Morgan and Guggenheim Syndicate’s staggering power in buying up, building, and expanding the canneries, steamboat companies, mines, and railroads.


This engaging small press book tells two adventure stories: one is the story and background of the famous wreck of Northwest Flight 4422 on the flanks of Mount Sanford over fifty years ago. The other is the story of the author and a partner – both climbers and pilots – investigating the cloudy history of that airplane crash and its long-rumored gold treasure on-board. They spent nearly two decades in their quest and in the end found the wreck emerging briefly from a glacier below the original crash site. The book is interesting on its own merits, but also is an illuminating discussion of the role of aircraft in Alaska and in the Wrangell-St. Elias area and dynamic mountain environment that continues to inspire and present significant objective hazards for the adventure flyer, climber, and hiker.

This article, published in 1964 but written about a trip to McCarthy in 1917, provides a good historical account (with photos) of a trip to McCarthy for Christmas. McKenzie had worked as a handyman for the railroad at Cordova and took the opportunity to hop the train to McCarthy for the Christmas visit. He describes how the railroad was free for passengers since the main focus was transporting copper, so accommodations were extremely limited. The winter trip was slow and dangerously cold, and a snowplow pushed by two locomotive engines was required to get through massive snowdrifts that regularly slowed progress and in one case resulted in two trains being snowbound for six weeks. The author describes seeing Natives assembling in large numbers in Chitina for a potlatch, and in McCarthy a huge Christmas tree with presents underneath, and a dance in the community hall with live music provided with violin, guitars, and a piano. The description provides a window into McCarthy in its prime.


“This report summarizes existing information on subsistence practices in the upper Tanana Valley and Copper River Basin, and includes the preliminary findings of collaborative fieldwork conducted in 1987-88 in the upper Tanana region by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), the National Park Service, and AEIDC. Data for Copper Basin communities are derived from ADF&G research conducted there in the early 1980s. This project was designed in part to provide information required to evaluate the potential effects of the proposed Backscatter Radar System on subsistence patterns and to assess historic and contemporary uses of 13 specific areas within the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. Maps depicting areas used by Tok and Tanacross for harvesting resources in 1968-1988 are included, as are tables summarizing use of selected areas in the park and preserve by upper Tanana and Copper Basin households” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

The report provides a good summary of subsistence in the economics of households, and potential impacts of access, competition, and trade-offs of short term wage employment and dependence on the cash economy. It also specifically mentions the role of subsistence in the non-Native community: “Subsistence is important in a sociocultural sense to non-Native residents of the study region, too.... Subsistence resources first became important to non-Native households because they were the principal sources of food. Today, non-Native resident hunting, fishing, and gathering activities not only help defray the high cost of living, they also have assumed a sociocultural role extending far beyond whatever recreational benefits are associate with them. Many non-Natives residing in remote settlements probably have consciously chosen to do so, in part, because they wish to live a rural lifestyle and desire to be dependent to some extent on products of the land.”

This report, in two main sections focusing on (1) Cordova, Copper River Delta and Prince William Sound, and (2) Yakutat, Cape Suckling to Cape Fairweather, is a good primer on the economy and culture of wild foods in Yakutat and includes a “seasonal round” section. Its main focus is on Native resource use, but it has a good discussion of the Malaspina Forelands area that is helpful as context for the subsequent creation of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.


“Medary was a member of a hunting party that obtained a special permit from the Secretary of Agriculture to exceed the big game bag limit as they collected specimens of caribou, Dall sheep, and mountain goats for the U.S. Biological Survey and Smithsonian Institution. The party hunted on the north side of the Wrangell Mountains and spent some time in the Nabesna and Chisana River drainages and at Batzulnetas. Medary’s account includes descriptions of interactions with Ahtna people at Batzulnetas, Chistochina, and nearby areas. No reference is made to the upper Tanana Athabascans. This personal memoir contains some insightful descriptions of the Ahtna-upper Tanana borderlands in 1924 and of the abundant wildlife resources present in the area” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

This highly entertaining account reminds the reader of just how vibrant and “developed” parts of the Wrangell-St. Elias area were a century ago, long before the copper mines had gone silent and before dreams of vast gold finds were tempered by disappointment and destitution for many. Along on the adventure was the famed guide and prospector Andy Taylor, and one journal entry upon arriving in McCarthy gives a sense of the writer: “The Alaska House is kept by ‘Kate’, an exdance-hall ‘lady’, who has kept about 80 thousand dollars of her earnings. The town is full of husky dogs and women of easy virtue, and most of the money earned by the workers in the Kennecot [sic] Mines is left in McCarthy.”


“This report resembles that of most geological survey papers for this period. Some information is presented concerning Native groups and travel routes (some of which are depicted on a foldout map) in the Copper River basin and upper Tanana region, but this is secondary to the descriptions of the geology and mineral resources in the Mount Wrangell District” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

“This article highlights the lives of Ted and Babe Lowell, who opened a trading post at Tanacross in 1928 and delivered freight and purchased furs in the upper Tanana region until the early 1940s” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

Ted Lowell explains how in the early days money never changed hands as Natives relied on trading furs directly for supplies: “The most common staples traded were flour, sugar, rice, tea, tobacco and hardtack.” In other interviews (see Stern 1979) Lowell reported that perishables were never available at trading posts due to the hardships and time involved in delivering freight. Lowell also gives a good account of hauling freight to the Wrangell-St. Elias area from Fairbanks using a Model T Ford freight truck.


“This report primarily focuses on contemporary subsistence practices of Native Yakutat community members, though it does contain a section that provides a brief overview of historical resource use by Native Alaskans. Information gathered in this report resulted from 25 key informant interviews with long-term Native residents with extensive knowledge of fishing and hunting practices, followed by a random survey of 30 percent of the community that gathered quantitative data on contemporary subsistence patterns” (Lahoff, Thornton, and Deur 2012).

The report’s section on increased road access and the relative inefficiency of “road hunting” due to competition is illustrative of a broader pattern in the Wrangell-St. Elias region, where road corridors invite heavy use, reduce harvest success, and create tensions between user groups. The report also concludes that non-Native dependence on subsistence resources is substantial: “Non-Native people have moved to the area, many seeking a life that also allows them to become connected with the natural processes and the surrounding land, suggesting that similar needs exist for these people as well.”


