YUKON FRONTIERS
Historic Resource Study
of the
Proposed Yukon-Charley National River

Melody Webb Grauman

Anthropology and Historic Preservation
Cooperative Park Studies Unit
University of Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska
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by
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National Park Service

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It was nearly seven o'clock. The swarming mosquitoes had subsided to an even hum as we watched the evening campfire on which our meal of "gruel" cooked. It combined brown rice, dried lentils and peas, the luxury of fresh onions and cheese, and it was welcome after a hard day of backpacking. The muscles in my legs twitched from the unusual strain of walking on spongy muskeg and balancing on wobbly tussocks. Despite several hours of searching, we had failed to find the elusive Montauk Roadhouse. Historic reports from the turn of the century described it being a hundred yards off the Yukon. We found what we regarded as the mail trail and assumed that the roadhouse would not be far from it. Applying every deductive technique, including imagining ourselves the builders of the roadhouse, we finally admitted defeat and floated down to our camp at the mouth of Trout Creek. Tomorrow promised to be an even harder day as we planned a twelve-mile-round trip to the Gilman Creek Cabin. The forest fire of
1969 had badly burned the area, and I knew that only hard work and Dave's New England perseverance would get us there and back in one day.

This was a typical day in my historic-site survey of the area embraced in the proposed Yukon-Charley National Rivers. Some, like this, ended in disappointment. Others, equally demanding, ended with the satisfaction of discovery. Almost sixty days in the summer of 1976 were spent searching for these sites. Pouring rain, hordes of mosquitoes, and exhaustive hikes were more than offset by the satisfaction of finding a historic cabin, trail, or mine and by the warmth and hospitality of the "river people".

David Evans contributed indispensably to the survey, not only in finding the sites but in introducing me to the river lifestyle that added a vital dimension of understanding to the historic remains we identified. Dave is a trapper who had agreed to guide me to the sites he knew and help me find others, but he would do so only if we lived his way of life. That meant no freeze-dried foods, heavy reliance upon the land for necessities, and a lot of walking. Having rejected a career in history for which he had studied, Dave had turned to subsistence trapping. His innate curiosity of the land and its people and his deductive
reasoning and good common sense paid off when my book knowledge failed. Moreover, I sampled not only the history of the area but acquired a feel for its spirit. To David Evans, more than any other, I am indebted for the successful completion of the survey.

The purpose of the historic resource study is to research the history of the proposal area and identify historic or cultural sites. Survey and evaluation of an agency's historic sites are mandated by a number of historic preservation laws, primarily the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and Executive Order 11593. All sites that qualify for the National Register should be nominated to it. In addition to compliance with these laws, this initial survey provides legislative support data for Congressional hearings on the significance of the area to merit distinction as a national park. Furthermore, essential to the planning and management of any park is knowledge of the area's resources, their use, and their importance. One of the first steps is a List of Classified Structures, for which this study provides the foundation. Finally, interpretation of these resources requires historical research to ensure accuracy, instill human interest with lively anecdotes, and synthesize data into broad historical themes.
The study area consists of approximately two million acres along the Yukon and Charley Rivers of east-central Alaska. It contains mountains, ridges, valleys, rivers, meadows, and a biological cross-section of much of Alaska. The muddy, broad Yukon River contrasts greatly with the clear mountain streams of its tributaries, primarily the Charley, Nation, and Kandik Rivers. While wilderness has reclaimed much of the area, it is rich in history. Unfortunately little has been recorded and thus much has been lost. Other information lies dormant in the memories of a few remaining old-timers. A history of such an area demands not only digging into primary sources, but extensive oral history as well. The dearth of secondary sources in Alaskan history has resulted in a few hackneyed gold-rush stories to characterize the area's exciting and varied history. Hopefully this study will add new dimensions to the colorful past of a dynamic and changing frontier. This study does not pretend to be complete but merely forms a stepping stone for greater detail, additional themes, and a more complete inventory of historic sites as part of a cumulative process.

The following study consists of two parts--a historical narrative of the proposal area and a description of the historic sites within it. The thumbnail sketches of the sites include the
approximate locations, significance levels, roles in history, conditions of each, and my recommendations. I hope the photographs give a sense of the remaining fabric and its condition. Sites that qualify for the National Register will receive more complete work-ups at a later date. At appropriate points in the narrative, I have tried to bridge the two parts by including a paragraph describing a site that could be used to interpret a broad historical theme. The description is indented and single-spaced. Thus the reader can skip it if the narrative flow is interrupted. More than 150 sites are described, but only the most illustrative or significant are used in the text.

Although the field survey was the most exciting and dramatic part of my study, most of the year I spent in research. I visited the Library of Congress, the National Archives, the Universities of Oregon and Washington, the Oregon Province Archives of the Society of Jesus at Gonzaga University, the Alaska State Historical Library, and the indispensable Elmer E. Rasmuson Library at the University of Alaska. I wish to thank collectively all librarians who helped me in my search, but specifically I want to mention Martin F. Schmitt at the University of Oregon and Reverend Clifford Carroll, S.J. at Oregon Province Archives of the Society of Jesus who took an active interest in my project.
There are numerous people I wish to thank. This project owes its funding to William E. Brown of the National Park Service, and without his strong support and amazing patience it would never have been completed. Zorro A. Bradley, also of the National Park Service, assumed many of my administrative responsibilities and allowed me time for field work, research trips, and writing. To Robert M. Utley, now of the Advisory Council of Historic Preservation, I owe the idea of applying Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis to Alaska. But more important, his careful reading of the manuscript improved its style immeasurably. Robert N. DeArmond not only read the text for historical accuracy, but clued me in on a number of sources and even lent me his indices of the Alaska Weekly and other Alaskan newspapers. Friends and colleagues, especially Elizabeth Andrews and Orlando W. Miller, have read portions of it and have made valuable suggestions. Linda Yarborough graciously translated the important Francois Mercier manuscript. Responsibility for the typing was placed in the competent hands of Ilyne Miller, Teri Borders, and Sandi Phillips whose good judgement has won my respect. David Hoch designed the fine maps accompanying the site descriptions. The Bureau of Land Management, especially the Fortymile Resource Area, has been most cooperative. No project would be complete without the support of the local people. I wish to thank all those who gave me their time and
shared with me their memories. Most particularly, I want to thank George Beck and Charlie Biederman, whose knowledge of twentieth-century Yukon-Charley far surpasses the synthesis of this study. Last, but not least, my gratitude extends to my husband, David S. Grauman, who not only encouraged my travels, but actively shared in the evolution of this project.
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"Stand at Cumberland Gap," historian Frederick Jackson Turner declared in 1893, "and watch the procession of civilization, marching single file--the buffalo following the trail to the salt springs, the Indian, the fur-trader and hunter, the cattle-raiser, the pioneer farmer--and the frontier has passed by. Stand at South Pass in the Rockies a century later and see the same procession with wider intervals between."¹ Stand at the Yukon River near the Canadian border fifty years later and watch Turner's frontiers flow past modified by Alaska's unique environment: the Indian, the explorer, the trader, the missionary, the miner, the soldier, the riverboat man, the dog-team driver, the woodchopper, the homesteader, and finally the townsman.

Although never so orderly a procession as Turner describes passed through either Cumberland Gap or South Pass, his idea

of moving and changing frontiers resulting in the Americanization of men and institutions has withstood the test of time and the attacks of revisionist historians.\(^2\) By 1893 Turner had rejected contemporary historical concepts that ignored environmental factors. Instead he felt that the distinctive environment of the United States, especially the presence of free land on the western edge of advancing settlements, explained the basic American character and institutions. Attracted by dreams of economic improvement or adventure, people took into the wilderness established political, economic, and social practices. Against the hostility of a new environment these sophisticated practices gave way to new or adapted ways of life. Slowly the frontier grew more and more complex as various groups with different skills and abilities passed through, and finally a fully developed society evolved. This society, however, differed from those farther east by its separate evolution and its unique social environment. Though with essential differences because of time, place, and men, this same process repeated itself for three and a half centuries.

Alaska offered the last promise of free land and is even called the last frontier. Here exploration had barely commenced in 1890

when the Superintendent of Census declared that the frontier had passed. Turner, the historical generalist, undoubtedly did not recognize the rare opportunity presented by the vast laboratory of Alaska to test his frontier hypothesis. But Alaska in fact completes his scenario. In particular, the Yukon-Charley area, approximately two million acres around the junction of the two rivers, affords a lens through which the succession of Turnerian frontiers that made their way from Cumberland Gap to South Pass may be viewed extending to Alaska.

Like any frontier, the Yukon-Charley environment provided a decisive influence in the moulding, adapting, and inventing of social institutions. This environment, as the institutions arising from it, evolved through millions of years of uplift, erosion, and deposition. Important events in geologic time created a significant impact on man in historic time.

Throughout geologic time the earth's crust was forever in motion, buckling, fracturing, pulsating, and producing uplift and troughs as ancient seas and later glaciers emerged and submerged the land. More than 520 million years ago the oldest rock in

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MAP 1 THE YUKON-CHARLEY PROPOSAL AREA

From the Department of the Interior's Final Environmental Statement on Proposed Yukon-Charley National Rivers Alaska
Alaska, the Birch Creek schist, formed under the sea as sediment. Later folding and intrusive lavas caused hardening and recrystallization while uplift, erosion, and primeval rivers cut into the ancient rock. At some time in the early Paleozoic era, 360 to 520 million years ago, a land mass near the upper Yukon River emerged from the sea only to be eroded and submerged again. Later an epoch of widespread vulcanism occurred under the ancient sea. For the next 200 million years mountain-building, erosion, and deposition fluctuated and changed the landscape, creating varied layers of strata. During the middle of the Jurassic period of the Mesozoic era, about 140 million years ago, great bodies of granite intruded into the previously laid sedimentary, limestone, and igneous rock. These intrusions produced uplift but, more important, brought recrystallization and metamorphism of the invaded rocks and generally formed valuable mineral deposits. The sea once again reclaimed most of interior Alaska.

At the end of the Mesozoic era, 60 to 130 million years ago, with the dying out of the igneous activity came an all-important event—the injection of gold-bearing quartz veins accompanied by folding and faulting. The Tintina fault, a major factor in the mineralization of Yukon-Charley, created a natural weakness or

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4 Brooks, Blazing Alaska's Trails, p. 56.
stress point that attracted the gold-bearing intrusions. During the early Tertiary period, 40 to 60 million years ago, great elevations took place, and Alaska arose from the sea with much of its present outline. Rivers and streams eroded the strata including the mineralized intrusive rocks and resulted in the development of ancient placers that in turn consolidated into conglomerate rock. At this time coal deposits were also laid down as vegetable matter in the rivers and lakes. Slowly the climate that had been subtropical began to cool. Erosion rounded mountains and created valleys of accumulated sediment. Ancient rivers flowed seeking the path of least resistance carrying in their torrent small particles of liberated gold. By the close of the Tertiary and throughout the Pleistocene, giant glaciers, originating in the mountains, waxed and waned, generally leaving the Yukon Valley free of ice and the ancient placers undisturbed.

During the last glaciation, the Yukon River remained an ice-free corridor across Alaska. As glaciers absorbed the earth's sea and the sea level dropped, a wide land bridge between Alaska and Siberia emerged. Early man and other mammals may have crossed this bridge and migrated to America along the Yukon Valley toward the United States and Mexico. Following

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the last glacier, abrupt environmental changes caused the extinction of many of early man's food sources, such as the mastodon and musk oxen. Early man continued to adapt and change along with his environment. The Yukon, whose waters and tributaries had carried away the melting glacier water, dwindled in size as the Charley, one of its largest tributaries, continued to drain the upper highland of the annual ice and snow.

As geologic time approached historic time, the environment known to the early Indian proved not dissimilar to that known to the twentieth-century Yukon trapper. The glacier-scraped highlands of the upper Charley River dominate a horizon that gently slopes down to the rounded hills, even-topped ridges, and open valleys of the Yukon Valley. The Yukon itself has cut through complex geologic structures as it flows toward the Bering Sea, leaving behind benches and terraces as testimony to its previous course and might. From a single dominant channel, often confined by resistant time-hardened rock, it breaks free upon entering the flat plains two hundred miles from the Canadian border and branches into several meandering channels. Willow, alder, and black "scrub" spruce cover its banks. As the elevation increases, the

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MAP 2 YUKON-CHARLEY TOPOGRAPHY

From the Department of the Interior's Final Environmental Statement on Proposed Yukon-Charley National Rivers Alaska
black spruce gives way to groves of white spruce, birch, and aspen. Berries of all kinds, rose bushes, and muskeg form the undergrowth.

But the influence that most severely distinguishes the Yukon-Charley frontier from the Cumberland Gap and South Pass frontiers of Turner is the climate. Temperatures range from seventy degrees below zero in the winter to more than ninety degrees in the summer. Sheltered by the Brooks Range to the north and the Alaska Range to the south, the Yukon-Charley area annually averages only ten to twelve inches of precipitation, comparable to the southwestern deserts. Snow cover lasts at least seven months a year while sunlight wanes to less than three hours. The impact of this climate demanded modified behavior patterns, new skills and abilities, and innovative social institutions. Even so, there as with Turner's more temperate environments, the frontier story began with the Indian.
II. THE INDIAN FRONTIER

The Han and Kutchin Indians of the Yukon-Charley area evolved a homogenous culture with tribes from surrounding areas. This culture, known as Athapaskan, numbered more than twenty-five tribes in Alaska and Canada. Flexibility and accommodation characterized their ability to meet the harsh demands of the environment and allowed cultural diversification to exploit different resources. Various aspects of this culture—social organization, subsistence activity, settlement patterns, religious beliefs, and individual personality—reflected the adaptation. Differences in quantity, quality, and stability of food resources of particular interior environments produced slight differences in individual Athapaskan tribes. The pronounced contrast between the interior and coastal


environments, however, wrought pronounced differences between the Athapaskans and the Eskimos, Aleuts, and coastal Indians.

Prior to white contact, the Han Indians exploited most of the Yukon-Charley environment. They settled primarily in three major areas along the Yukon: 1) Charley's Village near the mouth of the Kandik River, 2) Johnny's Village or David's Camp near the mouth of Mission Creek, and 3) Nuklako thirteen miles below the mouth of the Klondike River. Since extensive travel occurred, involving trade and subsistence activities, the Han villages were socially and economically linked to one another and also, though not so closely, to the neighboring Kutchin, Tanana, Upper Tanana, and Tutchone Indians. The Kutchin used the northwestern portion of the area, but not so consistently or efficiently. Thus the primary impact on the Yukon-Charley area came from the Han.

Food resources determined the size of the tribe and the placement of the villages. The larger and more stable the food supply, the larger the population. Unlike the lower Yukon Athapaskans, the Han never depended solely on seasonal salmon runs for food.

(continued)


3 VanStone, Athapaskan Adaptations, p. 37; Graburn and Strong, Circumpolar Peoples, pp. 61-79.
MAP 3  HAN TERRITORY IN EAST-CENTRAL ALASKA

From Cornelius Osgood's The Han Indians: A Compilation of Ethnographic and Historical Data on the Alaska-Yukon Boundary, Yale University Publications in Anthropology, 74, 1971
Instead, caribou, moose, and other animals supplemented their diet. Requiring game as well as salmon, the Han had to range over a large territory, and as a consequence, their population before the white advent was small—less than one thousand.\(^4\)

In contrast to coastal Eskimos, the Han resembled other North American Indians. They were tall, generally slender, with high cheekbones and black hair and eyes. Their apparel and ornamentation reflected the distinctive features of their environment as well as trading relationships. Both men and women wore caribou shirts decorated with porcupine quills or long hair. During the winter they added a rabbit skin shirt, moose skin mittens, marten or rabbit skin caps, and caribou skin pants tanned with the hair on and worn next to the skin.\(^5\) For personal decoration and individual distinction, the Han coated the skin with grease followed by

\(^4\) Cornelius Osgood's *The Han Indians* is only a compilation with little or no synthesis. Since he spent only three weeks in the Han villages, he supplemented his ethnographic material with historic reports. Edwin S. Hall, Jr., "Aboriginal Occupations of the Charley River and Adjacent Yukon River Drainage, East-Central Alaska", typescript (Anchorage: National Park Service, 1974) summarizes Osgood's work and this is more readable but no more informative.

red ochre for the face. They wore earrings and necklaces of
dentalia shell or colored porcupine quills and also straight bone
ornaments through the septum of the nose. Their hairdress, probably
their most obvious cultural distinction, was worn long and tied in
the back of the head with liberal applications of grease, red earth,
goose down, and shells.\(^6\)

In adapting to their climatic extremes, which ranged from
sixty degrees below zero in winter to ninety degrees above in summer,
the Han developed three types of shelters. The nà kùn, or moss
house, served as the permanent dwelling during the coldest months.
It was a twenty-five-foot-square pole house covered with moss and
soil, and each fall two families joined to build and occupy one. The
second main type of shelter, niibeeo zhoo, was an elliptical, skin-
covered house used for winter travels and sometimes as a semi-permanent
dwelling. For travelling in mild weather the Han used a di ty szo, which
is similar to a niibeeo zhoo except that the skin was tanned without
the hair and no smoke hole was left.\(^7\)

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\(^6\) Robert Campbell, Two Journals, p. 97; Murray, Journal of
the Yukon, p. 85.

\(^7\) Elizabeth Andrews, "Niibeeo Zhoo: An Early Historic Han
Athapaskan Village Site, Interim Report", typescript (Fairbanks:
National Park Service, 1976); Osgood, The Han Indians, pp. 84-90;
Hall, "Aboriginal Occupations", p. 13; Edwin Tappan Adney, "Moose
Hunting with the Tro-chu-tin", Harpers New Monthly Magazine 100(1900):
494-507; and VanStone, Athapaskan Adaptations, pp. 32-37.
Niibeeo Zhoo (#7), "a place of skin-houses", excavated in 1976, is the archeological remains of a niibeeo zhoo. Seven depressions, twelve by fifteen feet, remain of an early historic village, probably occupied between 1860 and 1898. Historic reports supplemented by excavation reveal that sticks three to five feet long were set upright a foot apart in the snow or earth. Sixteen to twenty previously bent and curved house poles, in this case diamond willow an inch thick and ten to twelve feet long, were set up in the snow at the ends of the house pointing towards the middle. The ends were joined with two arched poles underneath and were lashed to the side stakes. Over this stick framework went a covering of forty caribou skins tanned with the hair on and sewn together to leave a smoke hole in the center. One of the excavated houses may have been used as a sweatbath. Artifacts of Native manufacture included stone skin-scrapers and a bone skin-flesher, arrowpoint, and snowshoe netting needle. The site, located within the city limits of Eagle, could be used to interpret aboriginal and historic Han shelters, lifestyles, and cultural evolution as contrasted with modern Eagle Village.

Juts' ok (#20), "summer house", may be the archeological remains of a di ty szo is similar to a niibeeo zhoo except that the skin was tanned without the hair, that no smoke hole was left, and that sometimes birch bark instead of skin was used. Once Juts' ok has been specifically located and its archeological significance evaluated, the site could be used in conjunction with Niibeeo Zhoo to interpret the differences between summer and winter subsistence and social activities.

There are no known sites of the permanent moss house, the ná kun. (Numbers in parentheses refer to specific historic sites described more fully starting on page 233.)

The Han apparently used these temporary structures when they travelled for subsistence purposes and for trading with other Native groups. They traded red ochre for the Ahtna copper knives

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8 Osgood, The Han Indians, pp. 77-83; and Graburn and Strong, Circumpolar Peoples, p. 96.
and obtained shells and walrus-hide babich from the coast. Living on a large navigable river contributed to ease of travelling and trading. Furthermore, the Han developed a number of specialized birch-bark canoes: the flat-bottomed canoe for dipnet fishing, the thirty-foot travelling canoe, and the long, narrow, kayak-like hunting canoe. For winter travel two different types of snowshoes were developed, one for hunting and one for trail use. When the Han family travelled during the winter, however, a combination of women and dogs pulled a ten-foot sled.

Although the Han travelled extensively for subsistence purposes, a salmon diet allowed the community to reside at a central village for most of each year. The Yukon River environment bountifully provided three species of salmon—king, dog, and silver. To take advantage of nature's predictable run of salmon during July, August, and September, the Han spread out in individual fish camps located at good eddies a few miles apart and not far from the central village. Here they employed specially designed fish traps, dipnets, and occasionally gill nets. Once caught and cleaned, the salmon were split lengthwise and placed on racks to dry in the sun until ready for caching.

Van Stone, Athapaskan Adaptations, p. 125, categorized the Han as Central-Based Wanderers meaning they had an emphasis on fishing that allowed the community to rest at a central base most of each year. Cf. Graburn and Strong, Circumpolar Peoples, pp. 61-78, who would characterize them as a borderline culture between Inland Riverine Emphasis and Inland Hunting-Snaring Emphasis.
Of the ten fish camps located in the Yukon-Charley area, Bob Stacy's Fish Camp (#11) has enough fabric remaining to interpret this aspect of the Han annual subsistence cycle. Although the site is of recent age and not of prehistoric origin, the site has the essential pole-rack structure, approximately twenty-five by ten feet large, and numerous log-ribbed holes used as fish caches. A few benches and a table remain, adding a feeling of the transitory that is reinforced by the lack of a permanent structure. Canvas tents were probably utilized in recent times or possibly the di ty szo in earlier times. Although Bob Stacy probably used a fish wheel instead of fish traps or dipnets for procuring fish, the basic construction and purpose of the camp depict the same feeling. Moreover, the site could also interpret culture change as it evolved in historic times.

In early fall, after the salmon runs, the Han left their villages to take advantage of the fall caribou migrations. Since caribou moved in large herds, several techniques were developed to obtain as many caribou as possible for food, skins, bone, and antler. Caribou fences, consisting of two long rail fences that converged into a corral, allowed a number of animals to be killed by bow and arrow or set snares. If the caribou missed the fences, the Indians themselves occasionally formed human surrounds. Whereas caribou hunting utilized large groups of people and occurred mostly in the fall, moose hunting throughout most of the year required individual stalking and killing skills. If the kill happened too

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10 Osgood, The Han Indians, pp. 107-109; VanStone, Athapaskan Adaptations, pp. 26-27; and Graburn, Circumpolar Peoples, pp. 65, 70, 73.
far from the village or camp, the Han dried and cached the meat near the kill site and returned when more snow allowed easier shipment with sleds.

A caribou fence is reported in the middle Fortymile country and was once used by the Han.

An Indian Hunting Camp (#32) is a modern equivalent to the earlier moose-hunting expeditions. A camp site, complete with fire hearth, benches, and a table, overlooks the Yukon River. Meat drying racks are set farther back on the island. The site could not only interpret the activities involved in procuring moose, but the broad themes of cultural continuation and adaptation.

After caching the meat, the Han returned to their villages along the Yukon to make snowshoes, sleds, and winter clothing.11 They lived on their summer's dried fish stores until December when they returned to their meat caches and retrieved their contents. When all cached food was depleted, generally in February, they split up into family groups to fish through the ice and to hunt moose, stray caribou, mountain sheep, rabbits, and grouse. In the spring they returned to their camps along the river to make canoes and nets in preparation for summer salmon fishing. At the same time, water fowl returning from the south stopped frequently at small lakes to wait for Arctic lakes and meadows.

to thaw. The Han, profiting from nature's cycles, subsisted on a variety of animals until the salmon runs began.

Most, if not all, of the Han institutions arose from this day-to-day struggle to subsist in an exacting environment.\textsuperscript{12} Moreover, the changing seasonal economic relationship of the Han to their environment ordered their social organization. Although basically village oriented, they broke up several times a year to exploit the resources more efficiently. During the early fall they cooperated in communal caribou drives, but in the late winter they hunted moose and other animals individually. In the spring they joined with a partner to hunt water fowl. By summer they had separated into individual fish camps but still maintained close contact with the nearby village. Family ties, friendship, and a sense of community sharing tied them to their village.

Religious beliefs likewise reflected a close tie to the land and its animals. Animal myths and stories characterized their folklore. Shamans often derived their power from animal spirits. Individuals identified with particular animals or with certain animal characteristics. As in the social structure, most religious rituals were individualistic rather than communal. The annual

\textsuperscript{12} Van Stone, Athapaskan Adaptations, presents a thesis on environment and culture that is similar to historian Frederick Jackson Turner's hypothesis.
King Salmon Ceremony, however, represented a culture-wide celebration. On the other hand, the potlatch, a gift giving festival in honor of a dead relative, combined the individual's desire for prestige with the group's desire for a rare social gathering. Although the potlatch emphasized the virtue of sharing one's property, it also depicted the relationship of subsistence skills and social structure to the environment. The best trapper or hunter would have the most goods to share.\(^{13}\)

In addition, then, the culture emphasized the individual and his responsibility to summon his skills and energies in the quest for food for his family. Since the nuclear family represented the strongest unit in the culture, each individual played a vital role in its well-being and self-sufficiency.\(^ {14}\) Each avoided anything that might adversely affect his subsistence abilities. Menstruating women, for example, stayed away from the village, and hunters shunned women giving birth. Although the culture stressed self-reliance and individualism, a flexibility to depend on others and to cooperate when necessary was equally important. Thus, the rigors of the environment tempered both social and individual impulses and fused them into a unifying culture.

\(^{13}\) VanStone, Athapaskan Adaptations, pp. 43, 73, 121-26.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., pp. 51, 74-89.
The impact of the environment on the evolution of the Athapaskan culture provides an Alaskan dimension of the hypothesis Frederick Jackson Turner applied to the continental frontiers of the United States. Moreover, the Indian symbolizes many of Turner's character traits of the unique American—individualistic, self-reliant, innovative, adaptive, and yet socially dependent. In contrast to the frontiers that followed, however, the Athapaskans tried to maintain a harmonious relationship with their natural environment. With the arrival of the white man and his goods, skills, and institutions, this relationship changed radically.

III. THE RUSSIAN AND ENGLISH FRONTIER

Far beyond the Han territory, late in the eighteenth century, the Russians introduced among other Natives new concepts, tools, and skills derived from a thousand years of western civilization. For the first fifty years of Russian settlement, the Han felt little impact. By the 1830's, however, word had reached them of the value of the new trading goods. Indians along the Mackenzie River, nearly two thousand miles away, exhibited such articles as Russian coins, metal combs, and copper tools and testified that foreign men traded at a post at the mouth of a great river.¹

In fact, in 1833 the Russians had built a trading fort at St. Michael, near the mouth of the Yukon River, and had cautiously explored the lower Yukon. They eventually established a post at Nulato and traded as far up the Yukon as the Tanana River. At the same time, the British Hudson's Bay Company had slowly expanded westward. Along overland routes and up the coasts, they pushed toward Russian America. This

expansion, together with the construction of permanent trading posts alarmed the Russians. Eventually, in 1839, the trading competition brought about a treaty intended to remove rivalry and friction between the two parties.\(^2\) In the following years both countries strove to maintain the resultant good will.

Meanwhile, on the western fringes of the British trading frontier, Robert Campbell arrived at the Mackenzie River in the "land of romance and adventure".\(^3\) In 1834, Campbell was twenty-six years old. The rugged Scottish hills of his father's sheep farm had strengthened his tall, broad-shouldered physique for the deprivations of the North American frontier. Reared a devout Presbyterian, he not only carried a Bible with him wherever he went, but professed the Protestant edict that the products of civilization could help improve the Natives' primitiveness, poverty, and misery.\(^4\) Yet he chose the Hudson's Bay Company primarily for the challenges of exploration and living in an unknown land.\(^5\)

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\(^5\) Ibid.
After learning the fundamentals of the fur trade, Campbell took an active interest in expanding the trading boundaries of the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1840, with a companion and two Indians, he poled and tracked his boats up the Liard River and its tributary, the Francis River, crossed the continental divide, and looked down onto a tributary of the Yukon that he called the Pelly River. Sir George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, felt certain that the Pelly eventually flowed into the Pacific and ordered Campbell to explore it further. In 1848, accompanied by nine men, Campbell descended the Pelly to its junction with the Lewes. Here he built Fort Selkirk amid rich resources of moose, caribou, bear, and fish. But trade goods remained in chronic short supply because of the hazards of transporting them over the treacherous route he himself had opened.

Meanwhile another Hudson's Bay trader, John Bell, explored down the Mackenzie River to the Peel, then crossed to the Porcupine River. As he descended it, he heard the Indians talk of "the Yucan". In 1846 he was ordered to find this river. With little difficulty he did. The very next year Alexander Hunter Murray followed this route to the mouth of the Porcupine. There, near its

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6 Robert Campbell, Two Journals, p. 61.
MAP 4 THE UPPER YUKON

From Cornelius Osgood's The Han Indians: A Compilation of Ethnographic and Historical Data on the Alaska-Yukon Boundary, Yale University Publications in Anthropology, 74, 1971
mouth on the Yukon River, he supervised the building of Fort Yukon. Although Alexander Murray had joined the Hudson's Bay Company only the year before, he competently constructed three log buildings surrounded by a stockade—not in fear of the Natives, but in fear of the Russians. He felt certain that the Russians had explored the Yukon to its source. But more important, Murray knew that the fort trespassed on Russian soil, and he did not want to upset British-Russian relations, smoothed over by the 1839 treaty. He recorded his less-than-happy thoughts during that first year: "As I sat smoking my pipe and my face besmeared with tobacco juice to keep at bay the d--d mosquitoes still hovering in clouds around me, that my first impressions of the Youcan were anything but favorable. . . . I never saw an uglier river, everywhere low banks, apparently lately overflowed, with lakes and swamps behind, the trees too small for building, the water abominably dirty, and the current furious." Nevertheless, he found the


9 Murray, Journal of the Yukon, p. 43.
Native population larger than he had initially believed and receptive to trade. With a small experimental garden and abundant game resources, Murray came to enjoy his trading post.

The post also attracted the Han, or the Gens du fou as Murray called them. They added to their culture trade items that they had previously obtained from the Russians, either directly or through intermediaries—beads, blankets, muskets, iron knives, and metal containers. These trade items, as well as general contact with English and Russian traders, caused rapid changes within their culture. Beads and blankets became frequent decorative ornaments and important items for the potlatch. Metal tools and implements replaced their aboriginal counterparts, whereas guns may have increased intertribal conflict. To obtain these trade items, the Han had to shift from fishing to a greater emphasis on hunting and trapping. Thus, this first overlapping of Natives' and traders' frontiers forced adaptations upon the aboriginal inhabitants.

Meanwhile Governor Simpson, judging relations with the Russians sufficiently cordial, at last granted Robert Campbell permission to explore as much of the Pelly as he wished. Eagerly, Campbell left on June 4, 1851. Although rumors whispered that the Russians had travelled the middle Yukon, Campbell became the first recorded white man

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10 Ibid., p. 72; Osgood, The Han Indians, pp. 127-29.
11 Osgood, The Han Indians, pp. 127-29.
to make the trip. After two days and nights of travelling, he met a group of Indians, later known as the Han, who delivered a letter of welcome from Alexander Murray written a year earlier. Campbell named the White and Stewart Rivers for colleagues in Hudson's Bay Company. On June 8, after only a four-day journey, he reached his goal—Fort Yukon. "I had thus the satisfaction of demonstrating that my conjectures from the first—in which hardly anyone concurred—were correct and that the Pelly and Youcon were identical." 

Campbell returned with a few trade goods to Fort Selkirk via the old route of the Porcupine, Mackenzie, and Liard Rivers. The following summer he travelled again to Fort Yukon and obtained enough trade goods to test the potential of his fort. His test never materialized. Later that summer Chilkats from the southeast coast arrived at Fort Selkirk, angry and hostile. Until the fort's construction they had enjoyed a monopoly of trade with the Indians of the upper Yukon, acting as middlemen between them and the Russian and British traders on the coast. Unable to appease the Chilkats, Campbell was lucky to escape with his life as his trading post burned. He then sought permission to rebuild the fort, but he failed to convince the company managers of its importance. Discouraged and cynical, he left for Scotland. A year later, with bride in hand, he returned as a Hudson's

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13 Osgood, *The Han Indians*, p. 98.
Bay Company administrator. Never again, however, did he cross the Rockies to the Yukon. After forty-one years, the company suddenly and unjustly fired him, and he finished his life cattle ranching in Manitoba.14

Despite contrary rumors, the English and Russian trading frontiers still had not met. At last, however, in 1863 the Russians sent Creole Ivan Lukeen to Fort Yukon to gather information on the extent of British trade. He successfully posed as a defector from the Russian company and accomplished his mission. At the same time he went on record as the first white man to travel from the sea to the Porcupine, proving beyond a doubt that the Russian Kvichpak and the English Yukon were one great river.15 Although other, more substantive relations may have developed between English and Russian traders, Lukeen's mission is the only well-documented connection between the two.

Further exploration soon occurred. In 1866, when the Western Union Telegraph Company attempted to find the best overland route for a European telegraph line via Canada, Russian America and Siberia, Lukeen guided the explorers Michael Lebarge and Frank Ketchum to Fort Yukon. The following summer, without Lukeen, Lebarge and Ketchum continued to explore the territory Robert Campbell had

14 Mathews, The Yukon, p. 62; Wilson, Campbell of the Yukon.

abandoned sixteen years earlier. At the ruins of Fort Selkirk they
turned back and at Nulato learned that the underwater trans-Atlantic
cable had made Western Union's venture pointless. Only a few months
later, in March 1867, the purchase of Russian America by the United
States permanently removed the Russian frontier and opened the
way for still another breed of trader--the American.

Although the Russian frontier had little direct contact with the
middle Yukon, it had great impact on its Natives. The Russians
introduced a new material culture that the Natives eagerly adapted to
their own. As they embraced facets of this new culture, they forfeited
their self-reliance and independence. They became dependent upon the
trader, his trading post, and his demand for fur. Any change in any
of these three variables brought a corresponding change in the Native
lifestyle. Thus the Russians introduced a new variant to the environment
of the Natives. The British and Americans perpetuated it.

On the Pacific Coast soon after the Alaska purchase, seven men
from various parts of the country formed Hutchinson, Kohl & Company which
purchased the assets of the Russian American Company. Then Hutchinson,
Kohl & Company took in two other groups and formed the Alaska
Commercial Company which soon dominated the fur trade of Alaska. 16

16 Osgood, The Han Indians, p. 6; Mathews, The Yukon, pp. 76-7;
William Ogilvie, Early Days on the Yukon (Ottawa: Thorburn and Abbott,
1913), p. 64; Lois D. Kitchener, Flag Over the North: The Story of the
Northern Commercial Company (Seattle: Superior Publishing Co., 1954),
pp. 32-4; Frank H. Sloss and Richard A. Pierce, "The Hutchinson, Kohl
Story: A Fresh Look", Pacific Northwest Quarterly 62 (1971): 1-6; and
The Hudson's Bay Company found these newcomers not as appeasing, passive, or accomodating as their Russian predecessors. Instead the Americans, conditioned by two hundred years of frontier adaptations, asserted aggression, innovation, and impatience. When the Americans recognized that the British were siphoning off the middle Yukon trade, they responded with thinly veiled threats of force.