“Robert McKennan’s field journals offer important insights into his fieldwork among the upper Tanana and Gwich’in Athabascans and the challenges of conducting ethnographic research in remote areas of interior Alaska in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Mishler (Gwich’in) and Simeone (upper Tanana) have performed an important service for researchers by assembling this material, augmenting the journals with a biographical sketch of McKennan, and providing other contextual information. McKennan’s upper Tanana journals contain important insights about life in the Chisana, Nabesna, and Slana areas near the northern border of what is now the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve in the late 1920s” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

“Mitchell directed construction in 1901-1903 of the branch of the Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System (WAMCATS) running from Eagle City to Valdez. He recounts his experiences in this monograph, which was written about 30 years following his Alaska service. Mitchell’s observations of and interactions with the Han Chief Charley at Ketchumstuk, the upper Tanana Chief Joseph (who served as a guide for Mitchell) and other upper Tanana people at Ketchumstuk, and Middle Tanana Athabascans at encampments along the Goodpaster River offer insights into a culture in transition consequent to increasing white presence in the region at the turn of the 20th century. Upper Tanana – Ahtna interactions and relationships are not discussed” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

Mitchell’s retrospective account conveys a powerful sense of the difficulties – logistical, social, and environmental – of the monumental achievement: “It was a project unique in the annals of telegraphic engineering in respect to its immensity and the remoteness, inaccessibility, climatic severity, and the wild and uninhabited nature of the region to be served.” He gives a harrowing account of finding an early mail carrier frozen to death on a sled outside a tent, with a match between his teeth and the strike box between his legs, and of having to shoot the only dog that remained at the man’s side (the others had escaped their harnesses and run off) shows the grim dangers faced by so many in this early period of Alaska’s development.


“This geological survey report includes brief descriptions of the Indian and white population in the Batzulnetas and Slana areas, and of travel routes between the upper Copper River basin and Tetlin” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

General note on the Moffit reports: While these reports are almost all physical geography and geology in content, a little information can be gleaned about Natives and non-Natives (chiefly miners, prospectors, trappers, traders) in the area. Moffit devotes some discussion to the topic of horses and horse travel in each report, evaluating areas with habitat and browse for horses and vexing about the limited growing season; about trails and trail conditions, and special cautions for non-Natives about Indian trails “that exist chiefly in the minds of the natives,” and about the places the non-Natives are better to stick with well used game trails, which “could be depended on to give the easiest routes across ridges and through valleys,” while the many routes and shortcuts are known only to the Native trappers and hunters and were of “less help” to non-Natives.


“Topographic and geologic field parties surveyed the section of the Alaska Range between the Nabesna and Big Tok rivers in 1934. This report contains no information about the people living
in this area. A sketch map included with the report depicts the Eagle Trail running south along the Tok River to Mentasta and then to Slana, with one loop circling back to another point on the Tok River” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“Moffit describes the Slana-Tok District as “extending from Mount Kimball southeastward to the Tetling River and including streams that are tributary to the Copper River on the south and to the Tanana River on the north.” He summarizes the history of exploration in the area and describes trails and travel routes. Reference is made to Indian trails, but no other information is presented about Native peoples in the area” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“This geologic investigation focused on the northeast side of the Nutzotin Mountains between the Chisana River and the Canadian border, and included geologic mapping of the valleys of Cooper, Notch, and Cross creeks, located between the Napesna and Chisana rivers. Moffit describes travel routes and trails in the area, including an “old Indian trail down the south bank of the Napesna River” that had fallen into disuse. Some of these trails extended into the southern periphery of the upper Tanana region. The Native inhabitants of this region are not discussed” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“The geology of a part of the Alaska Range located in the headwater region of the Tanana and Copper rivers is described in this report. The history of previous geological investigations in the area is summarized. Moffit describes routes and trails in the area, including one ‘well known to the natives but little used by the few white men who have visited the district’” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“The authors conducted topographic and geologic fieldwork in the summer of 1908 south of the upper Tanana region, on the northeastern slope of the Wrangell Mountains and the adjacent Nutzotin Mountains. Three Indian villages with an estimated population of 45-50 inhabitants were then located in this area: Batzulnetas, on the Copper River; an unnamed village on the Napesna River at the mouth of Cooper Creek; and an unnamed village on Cross Creek opposite the mouth of Notch Creek in the Chisana Valley. Due in part to their isolation, Moffit and Knopf considered the Chisana Indians to be more independent than those at Batzulnetas and Napesna, and said they ‘have retained their own manner of living to a greater extent’ (p.166). The Indians in all three villages wore western clothing and Native-made moccasins, and were eager to trade for tea and tobacco. [In contrast, a version of this report published in 1910 in USGS Bulletin 417,
contained a more negative description of the Indians, stating that they were “inveterate beggars, always asking for tea or tobacco, for which, as well as for flour and cloth, they will trade meat and leather goods, when they have them” (p.15)]” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


While this edition of Alaska Geographic focuses on the dynamic physical environment of Alaska’s glaciers, the discussion of Yakutat Bay, Dry Bay, and the lower Copper River region vividly brings to light how challenging the glacial environment is for human activity, and how it shaped and “complicated” non-Native economic activity and development of the area. The Copper River and Northwestern Railway, for example, required tracks running across nearly six miles of active glacial ice: “it is possible that construction of the Copper River and Northwestern Railway is the only instance where man has successfully constructed a railroad over glacial ice.”


This article describes a new exhibit at the Anchorage Art Museum called “‘Wrangell-Mountain Skyboys: Making History Above Alaska’s Copper Belt.’” The photographic exhibit was developed by NPS historian Katie Ringsmuth and includes familiar names such as Bob Reeve, Merle “Mudhole” Smith, and Harold Gillam. The exhibit “explores the role pilots played in building a mining economy in the remote and difficult geography surrounding what’s now Wrangell-St. Elias National Park.” The exhibit also explores the mythologizing of Alaskan aviation and its “heroes,” and provides a good description of the creation of Cordova Air Service as an outgrowth of the Bremner Gold mine south of McCarthy.


“In a section on Southeastern Alaska Moser discusses the various fish canneries, including the ethnic composition of the fishermen and cannery workers, the numbers of fish taken and the localities where fish are found. Among facilities discussed are the Western Fisheries Company in Dundas Bay and Bartlett Bay Saltery and Cannery owned by the Icy Strait Packing Company. The topography, water sources, and fish for these areas is also described. Salmon streams on the outer coast from Cape Spencer to the Alsek River as reported by Indian people are listed’ (Theodoratus 2000)” (Lahoff, Thornton, and Deur 2012).

This study of hunting and harvest activity shortly before the establishment of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve showed that while most hunters were Alaska residents, non-resident hunters were more successful; it is suggested that this is due to non-residents more frequently accessing remote areas by aircraft, as well as more of them participating in guided hunts. This study also showed that trophy sheep harvests were most often inside the proposed boundaries of the park rather than the preserve. All harvest of Chitina bison were within the proposed park boundary as well.

Munsey, Sylvia Falconer. (1975). “Margaret Keenan Harrais...a teacher, crusader and magistrate who was widely known and loved.” Alaska Journal 5(3), 144-152.

This article-length biography sketches the remarkable life of a pioneering Alaskan woman who lived and taught in McCarthy and Valdez, among many other villages and towns in Alaska and the lower 48. The details of her life in McCarthy shed light on the political and social environment of McCarthy from the perspective of Harrais, a prohibitionist living in a frontier town. Harrais is also discussed in Hunt’s Mountain Wilderness, and in an oral history recording with former McCarthy resident Oscar Watsjold from 8/29/94. The details of this accomplished and adventurous woman shed light on the grit and determination of early Alaska women pioneers, who often lived in a social environment where men outnumbered women by ten to one or more. Her husband Martin Harrais was a shift boss at the Jumbo mine at Kennecott. Both Mr. and Mrs. Harrais have unpublished manuscripts on deposit at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.


Not reviewed. From the guide to the collection: “The Nabesna Mining Corporation Records consist of 36 documents boxes of records and files primarily for the period 1931-1947 with some material for 1920. The material consists of correspondence, field books, blueprints, photos and miscellany relating to the operation of the mill and mine as well as to the work and activities of Carl Farwell Whitham, a principal in this mining venture.” The material is unrestricted but requests for publication and reproduction should be directed to the librarian.


The Slana Roadhouse was built by Lawrence Dewitt in 1928 to replace a smaller one closer to the river. The narrative description and statement of significance provides a good synopsis of area history and the role of the roadhouse from 1928 until its closing in 1953 when the Glenn Highway was rerouted and no longer passed by the building. Other nominations for the area are also available for pdf download, including nominations for buildings in Chisana, Chistochina, Chitina, Gakona, Kennecott, and McCarthy.

This road guide provides a keyed map and guide to highlights along the 42 mile road, including "campsites, scenic vistas, hiking routes, and opportunities for wildlife viewing. While geared to the mostly to the nature traveler, historic references and descriptions of the Nabesna Mine, Slana, and the boundaries of park and preserve are also provided.


This synopsis of Chisana history traces Chisana’s history from being the site of “the last great gold rush in Alaska” in 1913, through almost complete abandonment when Milton Medary in 1924 as described Chisana as “452 log cabins in which one man lives alone,” to enjoying status today as an area with “seasonal population of about twenty-five” who run guide businesses, B&B’s, and where a few “persistent placer miners continue to work the district’s creeks.”


The Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Subsistence Plan is a regularly updated and ongoing documentation and administrative record of the Wrangell-St. Elias Subsistence Resource Commission. The SRC is the federally designated advisory body relating to resident subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering on park lands, as allowed and protected under Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.


“This report summarizes existing information on the historic and contemporary uses of fish and wildlife resources in Game Management Units 11, 12, 13, and 20 by residents of the upper Tanana region. Emphasis is placed on the use of large mammals, as the primary purpose of the report was to provide information for use by the Federal Subsistence Board in making customary and traditional use determinations for moose, caribou, sheep, goat, bison, and black and brown bears. Areas used to harvest wildlife resources within the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve are identified, as documented in Division of Subsistence community surveys and in other sources” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

This study provides community summaries, methods, means, and harvest of communities of Dot Lake, Tanacross, Tetlin, Northway, and Tok. Information includes household harvest activities, transportation methods, and species harvested.

“This report is a synthesis of public testimony, oral interviews with residents of Healy Lake and other upper Tanana and Copper River Basin communities, and published and unpublished sources. It documents use by these communities of the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve for subsistence purposes and was prepared in support of a proposal to add Healy Lake to the park resident zone” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“This report, which uses data from a permit program administered by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Division of Commercial Fisheries and from household surveys administered by the ADF&G Division of Subsistence, summarizes household subsistence-personal use salmon harvests in Southeast Alaska between 1996 and 2006. Of particular interest are the sections on customary and traditional harvest methods and use of salmon and its significance to the peoples of the Northwest Coast” (Lahoff, Thornton, and Deur 2012).


“A National Park Service historian, Norris wrote this detailed chronological history of subsistence management in Alaska, primarily as it involves National Park Service lands and programs. It is required reading for serious students of the subject. Relevant to this project are sections of the report describing the Katie John case and subsistence resident zone issues in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, both of which involve upper Tanana Athabascans and local communities” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


This 1987 study identifies alternate land use scenarios for State of Alaska lands, including analysis of local environmental and economic conditions: “The State of Alaska is currently involved in developing area plans for the disposition of Alaska state lands. These plans identify alternative land-use scenarios, their resulting effects on local environmental and economic conditions, as well as the requirements for fiscal resources from state and local agencies.... In particular, availability and supply of recreational, agricultural, and timber resources were evaluated.” The report concludes that “the economy is based primarily on government and other services, agriculture, forestry, mining, recreational hunting and fishing, and transportation (both highway and oil pipeline). Most of the agricultural, forestry, fishing and hunting activities are of a subsistence nature and have little commercial value.”

This recent (2007) community development plan for Kenny Lake is based on a community vision generated at community planning meeting: “The Greater Kenny Lake area is a supportive community where we respect our colorful diversity of people and decide things together. We want to keep a safe community for our children to play and enjoy friendly neighbors. We value a sense of wilderness and our peace and quite [sic], maintaining a rural subsistence family-oriented lifestyle, living off our agriculture by having farms, gardens, livestock, and producing goods to sell. Businesses, industry and farms should be locally owned and minimize the depletion of our natural resources, not degrading our air and water quality. We support self-sufficiency and accomplish things with volunteerism. We want to remain in an unorganized borough without taxes, retaining our self-sufficiency.” The plan identifies the greatest potential for development in agriculture, residential and vacation home construction, tourism, and related services and general services in the private sector. These community plans are highly instructive about commonly held values of area residents and how they define themselves, their history, and their culture.