The United States Army directed Captain Charles Raymond of the Corps of Engineers to determine the latitude and longitude of Fort Yukon and to report on the activities of the Hudson's Bay Company in Alaska. Raymond arrived at St. Michael on the Alaska Commercial Company's ship Commodore, which had lashed to its deck a fifty-foot stern-wheel steamer, the Yukon. On July 4, 1860, the Yukon, the first of hundreds of steamboats on the Yukon, entered the river. It caused great excitement and consternation among the Natives as it "appeared to them as a huge monster, breathing fire and smoke."

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Raymond debarked at Fort Yukon after making celestial observations and announced to the Hudson's Bay Company that Fort Yukon stood within the boundaries of the United States. The British company obligingly sold the fort to the Alaska Commercial Company and departed. Even though the British had physically left the middle Yukon, however, their presence and influence continued to be felt. An artificial political boundary did not inhibit the free movement of either Natives or traders.
IV. THE TRADING FRONTIER

The fur trapping and trading frontier of the Yukon River between 1867 and 1885 resembled that of the American West between 1807 and 1840. Similarities existed between the breed of men, the fierce competition, the transportation of supplies by steamboats, and the development of strategically located trading posts. Even the consequences were repeated: the traditional Native culture changed to accommodate that of the white man, new routes of travel were found in a hostile land, and enticing tales held promise to newcomers of economic opportunity.\(^1\)

In Alaska, however, there were no white trappers or mountain men. Shortly after the Alaska purchase, Congress turned control of the fur-bearing animals over to the Secretary of the Treasury who passed regulations prohibiting anyone but Natives from taking such animals.

Shortly after the purchase of Alaska and while the Alaska Commercial Company was organizing, a group of hardy adventurers, comprised of former explorers for the defunct telegraph expedition and ex-Hudson's Bay traders, formed a loose trading association called the Pioneer Company. Although the company survived only a season, these traders did establish, at the junction of the Yukon and Tanana Rivers

\(^1\)Billington, *Westward Expansion*, pp. 370-91.
the first American post on the Yukon. Their exploration of the Yukon River and experience with furs and Natives contributed to the eventual success of the Alaska Commercial Company, which soon absorbed the Pioneer Company.

Among the Pioneer adventurers who joined the Alaska Commercial Company was Francois Mercier, who was destined to dominate the Yukon trading frontier for the next seventeen years. As the Alaska Commercial Company's general agent for the Yukon, Tanana, and Kuskokwim Rivers, Mercier established trading posts, provided annual provisions and merchandise with only one small steamboat, won company loyalty from independent traders, competed with rival companies, and developed friendly relations with the Natives. He and his brother Moses descended from a line of rugged French-Canadians, or coureur de bois, that had extensively explored from the upper Mississippi to western Canada. Both men received their training and experience from the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1869, when Francois took charge of the company's operation based in St. Michael, Moses acquired the most remote yet the most profitable post, Fort Yukon.

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2 Francois Mercier, untitled manuscript found in Father Francis Monroe Papers, Oregon Province Archives of Society of Jesus, Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington, translated from French by Linda Yarborough; and Mathews, The Yukon, p. 77.

3 Kitchener, Flag Over the North, p. 148. The book is a great fund of information but it is poorly organized, has no footnotes, index, nor bibliography. There are enough inaccuracies to question all data that has no other reference. Mercier manuscript.
By 1871 Francois Mercier had the organization of the river trade well underway, but the impatient and restless American individualists found the leisurely tempo set by the Russian and British traders difficult to follow. The Natives, on the other hand, had adopted and enjoyed spending several days of drinking tea, smoking, and eating meals at the traders' expense before settling down to barter their furs. Friction quickly developed between the two temperaments. Mercier left on the first steamboat to San Francisco in 1872 to discuss this problem with company managers. He sincerely believed that if the Natives got out of hand, the lives of his handful of traders would be in jeopardy. The company president, sympathetic and concerned, suggested a force of two hundred armed men to protect the traders, hopefully with government aid. Showing great foresight, Mercier counseled that Roman Catholic missionaries might be more effective. Father Isadore Clut, who had spent a number of years in the Canadian Athapaskan and Mackenzie regions, appeared the ideal choice. Father Clut, accompanied by Father Lecoire, returned with Mercier to St. Michael. But miracles did not happen. Both the traders and Natives had to learn to adjust to the lifestyle of the other.

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4Mercier manuscript; Kitchener, Flag Over the North, p. 147; and Petrov, Population and Resources of Alaska, pp. 67-9.

5Mercier manuscript; Kitchener, Flag Over the North, p. 148.
While Mercier struggled to establish a Yukon River fur-trading empire, a group of prospectors, planning to visit the Yukon, wintered in Canada at the mouth of the Nelson River. Among the group three men stood out—Napoleon Leroy (Jack) McQuesten, Arthur Harper, and Alfred Mayo. McQuesten grew up on a farm in New Hampshire, but the California gold rush drew him west. A series of gold strikes on the Fraser and Finlay Rivers pulled him into Canada. For the next ten years the Hudson's Bay Company employed him in trapping and trading. Harper was born in the county of Antrim, Ireland, but arrived in New York as a boy. Like McQuesten attracted to California, he became a prospector and gravitated towards the Yukon through British Columbia. Alfred Mayo had been a circus acrobat but also sought the excitement of gold. When gold could not be found, he turned to trading. These men and their companions worked down the Mackenzie River, crossed to the Porcupine, and arrived at Fort Yukon in August 1873.6

6There are many accounts of McQuesten, Harper, and Mayo. The three primary sources: Mercier manuscript; Leroy N. McQuesten, Recollections of Leroy N. McQuesten of Life in the Yukon, 1871-1885 (Dawson City: Yukon Order of Pioneers, 1952); and Erinia Pavaloff Cherosky Callahan, "A Yukon Autobiography", The Alaska Journal 5 (1975): 127-28. The best secondary sources include: Ogilvie, Early Days, pp. 87-91; Brooks, Blazing Alaska's Trails, pp. 312-30; Mathews, The Yukon, pp. 84-97; Kitchener, Flag Over the North, pp. 149-55; and Old Yukon, pp. 96-105.
After being royally received by Moses Mercier and obtaining what few supplies he could spare, Arthur Harper went prospecting up the Yukon but found no fur to trap, no Indians with whom to trade, and no gold to mine. Both groups met the following spring at Fort Yukon and floated down to St. Michael for supplies. At Nulato they met the ideal company trader, Michael Lebarge, who had been an explorer for the telegraph expedition and was now "a good Indian trader and a great favorite with the Indians."

At St. Michael Francois Mercier offered the eight prospectors employment with the Alaska Commercial Company. Harper declined, preferring to prospect for gold near Tanana Station, where Mayo was assigned. Since Father Clut had known McQuesten well on the Mackenzie River and had recommended him as an honest man and a good trader, Mercier decided to establish a new post with McQuesten in charge.

The Yukon left St. Michael in July 1874 with three barges in tow containing supplies and merchandise for the forts along the way. The crew spent six hours a day chopping wood to burn in the small steamer's

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7McQuesten, Recollections, p. 4; and William H. Dall, "A Yukon Pioneer, Mike Lebarge" National Geographic Magazine 9 (1898): 138-9 describes Lebarge as "An indefatigable traveller, a delightful companion enroute or by the campfire, full of expedients whatever befell, tactful, and adroit in his dealing with the natives, generous and helpful to the inexperienced—in short, a capital voyageur of the best type."

8Mercier manuscript.
boiler. After leaving Fort Yukon, the steamer was on an unfamiliar part of the river and frequently went aground. Eventually they chose a site on Canadian soil across from Nuklako, six miles below the Klondike River. They called this first post in Han territory Fort Reliance. Mercier established the post to accommodate the Han Indians, who travelled hundreds of miles from their hunting grounds to trade their furs. "This [post] was, then, to shorten, at least, a little of this long and painful journey which the Indians had made all the time."9

During the trading season of 1874 only thirty-two white men lived on Alaska's three major rivers—the Yukon, Kuskokwim and Tanana—a striking contrast with the hundreds that scoured the American West in search of beaver and Indian trade.10 Isolation in both cases, however, forced a self-reliance and self-assurance typical of the frontier. The traders, recognizing that the Indian culture had already adapted successfully to the environment, adopted much of their lifestyle. The Indian, in like manner, acquired from the traders those aspects of western culture that made life easier if less secure and independent. Often the traders, like their earlier counterparts, completed the union between the two cultures by marrying Native women. McQuesten, Harper, and Mayo were not exceptions.

9Ibid., he also describes the buildings and how they were constructed.
10Mercier manuscript; Billington, Westward Expansion, pp. 370-91.
Since the traders carried only the basic staples of flour, tea, and sugar, time had to be allocated for hunting moose, bear, and caribou. Then the meat had to be dried and stored. Dogs, essential to winter travel, had to be fed. Thus salmon, the main dogfood, had to be caught and dried or bought from the Indians. Cords of firewood had to be chopped and stacked in anticipation of seventy-below-zero temperatures. If any of these resources were in short demand, the winter would be even longer and harder.

When McQuesten, Mayo, and Harper met at St. Michael in the spring of 1875, they discovered that the Alaska Commercial Company had reorganized. Trading posts were now leased to independent traders working on commission. The Mercier brothers left the company at this time either in disagreement with the new policy or as a result of the reorganization. Since Harper had not found enough gold to live on and most of his companions had returned to San Francisco, he joined with Mayo to trade at Fort Reliance for the next three years. Meanwhile McQuesten went to Fort Yukon.

In 1877 unusually fierce competition excited the Natives and led to serious trouble. Another San Francisco firm, the Western Fur and Trading Company, appeared on the river. So strenuously did the two companies compete that they drove the price of fur higher than the market value in San Francisco. The Natives capitalized on the rivalry and played one company against the other. The traders soon began to have trouble with the Natives. Harper and Mayo caught some of them
at Fort Reliance stealing the goods. Disgusted and discouraged, they abandoned the post, but not before leaving some arsenic mixed with grease to kill inquisitive mice—an act that was to have tragic consequences. Meanwhile Francois Mercier reappeared in the employ of the new firm. He opened a post near the mouth of the Tanana River and created such heavy competition that the Natives held the upper hand. In September 1878 James Bean, an independent trader who lived thirty-five miles up the Tanana River, alienated the Natives with high prices and threatening manners. Two Indians, attempting to kill Bean, instead shot his wife, the first white woman on the Yukon. Hers was the only violent death recorded on the middle Yukon during the period of the trader's frontier.11

Because of the severity of the competition in the firmly established posts, McQuesten planned to reopen Fort Reliance. Passing through Charley's Village, he learned that two old women and a blind girl had eaten the arsenic that Harper and Mayo had left behind and had died. Chief Charley tried to convince McQuesten to remain at his village, but McQuesten did not want to incur the expense and labor necessary for a new post. Consequently, when he arrived at Fort Reliance and the Natives greeted him with joy, he was immensely relieved. They paid for the goods previously stolen from Mayo, and he gave a dog in exchange for the young girl's death. Both parties acknowledged that the old women should have known better and were no

11Mercier manuscript; McQuesten Recollections, p. 6; and Mathews, The Yukon, p. 91-2.
loss to the village. A still closer bond was created when McQuesten fell and broke his ribs while prospecting. Every day a messenger came from one of the three bands of Indians inquiring of his recovery and stating that their shamans were making magic for him.

The following summer the Western Fur and Trading Company launched a second Yukon steamer, the St. Michael. In 1880 Francois Mercier, in charge of the steamer, travelled upriver with the Alaska Commercial Company's Yukon. Since the Yukon was "liable to break down any time", Mercier offered to tow it to Fort Reliance. The following spring McQuesten found that during break-up ice had smashed it. The company, however, had anticipated its eventual demise, and at St. Michael a new seventy-five-foot boat, also named the Yukon, was launched.

Meanwhile, in 1880, an agent for the United States Census Bureau, Ivan Petrov, interviewed traders and Indians and recorded that David's Village numbered 106, Charley's Village 48, and Fort Reliance 82 with 1 white. 12 At the same time Mercier, aware that David's Village was the largest village on the middle Yukon, proceeded to establish a trading post three-quarters of a mile from it. He left his steamer captain in charge and steamed back to St. Michael for the winter. 13

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13 Mercier manuscript; and McQuesten, Recollections, p. 9. Secondary sources and local tradition has placed the building of Belle Isle in 1874 and on the island off the present city of Eagle. McQuesten and Mercier specifically state that neither of these are true.
By spring the trader at David's Village had grown disgusted with the poor trading season and abandoned the post.

In 1882 Francois Mercier returned to the Alaska Commercial Company and reopened the post at David's Village that had been abandoned for a year. He called it Belle Isle Station, for a Canadian friend in San Francisco.\textsuperscript{14} Cherosky, a Russian Creole from Nulato, and his wife, Erinia Pavaloff, served as his interpreters.\textsuperscript{15} The Western Fur and Trading Company also decided to return to David's Village that year, and competition between the two exceeded previous limits. "The Indians had a picnic that winter," quipped McQuesten, "as they both had quite a supply of flour and they were both out in the Spring."\textsuperscript{16}

Although McQuesten, Harper, and Mayo spent time each fall and summer prospecting for gold, they found no claims worth staking. Nevertheless, they explored various tributaries of the Yukon—the Tanana, the Fortymile, the Sixtymile, the White, and the Stewart. These men acquired a general familiarity with the broad relief features, drainage, and gold-bearing gravels. Through letters to friends in the placer camps of British Columbia, they publicized the mineral potential of

\textsuperscript{14}Mercier manuscript.

\textsuperscript{15}Callahan, "A Yukon Autobiography", p. 127.

\textsuperscript{16}McQuesten, Recollections, p. 11.
the Yukon. Furthermore, with their trading posts they offered prospective gold-seekers an assured source for provisions.\(^{17}\)

Although there were rumors of earlier prospectors arriving from Juneau, the first of record arrived on the upper Yukon in 1880.\(^{18}\) The slow trickle of information inspired others. Finally in 1882 a group consisting of Joseph Ladue, Howard Franklin, and ten others crossed Chilkoot Pass and arrived at Fort Reliance. They wintered there and at McQuesten's suggestion prospected the Fortymile and Stewart Rivers.

Also in 1882, but from the opposite direction, came Ed Schieffelin, who had discovered the rich silver deposits of Tombstone, Arizona. He arrived equipped with a steamer, the New Racket, and the latest in mining equipment. Seemingly aware of Harper's early prospecting experiences on the Tanana River, Schieffelin and his crew set up their winter quarters there. By spring, when he had not found enough gold to warrant staying, he sold the New Racket to the newly organized firm of McQuesten, Harper & Mayo and left the country. His venture, though small, represented the first significant capital invested in Yukon mining.

\(^{17}\) Brooks, Blazing Alaska's Trails, pp. 318-20.

\(^{18}\) Rumors had Michael Byrnes on the upper Yukon in 1867 but cannot be proved. George Holt's trip in either 1874 or 1875 was recorded in Customs records and The Alaskan, a Sitka newspaper. In 1880 The Edmund Bean party and the James Winn party arrived fully documented in the Mercier manuscript, Brooks, Blazing Alaska's Trails, pp. 321-25; and U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Naval Affairs, Reports of Captain L. A. Beardslee, U.S. Navy, Relative to Affairs in Alaska, 47th Cong., 1st sess., 1882, pp. 59-65.
In 1883 General Nelson A. Miles, commander of the Army's Department of the Columbia, ordered Lieutenant Frederick Schwatka to Alaska to determine the number, character, and disposition of all Natives, their weapons, and their attitude towards the whites. Since Congress refused to appropriate any money for the exploration of Alaska, Miles' own command financed the expedition. Lieutenant Schwatka arrived on the Yukon via the Chilkoot Pass, which had already been explored by prospectors. At Lake Lindemann he built a large raft and floated down the river. Enroute, to the disgust of traders and geographers, he freely substituted his own names for those geographical landmarks already identified. Arriving at Belle Isle, he assumed that it had been abandoned as unprofitable when Mercier had merely journeyed to St. Michael for supplies. Although Schwatka described in some detail the culture of the Han, or Klat-ol-klin, as he called them, and

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estimated that Johnny's Village (David's Village) housed 75 to 100 people and Charley's Village 40 to 50, he made no great contribution to scientific knowledge. He did, however, bring publicity to "Alaska's Great River", as he titled his book, when he published an account of his trip for the popular reader.

Meanwhile, at St. Michael, McQuesten and Mercier learned that the Alaska Commercial Company had bought out the Western Fur and Trading Company. The severe competition had ended. Now came the task of raising the price of trade goods and lowering the value of furs without angering the Natives. An unplanned incident relieved the problem. Returning to Fort Reliance in the fall of 1883, McQuesten's steamboat, the New Racket, broke a crank pin within only ten miles of Belle Isle. McQuesten left a few supplies with the Indians to help them hunt through the winter and returned to winter at Tanana. The hardship caused by this accident heightened the Indians' appreciation for even the higher priced goods in the spring. At the same time the prospectors of the upper Yukon who had hoped to find provisions at Fort Reliance now had to journey all the way to Tanana or St. Michael.

As more and more prospectors arrived on the Yukon, McQuesten recognized that the Alaska Commercial Company, which subsidized his firm,

22Sherwood, Exploration of Alaska, p. 102.
The finding of a few thousand dollars worth of gold on the Stewart River in 1885 opened a new frontier that followed patterns established on the older western frontier. The great California gold rush had graduated many experienced miners and prospectors who roamed the West seeking new bonanzas.\(^1\) The men who reached the Yukon represented the same type miner-prospector as the earlier men who followed the stam­pedes from California to Colorado, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, and British Columbia. Restless, impatient, and individualistic, they had no time or money to develop lode deposits. Rather they sought placer gold or "poor man's gold"—gold that nature had already partially mined.

Most of these men understood the basic geologic process that formed placers. They knew that after the injection of gold-bearing

quartz veins into the Yukon strata occurred, 60 to 130 million years ago, the land folded, faulted, and eroded in processes that loosened the gold particles from the host rock. Rain water and melting snow picked up and carried them into ancient rivers. As the rivers slowed, the heavy gold particles dropped first, followed by sand and gravel. Later, glacial rivers once again swept up the gold and gravel and carried them farther until dumped and buried as the torrent slackened.

To these ancient stream beds men from other mining frontiers brought their training, experience, and social institutions.

The minor gold strike on the Stewart River in 1885 and McQuesten's return to the Yukon with mining supplies marked a change in policy of the Alaska Commercial Company. No longer were Indians and their furs the main source of trade, which now catered to the miner. Consequently in the summer of 1886 Harper and McQuesten abandoned Fort Reliance, in the Indian country, and moved to accommodate the miners at Stewart River. During the winter word passed out of Alaska with departing miners that gold had been discovered on the Yukon. More than a hundred miners arrived in the spring to try their hand in the Arctic gold fields.

The Stewart strike proved disappointing and of little intrinsic value. But from it men fanned out in greater numbers to search nearby streams and rivers. Harry Madison and Howard Franklin, two miners who had arrived with Joe Ladue in 1882, travelled forty miles below Fort Reliance to the Fortymile River. Arthur Harper had searched the river
years earlier, followed by Ladue himself. But this time Madison and Franklin tracked their boat twenty-three miles upriver into American territory. Here they struck coarse gold—the first rich placer on the Yukon.\textsuperscript{2}

Once again, the firm of McQuesten, Harper & Mayo transferred its post from the Stewart to the mouth of the Fortymile. At this time McQuesten was in San Francisco buying supplies. Harper recognized the value of Franklin's gold discovery and knew that hundreds of prospectors would be arriving in the spring. He feared that starvation might ensue if McQuesten did not augment his orders. Even though winter had arrived, a young steamboat pilot and Indian boy volunteered to carry a letter across Chilkoot Pass. The pilot died, but the message got through.\textsuperscript{3} Harper's premonition held true—several hundred miners arrived even ahead of McQuesten.

The unexpected change in trading policy caught the Indians unaware.

\textsuperscript{2}Brooks, Blazing Alaska's Trails, p. 328.

and left them confused and frustrated. Suddenly they found their furs second to the miners' gold. But more important, by 1887 they saw the abandonment of both Fort Reliance and Belle Isle. Unfortunately they had become dependent upon these posts: their diet had broadened to include flour, lard, sugar, and tea; their clothing now incorporated items of cotton, flannel, and wool; their weapons included the all-important guns; matches replaced flint; metal pots supplanted woven basketry; and alcohol had been introduced. Although the Indians complained of the long and often dangerous journey to the new Fortymile trading post, economics dictated the company's policy.

By 1887 many prospector-miners entered Alaska who stayed on through the Klondike rush. George Matlock appeared on the Fortymile as well as Frank Buteau, Henry Davis, Gordon Bettles, Michael O'Brien, and Jack Wade. They knew and depended on one another as they in turn depended upon the reliable firm of McQuesten, Harper, & Mayo. Generally the early miners cooperated. In fact, a group known for their tall tales as the Sixteen Liars decided to locate claims of 300 feet

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4 Osgood, The Han Indians, pp. 129-38.


each instead of the 1500 feet allowed, thereby generously leaving room for others. A few undesirables, however, also arrived. One man known only as Leslie tried to use strychnine to poison his partners. He was fortunate that no one died and that the miners only ordered him out of the country.

Yet these miners from other western mining camps encountered a surprisingly new environment. On the Yukon the ground was permanently frozen below a depth of only a few inches. Although the Fortymile bedrock on which the gold lay was shallow, the miners grew impatient waiting for the sun to thaw the soil enough to dig. On Franklin Gulch during the winter of 1887 Fred Hutchinson built a fire to thaw the ground. Investigating further he found that the hated permafrost, as the frozen ground was called, made supporting timber unnecessary. Not only could the industrious miner now mine year around, but he did not have to timber his mining shaft. At the end of winter a large mound of gold-bearing gravel lay piled high near the diggings awaiting spring thaw. Once the snow and ice melted and flowed into

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8 Ibid., p. 90; Davis, "Recollections", p. 38.
rushing creeks, the miner could wash his winter dump. The miner from the early Fortymile averaged only $800 a year.\textsuperscript{10}

Even though the California and subsequent gold rushes had developed sophisticated equipment for the mining of placer deposits, each gold rush had to evolve through the placer-mining cycle of gold pan, rocker, and sluice box.\textsuperscript{11} The gold pan was shaped like a pie tin except larger. The miner filled this pan with gold-bearing gravel, added water, and swished it round and round to carry off the dirt. Eventually, after repeated washings, only the gold was left. The rocker was a box on rockers with a perforated metal top and a sloping blanket inside. The miner dumped in water and gravel together and vigorously rocked it. The gold fell through the perforations and lodged on the blanket. The more sophisticated sluice box depended on a constant and adequate flow of water. The box could be any length, generally between three and fifteen feet, with open ends. Riffles were placed on the floor. As the gravel and water flowed freely through the box, the riffles caught the gold.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10} Buteau, "My Experience in the World", p. 96.

\textsuperscript{11} Paul, Mining Frontiers and California Gold; Young, Western Mining; and nearly all United States Geological Survey Bulletins on Alaska.

\textsuperscript{12} Adney, The Klondike Stampede, pp. 226-24; also described in Paul, California Gold and Mining Frontiers; and Young, Western Mining.
Finally, in 1890, the California technique of hydraulic mining reached the Fortymile. Frank Buteau, George Matlock, and their partners built a flume from Franklin Gulch to their claim to create twenty-four feet of pressure, an amount sufficient for hydraulic mining. The water was then channeled into metal pipes and nozzles that directed jets of highly pressurized water onto river banks and hills. The force of the water crumbled the banks and washed their gravel into awaiting sluice boxes.

Although supplies could now be obtained in sufficient quantities for the miners to winter over, in 1889 the miners found they could be more independent than they had believed. The Alaska Commercial Company, which subsidized McQuesten, Harper & Mayo, launched a new steamer, the Arctic. It struck a rock, however, and lost all the winter provisions for the Fortymile. Notice went out of the disaster with a suggestion to winter at St. Michael. George Matlock, Frank Buteau, and two others decided to stay in the Fortymile area and work on their flume. They killed forty caribou and supplemented their meat diet with three sacks of moldy flour and a few beans. When the newly repaired Arctic arrived in the spring, the partner, recalled one, were "all well and happy". Reluctant again to trust the company so completely, the following fall they constructed a fish trap, commonly used by the Natives.

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and caught a ton and a half of grayling to help them through the winter.  

Although most of the claims on the Fortymile were on American soil, the town called Fortymile flourished at the river's mouth in Canada. Around McQuesten's store arose a number of miners' cabins, a blacksmith shop, a sawmill, saloons, and a settlement of Indians. Initially the miners made the most of what little they had. They lacked stove, stovepipe, and windows. Typical frontiersmen, they improvised. They made a stove and chimney out of rocks and mud, using a flat rock for the top of the stove. For windows they cut a clear piece of Yukon River ice slightly larger than the window opening which they fastened on with wooden buttons. More supplies and a few of the amenities of life came more frequently when the larger and faster Arctic was launched. The new boat could make several round trips from St. Michael each season.

Josiah Edward Spurr of the United States Geological Survey found the miners hospitable, eager for news from the outside world, keenly interested in political developments, and generally more intelligent and better informed than others in his miner experience. Their taste

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14 Ibid., p. 96.
15 Ibid., p. 88.
for Shakespeare, philosophy, and science surprised him. A few women had followed their husbands to the Yukon, making rough-hewn cabins into comfortable homes. Missionaries and schoolteachers took their place in the growing community. Yet still a ruckus occasionally shook the camp. One night several men were gathered in a cabin when a man named Washburn became angry at George Matlock and stabbed him in the back. Matlock sought revenge. He returned with his gun, aimed for a flesh wound, and shot through the window at Washburn. The bullet struck Washburn in the thigh. They were "even up" and later even shook hands and became friends. Most legendary of all, however, was McQuesten's generosity. He willingly extended credit or even grub-staked hapless miners.

Partly because of McQuesten's liberal credit and partly because the Fortymile proved less than a bonanza, prospectors toiled up and down most of the tributaries of the upper Yukon. During the winter of

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18 McQuesten's generosity was legendary, and nearly all observers commented on it. Buteau, "My Experience in the World"; Davis, "Recollections", Ogilvie, Early Days; Brooks, Blazing Alaska's Trails; and Adney, The Klondike Stampede.
1890 Barney Hill and Captain Billie Moore hauled a year's supply of goods by sled from Fortymile to a point forty miles up the Seventymile River (seventy miles from Fort Reliance, thus thirty miles from Fortymile). They built a ditch, a flume, and several whip-sawed sluice boxes. Six to eight other miners worked the river at the same time, all with poor results. Miners routinely travelled the length of the Yukon, walked, tracked, or poled their way up adjacent streams, and subsisted on bare essentials in order to try their hand at a good prospect.

Everyone tried prospecting. In the summer of 1892 Cherosky, Mercier's and Harper's Creole interpreter at Belle Isle, and his brother-in-law, Pitka Pavaloff, hunted moose up Birch Creek. While hunting, they panned for gold. On one bar of the creek they found some. After staking a claim and naming it Pitka's Bar, they killed a moose and used the skin to make a canoe to float down to Tanana Station. Here they

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19 Chase, The Reminiscences of Captain Billie Moore; and Captain William D. Moore, "From Peru to Alaska", typescript in Manuscript Collection, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington.

picked up their families, boarded the steamer, and went upriver to Fortymile. Cherosky and Pitka approached McQuesten for a grubstake or a year's outfit on the prospect they had found at Birch Creek. McQuesten agreed because he wanted information from an unprospected area and hoped to cash in on any new strike.

By fall the families were back downriver at a place approximately thirty miles above what later became Circle City. They had begun building cabins when other miners, drawn by word of gold on Pitka's Bar, showed up. More than a hundred men wintered at the town, which became known as Old Portage. To accommodate that many people Manny Hill built a store. At the first sign of spring Pitka and Cherosky, followed by the hopeful miners, crossed to Birch Creek. Others staked on creeks that proved less rich. Although Pitka and Cherosky had staked claims, they did not know enough about mining and lost them to incoming white miners.\[^{21}\]

These mines lay sixty to eighty miles from the Yukon. Eventually a connecting trail wound across swampy muskeg and around small but frequent ponds guarded by clouds of persistent mosquitoes. Roadhouses were built approximately every twelve miles and furnished weary

\[^{21}\text{Callahan, "A Yukon Autobiography", p. 128; Wharton, The Alaska Gold Rush, pp. 152-55 but Wharton digresses into a long passage filled with imaginative conjectures.} \]
travellers a meal and a floor to sleep on. For the roadhouses and the miners the greatest problem was obtaining supplies from the Yukon. During the winter dog sleds freighted mining equipment and food at seven cents a pound, but in the summer freighting costs jumped to forty cents a pound.22

By the first winter the mines on Mastodon, Deadwood, and Mammoth Creeks had yielded $9,000, and by the end of 1895 the output from all the creeks in Birch Creek district was $150,000.23 Since these mines were even more shallow than those at Fortymile, the miners resorted to open-cut methods. This required that the ground be stripped clear of the overburden and worked from the surface down to bedrock. Then the gold pan, rocker, and sluice box separated the gold from the gravel found at bedrock. Since open-cut mining could only be employed during the summer, the miners mined all summer but spent the winter in town.

In "town" Manny Hill had moved his store downriver to be closer to the creeks. McQuesten joined him later that fall when reports of the other discoveries filtered up to Fortymile. During spring break-up a number of cabins at "Fish Camp" washed away, so McQuesten moved still

22 Spurr, Through the Yukon Gold Diggings, p. 173; and Davis, "Recollections", p. 67.

farther downriver to the present location of Circle. Here Barney Hill, from Seventymile, and Robert English staked out a town-site. Since the miners thought the town was north of the Arctic Circle, they called it Circle City. As at Fortymile, Circle City attracted a settlement of Indians. Some built log cabins on the edges of town and mixed freely with the miners and townspeople. Others, more traditional or less acculturated, lived in tents and semi-subterranean houses on an island two miles down the Yukon.

McQuesten, leaving the Fortymile post to Harper, encouraged the development of the Birch Creek diggings. He offered any Fortymile miner outfits on credit, and eighty men accepted his offer. Yet by November 1893 the two major creeks, Mastodon and Deadwood, had been entirely staked. Deadwood Creek, in fact, was known as "Hog-um" Creek because some people haggled it all when they staked it.


25 Stuck, Voyages on the Yukon; Dunham, "The Alaskan Goldfields", p. 350; and Kitchener, Flag Over the North, p. 188.


27 Davis, "Recollections", p. 67; and Spurr, Through the Yukon Gold Diggings, p. 175.
This temperament contrasted drastically with Fortymile's altruism. Geologist Spurr commented on the "remarkable difference" between the miners at Birch Creek and those at Fortymile. At Birch Creek no one showed the slightest hospitality or friendliness and all seemed to lead cheerless lives.28

The rambling town of Circle City lay on the left bank of the Yukon at the beginning of the Yukon Flats. Dog freighter Arthur Walden described it: "A person approaching the town by water for the first time saw a steep bank with small boats of all descriptions moored along the edge. On top of the bank were piles of logs to be whip-sawed, and crude scaffoldings for this purpose, with their accompanying machinery of a man above and a man below. Then came a stretch of fifty feet or more which was the street, and on the other side were rows of log cabins, with a few larger buildings also of logs. These cabins were moss-chinked and dirt-covered, with the exceptions of the warehouses, which were built of corrugated iron. In the mosquito season every cabin had its little smudge in front."29 In winter it was a "City of Silence", he added, muffled by snow and cold. Yet Englishman Henry De Windt saw only that "Four hundred log buildings line the wide straggling thoroughfares . . ./In a motley collection

28Spurr, Through the Yukon, p. 176.

of sodden dwellings and dripping roofs."³⁰ He vehemently objected to Circle City's claim to be "The Paris of Alaska".

By 1896 Circle City had a population of 700 and was the largest settlement on the Yukon and the largest log-cabin city in the world. ³¹ Jack McQuesten, now fully in the employment of the Alaska Commercial Company, which had purchased his firm, built a two-story log building for the store and a fire-proof, corrugated-iron warehouse. He was also postmaster and banker. Not only did he extend credit, but he had the only safe in town. Yet he did not bask in his popularity for long, for competition quickly arrived. From Fortymile came McQuesten's arch-rival, John G. Healy, representing the North American Transportation and Trading Company. Healy had the Chicago millionaires Jack and Michael Cudahy of meat-packing fame and P.G. Weare of the Chicago Board of Trade backing his enterprise. With experience gained from the Montana placer camps, Healy launched the Yukon's largest steamboat, the Portus B. Weare, and began in 1893 at Fortymile to compete with the Alaska Commercial Company. However, Healy's cranky disposition and stingy, even vindictive methods made him unpopular with the miners at


Fortymile and later at Circle City. McQuesten, on the other hand, had extended more than $100,000 in credit in 1894 and had collected nearly all of it by the following fall. Nevertheless, the high prices, poor quality and quantity of supplies, and "greedy" profits of the two commercial companies made several of the miners disgruntled.

Aside from McQuesten's store, Circle's eight to ten dance halls and saloons offered a warm, comfortable place to meet and enjoy the lights and music. Gambling went on all the time. A few professional gamblers arrived from Juneau when they heard of the rush. The gamblers, saloon keepers, and dance-hall girls lived better, dressed better, took life easier, and in a sense were the aristocrats of the camp. Although the dance-hall girls were of easy virtue, the miners treated them with respect and social equality. Since the few respectable women kept to themselves, these women furnished all the miners' feminine society. George Snow, an actor from California, directed theatrical performances in Harry Ash's Opera House, which was actually nothing more than a dance hall.

Visitors reported in garish detail Circle's famed balls or dances. Sometimes they were merely extensions of the "dollar-a-dance"

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33 Buteau, "My Experience in the World", pp. 107-8; and William Douglas Johns, "The Early Yukon, Alaska, and the Klondike Discovery as They were Before the Great Klondike Stampede Swept Away the Old Conditions Forever By One Who Was There", typescript, Manuscript Collection, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington.