“This dictionary is invaluable for identification of Alaska place names. Origins of names, variations of names including historical changes, and location in longitude and latitude is provided” (Theodoratus 2000)” (Lahoff, Thornton, and Deur 2012).


Not reviewed. From the publisher’s overview: “A collection of true stories from the life and ministry of Alan L. Pearce. At the time these incidents took place Pearce, a former soldier, had left a 15 year career as a policeman to become his childhood dream...a pilot missionary to Alaska. In these stories he gives glimpses of the lives and the world of people he meets and the faithfulness of God. He serves in meeting their needs. Lessons about getting along when life happens, told with humor and insight by a man who is willing to learn as well as to teach. Lessons from the Native American community as well as homesteaders and more. A good encouraging read...from the life an Alaskan missionary.”


“Pearson describes several trails leading to and from the upper Tanana River in the upper Tanana-Ahtna borderlands area, most of which have been described in other expedition reports” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

“In 1898, the U.S. Congress provided funding for geological surveys in Alaska. Peters and Brooks summarize their expedition to the White and Tanana river drainages, and describe existing and potential transportation routes into these areas” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“An Alaskan pioneer who lived in the Copper River Basin and Alaska-Canada borderlands area, Peterson recounts some of his experiences and observations there beginning in the 1920s. Two chapters in this short volume describe interactions between whites and local Athabascans. The first account took place in the 1930s somewhere near Snag, Yukon Territory, where white trappers (including the author) invited Athabascans from a local village to their cabin to celebrate Christmas and to purchase furs. The second story, presumably recounted to Peterson by one of the prospectors involved, also occurred just inside the Canadian border in 1912. It tells of a local Native medicine man whose apparent misdeeds led to his life being taken by a Native from another village in exchange for a new Winchester rifle. The accuracy of neither story has been verified” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

This account of Alaska’s bygone days as a freewheeling “territory” is an homage to frontier myth and reality as experienced by a miner at Kennecott. He describes the “old” Alaska as a “land of brotherhood, a land of one great big family who recognized and accepted each other as friend and neighbors, regardless of race, nationality or religion.” His account of the Kennecott Copper Mine and McCarthy is one of a town and mine with a marshal and a small jail but seldom any use for either: “Men were no different than they are now, so the little town of McCarthy, four miles below the Kennecott ore mill, let the sporting girls build or buy their cabins on a high bench right by the town. When the miners quit for the purpose of going to Seattle for a while to have some fun, McCarthy was usually as far as they go, and the little town was a prosperous spot because of it.”

His description of contemporary Alaska reflects a melancholy coming to terms with the institutional and bureaucratic era of the state: “take your hat off and ask some young punk with long hair and trying hard to grow a full beard if you could get a permit to cut some wood for your winter fuel supply. His reply, after sizing you up as a suspicious-looking customer and after scanning a map, was, ‘No, this is near beautiful so-and-so’... So you go back home and cut the goddamn wood anyway and nothing happens. Then it dawns on you that this far northern country that had been so good to you has all been lost.”


Not reviewed: From the UAF Rasmuson Library online catalog entry, attributed to the Cover: “A preliminary report of the Roadhouses and Telegraph Stations established and operated on the
Richardson Highway between Valdez and Fairbanks, including the Edgerton cutoff and the Delta Cutoff.”


“Originally published in 1909, this account of Powell’s travels in the Copper River region includes some insightful observations about the Ahtna and neighboring upper Tanana Athabascans.

Powell was a surveyor and adventurer who ventured north for the Klondike Gold Rush in 1898 and remained in Alaska intermittently until 1907. He was a deputy surveyor on Abercrombie’s Copper River exploring expedition from 1898 to 1900, and later prospected and hunted in the Chisana and Valdez areas” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

This first person account of early explorers, prospectors, and local people conveys a sense of the often desperate and foolhardy pioneers lured to the area by the promise of striking it rich, a promise that far more often ended in disappointment and departure than fulfillment of their dreams: “Every out-going steamer was loaded down with the quitters, who, as prospectors, were helpless incompetents. To avoid being ridiculed, they pretended to be returning for horses, larger outfits or more assistance from home.”


The historical and ethnological sketch of the Yakutat areas begins with the Yakutat Tlingit as documented by Frederica de Laguna, the Russian period culminating in their expulsion and massacre, and up through the American period of prospecting, mining activity, exploration, mountain climbing, to the establishment of the Swedish Free Mission Church in 1887. The sketch also gives a good summary of the timber and fish haul operations that gave rise to the development of the Yakutat and Southern Railroad, which still lies in ruins around the local area today.


“This short report is an overview of the WAMCATS telegraph line construction project that focuses on the segments built under the direction of Lieutenant Billy Mitchell” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

This report is of particular interest in describing the logistical challenges of establishing the WAMCATS along a route that had but 12 miles of wagon road along the entire route before construction began. The hardships of the line builders, as well as the difficulties of supplying the needed construction materials and personnel, and of using sled dogs and pack animals for staging operations are all described.

“Described as a guide for ‘tourists, investors, homeseekers, and sportsmen,’ this booklet contains statistical information about Alaska and the Yukon, describes the natural resources and communities, and provides other information that visitors would find useful. Of particular interest are the detailed maps presented for different regions of Alaska, three of which portray portions of the upper Tanana region and/or Copper River Basin. Major trails and travel routes within and between the two regions are depicted” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“Reckord describes sociocultural changes that occurred in the Ahtna Athabascan community of Copper Center during construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Systems (TAPS) in 1973-1978. This ethnographic and ethnohistorical overview also describes the subsistence patterns of Copper River Basin communities affiliated with the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve and the effects of such change agents as missionaries and the fur trade. It is based primarily on research conducted in the 1970s before the park was created. The only reference made to the upper Tanana Athabascans is in a section discussing clan affiliations” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

The section relating to Native and non-Native “race relations” illuminates tensions between the highly segregated Native and non-Native residents, explaining that “inter-racial interactions are superficial and strictly role defined, such as those between employer and employee, customer and businessman, and schoolmates.” Reckord also describes a kind of “role reversal” with the ANCSA land settlement: “Non-Natives, who previously felt no threat to their status in the community from Natives, began to feel that the Natives were 'taking over' and that race relations were worsening,” while Natives' power and prosperity were greatly enhanced by the land settlement act, they felt confident to move into new situations they had previously avoided, and in turn began to see race relations as having greatly improved.” This is one of the very few explicit discussions of these sensitive issues that can be found in the literature from the region.


“Aboriginal and contemporary subsistence patterns in communities around the newly-established Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve are described in this report, which is based on a literature review and interviews conducted by the author in the late 1970s. Reckord included Northway, Tetlin, and Tok in the study but concluded that the distance and expense of traveling to the park precluded Alaska Highway communities from using the area very much today.
However, she adds that when Natives lived in the Nabsna and Chisana valleys, ‘they knew the Wrangells well and used them extensively’ and still today ‘some might drive to the Nabsna Highway to go hunting.’ Reckord also points out that upper Tanana people activate social ties with the Ahtna to obtain salmon, which are generally unavailable in the upper Tanana region” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

Like Hunt’s Mountain Wilderness, this book is essential reading and although not titled as such, represents an early example of an Ethnographic Overview and Assessment for the area. Importantly, it has the most detailed review of non-Native residents and their unique socioeconomic characteristics and ties to the area just before park establishment. Especially important is her three part typology of non-Native subsistence strategies: 1) “those people who maximize the material quality of their life style by investing money earned in wage labor, usually undertaken outside the Wrangell area, in technological improvements of their property.” 2) “[R]esidents who extend their time spent in the Wrangell region by living technologically limited life style. This approach emphasizes the unselective use of diverse subsistence resources, as the more successful one is at subsistence, the more one will be able to avoid wage labor outside of Wrangells.” And 3) subsistence users who “maximize their investment in their lands, usually homesteads or guiding base camps, but sometimes mortgaged or inherited properties. This last group includes agriculturally oriented homesteaders as well as guides and service business operators.”


This issue of the Alaska Geographic magazine focuses mostly on Cordova and the Copper River and Northwestern Railway development that linked the copper mines to the coast. The issue includes a good description of Chitina history, historical photos of Chitina and McCarthy, and a summary of the activities of the Morgan Guggenheim syndicate, including local Alaskan opposition to their monopoly of multiple resource and transport industries.


“The Rice expedition traveled from Valdez to Eagle City and back to Valdez between June and August 1899. They followed ‘an old Indian trail’ from an unidentified point on the Slana River to Mentasta Lake, where they encountered prospectors and ‘3 of the Tetling Indians’ who informed Rice that all but two of the Mentasta Indians had died the previous winter and the two survivors had joined the ‘Ketchumstock tribe.’ At Lake Mansfield the expedition found ‘a band of about 50 Ketchumstock Indians’ that was spending the summer there hunting and fishing before returning to Ketchumstuk for the winter. An Indian guide hired by the expedition (possibly at Copper Center) did not want to accompany the group beyond Ketchumstuk, as he would be trespassing in the territory of another ‘tribe’ without approval from the local ‘chief’” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

Not reviewed. From the publisher: This book is the author’s life and adventure and being single homesteading in the Copper River region. “Harry J. Roehrig was born and raised on Long Island in the state of New York. He had a wonderful childhood playing sports and games with his many friends and family members. His love of nature lead him to Alaska after high school, where he has made his home for the last twenty-six years.”


“This study of the methods used for establishing eligibility for subsistence hunting in the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park was motivated by concerns about population growth in local communities and its potential effects on conservation of park resources. Rogers details the legal framework guiding subsistence uses in national parks in Alaska, reviews management of subsistence hunting in the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park from its establishment through June 1990, and analyzes subsistence harvest data for the park area. He also summarizes the views of local Native and non-Native subsistence users and of one representative of the conservation community, based on personal interviews conducted in 1989. Finally, Rogers presents a series of conclusions and recommendations concerning future management of subsistence in the park.

One of Rogers’ respondents noted that ‘Down in the Northway area a lot of people used to go up in the Chisana…with the park being established, people didn’t understand the regulations so they just kinda (sic) quit going up there.’ This is the only new information presented regarding linkages of the upper Tanana communities to the park area” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

This important study discusses conflicting missions between the State of Alaska and the National Park Service in the management of subsistence activities in and around Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve: “The challenge given to NPS is to fulfill its mandates for wildlife and wildland protection and that of providing for continued subsistence and sport hunting, and to do so in a manner which will allow the system to continue to operate successfully into the future. The success of efforts to integrate subsistence hunting into national park conservation can be viewed as a measure of nation’s success in protecting traditional ways of life and natural ecosystems while Alaska continues to develop.” The vexing issue of orienting subsistence eligibility around road-accessible resident-zones with significant population turnover is addressed, though population growth in the area that the author anticipated has not occurred.


“The Rohn party was charged with making a general topographic reconnaissance map of the Wrangell Mountains area and studying the geologic and mineral resources to the extent possible. Some travel routes in the Copper Basin are described, as are interactions of expedition members
with Ahtna Athabascans. No reference is made to the neighboring upper Tanana Indians” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“Rohn describes trails in the area between Valdez and the Tanana River, including several in the Batzulnetas-Mentasta Lake-Nabesna area, the purpose being to identify travel routes that would facilitate investigation and development of mineral resources in the interior. Included are brief descriptions of some ‘old Indian trails’ that connected Ahtna villages in the Ahtna-upper Tanana borderlands area” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“In this report Rohn describes the geography and mineral resources of the Copper River Basin, occasionally referencing and adding to the observations of earlier explorers in the area. He notes that ‘Indians on the Nabesna [River] had bullets, knives, and arrow points made of native copper’ obtained at four different places including a tributary of the White River and farther west on the headwaters of the Tanana and the Nabesna rivers. As he does in his other expedition reports, Rohn also describes the routes traveled, many of which were Indian trails. Rohn persuaded Indians encountered on the Nabesna River to guide the expedition to Batzulnetas” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“Survey data recorded by the National Park Service in its Cultural Resources Mining Inventory and Monitoring Program between 1986 and 1996 are summarized in this report. Included is a chapter on the mining history of the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve in which connections between the upper Tanana and Ahtna Athabascans are briefly discussed” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“Funded by an Alaska Historical Commission grant, Simeone cataloged the Alaska photograph collection at the Episcopal Church Archives in Austin, Texas. Most of the photographs were taken between 1900 and 1930, many of which are not attributed to a specific photographer. The photographs are classified either as ethnographic or historic. Included in the collection are photos of upper Tanana Athabascans from Tanacross and Tetlin, many of which were published in the
Alaska Churchman, as well as other images of the greater upper Tanana region” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“This is one of several articles assembled in a booklet for the exhibition commemorating the 50th anniversary of construction of the Alaska Highway. As a backdrop to outlining the effects of this massive wartime project on the upper Tanana Athabascans, Simeone summarizes their traditional seasonal round and the changes they experienced after traders and missionaries arrived in the region. The Alaska Highway led to the demise of remote villages, provided wage employment opportunities, and “created a set of new social relationships in which Indians and Whites became alienated from one another, inhabiting different worlds.” Excerpts from three Native men who either were boys or young men at the time the road was built are included in this article.