34 Johns, "The Early Yukon", p. 135.
balls nightly staged by the dance halls. Other times they were held for special occasions such as to raise money for a school, hospital, or library. Of all the visitors, Spurr best captured the spirit of these dances: "The couples gyrated in eccentric curves around in obedience to the director's cries; the candles flickered in the draft from the open door; and a row of miners too bashful to dance, or who could find no partners, sat on boxes close to the wall, hunched up their legs and spit tobacco juice until the middle of the floor was a sort of an island. In short it was the most brilliant affair Circle City had ever witnessed."35

Illustrative of the morals of pre-Klondike society, doors lacked locks, and even gold dust was left in unlocked cabins. Caches of food and supplies along the trail and at the mines remained undisturbed. Claims were bought and sold orally. Robbery was a rarity, murder even more so. There was little open quarreling, but the long winter nights and close contacts developed intense hatreds that were usually settled by not speaking or dividing all jointly owned supplies and moving out.

Two miners' associations arose out of the feeling of brotherhood

35Spurr, Through the Yukon, p. 196; Others also describe dances; Johns, "The Early Yukon", p. 171; Davis, "Recollections", p. 68; De Windt, Through the Gold-Field, pp. 161-2; C. S. Hamlin, Old Times on the Yukon: Decline of Circle City; Romances of the Klondyke (Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Co., 1926), p. 4.
and loyalty demanded by the close living in a hostile environment. These fraternal organizations provided relief to members in sickness or distress as well as social companionship. The Yukon Order of Pioneers (Y.O.O.P.) was organized in Fortymile in 1893 with McQuesten as president, then reorganized in Circle in 1895. The Miners Association was formed by miners who did not care for the liquor element in the Y.O.O.P. Both associations required an initiation fee, password, and good moral conduct. Most miners belonged to both associations. The Miners Association added to the library McQuesten had brought down from Fortymile. Eventually the library reached two thousand volumes. Among them were the Bible, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and such authors as Darwin, Hume, Huxley, and Macaulay. For five dollars each, these books were lent to miners at the diggings to help break their tedium.

At Circle the miners' meetings of the California gold rush were refined into institutions more judicial than vigilante in character.37

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If no judicial office existed the miners could elect a judge, officers of the court, and a jury. Under the Oregon Code, which had clarified the California law, the miners' finding would be as binding as those of a regularly constituted court. The procedures were simple. A man with a grievance, either civil or criminal, would post notice to that effect and call a meeting. The miners would then assemble and elect a chairman. The prosecutor presented his case followed by the defendant’s. Cross-questioning and speeches in favor of either side would follow. The chairman then called for a vote and the matter was settled. Their decisions were regarded remarkable for their rigorous justness. The usual punishment was banishment from the country regardless of weather and conditions. Generally the meetings ruled in favor of women complaining of breach of promise by their lovers. Thieves were fortunate to escape with a handsled in the winter instead of a hanging. A shooting, although uncommon, usually favored the non-aggressive party, and the miners used self-defense as their rule of thumb. Yet less equitable was one meeting that demanded a prostitute to pay her own court costs, including two gallons of liquor drunk by the jury. Although the miners planned to spend the money with her, wiser heads prevailed and the joke fell through.

By 1897 this institution had outlived its usefulness. The growth

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38 Goodrich, "History and Conditions of Yukon", p. 127; Conditions in Alaska, p. 95; and Johns, "The Early Yukon", p. 148.

of the country and the introduction of a non-productive, adventurous group of men made the miners' meetings a mockery. Eventually the increase of this disreputable class of men in Circle made the productive miner reluctant to settle in town the disputes that had occurred on the creeks. The miners claimed that it was no longer possible to obtain justice there. Another complaint was that although the miners were well-intentioned, they could not decide cases impartially. 40 Arthur Walden cynically reported that after the 1898 gold rush that "civilization, with its religion, laws, disorder, stealing, education, murder, social life, commercial vice, comforts, and broken pledges crept in; justice cost money and disease raged." 41

Other social institutions sprang up. As more women arrived and families burgeoned, the townspeople built a school and requested a teacher. There were thirty students: four white, twenty Native, and six half-Native. A graduate of the University of Chicago, Anna Fulcomer, arrived from the United States Bureau of Education to serve as the schoolteacher. The schoolhouse had not been completed, and teachers and students spent the first few months bundled up in furs. Since there was a shortage of books, she resorted to frequent use of the blackboard.

40 Goodrich, "History and Conditions of Yukon", p. 127; Walden, A Dog-Puncher on the Yukon, p. 48.
41 Walden, A Dog-Puncher on the Yukon, p. 49.
A few adults received reading lessons in her spare time. The rush to the Klondike shortened her term to only one year. At the same time the Episcopal Church built a mission administered by Reverend Jules L. Prevost and his wife. Eventually government officials made it to the Yukon: United States Commissioner, Inspector of Customs, United States Marshal, Collector of Internal Revenue, and Postmaster.

As in any town, Circle's people provided its flavor and spirit. The famous Tex Rickard, founder of New York's Madison Square Garden, owned a gambling house briefly in Circle. Swiftwater Bill was a dishwasher in a roadhouse at Circle before he became the millionaire Don Juan of the Klondike. Reverend Jules Prevost moved the Yukon Press from Tanana Station (Fort Adams) to Circle. The first dentist in the interior, Benton S. Woods, arrived in 1895 and made his own dentist's chair of twisted saplings. He doubled as Circle's mining recorder. A remarkable forty-five-year-old Mrs. Willis, stout and rugged, pulled her own sled weighing 250 pounds into Circle. She started a laundry and bake shop. Men such as George Matlock, Tom King, and Casper Ellingen appeared briefly as horse freighters, miners, and saloon owners respectively.

Anna Fulcomer, "The Three R's at Circle City", Century Magazine 56: 223-29.
William Douglas Johns captured much of the essence of Circle during his year there. He grew up in Chicago, studied law, raised cattle and wheat in North Dakota, and ran a newspaper. Finally the depression of the 1890's pressured him into finding a new lifestyle independent of the whims of business. He arrived in Circle in 1896, staked a claim on Birch Creek, then wintered in Circle City. He rented a small twelve-by-fourteen-foot cabin. Although heavy moss between the logs and on the roof insulated the cabin, during the cold months he could scrape the ice from the logs in back of his bunk. His bunk consisted of spruce boughs for a mattress covered with blankets and robes. Prices were similar to Fortymile: flour, $37 per hundred pounds; whiskey $50 a gallon; dogs, $150 each; and firewood, $16 per cord.

One of the first things Johns learned was that "nothing will test out men as to their real character, resourcefulness, courage, endurance of difficulties, kindliness, willingness, and readiness to do their part and not shirk their duties as Life on the Trail in that hard frontier country would do." He saw numerous partners split up under the stress of survival. The usual food was sourdough, beans (known as Yukon

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44 Ibid., p. 127.
strawberries), and coffee. The saloons provided warmth and companionship even for those who did not have money. Women of all classes won his respect as "one phase of the free and easy democracy of the remote frontier". Indians, too, drew his compassion as he observed what "trading companies had 'done' them". Although the Alaskan vote did not count, on election day in 1896 Circle City voted solidly for William Jennings Bryan. A torchlight procession followed led by an illuminated banner showing Bryan. Miners' meetings, even with Johns' background in law, won his approval. Like his colleagues, he was governed by the unwritten but no less binding customs of the Yukon. They contributed to his philosophy, not unlike Frederick Jackson Turner's, that "the frontier life developed a man's self-respect, a regard for the rights of others, and a mutual helpfulness."

Fortymile and Circle City followed the typical pattern of mining camps that began in California. Men outnumbered women; and respectable women were rare. The communities were cosmopolitan; college graduates dug next to illiterates while various nationalities mixed with sourdough Alaskans. The promise of easy gold eventually at-

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46 Ibid., p. 141.
47 Ibid., p. 142.
tracted lawless outcasts, gamblers, and harpies. In these early
Alaskan camps they had to solve problems stemming from their unique
environment by developing democratic institutions and administering
their own brand of justice.⁴⁸

In the fall of 1896 the structure and character of both towns
changed drastically. The cry, "Gold on the Klondike", emptied the
mining camps almost overnight. It marked the end of a frontier and the
beginning of a new phase in mining. For once McQuesten, Harper, and
May failed to capitalize on the rush. Although Harper and Joe Ladue
moved their sawmill from Sixtymile and staked out the Dawson townsite,
McQuesten and Mayo met severe cut-throat competition and decided they
were getting too old for that kind of life. In 1898 Harper left
Alaska and died of tuberculosis in Arizona. McQuesten, known as the
"Father of the Yukon", also left Alaska for California in 1898. Only
Al Mayo remained to survive a number of subsequent gold rushes.
Outliving the other two by twenty years, he died in Rampart, Alaska in 1923.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Billington, Westward Expansion, p. 534.
⁴⁹Alaska Mining Record, 26 October 1898, p. 3; The Alaska
Weekly, 10 August 1923, p. 3; and Kitchener, Flag Over the North,
p. 153.
VI. THE KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH FRONTIER

The Klondike gold rush created the greatest impact in the history of the Yukon. Although never as rich as several of the western gold rushes, the Klondike resulted in new techniques of mining, subsequent gold rushes, and the development of an isolated country. To the Klondike thousands came as they had fifty years before to California. The Yukon, however, presented a more hostile environment, and many would-be miners lost their lives because of recklessness or carelessness.

The discovery of the Klondike has been credited to George Washington Carmack, who filed the first claim. Canadians, however, boast that Robert Henderson mined the first gold and gave Carmack the tip-off. Native historians now claim that Skookum Jim and Tagish

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Charley found the gold while Carmack slept. Nonetheless, the
discovery occurred and a snow-balling stampede was on. First Forty-mile smiled in disbelief but quietly investigated "Lying George's" assertions of gold on the Klondike River. Then letters to Circle City emptied that community within a month. By the winter of 1896 the Yukon's first real gold rush had begun.

The ground proved exceedingly rich by Yukon standards. Individuals claimed up to $800 from a single pan of pay dirt. Others received more than $140,000 for a winter's work. All the best claims had been staked long before the steamboat Excelsior arrived in San Francisco bearing the first Klondike gold. Claims changed hands for exorbitant sums. Joe Ladue named his town Dawson for the Canadian geologist who made the first report on the mineral resources of the Canadian Yukon. Eventually lots in Dawson reached as high as $5,000 a front foot. But most of the miners, not wanting to take time to build log cabins, lived in tents. Life was a frantic rush.

Unlike earlier American gold rushes and later Alaskan stampedes, Canadian government officials prevented the usual chaos, anarchy and violence. William Ogilvie, Dominion land surveyor, arrived in the winter of 1896-97 to survey Ladue's townsite. He stayed on to survey the two major creeks, Bonanza and Eldorado. Canadian law allowed five hundred feet per claim. In the urgent confusion of staking, many miners had haphazardly over-staked. These small claims between larger claims
became known as "fractions" and, since all other land had been staked, sold for high prices, Ogilvie's foresight prevented endless legal disputes. Following Ogilvie came the Northwest Mounted Police, who imposed law and order. Although life in Dawson was hectic and lively, it was seldom violent or disorderly.

When news of the Klondike gold rush reached Seattle and San Francisco, a nation caught in the throes of a depression responded with exuberance. The frontier was not dead. Adventure, romance, and gold still remained in the Far North. Within months Dawson swelled with the influx of stampeders. They arrived over the Chilkoot and White Passes, across the Valdez Glacier, up several Canadian "trails", and by steamboats from St. Michael.² But the easy gold claims had been snatched up long before. Americans, accustomed to American law, chaffed at being taxed ten percent of their gross production. Discontent hovered near the surface as Alaskan "sourdoughs" trimmed their behavior to Canadian law. The old rules and customs that had made the Alaska-Yukon camps cohesive communities no longer applied: doors were locked, claims were jumped, and men did not trust their partners.

While thousands poured into Dawson and others flowed out in search

of new bonanzas, men overlooked one precious commodity—food. Gold-crazed miners, eager to be among the first, had travelled light, expecting to buy their year's supply at Dawson with the nuggets they would easily mine. But a series of incidents created panic. The two commercial companies owned only six small steamboats, whose design often left them stranded in the shallow water of the Yukon Flats. When this happened in September 1897, Dawson became frantic. The commercial companies had already rationed their supplies because the steamboats had been unable to keep up with the heavy influx of people. Furthermore, the companies had stocked up on liquor and hardware because of their inflationary value rather than food. As the Yukon began to freeze, the Northwest Mounted Police joined with the commercial companies to urge newcomers without proper provisions to leave immediately. Hundreds fled downriver towards the marooned boats at Fort Yukon; others returned the way they had come.

Meanwhile the United States War Department ordered Captain Patrick Henry Ray and Lieutenant Wilds P. Richardson to Alaska. They were to investigate and report on whether troops were necessary, whether civil authorities were providing protection to life and property, whether

the people were law-abiding, and whether there was food in the country for the population to winter. From St. Michael in August, Ray reported Dawson's food shortage grave. He also observed a "turbulent and lawless" element entering the country lured by the Klondike's gold. As he steamed up the river, he recognized the isolation of the Yukon. There was no law enforcement, no communication, and no government.

At Circle City an astonished Captain Ray confronted his first miners' meeting. More than 180 miners had arrived in Circle from Dawson or Birch Creek to learn that the commercial companies had by-passed Circle City for the more profitable Dawson market. Thus, the warehouses were empty as winter closed in. Concerned, upset, and even scared, the miners called a miners' meeting. At the meeting they decided to hold up the next steamboat and obtain the necessary supplies. As Ray stared into the shotguns of the miners, he called attention to their "unlawfulness". The miners responded, "There is no law or any person in authority to whom we can appeal". They then cleared the

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5 Ray, "Suffering and Destitute Miners", p. 531; other contemporaries report the hold up sympathetically to the miners: Adney, The Klondike Stampede, pp. 191-92; Dunham, "The Alaskan Goldfields", p. 366; Walden, A Dog-Puncher on the Yukon, pp. 98-9; while Kitchener, Flag Over the North, p. 200 views it from the point of view of the companies.
boat of stragglers and posted guards to prevent pilfering. All goods received full payment at Dawson prices. To avoid charges of favoritism, they stopped both the Alaska Commercial Company's Bella and the North American Transportation and Trading Company's Portus B. Weare. Ray criticized the miners for their radical steps in interfering with legitimate business, yet also condemned the commercial companies for their monopolistic practices and poor planning.  

When an unseasonable warm spell cleared the river of ice, a mad dash to Fort Yukon ensued. Captain Ray was at the center of the scattered fleet. He was certain that there would be violence when the Dawson hundreds landed at Fort Yukon. His premonition proved correct, in fact he narrowly averted an armed revolution. Immediately commercial companies turned over their merchandise to him for protection. He then distributed outfits to the destitute in exchange for chopping wood. The companies' exaggeration of their supplies stored at Fort Yukon created additional headaches. A group of demanding, belligerent miners called another miners' meeting to take the warehouses by force. Ray and Richardson succeeded in fending off the threat, but the North American Transportation and Trading Company was looted, and $6,000 was stolen. One "destitute" miner obtained an outfit under false pretenses.

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Although he was apprehended and jailed in Circle City, a miners' meeting voted to release him. Blatantly he auctioned off his outfit and gambled away his proceeds.\textsuperscript{7}

By January Ray reported that neither Dawson nor Circle City remained in danger—the starvation scare had passed.\textsuperscript{8} But the miners' meetings convinced Ray that, against the increasing lawless and turbulent element, the civil government was totally inadequate. He recommended a semi-military government with military posts along the Yukon at St. Michael, Tanana, and near the Canadian border at Mission Creek. This military force would have a moral effect on the population, support the civil authorities, control the Yukon River, prevent smuggling, and provide law and order. The striking contrast between Canadian law and government, symbolized by the Northwest Mounted Police, and the absence of any government or law enforcement in Alaska filled him with frustration. Furthermore, the country needed exploration surveys, roads, railroads, light-draft steamers, and agricultural development. At the same time Ray made these recommendations, the commercial companies and the few civil officials also requested

\textsuperscript{7}Ray, "Suffering and Destitute Miners", p. 553.

\textsuperscript{8}Ibid., p. 551; Capt. P. H. Ray, "Alaska, 1897—Relief of the Destitute in the Gold Fields", in Compilations of Narratives of Explorations in Alaska, p. 501; and Alaska Mining Record, 2 March 1898, p. 6.
protection and assistance. Therefore, Lieutenant Richardson remained throughout the winter to patrol the river, preserve order in the mining towns, and extend relief and medical aid.

Although the starvation threat consumed most of Captain Ray's time, he still reported his observations on social conditions, population, and settlement. He estimated that 1,200 people lived along the Yukon between the Tanana and the Canadian boundary. Observing that the hunger panic had winnowed out the weak and dependent miners, he noted that the more self-reliant and persevering had spread out to live off the land and had explored, prospected, and staked new areas. Yet more significantly, these miners were Americans returning from Canada. Accustomed to less restrictive American laws, they expressed dissatisfaction with Canadian laws, especially the royalty on their output. Since no rich new discoveries had been made in Canada, they were returning to the good paying districts they had abandoned during the Klondike rush. Creeks and rivers such as Birch, American, Seventymile, and Coal drew them west.

Ray did not underestimate the anger that Americans felt over the

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10 The Alaska Weekly, 8 June 1923, p. 3.
the restrictive Canadian laws and customs. The Alaska Mining Record in Juneau composed a poem expressing the miners' sentiments:¹²

"Stay on the Yankee Side of the Line"

There is gold in Alaska, and plenty of it too,
But don't rush on to Dawson, for surely if you do
You'll remember what I've told you in the Record of this place,
Which has never printed else but truth about this golden race.
Keep on the side of freedom; I mean don't cross the line,
And millions of our countrymen may settle down and mine,
For the Stars and Stripes are free to all, our canyons and our gold,
And ten percent is robbery—and ten percent, I'm told,
Must be paid up in solid cash or else your claim is lost
And confiscated by the crown regardless of its cost,
Infringing rights and all that's dear, your liberty and time;
Dominion law is slavery; let's brand it as a crime.

This disaffection may be seen also in the patriotic names given camps and creeks—Eagle City, Star City, Nation, Independence, Union Gulch, and Fourth of July Creek.

Before Captain Ray left Alaska in February 1898, he estimated the population of these new towns: Eagle City with 200, Star City with 250, Charley River (later called Independence) with 180, Coal Creek with 75, and Circle City with 250.¹³ Ivy City and Nation City were founded

¹² Alaska Mining Record, 16 February 1898, p. 4.
within the year. Tied together by the main thoroughfare of the interior, the Yukon River, these small communities kept abreast of developments within their region and the broader mining community.

The disaffected American miners first returned to Mission Creek, just across the international border. Here the mountains fell away from the river, opening a perfect townsite on a fifteen-foot-high riverbank. American Creek, tributary of Mission Creek, had produced gold as early as 1895. Difficulty in controlling the creek's water, however, had prevented work on the main creek, and it was eventually abandoned. When Spurr visited the diggings in 1896, he found a number of men camped at the junction of Mission Creek and the Yukon, not far from Francois Mercier's abandoned trading post, Belle Isle. Mission Creek had taken its name from an Episcopal mission that had once stood next to the trading post but had been abandoned since 1888.

In 1896 the United States Geological Survey estimated that thirty-five miners worked American Creek with an output of $15,000, but the Klondike

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15 Spurr, Through the Yukon Gold Diggings, p. 156.

strike quickly drained this area. In 1897, for example, only the owners of seven claims remained behind to work their mines. Each one, nevertheless, averaged twenty dollars a day.

While American miners worked the Klondike, they discovered and learned, new mining methods and adopted old ones that they would later apply to Alaskan creeks. Initially they mined old stream bars, as they had in Fortymile and Stewart Rivers and Birch Creek, with gold pan and rocker. Quickly they graduated to gulch diggings that required either burn and drift methods or open-cut and sluicing methods. Once these claims had been staked, a few adventurers experimented with bench mining. The gamble paid off. New possibilities for claims arose overnight, and new methods developed. The poorer miner began deeper drift mines, but the miner with capital and labor turned to hydraulic mining, using pressurized water to blast off the deep overburden. When the miners returned to American Creek, they noted that the benches were 200 feet deep but that the claims were 1320 feet long and allowed enough footage.

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17 Goodrich, "History and Conditions of the Yukon", p. 125.


to make capital investments worthwhile. Other problems arose, too. The presence of running water at bedrock, even in the coldest weather, made prospecting and drift mining difficult. Moreover, the annual rainfall, eleven inches, and the grade of the creek were not sufficient to create the necessary pressure for hydraulic mining. But Klondike methods would later prove invaluable on other creeks.

By the end of the winter of 1897-98, as a result of the discontent and restlessness of American miners, the starvation scare, the absence of claims in the Klondike area, and the growing appreciation for older Alaskan claims, guide books reported "a great stampede to American Creek." Finally on May 28, 1898, a group of twenty-eight miners laid out a townsite they called Eagle City. Cabin sites were allotted by drawing numbered slips of paper out of a hat and sold for $500 to $1,000. By summer government geologists reported more than 500 cabins and a population of 1,700. A sawmill had been moved in along with three commercial companies—Alaska Commercial Company, North American Transportation and Trading Company, and Alaska Exploration

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23 Adney, The Klondike Stamped, p. 457; and Kitchener, Flag Over the North.
The town even boasted its own handwritten newspaper, *The Eagle City Tribune*, edited by Charles C. Carruthers. Its editorials discussed differences between Canadian and American mining laws, customs, and tariffs.

The population boom proved fleeting. Although 140 claims had been staked on American Creek and 71 on Mission, the population dropped to 400. Yet coarse gold, which often determined the quality of the claim, had been found—even a nugget valued at $192.

Meanwhile the Secretary of War followed the recommendation of the recently promoted Major Ray and, pending formation of a civil government, included Eagle City within the boundaries of the military reservation. In late 1899 another gold rush, this time at Nome, almost wiped out

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the small mining community. Eagle City's location on the Yukon River, supported by services of a military post, government officials, and three of the largest trading companies, saved it from joining the ranks of other gold-rush ghost towns.

Simultaneously the spin-off from the Klondike affected every creek and river in the upper Yukon. Although gold had been discovered in 1887 on the Seventymile River and men took out fifty dollars a day from rockers, little development occurred. During the summer of 1897 fifteen men averaged $2,500 each on the river, but because of numerous falls and rapids it remained only superficially prospected.28 During the winter of the starvation scare, 1897-98, the miners laid off a townsite, Seventymile City, at the mouth of the Seventymile River. During spring break-up the town flooded, so another was started two miles up the Yukon called Star City.29 By


29 Alfred Hulse Brooks, "General Information Concerning the Territory by Geographic Provinces: The Yukon District", Maps and Descriptions of Routes of Exploration in Alaska in 1899, U.S.G.S. (Washington, 1899), p. 80, names Seventymile City and Star City in that order and Topographer E. C. Barnard maps them in that order; Donald J. Orth, Dictionary of Alaska Place Names, U.S.G.S. Professional Paper 567 (Washington, 1967), p. 913, has followed the U.S.G.S. names; but Adney, The Klondike Stampede, p. 457 and map opposite p. 460, has the names reversed; Lt. W.P. Richardson to Quartermaster-General, 12-26 February 1899, "Records of the Office of the Quartermaster-General" Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, records the Post Office in lower Star City but most of the population in upper Seventymile City; and Wickersham, Old Yukon, p. 62, discusses only Star City. It is conceivable that eventually the remnants of the town at the mouth and the one two miles upriver became known collectively as "Star City".
June 1898 enough people, approximately 250, lived at Star City to qualify for an officially designated Post Office. In February 1899, when Lieutenant Richardson came through the two towns enroute to Eagle, he spent the night at the upper town. He felt that it had a good townsite with forty to fifty cabins and a small Alaska Commercial Company store. The population of the towns remained stable at 250 for two years. Then word of the Nome strike hit. By September 1900 Star City and Seventymile City became ghost towns.

Of the forty cabins at Star City (#27) recorded by Lieutenant Richardson and Samuel Dunham, only ten remain today. The cabins lie not on the first high bench above the Yukon but on the second, probably to avoid being washed away again. Historically the cabins were separated by fifty to seventy-five yards of open space, but today forest growth has intruded between them and destroyed the visual aspect of a town. The sod roofs that once provided good winter insulation have collapsed on all the cabins. The unpeeled logs reflect the miners' concern for expediency—gold came first, comfort and beauty second. A few builders squared off the inside walls to resemble the frame walls of their "civilized past". The ruins of two boats left abandoned next to their cabins depict a water-oriented lifestyle. Very few relics from the past remain. Scavengers and souvenir-seekers of earlier eras have left little but the basic structures for posterity. But of the five gold-rush

30 Alaska Mining Record, August 1898, p. 3; and Melvin B. Ricks, Directory of Alaska Postoffices and Postmasters (Ketchikan: Tongass Publishing Co., 1965).

31 Richardson to Quartermaster-General, RG 92, National Archives (hereafter indicated as NA); and Dunham, "The Yukon and Nome Gold Regions", p. 840.
communities between Eagle and Circle, more fabric remains at Star City.

There are no remains of Seventymile City—the river has undercut the town's bank and washed away all that remained.

Farther downriver near the mouth of Fourth of July Creek another pair of cities began the summer of 1898. Ivy City and Nation City, founded three miles apart, reflected the optimism felt on Fourth of July Creek. At Nation City on June 6, 1898, a miners' meeting established the rules for organizing a town: each lot measured fifty by one hundred feet, each block had eight lots, only one lot allowed per person, the streets that ran parallel with the river were named, and those perpendicular numbered, and streets were forty feet wide. Although sixty-six lots were eventually claimed, by winter Lieutenant Richardson observed only seven or eight cabins. At Ivy City the Arctic Express Company built the only commercial building. By 1900 the brief stampede that recorded more than one hundred claims on Fourth of July Creek proved a disappointment, and the district was

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32 "Rules for Organizing a Town - Nation City", 6 June 1898, Records in Eagle, Alaska, Yellow File #8, 1899, Claims.
33 Richardson to Quartermaster-General, RC 92, NA.
Nation City (#52) survived until the 1930's. It once included twelve to fifteen houses, a roadhouse, a small store, and a steamboat landing. It is doubtful that the population ever rose above forty to fifty people, who lived by mining probably supplemented by woodcutting. During the late 1960's two local trappers salvaged the logs from the old buildings to build two of their own cabins. They used much of the remaining logs for firewood. Thus only the foundations of nine buildings remain. A large sled that resembles several found at Fourth of July Creek mine is in poor shape. A few pieces of machinery, doghouses, and a cache are all the supporting fabric left at Nation City.

The ubiquitous George Matlock started a homestead (#53) one mile up the creek that was later patented by Fred Krager—the only homestead in the Yukon-Charley proposal. It was burned to the ground in a forest fire in 1969. Willows, alders, and small trees are encroaching on the cleared spaces.

Ivy City (#58) lived only two years. Little remains of it today. A trapper used most of the old buildings for firewood. What he left standing was wiped out in the forest fire of 1969. A historical archeologist could establish the extent of the townsite and recover any artifacts buried by time.

When Lieutenant Richardson made his winter trip from Circle to Eagle in February 1899, he met the "emergency relief reindeer herd" near Charley River. During the starvation scare of 1897, Congress

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34 Dunham, "The Yukon and Nome Gold Regions", p. 840; and Records in Eagle, Alaska, Yellow File #8, 1899, Claims.

35 Richardson to Quartermaster-General, RG 92, NA.
had authorized $200,000 for the purchase and shipment of Lapland reindeer herds to provide relief to Dawson. Although experienced Lapp herdsmen were hired, the reindeer's staple diet, caribou moss, did not grow along the route from Haines to Dawson. Only 125 out of 539 reindeer survived to reach Circle two winters later.\textsuperscript{35}

While at the mouth of the Charley River, Richardson recorded the beginnings of a small town called Independence. Here eight to ten cabins made up the town, which supplied sixty men mining the Charley River. Todd Creek reported the best prospects with thirty-cent pans.\textsuperscript{36} Although no "towns" existed, miners described good possibilities on adjacent Sam and Coal Creeks.

Nothing remains at Independence.

Just downriver from Todd Creek two cabins remain on Silvia Creek (#84). They undoubtedly represent this period of prospecting on the Charley River. Once again the sod roofs have collapsed, pulling down with them several of the logs from the walls. Nevertheless, enough fabric remains to capture a feeling for the miners who built them. Lumber must have been scarce as no door or window frames exist. The windows are smaller than one square foot—designed to let in as little cold (and consequently as little light) as possible. Two shovels are propped up against the outside wall. A workbench, cupboard, and bunk are all that remain. Yet the struggle against the environment and the hardship of mining can be readily felt.

\textsuperscript{35} Richardson to Quartermaster-General, RG 92, NA.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.; Dunham, "The Yukon and Nome Gold Regions", p. 840.
Disappointed Klondikers also worked their way back to the Birch Creek diggings. Samuel Dunham of the United States Department of Labor predicted that Mastodon and Mammoth Creeks would eventually produce as much gold as any ten miles of the Klondike. Because of an even distribution of gold, an output extending over a long period of time, and the employment of large numbers of men, Dunham felt that these mines would produce greater economic benefit to Alaska than the phenomenal production of the Klondike. By January 1, 1899, Circle City had recovered its population of 800 people, including Lieutenant Richardson's military camp. But by September all but the army had bolted to Nome.

The impact of the massive movement of people during the Klondike gold rush had a profound effect on the three tribes of Han Indians, especially the two groups adjacent to the booming communities of Eagle and Dawson. Not only did the Indians confront the white miner on the Yukon but on every stream, valley, even mountain ridge. No other Athapaskans ever experienced anything similar. White men's tools proved more efficient than the aboriginal, most remarkably the fish wheel and the repeating rifle. The Han's traditional shelters,

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38 Osgood, The Han Indians, p. 138.
the moss house and niibeeo zhoo, gave way to log cabins and canvas tents. Furthermore, the Indians found their territory governed by two political systems, American and Canadian. The gold rush not only accelerated acculturation but destroyed the few remaining vestiges of traditional culture. Every facet of Han culture suffered serious impact.39

Overall the backwash from the Klondike stampede resulted in great exploration of the Alaskan Yukon. During the three and a half years of the Klondike rush, the Alaskan Yukon placers produced nearly $2 million.40 A few settlements flourished briefly until drained by news of the latest strike. This pattern would be repeated several times. After each new stampede, disenchanted miners would return to the old, slow but steady diggings of the Alaskan Yukon. These miners of the Klondike frontier had been tempered and trained by it. They learned that the trail to gold in the north was unforgiving and could involve the forfeiture of their lives. They accepted the bitter lesson that the commercial companies were undependable. Paying more than $1,300

39Ibid., pp. 138-44.

yearly in food, shelter, and equipment, they had to pack the 1,500 pounds to the mines on their backs.\textsuperscript{41} If the mines failed to produce, the miners were stranded, dependent upon the charity of these same commercial companies. As miners they faced disappointment, starvation, hardship, and isolation. Yet many stayed on to search for the next bonanza and, in so doing, made the country an easier place to live for those who followed.

The military on the Yukon frontier did not deviate from the pattern established on earlier western frontiers. In 1898 the military was as preoccupied with preparedness for the next foreign war as it was in 1848. Consequently, the military leaders did not design the frontier army to adapt to its unusual frontier environment and circumstances. Moreover, unlike the Northwest Mounted Police, which all United States military officers admired, the Army never arrived on the scene until after violence and disorder had erupted. Even after sixty years of bloodshed and hard-earned lessons, the Army still waited until after the chaotic Klondike rush and its aftermath to evaluate the need for military installations.

Idealistically the leaders of the Army repeated the goals for Alaska as if they had been achieved on the earlier frontiers already: "The lines of the Army have advanced simultaneously with the advance of the settler along our vast frontiers," observed the Senate Committee on Military Affairs in a report on the military in Alaska. "It has been the uniform policy of the Government to foster the develop-
ment of the country by exploring and opening up trails for emigrants
and prospectors, convoying their supplies, aiding in the transmis-
sion of their mail, in all things extending a helping hand to them,
and in keeping step with the advance of civilization. . . . Where-
ever he [the emigrant] went he found that somewhere or somehow the
military branch of the Government had with wise, unerring foresight
established posts for his protection and relief." The Army had one
soldier, Lieutenant W. P. Richardson, stationed at Fort Yukon during
the turbulent winter of Dawson's "starvation scare". During the sum-
mer of 1898, however, several Army exploration teams mapped some of
the interior routes already explored by prospectors. The following
winter of 1898-99 Richardson acquired eighty men to help him patrol
the river and preserve order among the mining communities between
Circle City and Eagle City.

Finally, in June 1899 a permanent military district was estab-
lished on the Yukon River charged with the responsibility of protect-
ing transportation companies, finding new routes to the interior,
aiding the destitute, building military roads, improving communica-
tion between posts, and providing safety for the general welfare of

the community. At Circle City Richardson learned that his camp had been officially established and that he had been promoted to captain. Furthermore, he was ordered to begin construction on the first military post on the Yukon. Near the Canadian border at the mouth of Mission Creek, he staked out Fort Egbert, named for Colonel Harry E. Egbert, who had been killed in Philippines a few months earlier. At mid-summer Major Patrick H. Ray returned to Alaska to take command of the North Alaska District and relieve Richardson. With him came a company of ninety-nine enlisted men and a detachment of Hospital Corps.

By August 1, while the troops lived in tents, the foundations had been laid for six buildings, barracks, storehouse, hospital, officers quarters, office, and guardhouse. With the onset of winter the buildings were still incomplete. As the long winter drew out, Major Ray charged his Captain, W.K. Wright, with misappropriating funds and insubordination. Captain Wright, in turn, countercharged

3 U.S. Army, Alaska, The Army's Role In the Building of Alaska, Public Information Officer, Pamphlet 360-5, April 1969, pp. 34-41.
5 Richardson to Quartermaster, 31 July 1899, Records of the U.S. Army Continental Commands Post Records: Fort Egbert, 1899-1904, Record Group 393, NA, on microfilm in Alaska Resource Library, Anchorage, Alaska.
Major Ray with misappropriating public funds. Rumors of the conflict diffused along the Yukon. The enlisted men, taking advantage of the disharmony between the officers and the lax discipline, began drinking and squabbling among themselves and the townspeople, a condition aggravated by the inclusion of the town within the boundaries of the military reservation. Although the charges were distorted and petty, both the town and the fort split into factions that only a new company and a different set of officers could relieve.