A sound recording made by Simeone in conjunction with this project, ‘50 Years Later: Alaska’s Native Peoples and the Highway,’ is on file at the Oral History Program in the Rasmuson Library at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. (H95-89-03 parts 1 and 2)” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


Simeone’s book is the most comprehensive discussion of the modern Northern Athabaskan potlatch available. Based on decades of participant observation in and around the community of Tanacross, Simeone seamlessly integrates anthropological theory and engaging narrative to shine light on the meaning of the potlatch as a fundamental symbol and practice of “Indianness” organized by the principals of reciprocity and cooperation. The discussions of the role of non-Natives by symbolically – representing competition, social isolation, and selfishness – as well as the special meaning of non-Native participation in the ceremony itself are discussed as a form of cultural reciprocity between cultures and people, mediating difference in a positive way. These cultural dynamics of difference and mediation through reciprocity resonates widely in Alaskan villages. “Old time” non-Natives are compared favorably to “new” non-Natives, with the old timers considered more generous and integrated into Native communities and culture than non-Natives today.


The article provides an intimate view of mining and miners in the Chititu, Dan, and Young Creeks that feed into the Nizina River. Smith recounts his journey there in 1909, and later working at a mine before losing his job due to a squabble over fresh beef that was rationed by the mine boss, during which the boss’s “apple polishing buddies” were the only ones to survive the purge of unhappy workers.

Smith shares the story of a lesser known, but greatly accomplished, pioneer aviator in the Wrangells named Merrit D. “Kirk” Kirkpatrick. “Kirk” was “second only to Gillam in establishing an early and significant aviator presence in the Wrangell Mountains. Like Gillam, “Kirk” is described as having survived many close calls and for providing “heroic” service to remote communities while basing out of Cordova. “He was killed after encountering fatally bad weather and zero visibility while on return from McCarthy with one passenger.


“The Reverend Sommers reminisces about his trips to Tanacross and Tetlin in the early 1950s” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


Stanley provides a good general history of the Nabsesna Mine, Carl F. Whitham – who developed the mine without big finance – and the role of the mine in leading to the development of the Northway Airport, Tok, and the Tok Cutoff Road; support of the Lend Lease program of 1941; and the eventual character and extent of road settlement in the region.


Not reviewed. From the guide to the collection: Images include gold mining, dredges, freighting, and activities at Forty Mile, Goldstream, Shushana, Fox 1904-1929.


“Richard Stern and Terrence Cole conducted tape-recorded interviews with Ted Lowell in February 1979, focusing on his experiences as an employee of the trader John Hajdukovich (1929-1935), the operation of trading posts in the upper Tanana region, and navigability of the Nabesna and Chisana rivers. Stern prepared this file memo to summarize key points recorded in these interviews. Limited information is presented about the upper Tanana Athabascans. Cole used some of the navigability information in his report cited above (Cole 1979)” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

Ted Lowell was an employee of John Hajdukovich, who operated trading posts in Tetlin, Tanacross, and Nabesna. Lowell provides a detailed account of the logistics, people, and changing technology used to support remote trading posts and villages mostly by boats (poling, boats with kickers, steamboats), dog sled, and road and trail transportation from the 1920 to the 1940s. The frequency of accidents, delays, changing river conditions and challenges of extreme
weather are all discussed. It provides a window on competition in the transport business dependent on development: how air access altered transportation as it became routine but remained very expensive for moving freight, especially as improved boat technology and increased access from road building lowered the cost of overland and river transportation. Lowell also remembers John Hajdukovich as having a reputation for being generous to a fault, highly respected in Native communities for extending credit even as bad fur trading years sometimes nearly wiped out his business. Hajdukovich also guided hunters, taking wealthy clients for thirty day hunts for a price of $2500.


“Stirling wrote this report to provide background information for a navigability case the State of Alaska anticipated filing in U.S. District Court. It also was designed to fill gaps in the Cole (1979) report cited above by adding ethnographic information on historic uses of lakes in the Northway area. Interviews conducted with a few (and mostly non-Native) Tok and Northway residents to document contemporary uses of selected lakes provide the only relevant data not available in other publications. A list of historic sites in the Northway area reported in Andrews (1977) is included as an appendix” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

The study provides a good synopsis and ethnographic sketch of Native use, history, and significant historic sites, but for contemporary of the area the report relies on oral history interviews with mostly non-Native interviewees who came to the area in the 1960s and 1970s. The interviewees represent trappers, land owners, resource managers, as well as resident hunters, fishers, and recreationalists.


“This document was created for the purpose of determining ownership of submerged land within the region surrounding the White River of Wrangell-St. Elias Park. The report examines the uses of the White River, both historic and contemporary” (Lahoff, Thornton, and Deur 2012).


“This report presents socioeconomic and historical information for communities in the Copper River Basin and describes resource harvest and use patterns in these communities for the period June 1982 to May 1983. Among the communities described are those in the ‘Upper Copper River Subregion,’ which lies in the upper Tanana-Ahtna borderlands area: Chistochina, Slana, Nabesna Road, and Mentasta. Most of the pertinent historical information is derived from secondary
sources, but some of the new resource harvest information affirms the ties between people and communities in the upper Tanana region and Copper River Basin” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“Stuck describes his trip from Fairbanks to Tanana Crossing that began in late February. He references ‘an unusually protracted potlatch’ held the previous December, ‘attended by detachments from Mantasta (sic), Tetlin, Ketchumstock (sic), and even Moosehide, in honor of the memory of the local chief who died the previous Summer…’” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“The renowned Episcopal missionary describes a series of dogsled trips in interior Alaska. In 1910 and accompanied by Arthur Wright, Stuck traveled east from Fairbanks to Healy Lake and Tanana Crossing, then north to Eagle, and west to Circle City and Fort Yukon. The purpose of visiting the upper Tanana Indians was to inquire ‘into their condition and into the desirability of establishing a post among them.’ He concluded that Tanana Crossing was a good location for a mission, being ‘a central spot for the Indians of this region’ and two days journey from Tetlin, Mentasta and Ketchumstuk. Tanana Crossing was then a WAMCATS telegraph station and the Indians who eventually relocated there had resided at the ‘picturesque’ Lake Mansfield. Stuck ministered to 15 Indians at Lone (Long?) Cabin and also baptized five children on this trip. He encountered 40 residents of Ketchumstuk on the trail between that village and Chicken Creek, and lamented the detrimental influences of white contact on them” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“Tatum and his companions spent 25 days traveling from Fairbanks to Tanana Crossing in September 1912 to establish St. Timothy’s Episcopal Mission in an abandoned trading post. Tatum describes the challenges of repairing cabins and traveling from Tanana Crossing to George Creek during the winter months. Reference is made to an abandoned village site near George Creek and to the spruce tree shelters the inhabitants had occupied” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


“Tintinger and her family lived across the river from old Tanacross for 18 months beginning in December 1941, where her husband worked for Pan American Airways. She describes the local wildlife and scenery and discusses construction of the airfield at Tanacross. This article focuses on the life of Ole Frederickson, who arrived in Alaska in 1901 and while enroute to the Chisana gold fields in 1913 stopped in Tanacross and decided to remain there. Little reference is made to the Native people at Tanacross, but this short article is one of the few published sources of information for this area in the 1940s” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

“The original letters and photographs of Leroy Townsend, who traveled north to seek gold in the Copper River valley in 1898-99, are reprinted in this book and supplemented with historical information from other documented sources. Townsend spoke favorably of the Ahtna Indians he employed as guides or met on his trip. Although no reference is made to the upper Tanana Indians, this book includes several rarely seen photographs that portray Ahtna people and culture” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

The conclusion, written by Peggy Jean Townsend, references a Seattle Post Intelligencer article from July 1899 that reported on “returning” prospectors and others from the Copper River area. The article, entitled “Copper River Miners Return. Roundly Denounce the Country and Criticize Capt. Abercrombie,” states that “there is not a man in the crowd kindly disposed toward the country. With one voice they condemn it as a gold producer. And they unhesitatingly say that no land under the sun is the prospector met with such hardships. ‘I would consider the Valdez trail the worst trail in any country of which mining history makes mention, and that the Valdez glacier is a veritable deathtrap,’ is the verdict of Dr. Leroy C (S) Townsend.”


“In this book, the author recounts his personal experiences living in southeast Alaska, including trapping, prospecting and fox farming. Of particular interest are his descriptions of experiences with Yakutat Tlingits and his description of a Yakutat uprising against Russian fur traders in the region” (Lahoff, Thornton, and Deur 2012).


This general report of the US Department of Interior Bureau of Education for 1916-17 contains a special section report by Arthur H. Miller, Acting Superintendent of the Southwestern District, covering the Copper River, Prince William Sound, and Cook Inlet Regions: “Inspecting the work of the schools in the Copper River, Prince William Sound, and Cook Inlet regions, I have travelled by train, boat, automobile, stage, dog-team, and on foot more than 4,000 miles, covering only a portion of the district.” In addition to providing insight into the educational strategy of the Bureau of Education with respect to the Native population, it also reveals the prevailing paternalism of the day: “Though there yet remains much to be done, no one who has known Alaska natives for a considerable number of years doubts that advancement has been made among them where schools have been established and proper Christianizing influences have been obtained.” At the same time, the fundamental problem of localized competition for subsistence resources is addressed with a plea to close the cannery and commercial fish operations that were denying local Copper River Natives of their salmon stocks. In exchange for relief programs providing critical food and goods for local “destitute” Natives, the author
suggests a work program: “In order that a policy of merely distributing rations be avoided, it was thought best that all able-bodied natives should be required to work in return for what was given them; only needy widows, orphans and the sick were supplied with food free of charge.”


“This booklet describes travel between Eagle and Valdez in the late 1800s and early 1900s, as well as construction of the Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System (WAMCATS) along the Eagle-Valdez Trail in 1900-02. Maps depicting the northern part of the trail between Eagle and Tanana Crossing are included. Passing reference is made to the Native inhabitants of the region” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

This brochure includes quotations and photographs of early explorers, journalists, and military officials involved in mucking the trail and using it for daily commerce. Historical maps add to the sense of history of context, as well as the enormous logistical challenges involved in surveying, transporting materials, and constructing the trail.


This conservation plan, EIS, and wilderness review describes five alternatives for the area, including the preferred alternative of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. It focuses on the communities of Tetlin, Northway, Tok, and Tanacross and confirms the importance of local reliance on subsistence resources, making a distinction between the primarily Native communities and Tok, “the largest town in the subregion.” which serves as a supply center for the Upper Tanana and the Fortymile area. Changing economic conditions and population growth with development of and near the road system is also considered, emphasizing the commonality of perception, values, and reactions to change: “People living close to the land, regardless of their ethnic origin or place of birth, tend to be conservative and resistant to change…. Residents dependent on local resources have legitimate concerns about increasing competition from recreational users and efforts to increase public access and game populations are met with suspicion as this is seen as leading to reduction of resources local residents depend on year round.” The bulleted list of public and agency concerns is essential reading as they are express sentiments and perspectives applicable to land management and conservation lands throughout the region.


A number of Wrangell-St. Elias area residents were interviewed for various projects from the last several decades, and the recordings are on deposit with UAF Rasmuson Library: 1972 D-2
hearings in Tok, Yakutat, and Copper Center; Valdez Mining District tapes from Tazlina, Copper Center, Gulkana, and Glennallen; Northway area residents interviewed as part of a recent Whitefish Traditional Ecological Knowledge study; and a KUAC radio interview with Elmer Rasmuson regarding his family history in Yakutat, religion, banking and industry.


Project Jukebox is an online audio collection – with supporting text, maps, key word indices, and photographs — of interviews from current and former residents of the Wrangell-St. Elias area: “In the early 1990’s, the National Park Service wanted to better document local history by recording stories from local residents about their lives and experiences related to the Park, its establishment, and subsistence living in the area.” Many interviews have been added to the Jukebox Project since its creation two decades ago, and by now it is the single best source for first-person accounts of the recent history and culture of the area, covering both Native and non-Native interviewees. See also other Jukebox collections, including the Alaska Highway Project Jukebox, for more interviews relating to the area.