On August 23, 1900, Company E, Seventh Infantry, commanded by the able and efficient Captain Charles E. Farnsworth, took charge of Fort Egbert. Farnsworth was the right man for the job. Born in Lycoming County, Pennsylvania in 1863, he had worked with a telegraph construction gang while awaiting appointment to West Point. After graduating from West Point, he had served in several frontier posts in Colorado, North Dakota, and Tennessee that helped prepare

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6 Ray to Adjutant-General, March 1900, Record Group 393, NA; and Farnsworth to Tillman, 30 April 1900, Farnsworth Collection, University of Alaska Archives, Fairbanks, Alaska.
7 Farnsworth to Tillman, 30 April 1900; Farnsworth to Doctor Thrasher, 3 December 1900; Farnsworth to Goodin, 3 January 1901; and Farnsworth to Russell, 3 December 1900, Farnsworth Collection.
8 General Orders No. 19, 30 July 1900, Farnsworth Collection.
him for Alaska. In June 1899 his young wife and son accompanied him on his assignment to the District of North Alaska. Shortly after their arrival, the passage of the Civil and Criminal Codes for Alaska created a skeleton civil government. At this point the Secretary of War agreed to exclude Eagle City from the military reservation. Thus, Farnsworth had one less headache. The authorized abandonment of the Circle City post allowed Farnsworth to concentrate on Fort Egbert.

Farnsworth, appalled at Ray's drunken and mutinous company, became doubly discouraged upon inspection of the post. The green logs had dried and twisted out of shape opening large cracks between every two logs. The barracks accommodated only 60 men whereas Farnsworth had 102. No plans even existed for construction of the stables, and no hay, forage, logs, wood, coal, or fresh meat had been stored. Since snow already covered the hills, Farnsworth put his men to work immediately. Some began constructing a new addition to the barracks. Others caught and dried fish or hunted caribou. A fourteen-man detachment started construction of a telegraph line to meet the Canadian line from Dawson. Although kept well-disciplined

9 Root to Adjutant-General, 4 August 1900, General Order No. 109, "Selected Documents from the Abandoned Military Reservations File Relating to Fort Egbert", Record Group 49, NA.

10 Farnsworth to Goodin, 3 January 1901; Farnsworth to McCoy, 28 August 1900; Farnsworth to Assistant Adjutant-General, 28 August 1900, Farnsworth Collection.
and busy, the garrison suffered six desertions to the attractions of Canadian wages of ten dollars a day.

In a push to complete the telegraph hook-up before winter and in time for the presidential election returns, Farnsworth reinforced the telegraph construction crew to thirty men. The last three miles to the boundary interposed steep rocky mountains and frozen ground. On October 29, 1900, Fort Egbert telegraphed the states via Dawson and British Columbia. The excited listeners heard that William McKinley had carried the presidential election. Canadians allowed military and civilian messages sent for fifty-six cents per word, and a reply could be expected in five days. Previously messages took at least a month and more likely four. Almost as important, the international telegraph line inspired excellent cooperation between Canada and the United States.

By mid-November, with temperatures of thirty degrees below zero, the soldiers had completed the barracks and the stable, calked all log buildings, and sheathed the storehouse with corrugated iron.

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11 Farnsworth to Richardson, 18 October 1900; Farnsworth to Doctor Thrasher, 26 October 1900; Farnsworth to Will, 5 November 1900, Farnsworth Collection.

12 Farnsworth to Adjutant-General, 27 September 1900; Farnsworth to McCoy, 2 December 1900, Farnsworth Collection.
With winter came short daylight hours and severe cold. Nevertheless, Farnsworth conducted daily drills in the drill hall of the barracks. He had secured permission to build a Post Exchange without cost to the government—the Exchange paid the soldiers for their labor. A kitchen, dining room, billiard room, bar room, and store occupied the building. In justification of this building, Farnsworth explained: "The absence of proper places of amusement and the bad character of the saloons near the reservation render it a very important matter that there should be a good building erected for an exchange".

For Thanksgiving the military post gave a dance. The soldiers planed the drill-room floor smooth. One officer drove a bobsled pulled by four mules to collect the seventeen women of the town and post while another officer dressed in livery green acted as a footman. The dance proved a great success and at the request of the citizens Farnsworth promised a dance twice a month.

As time passed the Farnsworths discovered many aspects of life about Fort Egbert that they enjoyed. Farnsworth became an avid sportsman. On one three-day hunting trip he killed five caribou.

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13 Ibid.; Farnsworth to Adjutant-General, 27 September 1900, RG 49, NA.
14 Farnsworth to McCoy, 2 December 1900, Farnsworth Collection.
and fifty ptarmigan. Although the snow and ice made a picturesque setting, temperatures as low as seventy degrees below zero forced everyone to remain inside. Fires in every room consumed more than 400 cords of wood, and even then barely kept the rooms warm. Mrs. Farnsworth got "disgusted" with the cold since it burned her lungs. Everyone got nose and cheeks a little frozen but nobody seemed to mind. Overall, Farnsworth recognized that Alaska was a hard country for soldiers. "As all the men are on fatigue every day," he wrote, "they are practically nothing more than day laborers." Consequently he felt concern that none of his men would re-enlist for service at Fort Egbert.

Although a teetotaler himself, one of Farnsworth's worst fears was the closing of the canteen. "The men can be kept fairly well amused without drinking much as we sell beer at twenty-five cents per glass," he reported, "but if the canteen is closed the men will go to the horrible whiskey holes downtown, get crazed by the vile stuff they sell, and get into fights and others troubles, and finally

15 Farnsworth to Richardson, 18 October 1900, Farnsworth Collection.
16 Farnsworth to Mother Galey, 20 January 1901, Farnsworth Collection.
17 Farnsworth to Goodin, 3 January 1901, Farnsworth Collection.
The order abolishing the canteen confirmed his fears. Within a month a sergeant and a "worthless" enlisted man deserted. Drunkeness increased threefold.

Aside from the saloons, the relationship between the fort and the town emerged as one of compatibility and cooperation. The military allowed the new Department of Justice the use of the post's sawmill for lumber to build the town's courthouse and jail, although Justice had to supply the logs and labor. Clubs and meetings brought an intermingling of military and townspeople. Farnsworth participated in the "Wise Men's Club", otherwise known as the "Club of the Twelve Cranks", whose members wrote and criticized one another's essays. He also gave the keynote speech at the opening of the Presbyterian reading room.

Although interested in the construction of the post and the telegraph line, Farnsworth, concerned about his wife's health, requested a change of station. Relinquishing his command to his lieutenant, Benjamin Tillman, Farnsworth left on June 29, 1901. In 1910

18 Farnsworth to Goodin, 2 March 1901; Farnsworth to Wright, 16 April 1901; Farnsworth to his brother, 15 May 1901, Farnsworth Collection.
19 Farnsworth to his brother, 15 May 1901, Farnsworth Collection.
he returned once again to Alaska to command Fort Gibbon at the mouth of the Tanana River. The remaining twenty-five years, however, he spent compiling an impressive record in the Philippines, Mexico, Cuba, and France. He retired in 1925 as a major general.

Although Lieutenant Tillman had once displayed leadership and a delightful sense of humor, he had recently been jilted by his southern fiance. Morose, melancholy, and self-absorbed, he found himself saddled with a company of green recruits. The men of Farnsworth's original company had completed their enlistment time and had returned with him to the States for their release from the service. Because of the cold, Tillman held few drills and little target practice, and punished only a few miscreants with the chore of chopping wood. Without enough work and guidance to keep them from trouble, the recruits found themselves embroiled in a saloon brawl that landed a number of them in jail. Indignation swept the company, followed by an impulsive decision to free their comrades. The non-commissioned officer issued arms and ammunition, lined the men into columns of four, and marched them toward town.

Unknown to the soldiers, the Assistant United States Marshall had deputized all citizens, posted them on the roofs of the cabins, and ordered them to shoot any soldiers who attempted to break into the jail. As trappers, hunters, frontiersmen, and expert shots, the citizens would have annihilated the recruits. On the outskirts of
town Lieutenant Tillman intercepted the column. In a loud, firm voice he said: "Men, you are going back to the barracks. You may kill me, but I will kill four or five of you before you go any further. Column right, March!" The men marched meekly back to the barracks, where Tillman severely reprimanded them. He experienced no further discipline problems.

Such examples of misconduct among the soldiers moved government officials to doubt the need for the military. Since Army policy had been one of assistance to civil authorities and since civil government had finally come into its own, state politicians and government observers felt the military appropriations or their equivalent should be made available to the civil authority. These government spokesmen, however, overlooked the primary purpose of the military—to improve transportation and communication facilities. This purpose occupied the major Alaskan forts for five grueling years.

With the creation of the Army Signal Corps during the Civil War, speedy communication became an important military goal. Reorganized in 1887 by the great communication expert and Arctic explorer, General Adolphus Washington Greely, the Signal Corps emphasized the need for signal communications in Alaska. In 1898 a three-pronged

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21 Cantwell, Report of the Nunivak, p. 182.
survey team searched for a practical telegraph route from Eagle to either Cook Inlet of Prince William Sound. Meanwhile, since trading steamers traversed the Yukon at infrequent intervals, administration and coordination of the Alaskan military garrisons proved extremely difficult. Communication with Washington headquarters required a year to send a message and receive an answer. Since breaks in the Canadian telegraph line were common and American messages received low priority, even the completion of the Canadian line did not resolve the problems. Moreover, friction with Canada and England over the international boundary and with Russia and Japan over fishing and sealing rights in the Bering Sea required telegraph communication for military and diplomatic purposes.

These problems proved increasingly cumbersome. The dynamic but impatient General Greely demanded immediate and forceful action. As a rugged outdoorsman he did not underestimate the logistical problems of the all-American telegraph system that he envisioned. In May 1900 he electrified Congress into a $450,550 appropriation for such a system. Throughout the project the politically astute Secretary

22 "Introduction: Compilation of Narratives of Explorations in Alaska, p. 10.
of War, Elihu Root, rendered indispensable support. With only a handful of skilled Signal Corpsmen, Greeley exacted from the Alaskan infantry forces the necessary manpower.

Simultaneously, at Forts Davis, Michael, Gibbon, and Egbert, commanders ordered exploration teams to survey a route for the Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System (WAMCATS). After completion of the Canadian-Alaskan segment in October 1900, Egbert Commander Captain Farnsworth, tired of waiting for veteran explorer Captain William R. Abercrombie to blaze a trail north from Valdez, explored the route as far as Kechumstuk Summit himself. Sam Peter, from Eagle Village, guided Farnsworth over an Indian trading trail that proved the most practical route. Upon his return, he set forty-two men to work, cutting trail over the route he had reconnoitered. To General Greely he reported several logistical problems: bare rock mountain, frozen ground, steep cliffs above rivers, and insufficient and inappropriate tools.

When Farnsworth transferred to another assignment, construction on this portion of the telegraph line stopped. Lieutenant Tillman had all he could handle with a company of unruly recruits.

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24 Interview with Charlie Steven, Eagle Village, by Mertie Baggen, 22 July 1964, field notes in possession of University of Alaska Anthropology Department.
In the summer of 1901 Greely, concerned about the progress of the telegraph line, sent a Phillipine veteran, Lieutenant William "Billy" Mitchell, to Alaska to investigate the problems and recommend some solutions. To the twenty-one-year-old Mitchell, the construction of the Alaska telegraph system seemed as important as the Lewis and Clark Expedition, Fremont's trip to California, and the opening of the routes along the Mexican border to the Pacific coast. 25

The wild and unknown country enchanted the impressionable but confident and competent young officer. As he surveyed the route between Fort Egbert and Fort Liscum (near Valdez) during the summer, he quickly evaluated the problems—primarily those of transporting supplies. Deep moss, swamp, and muskeg, in which mules sank to their knees, covered the route. Little could be moved during the summer. In the winter, however, with the ground frozen, one mule could pull a sled of 2,000 pounds. He expounded his theory: "Nobody had tried to freight with horses and mules in winter on account of the cold, and as the dogs could pull comparatively little, almost nothing had been accomplished on the telegraph line... It seemed to me the thing to do was to work through the winter getting the material out: the wire, insulators, poles, food supplies, and forage; then to actually construct

the lines in the summer when we could dig holes in the ground and set the telegraph poles."

By recommending winter labor to General Greely, Mitchell ridiculed old-timers' tales of freezing and other myths of winter. After hearing Mitchell's report and recommendations, Greely ordered him to return to Alaska to build the telegraph line. "I was delighted at the prospect," said Mitchell, and he wasted no time preparing for his winter project.

He quickly learned a few essentials about intense cold: leather could not be worn; rubber cracked at temperatures of thirty degrees below zero; mercury thermometers froze at thirty-five below and thus served no good; kerosene froze at fifty below when lamps would go out; iron would stick to ice at forty below; and chilled steel or wood sled runners slid more smoothly than regular steel. He devised appropriate clothing for working in temperatures of sixty below: a parka of heavy bedtickling with a hood of wolverine tail lined with sable skin broke the wind and prevented the face from freezing; fleece-lined mittens of moose skin, three pairs of woolen socks, moccasins, fleece-lined underwear, wool trousers, and smoked goggles

26 Ibid., p. 42.
27 Ibid., p. 62.
completed the wardrobe. He also recognized the danger that dressing too warmly meant perspiration, which immediately froze and rendered all clothing useless.

After a winter reconnaissance over the trail, Mitchell organized his transportation system. Carefully selecting matched dog teams, he started a cache system along the trail. When the mule skinners refused to follow, he simply paid them off and hired new ones. When he discovered Fort Egbert's inadequate supplies, he bought or made new equipment. When he ran out of funds, he telegraphed Greely for more and received $50,000. Rather than waiting for the official warrant from the United States Treasury and losing a winter's work, Mitchell immediately obligated the funds for equipment, salaries, and services. "An officer who always follows the letter of the Book of Regulations instead of the spirit seldom gets anywhere," he declared. It was a motto he followed his whole life. The telegraph transmission had misplaced a comma, and the actual allocation turned out to be only $5,000. Greely had to request a special appropriation from Congress to cover Mitchell's obligations.

Although many horses and mules had to be shot because of improper

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28 Ibid., p. 86.
care in temperatures of seventy degrees below zero, the work went on. The crew cut the right-of-way, laid out the telegraph line along the route, and attached buzzer instruments that allowed communication with Fort Egbert. Throughout, Mitchell proved a strong and tireless leader. He personally conducted all reconnaissances, led the crews on their first trip, and maintained constant inspection tours. To prevent complaints and discontent while working in sub-zero temperatures, he prohibited thermometers. He established a wheelwright's shop at Fort Egbert to make specially modified sleds, harnesses, and horseshoes. These modifications prevented the horses and mules from freezing as they had during the early winter. He even worked out a schedule that showed a sled's specific load in accordance with a specific temperature.

During the summer of 1902 Mitchell's crew strung the telegraph line on the poles, dried salmon for winter dog food, hunted caribou and cached the meat, and built stations at ten-to-twenty mile intervals, each with a telegraph office, cabin, stable, and storehouse. On August 24, 1902, at Tanacross Junction, the Fort Liscum line linked up with Fort Egbert's line. The most difficult job, however, lay ahead.

The telegraph system from St. Michael to Fort Egbert, attempting to follow the Yukon, had mired in the swamps of the Yukon Flats. Mitchell determined that the best route would be to follow the Tanana
River, then up the Goodpasture River to Kechumstuk Summit and link into the Fort Liscum-Fort Egbert line. Once again with an Indian guide, Chief Joseph, a Ketchumstuk Indian, Mitchell personally reconnoitered the trail--the first white man to traverse the Goodpasture. The route was not perfect: portions of the trail had to be blasted, bridges erected over warm water springs, and boats constructed from whipsawed lumber. Still the trail pushed along on schedule. When news of the Fairbanks gold rush reached Dawson and Eagle, the winter telegraph trail became a highway for the stampedes. Summer brought hordes of mosquitoes that plagued the crew and animals. As the crew chopped, Mitchell graphically captured the image: "great bearded fellows in blue denim clothing, high horsehide boots and slouch hats, with remnants of mosquito netting around the edges. Their faces were sores from the assaults of the mosquitoes and black flies. As they attacked the spruce trees, the forest seemed to fall in front of them."

Time ran tight when the Tanana crew working east failed to meet Mitchell at the appointed spot. Since appropriations ran out on June 30, 1903, the remaining sixty-five miles had to be surveyed, the right-of-way cut, and the line stretched and erected in only thirty days. The mosquitoes became the real scourge and demanded constant

29 Ibid., p. 184.
smudge fires. Caribou and bear replenished the exhausted meat supply. If a supply boat were to capsize in the rapids of the Tanana, the completion of the line would have been postponed indefinitely. To prevent such a catastrophe, Lieutenant Mitchell personally guided each boat through the rapids. Before reaching the Salcha River, a forest fire flamed directly in the path of the telegraph line. Nevertheless, at long last, on June 27, 1903, three days before deadline, Mitchell himself made the last connection on the Alaska Telegraph System. Two thousand miles of wire stretched from St. Michael to Fort Egbert to Fort Liscum. "America's last frontier had been roped and hogtied," Mitchell whooped.

Despite Mitchell's calm, modest confidence, the construction of the telegraph line had been a monumental achievement. Battling unexplored terrain, extremes of climate, clouds of mosquitoes, inventing new equipment and methods of construction, and organizing efficient transportation and supply lines, Lieutenant Mitchell and his indefatigable men conquered nearly four hundred miles of the "wedge which cleft open the country to communication."

30 Ibid., p. 195.
31 Ibid., pp. 3a-5a; U.S. Army, Alaska, The Army's Role in Alaska, p. 51.
Billy Mitchell had completed his assignment. He returned to the States and later helped to organize the Air Service for World War I. His aggressiveness, self-confidence, and public attacks on the War Department alienated his superiors. Although courtmartialed for insubordination, he correctly predicted the Japanese attack and the role of aircraft in World War II. In 1946, ten years after his death, the Senate voted him a special medal of honor.

With the completion of the telegraph, life at Fort Egbert became easier. Only the telegraph maintenance crews at remote trail stations found life arduous, dangerous, and monotonous. The telegraph line needed constant maintenance—storms, floods, vandals, and avalanches broke it and thus necessitated repair in every kind of weather. During the winter, post freighters sledded in a year's supply of food and equipment for each station—a total of 400 tons. Eventually, in 1908, the Signal Corps installed a three-kilowatt wireless station at Fort Egbert and Circle City, and the land lines gradually fell into disrepair.

With the installation of wireless stations, the post settled into a more routine military lifestyle. Drilling, training, target practice, and other boring routines brought the common frontier army complaint—alcoholism. Eagle's four saloons bolstered this tendency. One officer blamed the town for the problem. His lieutenant was often found drunk. Seven soldiers stole a can of kerosene and sold it in
Eagle to buy whiskey. While they were arrested, tried, and dishonorably discharged, still one other enlisted man "blew his brains out in a fit of desperation because he could not get whiskey."

On the other hand, a new period with ample leisure time followed that resulted in the construction of a gymnasium. The building contained the usual paraphernalia--basketball court, shooting gallery, and bowling alley. The main floor accommodated winter field meets and semi-monthly dances. The post even engaged two special gymnastic teachers. The officers daily conducted drills for three-quarters of an hour followed by lectures. Most of the remaining time men spent perfecting their skills in the gymnasium. Free time allowed indulgence in practical jokes and pranks, yet also time to appreciate nature's wonders.

Since the telegraph had been converted to wireless and the Yukon area had been overshadowed by Fairbanks, the War Department determined that Fort Egbert had become expensive, redundant, and archaic. In 1911 the former commander of Fort Egbert, Major Farnsworth, now at Fort Gibbon, oversaw the dismantling of the fort. Only a Signal Corps detachment remained behind to operate the wireless sta-

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32 Hanigan to Secretary of War, 29 November 1909, in Records in Eagle, Alaska, Orange File, 1904, 1904-1910.
33 Henry David McCary, Historical Tape Recordings H-27, University of Alaska Archives.
tion in Alaska. An enlisted man agreed: "It seems to me a man can get as much out of life at Fort Egbert as any place I know."

The military frontier on the Yukon differed markedly from the earlier frontiers of the American West in one respect--there were no Indians to subdue. Instead of fighting the invading white man, the Indian embraced his culture, even joined in the pursuit of gold. When supplies ran short or disease struck, Indians as well as miners sought the assistance of the military. Although no major clashes occurred among the United States Army, Indians, or white men, the military's presence, not unlike Canada's Northwest Mounted Police, lent a stability and security to the hectic life of the gold rush era. But more important, military occupation required improved communication and transportation. The completion of the telegraph line and a few connecting trails alleviated the isolation of the upper Yukon and encouraged further settlement.

34 Farnsworth to Callaghan, 31 December 1913, Farnsworth Collection.
35 McCary, Tape Recording H-27.
American missionaries on the upper Yukon, like the military, followed the settlements of white communities. Elsewhere, conversion of the "heathen" Indians had propelled missionaries into the wilderness. Even pre-gold-rush California had Catholic missions strung along its coast. Perhaps the American Mission Boards had learned from earlier attempts that if missions became the nucleus of white settlement and influence, they could guarantee success among the Indians. Or perhaps the Klondike stampede disrupted orderly schedules and timetables of the missionaries. In any event the missionary movement on the upper Yukon contrasted greatly with previously evangelical patterns.

Only the early missionaries of the Church of England reached out to "save" the Indian. Typical of his predecessors on other frontiers, Reverend Robert McDonald threw himself into the task of converting the Indian to Christianity. In 1862 he was assigned to Fort Yukon.

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1 Billington, Westward Expansion, p. 444.
Although the trading post rested on Russian soil, the Hudson’s Bay Company had carved out a substantial trading empire. McDonald stayed in the vicinity of Fort Yukon until 1871 but frequently travelled in canoes, on foot, and with dog teams to adjacent Indian communities. He not only learned the Athapaskan dialects but eventually married a Native woman. During his years on the Yukon, he translated the language to writing, extracted its grammar, and taught the Indians to read and write their own language. At the same time he translated the Bible and Book of Common Prayer into what he called the Takudh dialect. At one point, McDonald found a creek with gold so abundant he could scoop it up with a spoon. Casual mention of this creek in a letter to friends brought gold miners in search of "Preacher's Creek". But McDonald had other interests and goals.

In 1865, when McDonald suffered what appeared to be a serious illness, a new man, William Carpenter Bompas, volunteered to relieve him. After a long, laborious, and fatiguing journey from London to Fort Simpson, Canada, the shy but religiously determined thirty-one-

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year-old Englishman discovered that McDonald had recuperated. None­
theless, Bompas stayed in western Canada and travelled to Fort Yukon. Here in 1869 he met United States Army Captain Raymond who determined that the English Hudson's Bay Company was on American soil. Although unable to deny that Fort Yukon was American, neither Bompas nor McDonald could desert the Yukon Indians. They moved their base of operations across the border but continued to tour the Yukon, per­
forming services and required rituals.

In 1873 the Church of England bestowed upon Bompas in London the bishopric of the Selkirk Diocese. At the same time, in addition to his new administrative duties, he acquired an English wife, Charlotte Selina Cox, who was willing to follow him back to Canada. Always short-handed, Bompas tackled the impossible. The Fortymile gold rush complicated his work immeasurably. Accustom to handling Natives, he found the miners disruptive to his mission. Demoralized he watched as the miners introduced alcohol and other baneful influences to "his" Natives. "The advent of white population strengthens the call for missions to the natives," he asserted. With increasing dismay he scrutinized the miners' behavior. When George Matlock shot Washburn

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3 Cody, An Apostle of the North, p. 264.
in the thigh, Bompas resorted to help from the Northwest Mounted Police. Although the miners condemned the Canadian laws imposed by the Mounties, the miners respected and admired the devout Bishop and his wife. The attitude of the Indians, however, became alarming. He felt they were "only too apt to imitate the careless whites in irreligion and debauchery."  

Nevertheless, Bompas tried to minimize the damage to "his flocks" and, at the same time, restrain the conduct of the miners. In 1895 he sent Reverend R.J. Bowen to the new community of Circle. Bowen held Sunday School and religious services in the schoolhouse. He also opened a two-bed hospital financed by local contributions and the Church of England. The discovery of the Klondike gold upset any long-range plans Bompas might have had for his diocese. Despite his difficulty relating to miners, he requested permission to move his Fortymile mission to Dawson. He used as his justification not the thousands of godless miners but the unfortunate and deprived Indians. During the remaining years Bishop Bompas, whose health had never been good, suffered scurvy twice. After the decline of Dawson in 1901,

4 Ibid., p. 271.
5 Ibid., p. 282; and Johns, "The Early Yukon", p. 144.
6 Cody, An Apostle of the North, p. 283.
he moved to Caribou Crossing, which later under his influence became Carcross. There in 1906, while Archdeacon Robert McDonald still preached in Winnipeg, Bishop Bompas died.

As a result of the gold rush strikes, American Mission Boards at last took notice of the upper Yukon. The Episcopal Church responded first to the early strikes of Fortymile and Circle. In 1895 the General Convention of the Episcopal Church elected Peter Trimble Rowe as Bishop of Alaska. Born in 1856 to poor Canadian parents, Rowe grew to manhood with an avid interest in the church. After being ordained he spent thirteen years on the Michigan frontier. The rugged, robust, broad-shouldered bishop enjoyed the trials of frontier living. His intense energy drove his two-hundred-pound frame relentlessly. Yet a keen sense of humor and a sincere feeling of human compassion tempered his drive and ambition. His athletic strength held him in good stead in 1896 as he climbed over Chilkoot Pass, whipsawed a boat, and faced the Yukon rapids. Visiting Fortymile and Circle, he admitted that "our mission here is to the whites and is the only mission to the white population in this part of Alaska." He respected and appreciated, however, Bishop Bompas' work among the Indians.

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At Circle Rowe expressed surprise that the Indians had their own Bibles, prayer books, and hymnals. Lacking a church, he held his services in Beaven's Saloon. At this time he heard rumors that a Catholic priest and three nuns were coming to Circle to start a mission. "Being first on the ground, I determined to occupy it," he declared. Next he convinced the miners to pledge themselves to the Episcopal Church. After five weeks in Circle, Rowe obtained Beaven's saloon for his mission at the reasonable price of $1,300. Upon his urging Bishop Bompas agreed to send Reverend Bowen to serve the mission.

On Rowe's second tour to Alaska in 1898, he met a seriously ill Bompas whose scurvy, the result of the "starvation" winter, testified to the man's dedication to his mission. Dawson impressed Rowe only for the quantity of whisky consumed. Back on American soil, he staked out two mission lots at the new tent town of Eagle City. At Circle, he found only 300 men who had forgone the elusive search for gold at the Klondike. Here his minister from Tanana, Reverend Jules L. Prevost, had replaced Reverend Bowen. Reverend Prevost brought with him the first printing press on the Yukon,

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8 Ibid., p. 69.
9 Ibid., p. 83.
with which he published the newspaper, Yukon Press. Both Rowe and Prevost felt certain that Circle would become permanent and that the miners would inevitably return from Dawson. Prevost opened a reading room and fought a losing battle against the making of "hootch".

Since the Catholic priest-physician had by-passed Circle for Dawson, Rowe decided that the hospital needed to be expanded. Within a year Dr. James L. Watt and Sister Elizabeth Deane, deaconess and nurse, had charge of the new Grace Hospital. The large, roomy hospital now handled seven beds with room for two more. Medical supplies, however, were always in short supply. Although the hospital was full, the patients had no money. In one year Dr. Watt hospitalized 42 patients with 4 deaths and treated 167 as outpatients. Indians made up more than half his patient load.

During these first four years of his forty-seven years as Bishop to Alaska, Rowe saw not only the establishment of his own twenty-four missions, but the establishment of other missions of other churches. Following him into the upper Yukon came a Jesuit Priest, Father Francis P. Monroe. Born in 1855 in France, Father Monroe came to America in

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10 Wickersham, Old Yukon, pp. 144-54; and McLean, "Early Newspapers".

1888. Immediately he found himself on the western frontier at Fort Benton, Montana, and later as a missionary to the Crow Indians. In 1898, after spending three years on the lower Yukon, he requested permission to make a preliminary excursion into the gold rush area. He visited Fortymile and the few scattered tents that would later become Eagle. At Circle he found over six hundred miners to whom he said mass.

His report coupled with the death of Father W. H. Judge of Dawson brought about his transfer to the upper Yukon. In 1899 he was ordered to establish a mission in Eagle. On August 19, 1899, he arrived there and rented a cabin for ten dollars a month. "The water is pouring freely through the roof when the rain is heavy but this is a very common thing here," he stoically wrote. A Catholic family leaving the area offered him a lot with two cabins for $300. The larger cabin became the chapel known as St. Francis Xavier. Father

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13 Monroe to Rene, 28 August 1899, Monroe Collection.

14 Monroe manuscript, Monroe Collection.
Monroe observed that Eagle had been booming in 1898, but the coming of the soldiers and the discovery of Nome had killed the boom. He perceived that the Army was not seen favorably nor was Major Ray liked by his fellow officers. Within three weeks of Father Monroe's arrival, Reverend James W. Kirk of the Presbyterian Mission arrived. The Jesuit looked with scorn on their money, piano, and luxuries. "They will very likely become a success in town," he reported dourly, "if not in the religious sense at least in some others." With only fifty Catholics in town, all poor, Monroe expressed little optimism of being able to meet his expenses.

As winter came, Eagle shrank to one hundred people and was destined to shrink further. Nevertheless he reported: "It would seem that Eagle will soon count nobody but the storekeepers, the saloon people, and the soldiers. Yet the Alaska Commercial Company has just put up a very large store and warehouses, and no place on this side of the line, St. Michael included, has larger stores, nor is better supplied for many things. At least this would tend to prove that business people believe in the future of Eagle." Major Ray also

15 Monroe to Rene, 28 August 1899, Monroe Collection.
16 Ibid.
17 Monroe to Rene, 3 December 1899, Monroe Collection.
promoted the town with plans for a road to Valdez, mail and telegraph service, and eventually a railroad. Father Monroe's Sunday mass, however, numbered less than ten people. Since the mission resided within the military reservation, Father Monroe sought the Army's approval to occupy six more lots. Approval was granted.

As Monroe had predicted, spring break-up coupled with the Nome stampede emptied Eagle of its miners. Despite the declining population, he felt more confident than ever of Eagle's future, primarily because of the telegraph line and the expected railroad. Since his congregation was so small, only three baptisms in the whole year, he began visiting and caring for the poor and the sick. In 1900 civilians could not be admitted to the military hospital so Monroe opened a small hospital in Eagle. He treated eight but two died. Since only a few could repay the hospital, the military doctors volunteered their services. The small hospital continued until 1903 when

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18 Ray to Adjutant-General, 14 December 1899, RG 49, NA; and Letters Received at Adjutant General's Office, 20 January 1900, "Index to General Correspondence of the Adjutant General's Office, 1890-1917" National Archives Microfilm Publications, Microcopy 698, Roll 356, NA Washington, 1967.

19 Monroe manuscript, Monroe Collection; and "Annual Reports on Eagle, Alaska, St. Xavier's Mission" by Father Monroe, 1900-01, Monroe Collection.
civilians were allowed admittance to the Army hospital. In total he
cared for 30 people for a total of 730 patient-days. In addition
to his weekly mass and hospital work, Father Monroe spent eight weeks
of each summer visiting the Catholics in Fortymile and Circle.

In the winter of 1902 gold was struck in the Tanana Valley.
Everyone rushed along the trail beside the telegraph line to the new
town of Fairbanks. Father Monroe requested permission to follow the
rush. Finally in the spring of 1904 Father Monroe left for Fairbanks
and closed St. Francis Xavier. Even after establishing the Catholic
Church in Fairbanks, Father Monroe made occasional visits to administer
to the few Catholics in Eagle.

Meanwhile Monroe's Protestant rivals, James and Anna Kirk,
adjusted to the shocking change from city life in Philadelphia. Their
log home had been built with unpeeled logs and unseasoned lumber, but
unlike most cabins, it boasted a rough board floor. Yet as Monroe
observed, the Kirks came prepared to make a home. They brought silver,
china, linen, napkins, piano, organ, sewing machine, and washing
machine. "We brought only necessary articles—there is nothing in

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Monroe manuscript, Monroe Collection.
all those boxes we do not need," insisted Anna Kirk. Even a church bell called the community to the church services, which for a while were held in a saloon.

Their home became a meeting place for most of the community's social life. Before the summer was out, the Kirks had hosted the Governor of the Territory, John G. Brady, as he toured the Yukon. Friday evening singing practice or "Musicales" became one of the social outings of the week. Readings, story writing, and refreshments relieved the tedium of the miners and soldiers. One time a military ball had been scheduled for Friday night. The community equivocated as to whether attendance at the ball would hurt Mrs. Kirk's feelings. Finally Captain Farnsworth recognized the dilemma and changed the date of the ball. Homesick soldiers and wayward miners often found their way into the warmth and hospitality of the Kirks' cabin.

Although idealistic and socially accepted, the Kirks were aware that there was very little money in camp and little permanence to the population. They sadly watched as their best members dashed off to Nome. On the other hand, they, like Bishop Rowe, were impressed with

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the devout and religious Indian services and remarked frequently on Archdeacon McDonald's achievements. Eventually the Kirks met Bishop Bompas who encouraged them to take charge of the Indian services, and he would furnish the books and the interpreter.

Moose, caribou, bear, and grouse supplemented a diet of canned or "evaporated" foods that included potatoes, eggs, onions, fruit, and even vinegar. Because the Yukon River contained excessive mud during the summer, water had to be obtained from a nearby spring, bought from a delivery man, or rainwater caught by large barrels under the roof. During the winter, the river water became sufficiently clear that a hole could be cut in the ice, and water hauled by sleds to nearby houses. The high prices for fresh vegetables coupled with the long summer days encouraged small kitchen gardens of potatoes, cabbage, turnips, beets, carrots, and lettuce.

Over twenty women followed their husbands to Eagle, which helped to relieve the loneliness and discomforts of frontier living. The customary piles of tin cans and refuse that marked the bachelor's cabin were replaced by kitchen gardens. Drapes, pictures, and oil-cloth tableclothes changed the appearance of the rough-hewn cabins.

23 Cantwell, Report of the Nunivak, p. 175.
Yet a class of women bore Mrs. Kirk's scorn: I was often heart­sick when I saw those bold, degraded persons calling themselves women who were in the place bent on lowering all standards of morality. I never before saw iniquity in its unblushing hideousness, for wickedness does not stalk abroad in the big city where law protects the safety and morality of its citizens. I trembled to think of the perils before our young men on the frontier."

Fortunately Mrs. Kirk did not observe the gambling in the saloons or on the military post.

For three years the Kirks sponsored much of the community's social life and religious ceremonies. Then in 1902 they were called back to Philadelphia where Mrs. Kirk became seriously ill and died within a few days. The Presbyterian Mission Board sent Reverend Charles F. Ensign and his wife to replace the Kirks. By this time the population had shrunk to less than one hundred people. Although the creeks had been staked, there was no mining. Mrs. Ensign, to help occupy her time, opened a day school for the Indian children.