The Valdez Museum provides a short online summary of the history of Chitina, focusing on the transition to a bustling town once the Guggenheim financiers bought up claims at Kennecott and decided to build a railroad to bring ore to seaport at Cordova. Chitina became a railroad town in 1910, and the railroad was in operation year-round until 1932, as prices of copper dropped precipitously after WWI and led to the eventual closing of Kennecott in 1938. The short summary makes the important point that while the railroad was running in the primary service of the mining industry, other businesses and opportunities grew up as well. Chitina in its heyday was bustling with tourism and served as a junction town to the trail road to Fairbanks.


Anthropologist James VanStone summarizes the exploration history of the late Russian and the early American periods of the Copper River country. Using explorer’s journals and reports, VanStone shares interesting non-Native experiences, observations, and perceptions of Native villages, including Taral. He provides a sketch of the sometimes tenuous and wary encounters with Ahtna Natives and the growing interdependence of prospectors and explorers and the goodwill and local knowledge of the Native inhabitants of the Copper River country.


“Walkley spent the summer of 1954 as an Episcopal missionary in Tetlin and in this short article comments on his experiences and the people there. A picture of the Titus David family at summer camp is included” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).

Not reviewed. From the publisher’s website: “From their log cabin overlooking Scoter Lake at Nelchina, to Glennallen, Anchorage, Wasilla, Copper Center, Tok, Palmer, Fairbanks, Denali, Matanuska, Susitna, Valdez, Cordova and other arctic communities, Norman Wilkins recorded daily journal entries throughout the 25+ years he and his wife Sylvia spent carving out a life on the Alaskan tundra.”


This 1889 article by climber and adventurer William Williams chronicles a failed attempt to climb Mount St. Elias in 1888 under the leadership of Englishman Harold W. Topham. Williams’ account of the epic 40-day trip describes striking out from Yakutat, after hiring a mix of local white prospectors and Natives: the Natives carried 70 to 90 pound packs while the non-Natives carried 60-80 pound packs, with Natives getting two dollars a day while the non-Native got three. And while the non-Natives wore nailed boots and used ice axes for cutting steps up steep ice – moving at 150 feet an hour – the Natives kept wearing their moccasins and refused to use the steps, instead climbing around their non-Native companions and then waiting from higher up. The expedition stalled out 7000 feet before the summit. The narrative give an excellent historical view of how locals, Native and non-Native, became indispensable local experts for early explorers, prospectors, scientists, climbers, and surveyors.


Wilson came to Alaska from Washington at the age of twelve and grew up in Northway, eventually attending Sheldon Jackson in Sitka: “That’s where I learned what it is like to be a minority,” he explains. His interview is especially insightful in his discussion of Native-non-Native relationships and the impacts to Native communities from rapid development and competition for local resources stemming from the influx of non-Natives relating to and following construction of the Alcan and connecting highways.


Not reviewed. From publisher’s “About this issue”: “Gerald Wright, National Park Service specialist in the Wrangell Mountains, built the foundation for this issue. Gil Mull generously contributed his knowledge of the region’s physical environment and mountaineering history. George Herben, who first visited Kennecott in the early 1950s, added his knowledge of the history of the Wrangells and contributed many of the magnificent photos. The wardens and naturalists at Kluane National Park, particularly Jack Schick, were especially helpful in pulling together information for the Saint Elias area in Canada.” Chapter subjects include childhood memories of Kennecott, mining the mountain wilderness, climbing, the first ascent of Mount
Blackburn, mountain recreation and tourism, people and the economy, and land status in the Wrangell-Saint Elias area of Alaska.


This website provides a several page history of the Yakutat and Southern Railroad which was developed to support a large-scale commercial cannery on Monti Bay. The history of the railroad illustrates how a primary industry such fishing and canneries results in growth in other sectors, such as the construction of a large sawmill to produce the railroad ties. The article also describes the repurposing of the railroad when the US Army negotiated with Libby Canning Company in 1940 to support transport of government materials for building an airfield and garrison 4 miles southeast of Yakutat. “In its heyday...the little railroad was perhaps the greatest single contribution to the economic growth and development of the small town of Yakutat, Alaska.”


“Zarnke, a retired Alaska Department of Fish and Game veterinarian, began recording oral history interviews with veteran Alaska trappers and hunters in 1996 in conjunction with the Alaska Trappers Association and the Hunter Heritage Foundation of Alaska. This short article is excerpted from a longer interview with Dean Wilson (see Alaska Trappers Association 1999), who was raised in Northway and later moved to Copper Center. Wilson discusses boyhood activities in Northway, noting in particular his admiration of Chief Walter Northway (who is described as a talented hunter and teacher) and Walter’s younger brother Steven” (Haynes and Simeone 2007).


Zarnke’s book is a collection of life stories based on oral history interviews with Alaskan hunters, fishermen, and trappers that are also available for purchase online at the Alaska Trappers Association. Stories included in the book with interviewees from the south-central and eastern interior regions of Alaska are Red Beeman, Larry Kritical, June Moore, Marlin Grasser, LeNora Conkle, Paul Kirsteatter, and Dean Wilson: “The book is based upon a project to record ‘oral history’ interviews with veteran outdoorsmen and women around the state of Alaska. The primary purpose of the project is to preserve the memories of people who have lived an active outdoor lifestyle...at the time of this writing, we have over 171 interviews in the collection.” See the Alaska Trapper’s Association website for further information about this book as well as the larger project from which these stories were selected: http://www.alaskatrappers.org/.

This recent study examines the history of Russian missionary activity in Alaska as reflected in narratives and travel journals, primarily from the 1850s to the 1930s. The material is particularly useful in showing how Russian trading and proselytizing was heavily influenced in the Ahtna region by the Ahtna’s ongoing and fiercely defended role as intermediaries between coastal traders – indigenous and Russian – and interior Athapaskan groups. Through Russian eyes, the Ahtna (Mednovtsy as the Russians called them) were alternately viewed as “unspoiled” and as “brutal” “savages” in character. The relative success of American entre' into the area later was at least in part due to the gradual integration of, and reliance upon, western trade goods among the Ahtna.