Finally in 1902 the Episcopals moved into Eagle. Although Bishop Rowe

24 Kirk, Pioneer Life, pp. 30-1.
had staked the lots in 1898, not until Reverend A.R. Hoare arrived did the Indians have their own church. No longer did they have to wait for the biannual meetings sponsored by the Church of England or attend services administered by Presbyterian ministers. In 1905 the Presbyterians surrendered their church in Eagle City to the Episcopalians. This church became known as St. Paul's while the one in the village was known as St. John's. In 1907, when the government appointed school teacher left, the Episcopal lay reader, who had replaced Reverend Hoare, assumed that responsibility too.

Yet while the various missionaries established their Yukon missions, the two semi-permanent communities of Eagle and Circle developed their own permanent foundations. In 1900, as a result of lobby pressure from Alaskan politicians and commercial interests, the United States Congress passed Criminal and Civil Codes for Alaska, providing taxation, licensing, incorporation, and three judicial districts. Consequently, the War Department revised Fort Egbert's boundaries to exclude Eagle City. The Civil Codes allowed Eagle City to organize a city


27 "Historical Data of Alaskan Missions"; Bouter to Reid, 15 May 1908, Records in Eagle, Alaska, Orange File, 1904-1910; and Hall S. Young, "Yukon Presbytery Redevisus", The Assembly Herald 17 (1911): 278.
government, to serve as the third judicial district's headquarters, and to collect customs and fees.

On July 15, 1900, within six weeks of the passage of the Civil Codes, the first judge of the third district, James Wickersham, arrived in Eagle. As an aggressive and ambitious young lawyer from Tacoma, Washington, he had attracted the attention of the Republican party. After campaigning hard for it, he won appointment to the Alaskan judgeship and proved himself an efficient, competent, and prudent judge. As time passed, he kept in touch with the right people and eventually politics, not law, became his first love. In Eagle he temporarily rented a furnished cabin on Fort Egbert and began to establish a court system. His district stretched from the Arctic Ocean to the Aleutians or a distance of 2,000 miles—half of Alaska and 300,000 square miles. Initially a lack of trained lawyers hampered court settlements. Moreover, the miners had become accustomed to miners' meetings and, as jurists, stubbornly fought the court. Finally, Wickersham adroitly manipulated the miners into accepting the court system by pointing to innate weaknesses in the archaic miners' meetings.

The Civil and Criminal Codes required saloons to pay a $1,000 annual license fee. Other stores paid a fixed percentage of their annual sales. With this money, Judge Wickersham built a courthouse and jail. He drew up the plans and specifications, let the contract
out to bid, and negotiated with the military to use their sawmill. These first public buildings, completed on April 22, 1901, cost a total of $8,000. Wickersham then drew up rules of procedure for cases heard in the Third Judicial District. During 1900 to 1901, Wickersham travelled, usually by dog team or steamer, to other parts of his district. In the dead of winter he journeyed to Rampart, more than 520 miles away, and spent 40 nights on the trail.

Meanwhile, with 300 permanent residents on record, the City of Eagle submitted to Judge Wickersham a petition for incorporation. Incorporation allowed the establishment of a city council empowered to tax. Commercial companies, fearful of tax burdens, fought the election. Of the thirty-three ballots cast, however, only seven were against incorporation. Thus, Eagle became the first incorporated city in interior Alaska. Once elected the seven-man City Council established six standing committees: Streets, Public Lights, and Wharfage; Health, Sewerage, and Police; Taxes and Licenses; Fire Protection and Water Supply; Public Schools, Grounds, and Buildings; and Elections and Claims.

The Indians at Eagle Village, however, found life a bit more

28
Farnsworth to McCoy, 23 December 1900, Farnsworth Collection.
precarious. With dire results, diseases of tuberculosis and pneu-
monia attacked the acculturated Indians. The clothing and partial
diet borrowed from the white man chronically kept the Indians in poor
health. They created no trouble; in fact, out of fifty cases of
crime on the docket of the Third Judicial District, not one involved
an Indian. Wickersham, attempting an Indian dictionary, visited
the village regularly. Otherwise, despite the close proximity,
there was little intermingling between the two communities.

Meanwhile, in Circle City the large store of the Alaska Commercial
Company burned down despite the efforts of soldiers, steamship crews,
and citizens. The loss was over $17,500. As a result an Arctic
Hook and Ladder Company formed with a twelve-foot fire sleigh. The
Nome gold rush caught the fancy of nearly all the miners of Circle,
and by the end of 1899 only fifty-five remained. Reverend Prevost
had even returned the printing press to Tanana. Although Circle City
never became an incorporated city, certain social institutions existed:
a United States Commissioner, a United States Deputy Marshal, a govern-

29
Farnsworth to Boyd, 9 May 1901, Farnsworth Collection; and
Mitchell, "The Opening of Alaska", p. 70.
30
31
McLean, "Early Newspapers".
ment supported school for the Indians, an Episcopal Church for the Indians, and a United States Signal Corps wireless station. A few businesses persevered—a jewelry store, three saloons, three commercial companies, and a restaurant. In September 1900 Wickersham held the first jury trials in a district court in interior Alaska. A grand jury brought forth three different indictments of murder, rape, and larceny. The trial jury followed, and the man charged with murder was found guilty of manslaughter. While the larcenist pleaded guilty, the rapist was acquitted. But the exciting boom town of Fairbanks fascinated and attracted the ambitious Wickersham as it had many of those along the Yukon. Even before Justice officials granted permission to move the Third Judicial Headquarter, Wickersham shifted his base to the dynamic and challenging city of Fairbanks.

As the missionary and early settlement period drew to a close, the upper Yukon had passed through one more frontier. The missionaries, of whom all but the Kirks had previously experienced frontier life, provided a stabilizing influence on a restless changing population at the same


33 Wickersham, Old Yukon, p. 48
time they observed and recorded the evolution of mining boom towns settling into permanent communities with established institutions. As these communities became more stable and consolidated, they could no longer support numerous religious organizations. Although only the Episcopal Mission survived beyond the abandonment of the military post, the missions, as a whole, contributed immeasurably to the permanence of the existent communities.
IX. THE TRANSPORTATION FRONTIER: WATER TRAVEL

Explorers, traders, miners, and settlers might have called upon an advanced technology and fifty years of experience in frontier transportation to speed travel in the rugged, mountainous, forested land of Alaska. Yet the Alaskan environment did not lend itself to the patterns of transportation that had been developed on the Great Plains. Although traders and miners blazed overland trails, these were never so heavily used as the California-Oregon Trail, Santa Fe trail, and other western trails. Separated from the rest of the nation by Canada, Alaska's isolation decreed a slower development than on the continental frontiers. The forests, rivers, and mountains posed transportation problems that coupled with supply problems, prevented the immediate growth of the wagon roads that had been so crucial to the settlement of the American West. Consequently exploration and migration followed the navigable rivers, a pattern that

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resembled the earliest frontiers along the East coast and thus a step backward in frontier evolution. As dependence on river transportation increased, moreover, technology and innovation provided a wide range of river crafts, from multiple-passenger steamboats to one-man canoes.

The early English and Russian traders used rough whipsawed scows, sometimes even rafts, as their method of transporting trade goods and furs. Later poling boats and Indian birch-bark canoes took their place as trade on the river increased. Lack of supplies was the greatest problem Robert Campbell and Alexander Murray faced. Not until large American capitalists invested in Yukon commercial companies was the supply problem alleviated. With the introduction of the Yukon in 1869, the Parrott & Company, who later merged with the Alaska Commercial Company, proved that the Yukon River was navigable for 1,600 miles. Ocean steamers, leaving their commercial supply base, usually San Francisco, carried trading goods to St. Michael near the mouth of the Yukon River. From there shallow-draft river steamers continued the journey to the Yukon trading stations.

The early sternwheel steamboats, the Yukon, New Racket, and St. Michael were basic in design and function. They averaged only seventy feet long but towed three or four barges to carry the cargo and traders. Since accommodations were non-existent, at meal time the steamers stopped and allowed the crew and traders to take turns
eating. The crew were Indians, and the captain occasionally served as the
engineer. As a novice pilot, McQuesten wrote: "It is a wonder
to me that we didn't blow her up or sink her as I didn't know anything
about steamboating."  

The discovery of gold on the Fortymile required a larger vessel, the Arctic. One hundred forty feet long and thirty feet wide, the
Arctic was not only the largest boat on the river but the fastest.
Routinely each season the boat made four round trips between St. Michael
and Fortymile, and it once made five. In 1889 on its maiden voyage it
hit a snag or a rock and lost most of the provisions for Fortymile.
As a result most of the miners faced starvation rations or found
their way to St. Michael. The Arctic was the first steamer into the
new city of Dawson, but during spring break-up in 1897 it was caught
in an ice jam and, during efforts to blast it free with gunpowder,
accidentally blown-up. The salvaged machinery was later installed in
a square-nosed barge that became the steamboat Margaret.  

2McQuesten, Recollections, p. 9.

3Walter R. Curtin, Yukon Voyage: Unofficial Log of the Steamer
Yukoner (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, 1938), p. 278;
Brooks, Blazing Alaska's Trails, p. 419; Ogilvie, Early Days, p. 67;
William D. MacBride, "Saga of Famed Packets and Other Steamboats of
the Mighty Yukon River", The Alaska Weekly, 21 July 1944, p. 7; and
William D. Moore, "From Peru to Alaska".
Meanwhile, in 1892, competition from the North American Transportation and Trading Company appeared with the 175-foot Portus B. Weare, which was even larger than the Arctic. P. B. Weare, president of the company, had travelled the Missouri and Mississippi as a fur trader and knew the capabilities of the captains and pilots there. He thought they would be equally good on the Yukon. One of them, Captain E. D. Dixon, Weare sent to take charge of the river business, freeing John Healy for the commercial establishments. Captain Dixon introduced the Mississippi system of lashing barges ahead or along side of the steamer and pushing them forward instead of pulling them by long hawser. The two strong personalities of Healy and Dixon immediately clashed, resulting in the Alaska Commercial Company snatching up the competent captain. Soon Mississippi and Missouri captains and pilots handled all the steamers of the Alaska Commercial Company.

As a result of the miners' "hold-up" at Circle City during the starvation crisis of 1897, both major commercial companies lobbied hard for military protection. Not only did they gain protection but

5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., p. 153; and Ray and Richardson, "Suffering and Destitute Miners", p. 539.
large profits for transporting military supplies. At the same time the starvation panic also focused the attention of America on the inadequacy of the two commercial companies to supply the Klondike's needs. Almost instantly, in response, new companies sprang up.

Many of these new companies did not survive the throes of organization, or were merely "paper companies" selling stock to a gullible public without following through on the utilization of the capital. Other companies innocently tried to move the river vessels under their own power from San Francisco to St. Michael. If they arrived at all, they were either unfit for the river or in partially wrecked condition. Still others found themselves totally out-classed by the older and more experienced companies. A few corporations, however, formed under careful and shrewd managers, succeeded in obtaining a foothold in the profitable business of transporting and selling supplies to the Argonauts. The most successful of the new companies were the Alaska Exploration Company, the Seattle-Yukon Transportation Company, and the Empire Transportation Company.

Two companies formed during the early Klondike illustrate the range in organization and management--the North British American

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Cantwell, Report of the Nunivak, pp. 127-29; Alaska Mining Record, 15 June 1898, p. 8; and "Short Story of Alaska and the Yukon", by the Mount Wrangell Company, 1897-98.
Trading and Transportation Company and the Seattle-Yukon Transportation Company. Pat Galvin left his job as City Marshal of Helena, Montana, during the Panic of 1893 and wandered into the Fortymile country. Capitalizing on George Carmack's discovery on Bonanza Creek, Galvin made a fortune. He planned a trading and transportation company with riverboats, ocean steamers, trading posts, banks, and hotels to break the monopoly of the old-time fur-trading companies, which had not "treated the boys right". Hastening to London with enthusiasm and a silver tongue, he sparked interest among a number of English businessmen, who agreed to provide the capital for the North British American Trading and Transportation Company. In exchange, Galvin put up his Klondike mines and his experience.

With unlimited credit at the Bank of England, Galvin purchased goods in Seattle and contracted for the building of the Mary Ellen Galvin. Designed by Galvin, the boat proved a total failure and caused the loss of the best part of the summer. Consequently, his outfit did not leave San Francisco until the end of August with only the hope of buying a boat in St. Michael. There he purchased the Yukoner, which had made the fastest round trip on record and a barge, the Maud.

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8 Curtin, Yukon Voyage, p. 7.
Galvin enjoyed sharing his wealth and royally scolded an employee who tried to "economize": "Don't show your ignorance by using that cheap outside word. We don't use it here, ... You must learn the ways of Alaska. That word is not understood in the North. If you have money, spend it; that's what it's for, and that's the way we do business." As a result he spent or gave away all his cash and started up the Yukon without a cent for cordwood or deck hands.

Galvin's outfit started late in September. Groundings and boiler explosions slowed progress. When reaching Dawson that season looked increasingly hopeless, Galvin left the expedition to report to London. Just above Russian Mission, as the ice filled the river, the Yukoner went into winter quarters. The crew built a warehouse, winterized the vessel, and prepared for a long winter. The choice of food was characteristic of Galvin's personality--fruit, chicken, turkey, roast beef, shrimp, crab, oysters, pâte de foie gras, anchovies, ham, bacon, fancy crackers, and champagne.

Finally, on June 1, 1899, the Yukoner once again emerged on the Yukon and eventually limped into Dawson. Here the crew found Pat Galvin, but also discovered the Dawson market already well stocked.

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9 Ibid., p. 38.
10 Ibid., p. 58.
their own goods spoiled or rancid, and the Galvin mines failed. Pat Galvin's whole enterprise had crumbled, and the English businessmen declared bankruptcy. After spending every cent he had, Galvin slipped out of Dawson and died of cholera in Manila.

In striking contrast to the Galvin fiasco, the Seattle-Yukon Transportation Company expanded to a business with a gross profit of more than a million dollars a year. Founded in 1897 by W. D. Wood, a Seattle lawyer, probate judge, state senator, and even Seattle mayor, the Seattle-Yukon Company did not wait in winter quarters but pushed on by dog team. Developing a fleet of four steamers and as many barges, Wood competed successfully with the Alaska Commercial Company. Instead of Mississippi River captains, he recruited competent Columbia River captains, such as James T. Gray. Others, however, proved less reliable and some had chronic alcohol problems. During the winter Wood planned ahead and sent an advance man to contract for 2,200 cords of wood for $15,000 for the summer season. Although Wood had a considerable stock of supplies, he found that business was done primarily by credit, and collections were hard to make.

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11 Ibid., pp. 264-72.
12 Pamphlet in Fred J. Wood Collection, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.
13 Wood to Mrs. Wood, 16 September 1900, Wood Collection.
14 Wood to Mrs. Wood, 11 November 1900, Wood Collection.
For four years Wood fought his competition. Finally, in the spring of 1901, to compete more effectively with the Yukon and White Pass Railroad and the Canadian steamboats on the upper river, the Seattle-Yukon Transportation Company merged with the Alaska Commercial Company, the Alaska Exploration Company, and the Empire Transportation Company to form two companies: the Northern Navigation Company for the river transportation business and the Northern Commercial Company for the mercantile business. Only the North American Transportation and Trading Company remained independent.

During the peak years of the Klondike gold rush, 1897 to 1900, no fewer than 137 steamers plied the Yukon transporting supplies and passengers. Three steamers suggestive of palatial packets of the Mississippi, marked the peak development of the Yukon sternwheelers. The Susie, Sarah, and Hannah, built in 1898, measured 223 feet long, 42 feet wide, with a depth of 6 feet, and a gross tonnage of 1,211. They


MacBride, "Saga of Famed Packets", July 21-September 15, 1944.
pushed three barges each at a speed of 15 miles per hour. They also catered to the comforts of their passengers with electric lights, steam heat, cold storage plants, and well-ventilated staterooms. Passengers included prospectors, traders, and a few soldiers. Initially gambling, chiefly faro and poker amused the men until company officials banned them. Occasionally a talented dance-hall woman told stories, danced, sang, and joked to while away the time.

Frequently the captains raced their steamers up and down the river. On July 12, 1900, when the Rock Island blew a cylinder head within a few miles of Dawson, it lost 110 passengers to the Sarah. But one of the more exciting races tested the two fastest boats of the North American Transportation and Trading Company—the T. C. Powers and the John Cudahy. They raced from Dawson to St. Michael loaded with 500 stampeders for Nome. Strangely no newspaper recorded this wild and exciting race, but seamboat men talked of it for years.

17 Northern Navigation Company, "To the Alaska Gold Fields", p. 5; Osgood, The Han Indians, p. 12; Ogilvie, Early Days, p. 69; Mitchell, "The Opening of Alaska", pp. 44-6; Wickersham, Old Yukon, p. 47; and Alaska Mining Record, 2 November 1898, p. 4.
19 Wood to Mrs. Wood, 12 July 1900, Wood Collection.
20 Pilcher to University of Alaska, 2 May 1935, Pilcher Collection, University of Alaska Archives.
Since the Yukon River's channel changed frequently, with innumerable submerged sandbars, each steamboat came equipped with heavy spars and tackle on the forward deck. With this sparring outfit a vessel could almost lift itself over a sand bar or "crutch" itself into deeper water. Navigation, particularly through the Yukon Flats, where the river widens into several narrow, tortuous, and swift-flowing channels, demanded special skill by captain, crew, and pilot. Often the captain hired a Native pilot at Fort Yukon to guide the boat through the flats to Circle.

The steamer crew consisted of nearly sixty men, including a master or captain, two mates, one chief engineer, one assistant engineer, one purser, one freight clerk, one steward, two pilots, eight firemen, twenty-five deck hands, three cooks, and seventeen waiters. The smaller vessels required the same number of officers but fewer subordinates for a total of thirty men. The salaries were liberal enough to entice the best men in the field.

One of the best captains on the river was Captain James T. Gray.

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21 Cantwell, Report of the Nunivak, p. 131; and Mitchell, "The Opening of Alaska", p. 44.
Born in 1852 in Oregon, Gray, at age twenty-one, became a master on a Columbia River sternwheeler. He married the daughter of Oliver O. Howard, a general during the Civil War and the subsequent Indian wars. Her extravagance and desire for society life pushed Gray into a number of shaky business schemes. The Panic of 1893 left him bankrupt. By 1898 he found his way over the Chilkoot Pass and into Dawson, where he secured a captain's position with the Seattle-Yukon Transportation Company. Here he won the praise of its treasurer as "an excellent man, a perfect gentleman and thoroughly reliable."

At forty-seven years of age, Gray stood five feet, ten inches tall, and weighed 175 pounds. Yet he prided himself on his strength and endurance, proving he could lift 850 pounds. He expected high performance from his crew and maintained an immaculately clean boat. Although he never used profanity or alcohol around his family, he was known as the "Master of Impressive Profanity" on the Yukon. When the Northern Navigation Company acquired Seattle-Yukon Transportation

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24 Wood to Mrs. Wood, 20 May 1900, Wood Collection.
Company, Gray became Assistant Superintendent of Transportation. He designed three light-draft steamers, the Koyukuk, Tanana, and Delta. Each drew less than six inches of water and thus could transport supplies on the shallow Tanana and Koyukuk Rivers. His family stayed in Oregon while he operated the riverboats from April to October. He returned to Oregon for the winter. In 1918 he retired to a small fruit farm, and at the age of seventy-five died of stomach cancer.

Another captain, J.E. Chilberg, found his steamboats with lienable claims of $35,000 that he had to absolve. He collected enough fares at $75 per person to pay his creditors. More than 300 passengers boarded the medium-sized Monarch. His crew of twenty-five proved unable to control the miners, and Chilberg philosophically allowed them to do as they pleased. More men crowded on board at Circle and Rampart, and most refused to pay. Since it was daylight all the time, Chilberg gave up trying to schedule regular meals. Rancid butter provoked a miners' meeting, which he handled with a sense of humor that disarmed the angry miners. All in all he completed three trips to St. Michael in 1899. The midsummer trips took between fifteen and twenty days, but the late summer trips took longer because of the shorter days.

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Both costs and profits for transporting supplies and passengers ran high. Although the steamboat season averaged 120 days, by the time the boilers were cleaned, cargo loaded and unloaded, wood purchased and loaded, and allowances made for storms, darkness, wind, fog, groundings, and maneuvering the mouth of the Yukon, only 50 days remained for actual river travel. Government inspection occurring during the summer also consumed shipping days. Nevertheless, the following table shows that steamboating paid, even if the season were short:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outgoing Expenses</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost of steamboat</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of barge</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of crew - round trip</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of meals for passengers</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of cordwood</td>
<td>13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$100,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incoming Payments</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>300 fares at $220</td>
<td>$66,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600 tons freight at 5¢ per lb.</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 fares on down trip</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$141,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Profit for first trip - $41,000; profit for second trip - $131,000

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27 Gray to Wickersham, 20 February 1911, Gray Collection.
28 Curtin, *Yukon Voyage*, p. 293.
Since the average steamer burned forty to fifty cords of wood daily, fuel was one of the biggest expenses and problems transportation companies faced. They used wood predominantly, but occasionally in the Yukon delta they resorted to coal. Thus the steamers' furnaces were designed to burn either wood or coal to make steam. In the beginning the steamer stopped every six hours, and the whole crew got off and chopped wood. By the gold-rush era the commercial companies maintained their own wood yards, where a constant supply of wood could be relied upon. Woodchoppers signed a contract for a predetermined price. The price of wood averaged eight dollars per cord but could jump to fifteen or even as high as forty-five. The contract also required wood five inches in diameter and four feet in length. It was stacked on a sill no higher than six feet tall at a safe distance from the river but not more than fifty feet. A company agent measured the cordwood on the first trip downriver and paid the woodchopper. In 1902 the Northern Navigation Company had thirty-seven wood camps of various sizes along the river.


30 Wood Contract, 1902, Gray Collection.

Some timber was cut on steep hillsides and corded where it fell. By removing the supportive props the whole pile thundered down to the riverbank like an avalanche. It was then carried on board stick by stick. Other woodchoppers, not fortunate enough to live near hillsides, waited for winter and then sledded their wood to the riverbank. One company wood camp owned a logging engine to transport the wood. This camp hired six woodchoppers. If twenty cords a day were sold, the camp made a profit of eighty dollars.

The woodchoppers themselves were hardy outdoor individualists who had come to Alaska to search for gold. When they failed to strike a bonanza, they had to earn a livelihood. Typifying this breed was George Pilcher, who arrived on the Yukon in July 1898. He may have intended to head for the Klondike but decided instead to stop and sell cordwood to steamers. He gathered and stacked driftwood, sawed and split spruce wood, and sold his wood for ten dollars a cord. As he chopped and hauled, he recorded the thousands of disappointed Klondikers

32 Cantwell, Report of the Nunivak, p. 133; and Journal of George Pilcher, 8 July 1899, Pilcher Collection.
33 Journal of George Pilcher, 16 November 1898, Pilcher Collection.
34 Cost of wood camps, Gray Collection.
as they passed his cabin. He built a fish trap and picked raspberries, currents, and cranberries to supplement his diet. With his wood money he purchased provisions from passing steamers. During the winter he trapped for marten as well as continued to chop, sled, and stack wood. He made his own bread, cranberry jelly, and canvas mukluks and mittens. Since these were the heydays of the Klondike, a number of steamers and Klondikers wintered near him, providing company and a regular social life of dances, visits, and practical jokes. During the summer he cursed thieving steamboaters who robbed him of his wood while he slept. Each year he moved to another wooded area, built a cabin, and started the process all over again.

Pilcher recorded his enjoyment and satisfaction with his lifestyle on Thanksgiving Day 1899: "I am at peace with all the world and am undisturbed by the sound from living mortal in my quiet home. I am simply supplied with every necessary comfort and have six grouse besides, yes, a basket full of ells--my health is perfect not a pain, ache, or woe. I eat like a wolf, sleep like a babe, and work like a tiger from dawn until dusk. My evenings are spent 'if at leisure' in either reading David Copperfield or else writing. . . . The world is

36 Journal of George Pilcher, December 1898-June 1899, Pilcher Collection; and Curtin, Yukon Voyage, pp. 57-192.
beautiful and Providence has my heartfelt thanks." After four years, however, the hard labor of woodchopping pushed him into trading with the Indians. Eventually he tried being a steamboat engineer, a trapper, artist, bridge builder, and inventor.

A later woodchopper, Frank Charles "Heine" Miller, established a wood camp at the mouth of the Tatonduk River that he patented in 1925. He hired six to seven Natives to cut, haul, stack, and load wood for the steamers. Stories abound about the small, beer-barreled man whose well-built cabins served as a stopping place for winter travellers. He had trained his horse, Maud, to haul wood unattended from the hills to the beach. Eventually in 1930 Miller sold his horses and shipped in a caterpillar tractor. This modern innovation allowed greater quantities of wood to be dragged from areas even farther away. Thus he was not compelled to move every year. In the great Yukon flood during the break-up of 1937, Miller was in the house when the river picked up his house and carried it twenty feet

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37 Journal of George Pilcher, Thanksgiving 1899, Pilcher Collection.
40 Ibid., 1 August 1930, p. 4.
downriver. The river washed away more than 600 cords of cut and stacked wood. This defeat broke the little man, and he left the area.

Miller's Camp (#29), except for being overgrown with willows and brush, stands much the way "Heine" left it. His large house, twenty by fifteen feet, lies twenty feet beyond its foundation. But the roof and walls remain largely intact as testimony to the workmanship. He had wallpapered his walls, built adjacent cabins and caches, and crafted a number of canoes and boats. Unfortunately there are no piles of cordwood or even his tractor to remind the visitor of the site's historic use.

Four miles downriver lies one of the few woodchoppers' cabins (#30) in the Yukon-Charley proposal. This cabin was used by an Eagle Native, Willie Juneby, who hauled wood from Wood Islands to Miller's Camp. Although the roof is gone, the cabin has been remarkably unmolested. Bottles, cans, and contemporary junk illustrate the lifestyle of the woodchopper. An adjacent road (#31) marks the tractor trail and can be followed across the island.

Because of the high cost and logistical problems involved with cordwood, steamboat companies searched for appropriate coal deposits. In 1897 the Alaska Commercial Company mined and sledded 2,000 tons

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Interview with Horace Biederman, Jr., 18 September 1976.
from a bituminous coal deposit on the Nation River. Coal, in order to be profitable, had to sell at no more than fifteen dollars a ton. The deposit was found only in pockets and was abandoned.

Although the Nation coal mine (#40) has been buried by slides, remnants of the coal mining enterprise exist in a stockpile of coal (#47) near the Bluff cabin (#46). In fact Christopher Nelson took the tent frame left from the coal mine operation and built the cabin now associated with him. A nearby cabin depression (#45) however, may have been part of the coal company's operation. Even signs of a road (#39) connecting the Nation and the Yukon are probably part of the abortive attempt to find another means to fuel steamers.

One other ambitious attempt to mine coal in the Yukon-Charley area occurred on Washington Creek. In 1897 N. B. La Brie found coal on the creek twelve miles from its mouth. He turned his claims over to the Alaska Coal and Coke Company and became its manager. The company built a good winter trail to the coal beds along which dog

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43 Collier, Coal Resources of the Yukon, p. 36; Cantwell, Report of the Nunivak, p. 134.
teams and horses sledded the coal. Meanwhile a group of four independent miners staked a mine across the creek from which they sledded five tons of coal to the Yukon. This coal was tested in the Northern Navigation Company's Sarah and proved better than most Yukon River coal. At some point the two companies became embroiled in a court case that ended on the steps of a San Francisco courthouse in an inconclusive gun battle.

During the winter of 1905-06 one of the companies, probably the Alaska Coal and Coke Company, brought a 100-horsepower steam tractor in by steamboat. It pulled five sleds, each of ten tons capacity, from the mines to the Yukon. But the Yukon's lignite coal crumpled when exposed to air. Also it contained excessive sulphur that caused harmful clinkers when burned by the steamboats. In the end, therefore, the coal mines proved uneconomical and were abandoned.

Although the Washington Creek coal mines (#66) had more than 170 feet of tunnels in 1902, they have collapsed, and the mines have not been exactly located. The road (#65), however, is discernable. But more exciting is the steam tractor (#69), which stands thirteen feet high and twenty-six feet long.

44 Collier, Coal Resources of the Yukon, pp. 30-2.
45 Interview with George Beck, 19 September 1976.
Although its boiler and cab have been salvaged at an earlier date, it is still an impressive piece of steam engineering.

Finally in 1903 the Northern Navigation Company experimented with one other fuel possibility—imported California crude oil. At heavy expense, the firm erected large storage tanks and modified the furnaces on its steamers. The absence of dirt and cinders, the elimination of tedious delays to "wood-up", and the increased steaming capacity appeared to resolve the problem. By 1907 more than 50,000 barrels were imported annually. Nevertheless, wood predominated as the fuel of choice.

Although Northern Navigation Company dominated the steamboat business, it never had a monopoly. North American Transportation and Trading Company held about one-third of the business. In 1906 the Merchants' Yukon Line acquired the North American Transportation and Trading Company but maintained the latter's name. By 1907 the Northern Navigation Company owned thirty-two steamers and thirty-

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five barges for a total tonnage of 27,000 tons. Moreover, as the Klondike ebbed and new strikes developed on the Tanana, Koyukuk, and Chandalar Rivers, the company hired James T. Gray to design light-draft steamers that could travel those shallow rivers. In 1913 additional competition arose from a Canadian company, the White Pass and Yukon Line. A ruinous rate war developed between the two companies as they fought for Dawson's dying trade. Finally in 1914 the White Pass and Yukon Line, through its American subsidiary, the American Yukon Navigation Company, paid the Northern Navigation Company $1,500,000 for its 53 steamboats and barges. The years of waning gold production and the inevitability of a railroad to Fairbanks had prompted the interest of the Northern Navigation Company to unload at a profit.

In 1923, when the Alaska Railroad finally joined the coast with the interior, freight was shipped quickly and cheaply. It arrived from Seattle at either Seward or the new port of Anchorage, trans-

ferred to railroad cars, shipped to Nenana where it was transferred to steamboats owned by the railroad, and then shipped anywhere along the Tanana or Yukon Rivers. New sternwheelers such as the General Jacobs and the Alice operated for the railroad and wintered at Nenana. In February 1930 the Alaska Railroad requested bids for the grandest sternwheeler of them all—the Nenana. Although 235 feet long and 44 feet wide, it cruised at 12 knots and far surpassed all steamboats on the Yukon. The boat accommodated eighty passengers in deluxe staterooms with hot and cold running water and electricity. A large social hall with plate glass windows and a promenade protected from mosquitoes by copper mesh screens provided amenities not seen since the Mississippi era.

But even as the Nenana was launched the time of the steamboat was fading. World War II curtailed Yukon mining operations but also increased traffic by cargo planes. The sternwheelers became outmoded and uneconomical. In 1948 the riverboats lost $76,338. The Alaska Railroad pushed hard for their removal. Finally, in January 1953.

51 The Alaska Weekly, 15 October 1926, p. 1; and 29 April 1949, p. 1.
52 Ibid., 14 February 1930, p. 1; 30 May 1930, p. 1; and 27 June 1930, p. 1.
53 Ibid., 29 April 1949, p. 1.
two new steel towboats replaced the palatial wooden sternwheelers. These were non-passenger, shallow-draft, 120-foot-long boats with 600-horsepower Diesel engines. The Nenana continued for a time, but her size defeated her—she was unable to maneuver the winding bends as easily as the smaller steel boats. Another era, even a frontier, had passed.

Although the steamboat captured most of the glory and all of the romance of river travel, smaller craft also plied the river. The Yukon poling boat, adapted from boats on earlier western rivers, allowed small groups to travel inexpensively but with hard labor up rivers and streams that were inaccessible to larger steamers. The poling boat was a long, narrow, tapering boat that allowed two men to carry a ton of supplies upstream at a rate of ten to twenty miles a day. Sometimes the men had to "track" or drag it from the shore. Explorers and geologists of the United States Geological Survey introduced the Peterborough canoe. This canoe could carry a half a ton but was light enough to be portaged by one man if necessary. The poling boat and Peterborough canoe provided the greatest bulk of travel along smaller rivers.

River travel may have carried the largest percentage of freight and passengers, but seven months of the year the rivers were frozen. Thus, other methods of travel developed. Initially horses were imported to carry winter mail and freight as they had done on other western frontiers. One early mail contract attempted an all-American route from Valdez on the coast, to Eagle. The route had hardly been explored, and the first trip killed 11 horses, cost $3,000, and delivered only 3 letters.

Almost immediately mail carriers switched to the Eskimo method of winter travel--dog teams. By 1901 a mail trail existed between Eagle and Circle. The United States Post Office contracted with Northern Commercial Company and individual mail carriers to carry the mail and maintain the trail. Generally the trail followed the

river but sometimes crossed a wooded portage that reduced the distance and sheltered the trail from drifting snow. Stakes or tree branches marked the trail where it crossed the river or a large lake. Occasionally the mail contractors erected mail cabins when the distance between roadhouses was greater than twenty-five miles. Here shelter, provisions, and stoves could be found.

The Eagle to Circle mail trail (#15, #33, #73, #80) still exists and can be readily traced especially along those areas used by present-day winter travellers. Tall spruce trees frame the limits of the trail while ruts in the muskeg, eighteen inches wide and a foot deep, mark heavy use. Those portions of the trail no longer used have regrown with smaller spruce, willow, and rosebushes and are more difficult to discern. Occasional old blazes on the trees are all that remain.

Only one mail cabin or way-station (#79) was found in the Yukon-Charley area whose sole purpose was to provide shelter for mail carriers. Its roof has collapsed and part of its walls, yet the dimensions (twelve by twelve feet) illustrate the winter life of a mail carrier. Moreover, being less than three-quarters of a mile from Biederman depicts the rivalry among mail carriers.

If any one occupation won the admiration and praise of sour-

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2 Wickersham, Old Yukon, pp. 131-33; Interview with George Beck, 19 September 1976; Interview with Charlie Biederman, 12 February 1977; Interview with Horace Biederman, Jr., 18 September 1976; and Interview with Wyman Fritsch, 19 September 1976.
dough Alaskans, it was the mail carrier. They travelled in all weathers and temperatures. Under contract to deliver the mail a certain number of times each year, they also had to keep a rigid schedule or they would hold up mail carriers all along the line. Travel between seasons—in the spring when the ice was rotten and again in the fall before it was solid—was dangerous, and risks were taken. At the same time, the mail carrier had the right-of-way along the trail and represented the most important person on the trail or at the roadhouse.

Most illustrative of the Eagle to Circle mail carriers was Max (Ed) Adolphas Biederman. Born in Bohemia in 1870, Biederman talked his father into helping him find passage on an American-bound steamship. At only thirteen years old, he found himself in Philadelphia apprenticed to a baker. Later he travelled about the country doing odd jobs, winding up in San Francisco at the time of the Nome strike. Immediately he left for Nome only to find, as thousands like him had, that all the ground had been staked. He wandered down to the Yukon River and got a job with Northern

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3 Cantwell, Report of the Nunivak, pp. 162-64; Wickersham, Old Yukon, p. 133; and Stuck, Ten Thousand Miles with a Dog Sled, p. 214.
4 Wickersham, Old Yukon, p. 133.
Commercial Company. After cutting cordwood for a while, he became a mail carrier between Tanana and Rampart for the company. Remaining on the company's payroll all year round, he boarded dogs in the summer and functioned as a troubleshooter for company repair jobs.

Eventually Northern Commercial subcontracted with their drivers to carry the mail. Biederman received the contract between Eagle and Circle. In 1918, approximately half-way between the two towns and across from the mouth of the Kandik River, Ed built his home. Here he and his family fished and boarded dogs in the summer. On the last steamer to Eagle his family moved to Eagle to allow the children to attend school. Meanwhile with only one dog sled team, Ed carried the mail. He spent one week on the trail between Eagle and Circle. The first night out of Eagle he stayed at Miller's Camp, then Nation, home on the third night, Woodchopper on the fourth, either Twenty-six Mile or Twenty-two Mile Roadhouse on the fifth night, and finally into Circle. Resting only one day, he started back. Thirteen trips a season, he averaged. During the spring and fall, mail became irregular, but with the first hard snow Biederman made a good trail with a toboggan. Thereafter he used especially designed sleds. One year he lost his contract to John Powers who used horses, but the following year he had it back.

In 1925 when a steamboat accident killed his well-trained dogs,
Ed, with green and unfamiliar dogs, accidentally drove through a creek that had overflowed--thick layers of ice had pushed warm flowing water on top of the ice which remained insulated from freezing by protective snow. Being only four miles away from Twenty-two Mile Roadhouse, he felt he could drive that far safely. Unfortunately his toes froze, and they had to be amputated. For the next four years, Northern Commercial Company subcontracted with John Palm of Nation to carry the mail. By this time Ed's oldest son, Horace, took over the route, and Ed contracted with Charlie Mayo, of Rampart to design him two special mail sleds. Horace used the sleds once and his younger brother, Charlie, used them the last three years. In 1938 the Biedermans lost the mail contract to pilots with airplanes.

Ed continued to maintain Biederman Camp until after World War II. He boarded dogs during the summer for miners and trappers who did not want the problems of caring for dogs in the off season. In addition, he caught, smoked, and dried fish for the table as well as for dog food. In 1945 when Ed died at the age of seventy-five, the family moved permanently to Eagle.

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5 One mail sled is in the Eagle Museum, the other is owned by George Beck, interview with Charlie Biederman, 11 November 1976.

Biederman Camp (#77) is associated not only with Ed Biederman but with his sons, Horace and Charlie, and his daughters and sons-in-law who carried on the "Biederman Tradition". The camp has a large house, shed, cache, dog barn, and dog houses. It also has the largest standing fish drying rack on the upper river and the accompanying fish-wheel baskets. The atmosphere reflects one of hard work and permanence, from a terraced garden to a number of hand-made boats to the substantial structures themselves. Although slightly worn by time, the camp represents and illustrates many themes in the history of Yukon-Charley—roadhouses, mail carriers, trapping, fishing, steamer landings, and even a base for miners. No where else on the river are winter and summer activities so graphically felt. Here the 1920's and 1930's can be viewed as if one walked backward through time.

One other major user of the trails were the freighters. Generally these freighters used dog teams and occasionally horses. Like the mail carrier, the freighter preferred the malemutes, dogs native to Alaska, whose strong, short, stocky build favored pulling heavily loaded sleds. Because of the narrow trails, the dogs were most often hitched tandem with padded leather collars and harnesses similar to horses' rigs. The leader responded to verbal calls of "gee", "haw", and "whoa". The weight of the load depended upon the condition of the trail, the terrain, and the number of dogs. Mail carriers made twenty-five miles a day with fifty pounds per dog. Freighters, on the other hand, loaded

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7 Brooks, Blazing Alasa's Trails, pp. 403-05.
three sleds with 600, 400, and 200 pounds apiece, or about 150 pounds per dog. By using three sleds the load was distributed over twenty-one feet of bearing surface instead of twelve feet. Moreover, the three sleds allowed winding through narrow forest trails and up and down hills. The dog food of both mail carriers and freighters consisted of dried fish, rice or oatmeal, and tallow. Good dog handlers preferred to cook the food to stretch the diet rather than give a single dried fish per dog. Freighters earned seven cents a pound per trip but had to deduct the cost of the dogs, their year-round maintenance, and the sleds. Mail carriers, on the other hand, earned only $125 per month after all costs were deducted.

Arthur Walden spent five years freighting by dog team between Circle and Birch Creek and later between Dawson and Lake Bennett. With a minister for a father and a writer for a mother, Walden was mentally

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8 Walden, A Dog-Puncher on the Yukon, pp. 35-8; and Johns, "The Early Yukon", p. 158.
9 Stuck, Ten Thousand Miles with a Dog Sled, p. 42; Walden, A Dog-Puncher on the Yukon, p. 33; Brooks, Blazing Alaska's Trails, p. 404; Cantwell, Report of the Nunivak, p. 159; and Adney, The Klondike Stampede, pp. 222-23.
10 Cantwell, Report of the Nunivak, p. 164; Davis, "Recollections", p. 67; and Spurr, Through the Yukon, p. 173.
prepared to record his Alaskan adventures. He left for Alaska at the age of twenty-four. Reaching Circle City at its peak in 1896, he preferred to freight supplies to the mines rather than mine for gold. He claimed credit for bringing the news of the Klondike to Circle City. Later he joined the rush and continued his freighting operation from Dawson. He even tried Nome and Kotzebue. Finally in 1901 he climbed on board a steamer for Seattle and home. His Alaskan experiences, however, remained an important part of his life.

To accommodate the winter travellers, roadhouses sprang up. Supplied by steamers during the summer, these roadhouses were often self-sufficient entities. Some doubled as roadhouses but functioned mainly as home base for traplines or mining operations. Others like Woodchopper Creek and Washington Creek roadhouses depended on and catered to the winter traveller. Most roadhouses had several characteristics in common. They often had associated outbuildings—a stable or corral for the dogs, additional bunkhouses, and sheds. Each meal cost two dollars and so did a bunk or, at least a place to throw a bedroll.\footnote{Michael E. Smith, Alaska's Historic Roadhouses, Office of Statewide Cultural Programs, History and Archaeology Series No. 6 (Anchorage: Alaska Division of Parks, 1974), pp. 5-7.}
Judge James Wickersham immortalized one of the earlier road-houses, Webber's. The ten-by sixteen-foot cabin and adjacent dog stable typified the general accommodations. But the dirt floor splattered with grease, and the rough-hewn table, bunks, and three-legged stool provided only minimal furnishings. Moreover, the meal could hardly be regarded as typical, "In fact we begrudged our animals the hot pan of rice and bacon we had prepared for them." The landlord prepared his rabbit stew in a large kerosene can that perpetually simmered on top of an ancient Yukon stove. As the guests reduced its contents, more water, rabbit, caribou, bear, or lynx were added. "The odor and steam from this ragout of wild meats permeated the tavern, glazed the half-window with beautiful icy patterns, and filled the two-inch air-hole above the door with frost." Yet other road-houses won Wickersham's praise—Star, Montauk, Washington Creek, Nation, and Coal Creek. In fact any winter traveller and the few summer walkers enjoyed and appreciated the hospitality furnished by these

12 Wickersham, Old Yukon, pp. 141-43.
13 Ibid., p. 142.
14 Ibid., p. 143.
15 Ibid., pp. 62-78.
At least fourteen roadhouses once existed along the mail trail from Eagle to Circle—Fox (#18), Star (#27), Miller (#29), Montauk (#34), Nation (#52), Washington (#68), Tom King (#76), Biederman (#77), Slaven cabin (#119), Woodchopper (#132), Webber (#133), Thanksgiving (#137), Twenty-six Mile (#138), and Twenty-two Mile (#140). Woodchopper Creek Roadhouse (#132) was among the most elaborate. Today more fabric remains here than any other roadhouse except Slaven Cabin (#119). The roadhouse is a large two-story logbuilding that stands twenty feet high. Its roof is intact but the bottom story has been flooded so often that the floor has been destroyed. The second story, however, is solid and divided into four individual bedrooms with closets, beds, and nightstands. Woodchopper Roadhouse marks the peak of accommodations along the upper Yukon. Wallpaper, rocking chairs, stoves, and brass beds are a far cry from Webber's tavern.

In 1905 Norwegian Roald Amundsen, the first man to negotiate the Northwest Passage, mushed a dog team along the mail trail to telegraph from Fort Egbert his achievement. The tall, gaunt, Arctic scientist had, from the beginning, shown strong determination and faith in his project. Rather than press his claims for appropriations from

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the Norwegian government, he defrayed most of his own expenses. Outfitting a small but stoutly built walrus sloop, the Gjoa, with a small gas engine and supplies for four years, the crew of eight men set sail on June 1, 1903, to establish the existence of a Northwest Passage and, at the same time, verify or redetermine the exact location of the magnetic North Pole. Without resorting to blasting, Amundsen skillfully navigated from Godhaven, Greenland, around Boothia, Canada, where he located exactly the magnetic North Pole, and onto King's Point (near Herschel Island), where the Gjoa wintered in Mackenzie Bay. Several American whaling ships, caught unexpectedly by winter, found themselves locked in ice along with the Gjoa.

Captain Willaim Mogg of the whaler Bonanza offered to outfit an expedition to the nearest telegraph office. Without funds but filled with great eagerness to tell the world of his achievement, Amundsen reluctantly accepted the offer. Although he engaged two Eskimos with two dog teams, Captain Mogg, as commander of the expedition, decreed that sacks of cooked beans rather than the nutritious pemmican provide food for both dogs and men. With the short, fat Captain insisting on being carried by dog team, the trip turned into a nightmare. Down the Herschel River, over 9,000-foot mountains, and down into Fort Yukon, over unbroken trail, and with only beans for food, the two Eskimos and Amundsen found the rations inadequate to replace the drain on their muscles. They grew hungrier and thinner every mile. At Fort
Yukon they learned that the telegraph station was at Fort Egbert. Between Fort Yukon and Fort Egbert, Captain Mogg, anxious to reach civilization, arbitrarily decided that all would forgo lunch. Amundsen objected and threatened to leave the dictatorial Captain alone with the dog team while he returned to a roadhouse. Mogg thereupon immediately recanted. Finally, after six weeks, with the temperature at sixty degrees below zero, they arrived at Fort Egbert.

From around the world telegrams swamped Fort Egbert station. Scientists proclaimed Amundsen's expedition as one of the most important scientific achievements of the century. Explorers of three centuries with the resources of wealthy nations had failed to find the Northwest Passage. The world was captivated by the modest, unassuming man: the State Bank of Seattle wired him $500, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer wired him a three-year condensation of Norway's news, and the Norwegian government offered all the aid he might require.

While Amundsen waited for the mail, his three-year voyage, topped by the exhausting dog sled trip, demanded a two-month recuper-

17 Roald Amundsen, My Life As An Explorer (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran, and Co., 1927), pp. 53-9; and Iris Warner "Herschel Island", The Alaska Journal 3 (1973): 130-42.
ative period. Finally on February 13, 1906, with medicines for the stranded American whalers, Amundsen left Eagle. The return trip to his ship proved uneventful and considerably easier. When the ice broke up, the Gjoa continued its voyage on to San Francisco, where it remained as a monument to a historic exploration.

Despite the value of the mail trail, in 1931 the United States Post Office contracted with pilot C. Harold Gillam to carry the mail by airplane from Cordova to Eagle. Some uproar resulted from people who resided away from settlements with airstrips: how would they be serviced? Furthermore, computations showed that the government spent $275,000 annually on mail contracts. Not only mail carriers expressed concern but all those who benefited from the $275,000—fishermen, drivers, supply towns, and roadhouses. In 1939 the airplane pilots took over all mail contracts for the upper Yukon. Roadhouse owners and mail carriers turned to trapping, mining, freighting, and fishing for a livelihood. Slowly the roadhouses closed up, and the mail trail

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19 The Alaska Weekly, 6 March 1931, p. 5.
21 Interview with Charlie Biederman, 30 June 1976.
fell into disrepair. The large number of winter travellers dwindled down to an occasional drifter. Dawson's population showed only seventy-two people and Eagle City elections boasted only twenty-six voters. The hurry-scurry of the Klondike era had slowed to a quiet shuffle.

Wagon roads that helped to settle the west only tangentially touched Yukon-Charley. Very few roads or trails existed in the whole state until 1904 when Congress compelled the United States Commissioners to appoint a road overseer in each district. Congress however, did not appropriate any funds, instead declared that every man in the district must work two days on roads each year or pay a head tax of eight dollars. Although no massive road system developed, smaller road projects did succeed. Trappers, miners, townsmen all worked on various roads such as Fourth of July Creek road, Seventymile trail, Eagle to Fortymile road, and Washington Creek road. They built bridges, cleared trees, brushed out trails, blasted through canyons, and did a minimum

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22 Thompson to Johnson, 17 May 1939, and Election results, Records in Eagle City, Green File #3, 1937-39.

23 Brooks, Blazing Alaska's Trails, p. 423.
amount of grading. The men even took pride in their work, as one remarked, "The work was done well and will stand for years."

The Fourth of July Creek road (#54) began as a trail in 1898 but under the 1904 legislation the trail was improved and widened. The road builders constructed bridges strong enough to hold wagons. Later a private mining company, Yukon Placers, improved the trail even more by widening and grading a road high enough to remain dry throughout the summer. That road is still an impressive road to follow as twenty feet or more was cut from the hillside for the last four miles. Although some underbrush and fallen trees have blocked the road, most of it is still passable.

Meanwhile Eagle and Valdez city councils lobbied strongly for a connecting wagon road. Miners, however, pushed for a shorter road.  


Valdez Common Council to Mayor and Council of Eagle, 29 July 1904, Ibid.
connective road with the Fortymile to allow Eagle, rather than Dawson to supply the miners in that area. Even a railroad joining the Yukon with the coast still held Eagle's fancy.

Finally in 1905 Congress passed a law providing for a Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska to consist of one officer of the Corps of Engineers and two officers of the Army stationed in Alaska. Their task was to locate, lay out, construct, and maintain wagon roads and pack trails. The Commissioner in charge was none other than Major Wilds P. Richardson, Fort Egbert's co-founder. Although he initiated funds for a survey of the Eagle to Fortymile road, the wagon road from Valdez to Fairbanks (Eagle was once again eclipsed) consumed most of his energies and funds. Until 1917 Richardson's work dominated road construction. During World War I, however, road construction stagnated. A shortage of labor, expertise and funds resulted in Richardson's handiwork falling into disrepair. But after 1920 Congress allotted greater appropriations while the World War developed new methods of

road building. Technology and power-driven machinery replaced the 30
pick and shovel construction work.

Alaskan road construction demanded time, money, and labor. After the road was located, timber cut, stumps grubbed out, moss and vegetation removed, drainage ditches dug, and grading completed, it required three years for the subsoil to thaw the ground water and 31 for the subsoil to reach a stage of equilibrium. Next came the corduroy process using scrub timber to support the road bed and the gravel. In 1929, at long last, Alaskans had their wagon road from the coast to the Yukon—not from Valdez to Eagle but from Valdez to 32 Circle. By 1950, the Alaska Road Commission had completed the road 33 from Eagle to Fortymile mining district. So road construction did affect those living within the Yukon-Charley area.

The transportation frontier differed in part from the trans-Mississippi West. Early movement followed the rivers using rafts,
scows, canoes, poling boats, or sternwheelers. Settlers along the rivers confronted the problem that more than half the year these rivers were frozen. From this dilemma arose a network of trails that connected winter settlements. Roadhouses and way stations accommodated these hardy travellers—never so large in number as the summer influx. This system of trails contrasted greatly with western trails primarily in the Alaskan use of dog teams instead of horses for freighting and carrying the mail. Although the Alaska Railroad terminated hundreds of miles from the Yukon-Charley area, it affected the area immensely. Greater quantities of supplies were available more quickly and cheaply, allowing opportunity for greater development. But the improved transportation provided avenues to escape the demanding Yukon. Other areas lured miners, trappers, and townspeople. Eventually the river could no longer afford the luxury of steamboats. Steel tugboats replaced the wooden sternwheelers just as airplanes replaced dog teams. Technology brought radical change as it did across the nation. Only nostalgia remained to feed on memories of the glorious "good old days".
XI. THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY MINING FRONTIER

At the same time that the embryonic transportation system evolved, the Yukon's primary industry, mining, progressed slowly. The great Klondike Gold Rush created gold fever throughout a nation recently hit by financial depression. The lure of instant wealth drew thousands to the Yukon. Unfortunately only a few experienced the pleasure of finding their fortunes. Others fanned out to explore, prospect, and discover their own bonanza. The severity of Alaska's environment coupled with the discouraging mining results forced many to leave the country. Other miners augmented their income with additional jobs—woodchopping, trapping, freighting, fishing, or special services. Thus post-Klondike miners fell into three vague categories: the stampeder who followed new gold strikes hoping to cash in on good luck, the prospector who stubbornly sought his own elusive bonanza, and the miner who settled for a claim that allowed him, with hard work and perseverance, to eke out a livelihood.

Although numerous gold strikes fueled stampedes until 1913, the last great bonanza was the Tanana discovery in 1902. Its close proximity to the Yukon-Charley region drained the area of all but its
most determined miners. So in less than four years a country that once had every creek staked and boasted six supply communities in a space 170 miles, shrunk to two basic communities, Eagle and Circle, and a few stalwart miners and prospectors.

Typical of this breed of miner was C. A. "Bert" Bryant. A farm boy from New York attracted to the Yukon by the Klondike Gold Rush, Bryant arrived in Eagle in 1899. Initially he worked as a packer for the army at Fort Egbert, then shifted over to his own freighting business of supplying the Fortymile miners. Finally in 1901 he staked his first claim on the Seventymile River and bought another claim on nearby American Creek. During the winter he contracted with the army to haul cordwood to the fort. This provided money to prospect and mine. His first mining venture occurred on Jack Wade Creek in the Fortymile country. Here he freighted his supplies by dog team and began a drift mine. Into the perpetually frozen ground he sunk a mining shaft, without timbering or danger of cave-ins. Using wood fires to thaw the ground, Bryant's first drift mine went down twenty-two feet and drifted along bedrock to a width of seventy-five by thirty-five feet. All the dirt he hoisted to the surface and dumped

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to await spring break-up. When enough water flowed, he washed the
gravel, only to learn that after expenses were paid, he had earned
only $2.50 per day.

In the summer of 1903 Bryant prospected Copper Creek, a tribu-
tary of the Charley River, which he named when he located and claimed
a copper ledge. Although he spent several months of the next two
years developing the mine, his main income came from freighting and
logging contracts. Unfortunately a mining expert cast a "cold
draft" on Bryant's expectations when he assayed the specimens as good
but counseled that the location was too remote to be mined profitably.
Discouraged Bryant went "Outside" to Minnesota where he met an old
flame of his schooldays, "Married her in March. That was the begin-
ing of my bad luck". Together they returned to Eagle.

Bryant next tried his luck on a quartz lode mine on Flume Creek
of the Seventymile River. With his partners he constructed a water-
powered arrastre to grind the gold from the quartz rocks and completed

\[\text{Ibid., p. 146-A.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., p. 153.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., p. 157.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., p. 159.}\]
sixty-six feet of tunnel. The vein did not prove rich enough to develop without adequate transportation. Bryant turned once again to freighting. He even served as Eagle City's jailer for a couple of months. Finally in 1910 he established a camp at Alder Creek on the Seventymile. Several old-timers, dating back to the Fortymile days, worked mines along with Bryant on the Seventymile. Among them was George Matlock, who was still a tough, self-reliant, individualist.

Bryant decided to mine Alder Creek by ground sluicing. He constructed two dump gates on the creek to control the water. Then he made a cut, probably twelve feet wide and one hundred feet long. Through this cut the overburden and much of the gravel was sluiced, concentrating the gold in the remaining gravel. Finally Bryant shoveled the remaining gravel into sluice boxes for a final clean-up of sixty-five ounces. The succeeding years saw floods that filled his mining cuts with debris, and hot, dry summers that produced no water at all for mining.

When mining failed, Bryant prospected. Prospecting consisted not of aimless wandering and searching for easy surface finds but of

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6 Ibid., p. 160.
a systematic approach. First, the history of a creek was researched and old-timers' tales pieced together. Second, United States Geological Survey Bulletins were consulted. Finally, a line of prospecting shafts were sunk to bedrock to assess the pay dirt since few prospectors could afford the more expensive drilling methods. On Barney Creek one winter Bryant sunk sixteen prospecting holes to bedrock with indifferent results. Bryant's feeling typified the average prospector: "We melted ice for water, had caribou meat. . . . We put in a pleasant winter. No financial results but a lot of valuable experience."

In 1917 Bryant joined thirty-five other men on the Alder Creek mine, which he had leased to men who had decided to mine it by hydraulic methods. They built a six-mile ditch to provide additional water and pressure to remove the overburden and push the gravel into

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9 Bryant, "Another Man's Life", p. 172.
sluice boxes. During the winter he returned to Eagle and chopped wood. The following spring he bought an interest in the hydraulic plant. The subsequent dry summers barely paid out. Later a few good years stimulated him to travel to New York to attempt to find financing to dredge the Seventymile River but had no luck. For the next twenty-five years Bryant continued working his Alder Creek mine during the summer and freighting, chopping wood, or trapping during the winter. In 1938 he left Alaska only to return in 1941. He died in an automobile accident in 1945 at the age of 83.

C. A. Bryant's life characterized not only the lifestyle of miners within the Yukon-Charley area but throughout Alaska. Few ever struck it rich, but more than an elusive hope for wealth kept the miners on their claims. After years of pouring labor and money into the development of a mine, miners became reluctant to part with it. At best, it provided a livelihood and, at the very least, allowed an independence that appealed to many men. Thus, they returned to their claims year after year. Moreover, as the years passed and the lucky

10 Ibid., p. 179.
11 Ibid., p. 189.
bonanza discoveries waned, the United States Geological Survey surveyed, studied, and produced detailed papers on the economic geology of Alaska and the most appropriate mining methods. Miners merged their experience and background with this theoretical knowledge and slowly evolved efficient and profitable operations on low-grade placer claims.

In short, the geologists traced the origin of the Yukon-Charley gold placers back to the mineralization of the area during the middle Mesozoic era. Subsequent erosion broke up and removed the gold from the granite intrusions. Still millions of years later time and pressure cemented gold-bearing gravels into rock known as Tertiary conglomerate. Identification and recognition of this process supple-

mented the prospectors' intuition of where gold might lie. Folding and faulting, however, further disturbed the horizontal attitude and contributed to the irregular distribution of the gold. Later, streams and rivers cut through these Tertiary placers, scattered the gold-bearing gravels, and created new placers. Chance, then, played an important role in discovery of placer deposits.

Chance could be minimized by careful and scientific prospecting. Warnings throughout the United States Geological Survey bulletins cautioned the miners to study thoroughly an area before committing large capital sums towards its development. As more knowledge accumulated on the geology of placer deposits, the more sophisticated and efficient became the operations. Initially the bonanza miners of the Klondike era had focused on river bars, creeks, or beaches where only a gold pan or rocker supplied a daily wage. Finding an environment totally different from past mining experience, miners developed drift-mining to utilize the permanently frozen ground. Later they modified the other three basic mining methods, open-cut mining, hydraulic mining, and dredging to conform to their special circumstances. Thus, not only did they explore, survey, and research, but they created and adapted as well.

Arriving in Alaska, early miners confronted two new environmental factors—permafrost and muck. Permafrost was permanently frozen ground that did not thaw during the summer months. Muck, a mixture
of silt, animal and vegetative remains, plus sixty percent ice, shielded this underlying frozen ground from the warm air of summer. Muck ranged in thickness from a few inches to forty feet. When the protective blanket of moss was removed and muck was exposed to warmer temperatures, it melted and could be washed away. Every miner, however, faced the problem of removing the muck or burrowing through it. For small-scale operations drift mining in the permafrost offered a novel approach—using the frozen ground to the miner's advantage, no timbering or pumping was needed. Furthermore, drift mining perpetuated the miner's independence. Since one man could run the operation, no large capital, complex organization, or expensive machinery was needed for development. Unfortunately, drift mining only mined the bedrock, and any gold in the overburden was irretrievably lost. 


As miners became restless as a result of the bonanza strikes, the time-consuming process of thawing the permafrost by wood fires led to still another innovation—steam thawing. In 1898 C. J. Berry of Dawson noticed that steam from his steam engine exhaust had thawed a hole in the muck. He connected a rubber hose to the exhaust and channeled it directly into the ground. Next he attached a rifle barrel with a small hole bored in the side and hammered it into the frozen ground. The steam point was invented. By this process steam, under high pressure from a portable steam boiler, passed through rubber hoses and into hollow steam points that were driven into the ground. Once heated the pressure was reduced and the points left to heat or slowly thaw the surrounding ground. Since thawing for drift mining could now be easily directed and channeled, shafts could be sunk more quickly but at greater expense.

Most of the mines in the Yukon-Charley area have evolved through the drift-mining phase. Most of the mines have caved in or flooded, removing any trace of their existence. Sam Creek (¹111) has at least two mining shafts, three feet wide and five feet long, with collars of logs laid around each of them to prevent rocks and dirt from falling into the hole. Although the shafts have thawed and collapsed below the collars, the idea of

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16 Rickard, Through the Yukon and Alaska, p. 215; and Ball, "Permafrost Thawing Techniques", p. 3.
drift mining is clearly illustrated. The cabin and cache characterize a one-man operation typical of drift mining. Mining implements—picks, shovels, buckets, ladders—add flavor to the scene. Sandy Johnson also drift mined Ben Creek (#116). Frank Slaven drift mined Coal Creek (#119) as George McGregor did Mineral Creek (#125). Colorado (#124), Boulder (#123), and Iron Creeks (#126) were all mined using the drift-mining method. Some used only wood fires; others applied steam points. Drift mining was the most widely used technique in the Yukon-Charley area.

While drift mining progressed with the introduction of steam-points, open-cut mining, the mining of a whole area from the surface to the bedrock, adapted a myriad of western mining techniques. Although Klondike miners had practiced open-cut methods, deep placers and frozen overburden had presented seemingly insurmountable problems. They found that by removing the protective moss and allowing the muck to thaw naturally, shallow placers could be mined. Standard manual methods used by Bryant typified these small operations—ground sluicing or booming followed by shoveling in. Open-cut mining also adapted itself to large-scale modifications. Mechanical methods such as steam scrapers, bottomless scrapers, cableway excavators, and dragline excavators were employed. The high cost of transportation, however,

17 Wimmler, Placer-Mining Methods, pp. 87-112; Purington, Methods and Costs of Placer Mining, pp. 55-81; Hutchins, "Prospecting and Mining Gold", pp. 70-1; Prindle, "Yukon Placer Fields", p. 121; and Rickard, Through the Yukon and Alaska, p. 220.
discouraged the use of bulky and heavy machinery. The choice of either method, manual or mechanical, depended upon the topography, the bedrock grade, the depth of the overburden, the abundance of available water, the quantity of frozen gravel, and the amount of capital to be invested. All methods ended at the sluice box and depended on enough water to sluice down the excavated gold-bearing gravels. Unfortunately by 1910 shallow deposits were rare. Furthermore, the bedrock grade in Alaska seldom proved steep enough to dispose of the tailings adequately.

Ben Creek (#116) is currently being mined by open-cut methods coupled with hydraulicking the overburden. High-pressure water strips the muck and washes it away exposing the gravel. In general the gravel is then allowed to thaw naturally, but a portable steam boiler could thaw the ground through the archaic method of steam thawing. Modern machinery—bulldozers—take over the chore of 'shoveling in' and of removing the overburden if water is too scarce for hydraulicking. Ben Creek's greatest problem is the lack of water, and so the water must be impounded behind an automatic dam. When the water rises to more than two-thirds the height of the gate, the water is automatically released until nearly empty when it closes. This allows water at certain intervals for "booming" or ground sluicing, hydraulic mining, and sluice box clean-up. All implements clearly illustrate the open-cut method. A portable drill for prospecting is still used, and an adjacent grindstone sharpens the drill bits. The cabin, cache, and shed depict an earlier mining period—that of Sandy Johnson who owned the mine from about 1900 to 1945. His lifestyle included drift mining, trapping, and constructing cabins.

The shallow grade of the bedrock in Alaska also prevented the
full exploitation of hydraulic mining as it had developed in California. In 1852 in California Edward E. Matteson invented the process that channeled water, under high pressure, into pipes that shot it out in jets of great velocity against the face of a gravel bank.\textsuperscript{18} When the bank fell, the gravel was then disintegrated and carried by force into a sluice. In Alaska the process was modified to include any operation that applied water under pressure. Hydraulic mining could be used to excavate, transport, sluice, or dispose the tailings. Most commonly, the process was used to strip overburden and muck.\textsuperscript{19} Often hydraulic mining supplemented open-cut, dredging, or even drift mining and unlike California, was seldom the sole method used.

In addition to steep bedrock grade, hydraulic mining required an abundance of water under high pressure and adequate dumping room for the disposal of tailings. The Yukon environment provided none of these requirements. The annual precipitation supplied less than twelve inches of water, and few natural reservoirs impounded the

\textsuperscript{18}Purnigton, Methods and Costs of Placer Mining, p. 99; and Paul, Mining Frontier, pp. 90-1.

available water. Thus, man-made reservoirs, ditches, and wooden flumes had to be built to increase the water supply adding high initial costs and continuous maintenance expenses to the overhead. The gentle slopes of the mountains and the low grade of the creek valleys prevented high pressure from developing and allowed no adequate grade for sluicing or dumping the tailings. Moreover, the short season, from June to September, made large investments unlikely. Unlike California's gold, Alaska's gold was not distributed throughout a bench bank but rather was concentrated in the bottom fifteen percent. Also in contrast to California's large-scale industry, Alaska's hydraulic plants were small with low capital investment. Although a number of mines used hydraulic mining in some part of the process, true hydraulic mining occurred only in shallow placers where soft bedrock cleaned readily, and other environmental requirements were met.

The Fourth of July Creek mine (#55) meets most of the requirements for hydraulic mining except an abundant supply of water. During the early 1920's old-timer George Matlock was hired by the owners of the claim to build a ditch (#57) to carry water from

Washington Creek to Fourth of July Creek. Unfortunately, he built the nine-mile ditch on a porous rock base, and only during heavy rains did it carry water. Nevertheless, this mine produced the greatest quantity of gold prior to the dredges on Coal and Woodchopper Creeks. The tailing piles testify the extent of the mine as do the many remaining pipes and pumps scattered around the premises. A shed, a fallen house, and a bunkhouse plus the foundations of at least three more depict an operation of greater size than the typical one-man operations. The scarcity of timber is common for any large-scale mining project. The Fourth of July Creek mine once had a sawmill, but few trees remain now even for firewood. Most of the wood undoubtedly went to supply the power to produce the pressure for hydraulicking. Although only assessment work is currently being done on the mine, plans are to bring in a bulldozer along the road (#54) and to start mining by open-cut and sluice methods.

As the bonanza deposits that allowed inefficient and wasteful practices became exhausted, miners began to improve mining methods and reduce costs, enabling them to exploit the lower grade gravels. Meanwhile improvements and modifications moved the steam point out of the realm of poor miners and into the field of large-scale mining. Steam thawing required boilers, machinery, and additional men. Eventually miners applied the technique to thawing large areas of overburden and muck that could be washed away. Then the whole area, from surface to bedrock, was worked. Once the steam point made thawing of large areas practical, other more elaborate methods of mining became emphasized, primarily dredging.

New Zealand miners invented the dredging process, but Californians quickly adopted it and improved it. In 1899, hard on the heels of the
bonanza diggings, the first dredge arrived in the Klondike. The bucket ladder and stacker type dredge developed in California became the most widely used. Typically the dredge consisted of a bucket elevator placed upon a barge averaging thirty-five feet wide and one hundred feet long. Constructed in a pit below the water level of the creek, the barge floated once water was admitted. It then dug its way forward by means of a chain of steel buckets upon a lowering ladder. The buckets in turn dumped the gravel through a screen and into a revolving washing apparatus at the rear of the barge. After the gravel was washed and the heavy gold fell into sluice boxes, the tailings travelled by conveyor belt to the stacker forty feet or so beyond the barge. Here they were dropped out of the way of the dredge. The dredge advanced forward and sideways by means of winches moored to posts on shore and powered by hydroelectricity, or wood or coal boilers. Later, Diesel engines proved effective power sources.22

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The early Alaskan dredges proved no more than costly experiments and failures. Inadequate prospecting propelled operations into expensive investments and mistakes. Poor construction coupled with grandiose plans for large dredges contributed to the failures. Unforeseen high costs in construction, transportation, labor, and maintenance added unusual expenses. The chronic problem of frozen gravel dealt the final blow to the early experiments.

Thus the same recurring problems that faced drift miners, open-cut miners, and hydraulic engineers confronted dredge operators--frozen gravel and muck. Hydraulicking and ground sluicing stripped the muck and opened the gravels to natural thawing that unfortunately often took two or three seasons to complete. Dredge owners turned to steam points to thaw the frozen gravel in advance of their dredges. In 1912 the high cost of using steam points led to experiments, using hot water. The Yukon Gold Company of the Klondike commissioned two men, Henry M. Payne and W. L. Churchill, to investigate the temperature, nature, and depth of the frozen material. Unfortunately, World War I disrupted their studies. In 1917 John H. Miles startled the placer industry by announcing the superiority of cold-water thawing over hot

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water and steam. Not only was it cheaper because the water did not have to be heated, but it produced a preferable thaw pattern. He recommended a minimum temperature of thirty-six degrees; however, the warmer the water the more heat available to transfer to the frozen ground.

Although the problem of thawing frozen gravel had been resolved, other factors had to be considered before dredging could commence. Extensive prospecting and drilling was an absolute necessity to learn the character and depth of the bedrock, the dimension of the deposit, its gold tenor, and the distribution of boulders. The climate, length of season, water and fuel supplies, power possibilities, labor and transportation costs all had to be considered. Finally the valley to be dredged had to be broad with an even distribution of gold and deposits no deeper than thirty-five feet nor less than two. Once these factors were considered, the operator faced the task of ordering and installing the dredge followed by organizing and maintaining a camp of not less than twenty men.

24 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
Only two dredges, Coal Creek dredge (#120) and Woodchopper Creek dredge (#129), mined the Yukon-Charley region. Both still remain. Owned and operated by Canadian politician, General A. D. McRae, and Alaskan mining engineer, Ernest Patty, the two dredges represent the most efficient means of exploiting low-grade placers. Although the two creeks had been mined for forty years by one-man operations, only with the consolidation of claims and investment of large capital were the creeks profitable. After operating nearly thirty years, from the mid-thirties to the mid-sixties, the dredges closed. For a while the high gold prices of the early 1970's encouraged the Coal Creek dredge to operate again. The same problems of old occurred—high costs for transporting supplies, equipment, and men; big wages for labor; and costly thawing techniques. Moreover, with the placer industry dying out, skilled winch men and hydraulic engineers were hard to find. Nevertheless, the dredges illustrate the final culmination of the placer industry in Alaska and throughout the world. Floating in a pond and surrounded on three sides by tailings, the dredges appear ready to continue forward. Time has dulled the paint and rusted the metal but otherwise has not harmed the machinery. The mining camps (#121 and #127) capture the feeling of what life associated with the dredges must have been. Messhalls, bunkhouses, tool sheds, offices, and even pool halls project images of a once bustling camp that is now largely abandoned.

Although mining methods improved and evolved chronologically, their application occurred in a haphazard manner. The least efficient, drift mining, happened simultaneously with the most efficient, dredging. Nonetheless, the development of the placer industry did follow the basic pattern established in California. Eclipsed by the romance and excitement of the early gold rushes, the history of placer mining in Alaska centered on the persevering and the innovative miner.

Throughout the history of the placer industry, Yukon miners confronted the same problems: short available working season, lack of
suitable grade to streams, poor water supply, poverty of timber resources, high cost of labor and transportation, concentration of gold on or in bedrock, great thickness of barren overburden, frozen condition of gravel, lack of wagon roads, high cost of fuel, inadequate mining and police regulation, and ineffectual laws. Although time and conditions improved some of these problems, they were never fully solved. In fact as miners of lower grade deposits inched their way into profits, dry seasons or erratic transportation catapulted them back into shoestring operations. Thus the placer mining industry progressed forward, but also slid backward as far as it had advanced.

The first period of Alaskan placer mining reflected the bonanza mentality. From 1897 to approximately 1906 miners either followed the moving frontier of gold-rush towns or prospected for their own bonanza. Those who remained in the Yukon-Charley area during this time sought the most expedient means to reach bedrock. The development of bonanza deposits led to wasteful methods—the gold pan, rocker, and sluice box. Miners—without capital, experience, or ability—luckled into wealthy

shallow deposits. The lure of this poor man's mining attracted thousands of ill-equipped and inexperienced men, each unwilling or uninterested in consolidating claims, investing large capital, or organizing long-range plans. This era found claims on every creek.

A few hardy souls experimented with California's more advanced techniques. A hydraulic mine started on the Seventymile. Fortymile miners applied steam points to their drift mines. Since steam boilers required at least two men, they forced greater cooperation. The miners on American Creek built a flume and tried to use the ineffective method of hydraulic elevators. Because the United States Geological Survey had just begun their yearly reconnaissance and survey reports, only by trial and error could the miners learn what methods would work in the unusual Alaskan environment. Mammoth Creek near Circle attempted mechanical methods of open-cut mining and introduced the steam shovel. Twenty individual miners of Fourth of July and Woodchopper Creeks produced the largest quantity of gold in the area. Small operators completely dominated the region. Moreover, over half the claims used drift-mining methods. In 1906 Woodchopper alone, largely through winter drift mines, produced over $18,000. Although

some search for suitable dredging ground began and some machinery
had been introduced, the Yukon-Charley miners ignored the low-
grade gravels and capitalized on the smaller but richer placer
deposits. These Yukon miners were not unique to Alaska; over
eighty-five percent of Alaska's gold production came from placers.
Only in south-eastern Alaska did gold lode mines develop extensively.

General discontent raged across the territory because of the
lack of roads and trails and the inadequate steamboat service. The
abuse of the power of attorney provision in the federal mining law
provoked complaints. With this power, one individual could tie up a
whole creek, prevent any new bonanza seeker from staking a claim, and

28 Alfred Hulse Brooks, "Placer Gold Mining in Alaska in 1902",
Contributions to Economic Geology, 1902, U.S.G.S. Bulletin 213
(Washington, 1903), pp. 47-48; Alfred Hulse Brooks, "Placer Gold Mining
in Alaska", Contributions to Economic Geology, 1903, U.S.G.S. Bulletin
225 (Washington, 1904), pp. 47-57; Friese to Johanson, 4 February 1903,
Records in Eagle, Alaska, Orange Files, 1903; Alfred Hulse Brooks,
"Placer Mining in Alaska in 1904", Report on Progress of Investigations
of Mineral Resources of Alaska in 1904, U.S.G.S. Bulletin 259 (Washington,
Alfred Hulse Brooks, "Railway Routes", Report on Progress of Investi-
gations of Mineral Resources of Alaska in 1905, U.S.G.S. Bulletin 284
(Washington, 1906), pp. 13-5; Purington, Methods and Costs of Placer
Mining, pp. 1-204; Purington, "Methods and Costs of Placer Mining",
pp. 36-41; Prindle, "Yukon Placer Fields", pp. 109-10, 126; Brooks,
"The Circle Precinct", pp. 187-204; and List of Claims in Records in
Eagle, Alaska, Orange Files.

29 Brooks, "Placer Mining in Alaska in 1903", p. 43.
contribute to rampant speculation. Although the Yukon had been a hold-out against outside investment, by the end of 1906 several groups of claims had passed into the hands of strong companies who promised improvement in mining technology.

Slowly the bonanza seekers recognized that rich deposits were rapidly becoming exhausted. The few small gold rushes that occurred only provided a burst of nostalgia for a past era. A transitional period, from 1907 to 1914, resulted in a decline in gold production. During this transition from bonanza mining to low-grade mining, miners experimented with dredges, ditch systems, and hydraulic plants. Unfortunately careful prospecting and planning did not precede these large developments. Thus, when the cycle of drought years arrived in 1910, all mines suffered heavily. Four steam-powered dredges moved into the Fortymile area using steam-point thawing. Another dredge was built on Mastodon Creek. Steam scrapers mined the open-cuts on Fourth of July Creek. American Creek, Seventymile River, and Mammoth Creek attempted hydraulic plants and ditch systems, but the shortage


of water forced them to close. An increasing number of open-cut mines developed. Even though this period represented a decline in gold production, the effort to improve mining methods merited praise from both the United States Geological Survey and The Mining and Scientific Press.

Yukon-Charley miners shared problems with other Alaskan miners. An overall business stagnation that followed the financial panic of 1907 prevented large amounts of capital from being invested in large-scale placer mines. A cry for improved transportation culminated in a demand for a railroad. Thus the low-grade deposits remained almost untouched, and the placer-mining business fluctuated. Only with the exploitation of lower grade material would stability arrive. Unfortunately the pioneer miner who discovered and opened new districts took little part in the development of large enterprises.

The years 1915 and 1916 saw conditions improve considerably. Only a new dredge on Mammoth Creek survived the end of the doldrums. Hydraulic plants, however, proliferated on Alder, Crooked, Fourth of July, Mastodon, Eagle, Switch, and Butte Creeks. In 1916 over 70 mines employing 265 men produced over $375,000. The tendency toward large-scale mining increased. Open-cut and drift mining still occurred, but the greatest production came from the larger operations.

34 Ibid., p. 33; and Brooks, "The Alaskan Mining Industry in 1913", p. 45.
The improvement in mining conditions ceased abruptly with the onset of World War I. With World War I a gold depression occurred that lasted from 1917 to 1923. The world war had depleted the labor supply and raised the cost of materials and equipment. Moreover, dry summers plagued those that attempted to mine. Mines, such as Alder and Woodchopper, closed. Less than half the number of placers continued as the small-scale, high-cost operations succumbed to the adverse conditions. With the exhaustion of the bonanza deposits, the production of gold shrank to new lows and no longer ranked as the territory's leading export.


Prospectors discouraged by the continuing depression and attracted by good business opportunities elsewhere, left the territory in large numbers.  

In 1920 the average annual return to the small miner was $398, whereas the cost of his yearly provisions was $420. Thus the miner had to find remunerative occupations, such as trapping or cutting wood. Yet at the same time, owners of the large plants, dredges and hydraulic mines, could not afford to let them idle, and thus, continuous improvement in mining methods and economic management occurred. A general consensus of the United States Geological Survey was that the day of profitable small operations had rapidly passed. Almost as important was the recognition that large operations could not support the settlements built up by bonanza mining and that some settlements were bound to decline and be abandoned. The completion of the Alaska Railroad sparked the only positive note during the long depression. Improved transportation now offered an opportunity to exploit the low-grade deposits that previously could not be

mined at a profit. Slowly the placer-mining industry struggled back to a stable base.

The following period, 1924 to 1929, marked the consolidation of claims and one peak for the production of low-grade deposits. Nevertheless, mineral production continued to rank second to fisheries in monetary value. During these years rainfall and water supply proved sufficient. Hydraulic mining became popular. Careful planning, efficient management, extensive experimentation, and the replacement of obsolete machinery signaled a new approach to low-cost mining. Meanwhile consolidation occurred on Coal, Deadwood, and Steele Creeks. Placer mining evolved from the mine of the poor man to the mine of the engineer and capitalist. Technical training, large capital, and labor-saving machinery replaced the old-timer's intuition and back-breaking labor. Consequently the number of prospectors decreased. In alarm the Territorial Legislature responded to the strong mining lobby to pass the Prospector's Aid Act. Under this act Alaskan prospectors


Ibid.
received monetary assistance to meet some of their transportation expenses. The completion of the Steese Highway allowed new and heavy equipment to be transported by railroad and then by road to the borders of the Yukon-Charley area.

The next period, 1929 to 1934, found the world in a business stagnation and depression. Unlike the gold depression of 1917 to 1923, placer mining held its own. In fact the constant price of gold coupled with large unemployment revived an interest in prospecting. Yukon placers, stimulated by a number of new miners and plentiful supplies of water, produced greater quantities than before 1918. The Great Depression, however, limited the capital available


for development and increased the value of machinery and supplies. Thus, small operations enjoyed a revival. Most of the placers mined during this period used either hydraulic or open-cut methods—drift mining had become an anachronism. In 1932 the price of gold rose from $20.67 to $35.00 an ounce, which further enhanced the appeal of placer mining. In 1934 Ernest Patty began prospect drilling of Coal Creek with contingency plans for a dredge.

Although the world depression continued until World War II, the Yukon-Charley area saw its peak production and development between 1935 and 1942. Ernest Patty and General McRae bought and consolidated the claims on Coal and Woodchopper Creeks. During the next few years, the mining company built ditch systems, two camps with frame structures mounted on skids, and a road joining the two camps in addition to the construction of the two dredges. They stripped the muck to the gravel, using hydraulic nozzles. Then, using the ditch water, they applied cold-water thawing. An airstrip improved transportation of supplies, equipment, and men. Other camps within the area improved as well. Interest rates were low, the government offered limited subsidies, and tax deductions were allowed on unprofitable enterprises.

Yet at the same time the Territorial Legislature placed a license tax of three percent on mineral production in excess of $10,000. Nevertheless, dredges developed on Deadwood, Mammoth, Mosquito, Walker Fork, and Jack Wade Creeks. Draglines, bulldozers, and hydraulic operations also boomed.

The boom came to a shuddering halt with the entrance of the United States into World War II. Gold mining operations, determined non-strategic industries, were closed. After the war, rapidly rising costs forced many operations to remain closed. To cut costs Patty discontinued hydraulic stripping of the muck overburden in favor of ground sluicing—allowing the creek water to erode the muck. Furthermore, he abandoned cold-water thawing for solar or natural thawing. In spite of all new techniques employed, the soaring labor and material costs forced the profit lower and lower. Finally in 1957 Patty closed the dredges. They were leased for five years than sold in the early 1970's to Joe Vogler, a politician and developer, and Ernest Wolff, a mining engineer and University of Alaska professor, and his

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partner, Dan Colben. High contemporary costs prevent much profit despite the inflated value of gold. Other operations fared as poorly. Currently a few miners mine the old deposits around Circle and Eagle, but only marginal operations continue at Coal and Ben Creeks, and both are mined by open-cut methods.

The Yukon-Charley area experienced the drama and excitement of gold rush bonanzas, experimented with various mining methods, suffered through droughts and depressions, realized full potential, and slumped with the exhaustion of its deposits. Faced with a unique environment and its related problems, twentieth-century miners adopted or modified the methods of earlier mining frontiers and, in several instances, invented new techniques to conform to unusual environmental demands. But like the exploitation of any mineral deposit, exhaustion always occurs. Although the placer industry has waned, a few miners continue to live the lifestyle of C. A. Bryant. The mining frontier has not yet passed. Other minerals may foster still other mining horizons.

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Technology changed another nineteenth-century occupation—trapping. Only the environment and the basic theory behind trapping remained the same. The greatest difference arose primarily with the increased number of white trappers. Previously only the Indians had trapped the fur-bearing animals for trade at white trading posts. With the increase of summer occupations such as steamboat work, prospecting, and single-man gold claims, trapping offered winter income. Moreover, transportation had changed radically. Trappers, white and Indian, now used dog teams more frequently than they walked their traplines. Although steamboats brought more supplies closer to the traplines, poling boats and scows were still utilized to a great extent. Eventually technology introduced the "iron dog" or the snowmobile that proved much faster, more powerful, and, in the long run, more effective than the dog team. Motorboats replaced poling boats and scows and lent ease to summer transportation. Airplanes allowed the trapper to utilize more remote and isolated areas.

Yet technology reaped its price. The trapper lost his self-reliance and independence—he now depended on the foibles of machinery
and the ability of other people to supply fuel, parts, and expertise. Furthermore, the introduction of engines demanded a greater capital output and, thus, a greater harvest of fur. This in turn led to more effective trapping methods. Not only did steel traps replace dead-falls and repeating rifles supplant muskets, but nylon fishnets, fish wheels, and chain saws contributed to a more efficient exploitation of the resources with considerably less effort from the trapper. Nevertheless, despite all technological improvements, the trapper still trapped in a hostile and demanding environment where his knowledge of the land and its animals meant not only success but often survival. And the trapper still trapped for a fluctuating world market whose prices relied on the whims of fashion.

The story Evelyn Berglund Shore tells in *Born on Snowshoes* captures the life of the modern fur trapper. On July 30, 1917, she was born on American Creek near Eagle City. Typically her father mined and did a little trapping. Two years later they moved to Nation City where they shared their "city" with six old-timers and twelve or fourteen Indians. Here they tried to earn a living by catching salmon to dry and sell supplemented by backyard trapping. They left Nation City

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in 1921 and for the next seven years trapped the Sheenjek River, a tributary of the Porcupine River. In 1928 Evelyn's father, crippled with arthritis, entered a hospital while his wife and three daughters, aged nine, eleven, and twelve, joined an old trapper on the Salmon River, a tributary of the Black River two hundred eighty miles from Fort Yukon. For the next thirteen years these women, with a self-reliance typical of the occupation, trapped and hunted to support themselves in a remote and demanding country far away from schools and friends.

Each summer they bought on credit a year's supply of food and necessary equipment which they loaded into hand-built scows and poling boats—a motor was added to help over the rough spots. Cases of canned goods and sacks of flour went on the floor of the boat with sugar and perishables on top. Then dogs and kids were added. The upriver trip took six weeks to two months as they poled and tracked the boats, fighting snags, riffles, and drift piles as they toiled along. They kept mosquitoes at bay, in the days before effective insect repellent, with hats, gloves, bandanas, and smudge fires.

Once at the home cabin, the women set to work fishing. Twelve dogs demanded great quantities of salmon, grayling, and pike. Gill nets and fishing poles provided sixty to seventy fish a day. They also cut dry grass to serve as winter bedding for the dogs. Repair work commenced on the home cabin while the picking of currants,
cranberries, raspberries, and blueberries offered diversions not only in diet but also from tedious labors. With the arrival of September came the hunting season. Since there were only three weeks before the ice formed on the river and the moose grew too thin from rutting, they spent long, hard hours poling, stalking, and packing the required two moose and four or five caribou.

In November the trapping season began, and with it came the hardest work of the year—setting out the traplines. They cut new trails, cleared old trails, killed additional meat for the line cabins, built meat caches, and erected trail tents or constructed line cabins. Line cabins were small log structures often built without windows and with only two pole bunks, a pole bench, campstove, and green spruce boughs for the floor. Yet these simple structures required eight days of hard labor. In addition, adjacent dog shelters, usually made from the boughs and tops of trees, meant more time and energy. Finally they built, wherever they saw tracks, typical trail sets for wolf, fox, wolverine, lynx, marten, mink, and ermine. Eventually they had 300 miles of trapping trails, 10 line cabins, several line trails, 12 tent camps, and a number of permanent caches. The hours were long and the work hard, but as Evelyn writes: "We never stopped to think what was girl's work and what was men's work. It was all work, and if it needed to be done, we had to do it."  

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3 Ibid., p. 130.
Winter work entailed the running of the traplines. After each new snow, trail had to be broken by packing the trail in front of the toboggan with snowshoes. Each toboggan carried approximately 300 pounds. This included rations for 30 days, which were 20 loaves of frozen bread, 100 frozen doughnuts, 30 pounds of dried beans, ½ slab of bacon, 30 pounds of sugar, 30 to 40 pounds of flour, 2 pounds of tallow, 6 pounds of butter, 15 to 20 pounds of frozen cranberries, 50 pounds of frozen mooseburger patties, 5 pounds of dried milk, 2 to 3 pounds of dried eggs, 6 cans of tomatoes, a little macaroni, cheese, baking powder, and salt. The dishes consisted of a big kettle, two frying pans, two small pots, and a plate, knife, fork, spoon, and cup for each person. A caribou skin mattress and feather sleeping robes and pillows provided their bedding. The first trip each year included tents, campstoves, and 500 traps plus snares. Finally 200 to 250 pounds of cornmeal and dried fish for dog food and game rifles, evenly distributed, completed the load. Once they had set the traps and established the trail camps, the toboggan carried home the harvested fur.

The trails were run every few weeks, depending on the weather and how remote they were. The large animals caught—lynx, wolf, and

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4 Ibid., p. 176.
fox--stayed frozen until early spring when trapping season closed. The smaller animals--marten, mink, and ermine--were skinned as soon as they were caught. The women averaged three to fifteen marten each trip. One successful winter they trapped forty wolves.

Between trapping runs life at the home cabin was busy. Clothes were washed and dried in the sixteen-by-eighteen-foot cabin while meals of beans, bread, pies, and doughnuts cooked in quantities large enough to be frozen for trips. They used the less valuable skins for a number of purposes: rabbit skins for lining mittens, caribou and bear skins for mattresses, and untanned caribou strips for mending dog harnesses and threading snowshoes. During the long evenings they played checkers, knitted, or listened to the radio.

Spring marked an end to the trapping season. But work continued. All traps, tents, and campstoves had to be collected. The larger animals had to be skinned and stretched. Any left over meat was cut in strips and smoked dry. For two weeks in April the women trapped beaver until they reached the limit of ten each. If time allowed it, they planted a small garden of lettuce, turnips, and other hardy vegetables. At long last they loaded the scow and poling boat with the

5 Ibid., pp. 122, 193.
6 Ibid., pp. 98-102.
furs and floated to Fort Yukon. Here they learned each year for eleven successive years that their $1,600 to $2,000 worth of supplies cost more than their furs had brought.

The twelfth year they finally worked themselves out of debt. The following year in February 1941 Evelyn, now twenty-three years old, left the trapline to marry a man she had met in Fort Yukon—another trapper. Almost contentedly she writes: "Four of my five children were born, as I was born, on snowshoes. It would not surprise me at all if some of them, at least, spent most of their lives wrestling loaded toboggans out from between niggerheads, lighting fires in the icy stoves of snowed-in cabins, making camp in the cold dark in lonesome tents away out in the timber with the northern lights pulsing from horizon to horizon and the wolves howling far away. They will never get rich, but they could do worse."  

Although most of the twentieth-century trappers of the Yukon-Charley area were either bachelors or men whose families remained behind in neighboring communities, the seasonal cycle described by Evelyn Berglund Shore applied to all the trappers in Alaska. Generally those utilizing the Yukon-Charley area, unlike the Berglund family, had their summers free because their home cabins were closer to a supply base. Thus, they used the summer months to pursue mining, woodchopping, commercial fishing, or wage labor.

A great majority of the historic sites within Yukon-Charley pertain to this twentieth-century trapping era. They are not as large or impressive as the roadhouses and mining operations, but they characterize a lifestyle still followed today. Six cabins—Nation Bluff Cabin or Christopher Nelson's Cabin (#46), Charley River Mouth Cabin or Al Ames' Cabin (#81), James Taylor's Place (#51), George Beck's Cabin (#78), Kandik Mouth Cabin or Gordon Bertison's Cabin (#75), and the Bonanza Creek Cabin (#82)—are the best examples within the proposal. All have their roofs and walls intact. Some still have stoves and are used in trapping today. Christopher Nelson's Cabin (#46) is a typical cabin. The sod roof had been covered with flattened kerosene cans to repel the rain. A frame entranceway serves as a workroom and storage area as well. The original cabin is built from square-cut logs chinked with moss. Shelves line one wall with pole bunks on another. Al Ames' Cabin (#81) even has a small sluice box near it that depicts the alternate seasonal occupation of gold mining. Other cabins were used as a base for trapping—Sandy Johnson's (#116), Biederman's (#77), plus several whose roofs and walls have collapsed.

Many of the trails within the proposal area are trapping trails, thus, winter trails. They cross muskeg and tussocks which, once snow covered, make nice open trails. During the summer, however, the trails fill with water and are difficult to walk on or follow. Tree blazes, which mark not only the trail but each trail set, are visible. Trapping trails radiate from Christopher Nelson's Cabin (#46), such as one following the Nation River (#49) and one following the Yukon (#50). An older
trail, used probably during the 1920's, is Rock Creek Trail (#62). Even an occasional trap might be found in a forgotten set. These trails are utilitarian trails; their function was to transport supplies or to set out traps. Thus they do not necessarily make easy or enjoyable hiking nor do they take the most scenic or expedient route. Trails, like Rock Creek, which has a few trapping sets and blazes, illustrate not only the trapper's way of life but also the habits and behavior of fur-bearing animals.

A typical line camp is the tent frame (#36) found on Trout Creek. The tent frame is quite substantial although one wall has fallen down. The structure stands twelve feet high with three feet high log walls upon which is the framework for a canvas tent. The place has been largely undisturbed and various utensils, some on cupboard shelves, depict the quality of life at a line camp. A number of line cabins undoubtedly remain along other trapping trails in the more remote portions of the proposal.

Similarity in trapping methods as well as lifestyles were the result of response to the environment. Skill in trapping required more than how to set a trap or snare. Trappers studied the behavior and habits of the animals and adapted the best techniques to exploit this behavior. Familiarity with the land--its hills, gullies, lakes, streams, meadows, and forests--coupled with the knowledge of the animals increased the annual take of fur. Whereas some trappers learned a few basic techniques to supplement their income, the expert trappers spent years perfecting their knowledge and skills.

Because of Alaska's isolation and transportation limitations, supplies were either scarce or prohibitively expensive. Thus, in
exchange for labor-saving equipment, the early Alaskan trapper spent more effort and time on his trapline than trappers in more developed areas. Most illustrative was the use of the deadfall. The deadfall required no imported equipment except the basic axe but demanded considerably more labor than a metal trap or snare.

Two deadfalls (#63 and #85) illustrate an almost lost art in trapping. Both are built at the base of spruce trees. Neither employ any metal. One, (#63), was obviously designed for a large animal, either a wolf or a bear. It looks like a small cabin with one side consisting of a "door" made from heavy logs. This "door" was probably propped up with a small stick that served as a trigger. Then bait was situated so that the animal had to knock over the stick to get to the bait. Immediately the heavy logs fell and crushed the animal. The other deadfall, (#85), is much smaller but operates on the same principle. Here a "cubby" is built with eleven upright poles. A large log is placed in front of the cubby. On top of this log, propped up by a small stick, six inches high, is the killing log. The cubby is then baited. When an animal enters the cubby, he triggers the killing log and is crushed between the two heavy logs. Both deadfalls are in good condition.

As the twentieth century and its technology improved transportation, supplies became more plentiful. Metal traps and snares essentially replaced deadfalls. The most popular was the Newhouse trap, but Blake and Lamb, Victor, Oneida, and later Conibear were also used. These required less labor but did cost money and add weight to a trapper's outfit. Like deadfalls, traps needed occasional repair.
Some trappers boiled their traps in water with spruce tips and alder bark added, then hung them in a dry, sheltered place away from human odor. Others went so far as to wax their traps to prevent rust.

Various sizes were used for different animals: No. 1 for ermine, marten, and muskrat; No. 1½ for marten, mink, and fox; No. 2 and 3 for lynx and fox; No. 4 for beaver and wolverine; and No. 4½ for wolf. Snare s, on the other hand, were inexpensive, easy to transport, and easy to set. They could be handmade from a roll of nineteen-strand wire. Those commercially made, however, came with a locking slide on double-twisted cable. Both came in different sizes for different animals. Lynx and beaver were most often snared and occasionally wolves.

The trapper's outfit also included a collection of lures. These consisted of scents and baits that lured the animal into the traps or snares. Trappers regarded the scent as more valuable because it lasted longer and created greater curiosity in the fur-bearer. Occas-

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8 The best work on trapping in Alaska is Richard K. Nelson's Hunters of the Northern Forest: Designs for Survival Among the Alaskan Kutchin (Chicago: The University Chicago Press, 1973) also informative is The Manitoba Trappers' Guide (Manitoba Department of Renewable Resources and Transportation Services, 1976); more oriented to "lower forty-eight" trapping is S. Stanley Hawbaker's Trapping the North American Furbearers (Clearfield Pennsylvania: Kurtz Bros., 1974); and a historic source is Ned Dearborn's Trapping on the Farm, an extract from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Yearbook of 1919, Facsimile Reproduction (Seattle: The Shorey Book Store, 1973).
sionally, however, the trapper used bait in addition to the scent. Bait most often was the entails or skin of moose or caribou but could also be fresh or frozen salmon. Although some trappers used commercial lures, most had their own favorites, which they often kept secret from their competitors. All agreed, however, that different lures attracted different animals, thus no one lure served all. Sometimes the urine, feces, or glands from animals served as lures by themselves. Most used beaver castor as an important ingredient, but others had lynx liver, fish oil, muskrat musk, aniseed oil, and fancy commercial additives. Before setting the trap or snares the trapper smeared the lure onto rabbit fur, bird wings, flat pieces of wood, or moose skin. To keep the trap set attractive, the trapper replaced both scent and bait each time he ran the trapline.

The trapper's traps, lures, and knowledge of the land and its animals culminated in the planning, placement, and building of the trap set. Each animal and geographic location required a different set. Sometimes the lay of the land dictated the form the set would take, other times the habits of the animal. The care taken in

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9 Manitoba Trappers' Guide, pp. 18-20; Hawbaker, Trapping Furbearers, pp. 216-21; and Nelson, Hunters of the Northern Forest, p. 213.
designing the set often determined the success of the trapper. In the Yukon-Charley area marten and lynx trap sets were, and still are today, the most common.

The marten, a member of the weasel family, resembles the mink but is longer and heavier. The color of its fur is yellowish brown to dark brown with an orange patch of fur under its neck. Its diet consists of squirrels, hares, mice, lemmings, and occasional birds. The marten lives in hilly country forested with spruce but is very mobile and will leave a region without warning or reason. For this reason trappers generally set trap sets where they find marten tracks.

The most common marten set is the pole set with its different variations. Generally a tree is chopped down about three feet from the ground. Its branches are stripped off, and it is inclined against its stump, which has been notched to hold it. The pole is squared off about one foot from the upper end where the trap is loosely tied. The trap's chain, however, is tied securely above the trap. Bait is then placed above the trap. When the marten smelled or saw the bait, he would run up the inclined tree, step into the trap, struggle to free itself, pull the trap free, and fall quickly to its death.

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Nelson, Hunter of the Northern Forest, pp. 218-19; and Hawbaker, Trapping Furbearers, pp. 178-83.
After the marten are brought in from the trapline, they are skinned. The trapper makes a cut across the anus from foot pad to foot pad of the hind legs. The skin is pulled back from the legs, and the carcass is stripped out of the tail. Then the skin is pulled down over the head, inside out out, using a knife to cut around the ears, eyes, nose, and mouth. The cased skin is slipped on a stretcher, which is a tapering board, three feet long and three inches wide, cut down the middle but hinged at the pointed end so it can be spread apart by a wooden peg. All the fat is scraped off the skin with a dull table knife. The pelt is then hung from the cabin ceiling and dried overnight. Once dry it is turned right side out so the quality of the fur can be examined by the fur buyer.

The lynx is the second major animal trapped in the Yukon-Charley area and is similar to the bobcat of the American West. It has, however, long legs and large paws that help to keep it on top of deep snow. The fur is a dark gray with a beardlike ruff around the neck. It averages three to three and a half feet long and weighs between fifteen and thirty pounds. Forested river valleys provide its home. A diet, almost exclusively of snowshoe hares, makes the number of lynx each year fluctuate in accordance with the hare ten-year cycle.

The lynx is extremely curious, and trap sets are designed to take advantage of it. A piece of rabbit skin, a bird's wing, or even bright colored ribbons attract its attention. Once it has come to
investigate the attractions, it smells the scent, which is generally some scent mixed with beaver castor smeared on something in back of the trap. Thus the lynx is lured farther into the trap and forced to step into the trap by appropriately placed sticks and branches. These trap sets are built along "cat" trails, natural funneling caused by rock outcroppings, and steep banks. Most lynx sets used in the Yukon-Charley during the 1970's are trail sets. Traps, chained to a heavy pole, are placed in the middle of a sideline trail or "cat" trail. The trapper tries to direct the lynx into the trap by narrowing the trail with cut branches and by poking small sticks into the snow on either side of the trap.

Although cubby sets were once the major way to trap lynx, they are only occasionally used currently. A cubby is a man-made enclosure that is baited and trapped. It is usually built at the base of a spruce tree with walls of sticks and branches placed in teepee fashion, extending out about two feet from the tree, and standing about two feet high. Whereas the walls of a marten cubby are always tightly built, the lynx cubby is larger and more loosely built, even haphazard in construction. During August and September the cubby is baited with fresh fish or meat. After the lynx has become trained to associate the cubby with food, in November the cubby is baited with a trap.
There are a number of trap sets throughout the Yukon-Charley area—pole sets, trail sets, cubbies, and other variations. Most illustrative are the numerous sets (#48), primarily cubby sets, around Christopher Nelson's Cabin (#46). Because of their size and construction, these cubbies were probably designed for lynx rather than marten. Some are typically made from cut spruce branches leaned up, teepee fashion, against a tree. The trap is set at the entrance, and the bait or scent is put in the rear of the cubby. Some are crudely and expeditiously made of spruce branches. Others are more unusual—one from large salvaged logs, another from the bow of a boat. These cubbies show the innovative and creative approaches to trapping. Trappers today prefer to outthink the lynx by placing traps where they travel rather than training the lynx to come to the traps.

Wolves and wolverines are also trapped but less frequently. They are usually trapped near moose-kill sites and in natural corridors or crossings but are often snared as well. Their pelts are also cased inside out until dried. Since their fur has been traditionally less valuable than the marten and lynx, only a few wolves or wolverines are caught each year. In fact, trappers once only trapped wolves for the fifty-dollar bounty that the Territory of Alaska rewarded for the killing of moose and caribou predators. Now, however, wolf and wolverine fur have become valuable in their own right.

Aside from the bear only the beaver is skinned open. The beaver usually has a limit of 20 pelts per trapper, but the limit has varied from year to year and place to place. Because it is trapped under the ice, it is difficult and hard work to trap. Generally it is trapped in the spring after the season for other furs-bearers has closed. A bait pole of freshly cut poplar or similar wood and a
pole strung with a number of set snares are placed beneath the ice in the middle of the beaver's runway which connects its lodge and feed pile. Once caught the beaver is cut anus to chin and stretched on a circular form. The meat is tender, fat, and usually eaten. Also important are the beaver castors that provide an essential scent for trapping lures. Other animals, such as mink, muskrat, fox, and ermine, are occasionally trapped or snared but with less certainty.

The fur is usually sold to a local fur buyer or shipped to a fur auction. These auction houses, West Coast Fur Sales and Seattle Fur Exchange, operate on a straight commission. They accept the furs, grade the pelts, put them in lots of similar size and quality, and then offer them for sale at widely publicized auctions. The results of the auction, minus the commission, are mailed to the trapper.

Historically as much as today, the auction houses had very little control over the price of fur. Fashion and the quality and quantity of fur harvested determined the market value. As with any product, the market rose and fell, responding to international economic forces such as war and depression. These fluctuations affected the Alaskan trapper and his quality of life.

During the early 1900's the fur market remained fairly stable. Then in 1914 the market fell until stimulated by the first World War's demand for fur. Prices rose again in 1917. At the same time the

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Nelson, Hunters of the Northern Forest, p. 166; and Graburn and Strong, Circumpolar Peoples, p. 102.
hare and lynx cycle met their maximum population cycle, and one trapper observed that the "country was alive with lynx," trapping 225 lynx that sold for $8 each.

After the war fur, like many other products, suffered a recession until approximately 1923 when the market recovered. The years from 1923 until 1929 marked the real boom of twentieth-century trapping. The United States replaced England as the raw fur marketing center and Russia as the purchasing center for expensive, finished furs. Lynx brought trappers up to one hundred dollars each. The Alaska Game Commission, established in 1925, feared that marten might be trapped into extinction and thus closed the season in many areas of Alaska. From the winter of 1916 to the spring of 1929, the season on marten was open only during three winters. Moreover, the season on beaver trapping was also closed during 1925, 1926, and 1929. Thus

12 Carroll, The First Ten Years in Alaska, p. 70.
14 Nelson, Hunters of the Northern Forest, p. 166.
15 Redington to Gunnell, 24 October 1928, Folder on Fur Resources: Marten, Box 159, Record Group 22, NA.
the price on marten and beaver crept from six dollars each to twenty-six dollars for beaver and thirty dollars for marten and sometimes much higher. Regardless of the closed seasons the greatest peak in trapping occurred during 1924-25.

During the Great Depression fur prices declined. Either from over trapping during the high fur prices or from scarcity of food for the fur-bearer, the fur catch also declined. The high prices of the 1920's had tripled the number of trappers exploiting the fur resources—in 1929 more than 5,265 trappers made their entire living from the fur business not including 2,500 unlicensed Indian trappers. The poor season of 1929-30, however, discouraged several trappers within the Yukon-Charley area as well as others throughout Alaska. For several


18 Ferguson, Mink, Mary and Me, p. 9.

19 Nelson, Hunters of the Northern Forest, p. 167.


of the seasons during the 1930's the shortage of fur precipitated limiting marten and beaver to ten each per trapper. In addition, the lynx cycle started on the downward swing. Thus, local conditions contributed to the fur depression as well as the international business failure and the scarcity of money. By 1936 the number of trappers increased, the quantity of fur improved, and prices began to climb. In 1937-38 above average prices coupled with increasing numbers of fur-bearers produced the best harvest return for the Depression era. In 1939 the value of the fur exports exceeded that of the fisheries and minerals. Thus during the hard times of the Depression, the fur market provided trappers a low but steady and

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26 "Annual Report of the Alaska Game Commission to Secretary of Interior, 1939", RG 22, NA.
secure income.

At this time the Alaska Game Commission and Northern Commercial Company began an active program of education for the trappers. Slide shows, bulletins, and on-site lectures covered the proper methods for handling fur. In addition, the Game Commission discouraged the wasteful shooting of beaver, which contributed to increasing losses of the animal, and encouraged trapping, which was more difficult but brought greater market value without wasteful losses. When encouragement failed to produce results, the Commission required that all beaver skins be tagged or sealed in thirty days and closed the season earlier. These actions, which prevented shooting and required trapping, decreased the take of beaver on the upper Yukon.

World War II, however, created another boom in fur prices. Fur parkas for troopers in northern theaters of war contributed to the boom. The scarcity of lynx and the closed seasons on marten

27 The Alaska Weekly, 7 February 1941, p. 8; The Alaska Weekly, 11 April 1941, p. 4; and Kitchener, Flag Over the North, pp. 269-70.
29 Nelson, Hunters of the Northern Forest, p. 167; Graburn and Strong, Circumpolar Peoples, p. 102; and prices quoted sporadically by the Seattle Fur Exchange and the West Coast Fur Sales, Inc. in The Alaska Weekly, 24 April 1942 to 23 February 1945.
30 The Alaska Weekly, 13 December 1940, p. 4.
brought high prices for these furs. Although fur prices were high and fur appeared in abundant supply, the number of trappers decreased. The high wages of defense work and the Selective Service recruited trappers from their traplines. The resultant void was partially filled by untrained novice trappers who moved into the vacant cabins and traplines to the anger and helpless frustration of their absent owners. Nonetheless, the fur catch for 1941 amounted to two and a quarter million dollars. Because of the few trappers and the closed season on marten, the 1942 fur harvest dropped to the lowest since 1935.

Immediately after the war, in 1946, increased trappers in the

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31 The Alaska Weekly, 31 January 1941, p. 8; and The Alaska Weekly, 14 February 1941, p. 4.


33 "Annual Report of the Alaska Game Commission to the Secretary of the Interior, 1941", Box 6, RG 22 NA.

34 "Annual Report of the Alaska Game Commission to the Secretary of the Interior, 1942", Box 6, RG 22 NA.
field and high market prices resulted in more intensive trapping. As in the years following World War I, the fur market fell and remained low throughout the 1950's and 1960's. Initially trappers claimed that the high price of the finished furs discouraged the public from buying them. These high prices, which in turn were caused by a federal tax on fur, inflated labor and other costs in processing and manufacturing fur, and high mark-ups on the part of retail furriers, brought hardship to the trapper and raw fur traders. But these reasons failed to explain the continued doldrums of the fur industry. Even though airplanes could be chartered to fly supplies and trappers into previously inaccessible areas, trappers lost interest in the unprofitable and demanding occupation and sought other jobs in the developing territory.

35 "Annual Report of the Alaska Game Commission to the Secretary of the Interior, 1946", Box 6, RG 22 NA.
36 Nelson, Hunters of the Northern Forest, p. 167; Graburn and Strong, Circumpolar Peoples, p. 103; and The Alaska Weekly, 12 November 1948, p. 4.
37 The Alaska Weekly, editorial, 12 November 1948, p. 4.
38 Interview with Elmer Nelson, 19-20 September 1976; Graburn and Strong, Circumpolar Peoples, p. 103; and Nelson, Hunters of the Northern Forest, p. 167.
Only in the early 1970's has trapping, at least in the Yukon-Charley area, had a resurgence of interest. Prices are high but not compared to wages. Trappers are returning for values other than profit. These latter-day trappers represent a "return to the land" syndrome, resulting from an environmentally conscious society and a recognition of lost values of self-sufficiency and rugged individualism. Although many if not all are in "trespass", they epitomize the historic use of the land traced from the early Indian through the Russian and English fur trader, into the supplemental occupations of the gold-rush miner, and throughout the profitable trapping eras of the 1920's and 1930's.

In this last frontier the Yukon-Charley area represents an alternative to Turner's progressive frontiers. The Yukon area, as much because of time and technology as environment, failed to evolve from small, striving towns into booming industrial cities. In part the environment with its severe winters, short summers, and poor agricultural land hampered the farming and ranching frontiers that, at least in the Turner scenario, preceded town and city development. Yet at the same time, the Yukon provided a great navigational waterway not unlike the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri rivers. Nonetheless no Cincinnati, New Orleans, or St. Louis developed. Rather, like many parts of the West, the progressive frontiers passed on to other places, such as Anchorage and Fairbanks, and the Yukon was left
to a few hardy modern-day pioneers.

Despite the fact that Turner in 1893 perceived the frontier as already closed and failed to recognize Alaska as an extension of the West, his general thesis of the development of American character holds as true for Alaska as for any part of America. He summarizes: "That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom—these are traits of the frontier". These traits, described nearly eighty-four years ago, closely characterize the "river people" today. Yet time and technology are contributing factors to any frontier. The discovery of a new exploitive resource, such as oil in the Kandik River Basin or asbestos in the Fortymile area, could change the land beyond recognition and wipe out the lifestyle of this modern frontiersman who leads a tenuous but romantic existence on the edge of Turner's overlooked and last frontier.

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The historical significance of the Yukon-Charley area derives not from a single nationally significant site but from a whole spectrum of sites expressive of several broad historical themes. The upper Yukon represents a great chunk of Alaskan and American history that the historical narrative treated in the light of national, state, and local themes. It belies the common assumption that the Yukon is important only as part of the gold-rush story. Other themes—the fur trade, English-Russian-American relations, aboriginal uses and lifestyles, the rise and development of towns, border amicability with Canada, twentieth-century mining and trapping, and international activities such as the telegraph, trails, steamboats, and mail delivery—historians have largely ignored.

Several National Park Service historical themes and subthemes are represented in Yukon-Charley. Primarily the area illustrates the Westward Expansion theme with most of its subthemes, but it also depicts Original Inhabitants, European Exploration and Settlement, America at Work, and Society and Social Conscience. Moreover, several sites are associated with people of state, local, and even
national significance, such as Roald Amundsen, Billy Mitchell, Robert Campbell, James Wickersham, Ed Biederman, Ernest Patty, Jack McQuesten, and Father Monroe. Enough fabric remains to illustrate and commemorate these themes and people not with one site but with a series of sites whose individual significance merits less than national attention but as a district, viewed as a continuum, attracts national interest if not significance.

Although expensive, at least one site illustrative of each theme should be preserved and interpreted. Fortunately each site within the proposal retains its integrity. Many sites from the earlier epochs, however, have been lost to the ravages of time and nature or to succeeding generations that have salvaged the older sites for valuable and reusable parts. Others, however, such as the modern trapping period, have a number of similarly constructed buildings that local traditions characterize with different stories, events, and individuals.

The following thumbnail sketches locate, describe, and evaluate individual sites that the historical narrative has broadly interpreted. Although each site adds flavor, details, and human interest, some are more significant than others. Thus, some merit National Register nomination while others best illustrate the passage of time and the fragility of human history.
MAP 5  MASTER MAP SHOWING INDIVIDUAL SITE MAPS AND PROPOSED BOUNDARIES FOR YUKON-CHARLEY NATIONAL RIVERS
LOCATION:

Old Porcupine's Fish Camp is 4½ miles up the Yukon River from Eagle or 2 miles from Eagle Village and ½ mile downriver from Eagle Creek, on the right bank of the river.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Old Porcupine's Fish Camp represents the traditional fish camp of the Han Indians during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The location of this fish camp is indicative of the summer settlement patterns of the people. Archeological investigation of some of the fish camps from this area might provide valuable information on the life ways of the Han as they were involved in the taking of one of their major food resources - salmon.

CONDITION:

This site was obtained through oral research for Section 14(h)(1) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act that allows selections of historic sites by regional corporations. This site was not visited, thus, it's condition is unknown. This may be a Native allotment.

TREATMENT:

This site should be visited, and recommendations regarding preservation determined after a full evaluation has been done even though this fish camp is outside the proposed park.
SOURCE:

Elizabeth Andrews' 14(h)(1) survey.
#2 CHARLIE STEVEN'S FISH CAMP

LOCATION:

Charlie Steven's Fish Camp is 1 1/2 miles above Eagle Village or 4 miles above Eagle, on left bank of the Yukon.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Charlie Steven's Fish Camp represents the traditional fish camp of the Han Indians during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The location of this fish camp is indicative of the summer settlement patterns of the people. Archeological investigation of some of the fish camps from this area might provide valuable information on the life ways of the Han as they were involved in the taking of one of their major food resources - salmon.

CONDITION:

This site was obtained through oral research for Section 14(h)(1) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act that allows selections of historic sites by regional corporations. This site was not visited, thus, it's condition is unknown. This may be a Native allotment.

TREATMENT:

This site should be visited, and recommendations regarding preservation determined after a full evaluation has been done even though this fish camp is outside the proposed park.

SOURCE:

Elizabeth Andrews' 14(h)(1) survey.
#3 SELINA JOSEPH'S FISH CAMP

LOCATION:

Selina Joseph's Fish Camp is 3/4 mile upriver from Eagle Village or 3 miles from Eagle on the left bank of the Yukon near the mouth of Buckeye Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Selina Joseph's Fish Camp represents the traditional fish camp of the Han Indians during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The location of this fish camp is indicative of the summer settlement patterns of the people. Archeological investigation of some of the fish camps from this area might provide valuable information on the life ways of the Han as they were involved in the taking of one of their major food resources - salmon.

CONDITION:

This site was obtained through oral research for Section 14(h)(1) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act that allows selections of historic sites by regional corporations. This site was not visited, thus, its condition is unknown. This may be a Native allotment.

TREATMENT:

This site should be visited, and recommendations regarding preservation determined after a full evaluation has been done even though this fish camp is outside the proposed park.

SOURCE:

Elizabeth Andrews' 14(h)(1) survey.
LOCATION:

Eagle Village is indicated by name on the Eagle Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000 and Eagle (D-1), scale 1:63,360. It is on the left bank of the Yukon River, 9 miles from the Canadian border.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Regional significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

In 1883 Lt. Frederick Schwatka first documented a fishing village as Johnny's Village which may be Eagle Village or the site maybe near its vicinity. Early traders, however, had been drawn to the Han Village before Schwatka's trip. The Mercier brothers and Arthur Harper had trading posts near the village to exchange goods with the Indians. The arrival of the gold-rush miners changed the traders philosophy but the Han Indians had become dependent on the trade items, thus, continued their barter. The building of Fort Egbert, the telegraph line, and the boundary survey all had additional impacts on traditional lifestyles. By 1932, Cornelius Osgood, ethnographer, discovered that much of the Han culture had been lost. White man's education and religion helped to separate the Indian from his traditional culture. Eagle Village is the only Han Indian village on American soil.

CONDITION:

The village houses have changed a number of times since Schwatka first recorded Johnny's Village. Currently the buildings are of frame and log construction without regard to traditional materials. Money obtained from the Native Claims Settlement Act and loans or funds from certain government...
CONDITION: (continued)
agencies have started some remodeling. The village appears in a state of transition.

TREATMENT:
The village is an important element in the history of the Yukon River. Its story should be told along with the white history of Eagle and Fort Egbert. Since the community is changing, some guidance might be lent by the National Trust for Historic Preservation or NPS in evaluating those structures worthy of preservation, even restoration.

SOURCE:
Frederick Schwatka; James Wickersham; Leroy McQuesten; Eagle City Records; Cornelius Osgood.
#5 WALTER BENJAMIN'S FISH CAMP

LOCATION:

Walter Benjamin's Fish Camp is 1½ miles downriver from Eagle Village and 1½ miles upriver from Eagle on the right bank of the Yukon.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Walter Benjamin's Fish Camp represents the traditional fish camp of the Han Indians during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The location of this fish camp is indicative of the summer settlement patterns of the people. Archeological investigations of some of the fish camps from this area might provide valuable information on the life ways of the Han as they were involved in the taking of one of their major food resources - salmon. Walter Benjamin was Cornelius Osgood's principal informant for The Han Indians and was a Native minister of the Episcopal Church. He died in 1951.

CONDITION:

This site was obtained through oral research for Section 14(h)(1) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act that allows selections of historic sites by regional corporations. This site was not visited, thus, its condition is unknown. This may be a Native Allotment.

TREATMENT:

This site should be visited, and recommendations regarding preservation
TREATMENT: (continued)
determined after a full evaluation has been done even though this fish
camp is outside the proposed park.

SOURCE:

Elizabeth Andrews' 14(h)(1) survey.
#6 PETER LUNDEEN'S FARM

LOCATION:

The farm is across the Yukon River from Eagle near the upriver end of Lundeen Slough.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Lundeen's was an unusually large farm for the Yukon River. It provided fresh produce, milk, and eggs for the military at Fort Egbert from about 1900 to 1910.

CONDITION:

Unusually large and well constructed buildings remain but all without their roofs. Among them are a two-story barn, a large house, a small out-building and a chicken coop. Without roofs many of the walls have fallen. The once cleared fields have returned to the forest.

TREATMENT:

Restoration is not advised. Preservation would be recommended of this unusual site. Pragmatically, however, the costs of replacing the roofs and securing the walls of a site not within the borders of Yukon - Charley proposed park would be prohibitively high. It is unlikely that state or private monies would be available for preservation. This may be a Native allotment.

SOURCE:

C.A. Bryant.
#7 NIIBEEO ZHOO
("place of skin-houses")

LOCATION:
The village is on the outskirts of Eagle less than \( \frac{1}{2} \) mile from the center of town.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Regional significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
This is the only Han Indian archeological site excavated by professional archeologists. The site may have been occupied as early as 1860 but was abandoned before the establishment of Fort Egbert in 1899. Artifact recovery consisted of items of Native and non-Native manufacture including several stone skin scrapers, one skin flesher, bone arrowpoint, 2000 glass trade beads, various sizes of cartridge cases, glass and metal buttons, a muzzle-loading gun barrel, a metal trap, and a pair of scissors. The site is also one of the few house sites of the early historic period that has been excavated.

CONDITION:
The site contained 7 house depressions. The houses were elliptical in shape approximately 22 by 15 feet. Structural remains indicate that the frame consisted of diamond willow timbers and branches lashed together. Each house contained a central hearth about 3 feet in diameter. One house may have been used as a sweatbath. The site had been overgrown with willow and alder and was not discernable as an archeological site.
TREATMENT:

Analysis of the excavation is still progressing. The site is of sufficient significance and importance to be nominated to the National Register. Since the site is now recognized, it should be protected from pot-hunters. Preservation is strongly recommended. The site is outside Yukon - Charley's proposed boundaries.

SOURCE:

Elizabeth Andrews.
#7 Niibeeo Zhoo, view to the west of House pit 4, vegetative cover cleared.
LOCATION:

Eagle is located on the left bank of the Yukon River approximately 12 miles from the Canadian boundary. It is indicated by name on Eagle Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000 and (D-1), scale 1:63,360.

SIGNIFICANCE:

State significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Eagle or Belle Isle was founded in 1880's as a trading post for the nearby village of Han Indians. With the 1897 Klondike gold rush, Eagle became a mining supply center for mines in the surrounding area. The Army established Fort Egbert in 1899 to maintain law and order along the upper reaches of the Yukon River. At the same time, the first judicial seat in Alaska's interior was established under Judge James V. Wickersham. In 1901 Eagle became the second incorporated city in Alaska. The Washington Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System joined Eagle and Valdez and later the continental United States. Ronald Amundsen in 1905 telegraphed from Eagle his successful discovery of the Northwest Passage. Steamboats plying the Yukon made Eagle an important supply center. The 1902 stampede to Fairbanks brought a decline in population, and Wickersham moved the judicial seat to Fairbanks. Fort Egbert closed up most of the post in 1911. The wireless telegraph required less trail and line maintenance. Finally the Alaska Railroad killed the Yukon River steamboat traffic. Eagle went from the hub of Yukon military, judicial, communication and transportation concerns to a small supply town for a few persevering miners.
CONDITION:

The city and fort complex exude a frontier flavor practically undis-
turbed by modern intrusions. The 5 buildings on Fort Egbert are currently
being restored as is the Wickersham Courthouse. There are hospital ruins
and archeological remains for most of the fort's demolished buildings. The
city is attempting to keep its flavor despite new construction.

TREATMENT:

The National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Bureau of Land
Management have formulated preservation plans for the city - fort complex.
The district is already on the National Register. Since this is an important
historic site adjacent to Yukon - Charley proposal, cooperation with federal
and private concerns is recommended.

SOURCE:

James Wickersham; National Register Nomination; Melody Grauman.
LOCATION:

The site is on the bluff at the end of Fort Egbert parade ground approximately ½ mile from the center of Eagle. Eagle is indicated by name on Eagle Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000 and Eagle (D-1), scale 1:63,360.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

The archeological site known as Tśi-ta̱aad a tāi-n meaning "place where the water hits the point coming down" is an old village site. Informants and survey archeologists estimate the period as prehistoric and early historic. The site might yield additional information regarding the Han at the time of contact.

CONDITION:

The site's integrity is very poor. It is found at the end of Fort Egbert's parade ground. The building of the fort and the subsequent construction of the airstrip have compromised the site and may have destroyed a portion of it. Furthermore, general erosion of the bluff by the elements has probably lost even more.

TREATMENT:

The site should be archeologically salvaged before nature and pot-hunters destroy what little remains. The information on the Han is so sparse that any little bit will add considerably to the data base. Since the site is close to the center of town, the site should be protected. The site is outside the proposal's boundaries.
SOURCE:

Elizabeth Andrews' 14(h)(1) survey.
#10 JOE MALCOLM'S FISH CAMP

LOCATION:

Joe Malcolm's Fish Camp is 4 3/4 miles downriver from Eagle Village or 2½ miles from Eagle on the river side of the large island.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Joe Malcolm's Fish Camp represents the traditional fish camp of the Han Indians during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The location of this fish camp is indicative of the summer settlement patterns of the people. Archeological investigation of some of the fish camps from this area might provide valuable information on the life ways of the Han as they were involved in the taking of one of their major food resources - salmon.

CONDITION:

This site was obtained through oral research for Section 14(h)(1) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act that allows selections of historic sites by regional corporations. This site was not visited, thus, it's condition is unknown.

TREATMENT:

This site should be visited, and recommendations regarding preservation determined after a full evaluation has been done; even though this fish camp is outside the proposed park.

SOURCE:

Elizabeth Andrews' 14(h)(1) survey.
LOCATION:

The fish camp is 2½ miles downriver from Eagle on the right bank of the Yukon.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

The fish-drying racks and log-ribbed fish caches provide an example of an on-going traditional Native subsistence activity. Fish wheels and gill nets have been used since early historic times. The presence of no permanent structure suggests the typical tent-camp lifestyle. Oral traditions tell of day-to-day activities, not just economic and subsistence involvement, but social and kinship relationships as well.

CONDITION:

The fish camp is in good condition. The drying racks are standing. The site is not old but rather may occasionally be used today.

TREATMENT:

Preservation would consist of protecting the site from vandals. Since the site is visible from the river and since this is a Native allotment, it is unlikely that the site will remain unchanged. This site is outside the proposed boundaries.

SOURCE:

David Evans.

Photograph.
LOCATION:

The fish wheel baskets are 2½ miles from Eagle on the right bank of the Yukon.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

The baskets are characteristic of large baskets of a by-gone era when large quantities of salmon were caught for winter supplies and to feed large dog teams. More recent fish-wheel baskets are smaller.

CONDITION:

The baskets measure 10 feet high and 8 feet long. The frame is covered with 2-inch-square chicken wire. One side is more or less complete; the other is in disrepair. Nearby is a small 3-foot-square cache that stands only 2 logs high. Three 55-gallon barrels of the heavy metal variety were left in the area. It lies only 15 yards farther downriver from Stacy's fish camp. This may be a Native allotment.

TREATMENT:

No treatment suggested unless the Biederman fish baskets are lost or destroyed. If that should happen, these baskets should be evaluated for preservation as an example of a lifestyle and craft no longer practiced to that great an extent. This site is outside the proposed area.
LOCATION:
The ditch is 2½ miles downriver from Eagle on the right bank of the Yukon.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Unknown significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
It is uncertain what this man-made feature represents or why it was constructed, thus, its place in history is unknown.

CONDITION:
Between the fish camp and the cabin depression lies a 50-yard -by-15-yard -square ditch. The ditch is 2 feet deep with all the dirt piled on the inside side of the square. There are no remains of any other structures. The ditch could have served for drainage or fencing purposes.

TREATMENT:
No treatment is recommended. This site is also outside the proposed area. This may be a Native allotment.
#14 CABIN DEPRESSION

LOCATION:

The depression is 2½ miles downriver from Eagle, indicated on Eagle (D-1), scale 1:63,360 as a cabin.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

No information as to when the cabin was built or by whom or for what purpose. Thus, its place in history is unknown at the present. It can serve as an example of a dug-out cabin, which were once fairly common in the Arctic.

CONDITION:

The cabin depression occurs 500 yards downriver from Bob Stacy's fish camp. It measured 8 by 8 feet with a small entrance-way. In building the cabin the ground was dug out about 18-24 inches, then logs served as the framework with more dirt and sod piled up around the logs for greater insulation. No logs remain now, however; it is possible that a fire burned the cabin down.

TREATMENT:

No treatment is recommended. This site is outside the Yukon - Charley proposal area. This may be a Native allotment.
#15 MAIL TRAIL FROM BOULDER CREEK TO SEVENTYMILE RIVER

LOCATION:

The mail trail is 4 miles downriver from Eagle on the left bank of the Yukon at Boulder Creek, up the Creek ¼ mile, across muskeg to Ford Lake, across more flats to the mouth of Seventymile River.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Regional significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

This trail not only carried the mail from 1898-1938 but served as the major winter transportation trail. Although the military used a portion of the trail, today's trail departs slightly from the turn-of-the-century trail. It is the only portion of the mail trail from Eagle to Circle that is still used routinely today. It illustrates a valuable period of history and a lifestyle that has been subsequently modified by snowmachines and sparser population.

CONDITION:

This portion of the trail is easily followed in summer or winter. The winter trail is brushed out to 4-5 feet wide while the summer trail is about 2 feet wide. The trail goes up Boulder Creek, crosses the creek, up a slope, and then along a bench to Ford Lake which it then crosses and comes out near the mouth of the Seventymile River. Side trails branch off to trapping cabins.

TREATMENT:

Preservation and adaptive use of the trail is recommended. Since local
residents of the river use the trail to travel from their homes to Eagle, it is expected that the local traffic will keep the trail in order. This portion of the trail is outside the Yukon - Charley proposed area.

SOURCE:

Horace Biederman, Jr.; George Beck, David Evans.

Photograph available.
#16 ANDREW SILAS' FISH CAMP

LOCATION:

Andrew Silas' Fish Camp is 5 miles downriver from Eagle or 7½ miles downriver from Eagle Village on the right bank of the Yukon River.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Andrew Silas' Fish Camp represents the traditional fish camp of the Han Indians during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The location of this fish camp is indicative of the summer settlement patterns of the people. Archeological investigation of some of the fish camps from this area might provide valuable information on the life ways of the Han as they were involved in the taking of one of their major food resources - salmon.

CONDITION:

This site was obtained through oral research for Section 14(h)(1) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act that allows selections of historic sites by regional corporations. This site was not visited, thus, its condition is unknown.

TREATMENT:

This site should be visited, and recommendations regarding preservation determined after a full evaluation has been done even though this fish camp is outside the proposed park.
SOURCE:

Elizabeth Andrews' 14(h)(1) survey.
LOCATION:

The old Army trail begins at Eagle City, but for 6 miles it runs along the left bank of the Yukon River. Then it bisects a horseshoe on the river near Sixmile Lake. It crosses Sixmile Lake and gradually joins what is now recognized as the mail trail near Ford Lake.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

The trail was pioneered, cleared, and maintained by the U.S. Army from 1898 until at least 1903. Much of the mail trail later used segments of this trail. The trail allowed winter transportation and communication between army posts and camps until the telegraph line was built. A roadhouse known as Fox Roadhouse was built along this trail between Sixmile Lake and the Yukon.

CONDITION:

The trail was not found, thus, its condition cannot be evaluated.

TREATMENT:

The Army trail should be documented in greater detail especially those areas where it diverges from the better-known mail trail. After the trail has been documented and evaluated, recommendations for its preservation can be better made.

SOURCE:

Horace Biederman, Jr.; George Beck.
LOCATION:

The roadhouse is located on the old Army trail between the Yukon River and Sixmile Lake approximately 6 miles from Eagle.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

The original Army trail of 1898-1910 between Eagle and Nation went to Sixmile Lake and up to Ford's Lake whereas the mail trail went up Boulder Creek and crossed overland to Ford's Lake. The Fox Roadhouse served the Army trail offering a hot meal and a bed if needed. The first woman married in Eagle was brought up here.

CONDITION:

The exact location is uncertain, thus, the condition of the Roadhouse is unknown.

TREATMENT:

The location should be documented, local history explored, and the site evaluated for historical significance and preservation even though the roadhouse is outside the proposed boundaries.

SOURCE:

Horace Biederman, Jr., C.A. Bryant, Wyman Fritsch.
LOCATION:

Art Steven's Fish Camp is 9½ miles downriver from Eagle or 12 miles downriver from Eagle Village, on the right bank of the Yukon, near the mouth of Shade Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Art Steven's Fish Camp represents the traditional fish camp of the Han Indians during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The location of this fish camp is indicative of the summer settlement patterns of the people. Archeological investigation of some of the fish camps from this area might provide valuable information on the life ways of the Han as they were involved in the taking of one of their major food resources — salmon.

CONDITION:

This site was obtained through oral research for Section 14(h)(1) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act that allows selections of historic sites by regional corporations. This site was not visited, thus, its condition is unknown. This may be a Native allotment.

TREATMENT:

This site should be visited, and recommendations regarding preservation determined after a full evaluation has been done even though this fish camp is outside the proposed park.
SOURCE:

Elizabeth Andrews' 14(h)(1) survey.
LOCATION:
The village is said to be near Seventymile Lake. It is uncertain which lake is known by the Natives by that name. An assumption is made that the village is between Ford Lake and the Yukon River on the left bank of the Yukon.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
Juts'ok means "summer house". Sarah Malcolm reports seeing remnants of the hemisphere-shaped houses of poles and stick when she was a little girl. The site is estimated to belong to the early historic period. Juts'ok might make a valuable complement to Niibëe Zhoo and add substantially to sparse information on the Han Indian.

CONDITION:
The site was not visited, thus, the condition is unknown.

TREATMENT:
The site should be exactly located and the condition evaluated. The site should be protected from pot-hunters even though it is outside the proposal's boundaries. This may be a Native allotment.

SOURCE:
Elizabeth Andrews' 14 (h)(l) survey.
#21 WILLIE JUNEBY'S CABIN NEAR FORD LAKE

LOCATION:

The cabin is 12 miles from Eagle on the left side of the Yukon River, located on Eagle (D-1) 1:63,360.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

The cabin is representative of a subsistence lifestyle that exists today—a rough-hewn log cabin chinked with moss made without power tools. It is just off the Ford Lake trail that has been used as far back as precontact time as a resource area for ducks and muskrats. The cabin was built by an Eagle Native, Willie Juneby.

CONDITION:

The cabin measures 16 by 16 feet but lacks a roof. All 4 walls remain standing. Window and door frames made from lumber help hold the walls secure. Although 2 caches have fallen, the outhouse framework remains.

TREATMENT:

Preservation tactics would mainly include protection from vandals. Restoration or elaborate preservation is not recommended. More information is required to evaluate its significance. This cabin is outside the proposal area. This may be a Native allotment.

SOURCE:

George Beck.

Photograph available.
LOCATION:

The village is said to be 13½ miles from Eagle or 16 miles from Eagle Village on the right bank of the Yukon just below Calico Bluff.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

The village is indicated on a 1951 U.S.G.S. relief map of Eagle Quadrangle. Informants and written sources recall no such village at that location. It may just be a mistake in cartography but should be investigated before ruling it out.

CONDITION:

Since the site was not visited, condition is not known.

TREATMENT:

The area should be surveyed to find out if such a village did exist. Until the site is found, the area should be protected as if the village were there. The village is outside the boundaries of Yukon - Charley.

SOURCE:

#23 PICKERAL SLOUGH CABIN REMAINS AND CONCRETE FIREPLACE

LOCATION:

The cabin is 15 miles downriver from Eagle on the right bank and upper end of Pickeral Slough.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

A fireplace of any kind is most unusual in Yukon - Charley cabins. A concrete fireplace with inlaid brick and local stone is unique. Len Hart and his wife, who was a fiction writer, packed all supplies in on their backs and built the house. Unfortunately they built the large house with green logs that promptly froze and offered little insulation. With only a fireplace to heat the large house, they were exceedingly cold. When Len Hart froze his toes, his wife had to wrestle the firewood. She ended up tearing down the back room for firewood. Len was flown to Fairbanks for treatment, and at break-up she left too. Neither returned.

CONDITION:

The fireplace stands 15 feet high with a rock and mortar facade. Bricks outline the firehole. It appears cast on the spot. Ten yards away is a root cellar lined with logs but filled with water. There appears to be little or no foundation and no debris. Horace and Charlie Biederman probably salvaged the logs from this house for their cabin or for firewood. If the root cellar and fireplace are part of the same house, the house would measure 45 by 24 feet which is unusually large.
TREATMENT:

The fireplace, because of its regional uniqueness, should be preserved and protected from vandals. The lack of a supportive structure is a loss. This site is outside the proposal’s area.

SOURCE:

George Beck; Charlie Biederman.

Photograph available.
LOCATION:
The cabin is 15 miles downriver from Eagle on the right bank and upper end of Pickeral Slough.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
The cabin was built by Charlie and Horace Biederman in 1939 from logs salvaged from an adjacent cabin. Horace used the cabin for trapping.

CONDITION:
The 10-by-12-foot cabin has no roof. It has probably been flooded. The peeled logs, salvaged from the adjacent Len Hart cabin, are mixed with unpeeled logs and chinked with moss. It is 7 logs high.

TREATMENT:
Protection from vandals is recommended. This cabin is outside the Yukon - Charley proposal area.

SOURCE:
Charlie Biederman; George Beck.

Photographs available.
LOCATION:

The cabin is 15 miles downriver from Eagle on the right bank and very upper end of Pickeral Slough, 300 yards up the slough from cabin #24.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

During the 1920's Ed Olson built the cabin to use for trapping. Trapping prices were high during those years, and the Pickeral Slough area was a productive fur region. In the early 1930's Charlie Biederman remembers obtaining some moose from Olson's cache.

CONDITION:

The cabin was not visited nor specifically located. Charlie Biederman reported that the cabin was falling down when he and Horace built cabin #24. Otherwise Horace would have used Olson's cabin as his trapping cabin.

TREATMENT:

The cabin remains should be located and evaluated. Since this cabin is outside the proposal area and there are a number of trapping cabins within the proposal, documentation of the site would be sufficient.

SOURCE:

Charlie Biederman.
#25 TOM YOUNG'S FISH CAMP

LOCATION:

Tom Young's Fish Camp is 14½ miles downriver from Eagle or 17 miles downriver from Eagle Village on a large island across from Pickeral Slough.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Tom Young's Fish Camp represents the traditional fish camp of the Han Indians during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The location of this fish camp is indicative of the summer settlement patterns of the people. Archeological investigation of some of the fish camps from this area might provide valuable information on the life ways of the Han as they were involved in the taking of one of their major food resources - salmon.

CONDITION:

This site was obtained through oral research for Section 14(h)(1) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act that allows selections of historic sites by regional corporations. This site was not visited, thus, it's condition is unknown.

TREATMENT:

This site should be visited, and recommendations regarding preservation determined after a full evaluation has been done even though this fish camp is outside the proposed park.

SOURCE:

Elizabeth Andrews' 14(h)(1) survey.
LOCATION:

The cabin is 16½ miles downriver from Eagle on the right bank of the Yukon River, located on U.S.G.S. map Eagle (D-1) scale 1:63,360.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Fish camps are illustrative of a traditional Native lifestyle. Fish camps provided summer sustenance, and any surplus was dried and stored for winter. Cultural activities took place at these camps giving another texture and dimension to Native life. This fish camp currently belongs to Bob Stacey but was once known as Captain Dalphus' Fish Camp. Captain Dalphus was living at Charley Village in 1914 when it washed out. Later he cared for the dogs at Biederman Camp.

CONDITION:

Only 2 walls, 5 logs high, remain. The rest have been washed away by flooding and age. There are 3 visible cache pits. In the river below is a large eddy where gill nets were placed. It is now a Native allotment.

TREATMENT:

Protection from vandals of the remains is recommended. This fish camp is outside the proposed area.

SOURCE:

Elizabeth Andrews' 14(h)(1) survey; George Beck; David Evans.
#27 STAR - SEVENTYMILE CITY

LOCATION:

Star City is 16½ miles downriver from Eagle, on the left bank of the Yukon River, directly across the river from Bob Stacy's Fish Camp, ¼ mile off the river on a bench.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Regional significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

An early gold-rush town built in 1898 and generally abandoned by 1905. There is some confusion in the documents as to its name. Tappan Adney says Star City washed away. The U.S. Geological Surveyists, Alfred Brooks and E.C. Barnard, have Seventymile City at the mouth of Seventymile River and Star City one mile upriver. Donald Orth gives the description of Star City as being 1 mile east of Seventymile. James Wickersham reports staying overnight in Star City in 1901, and local tradition calls the town Star City. A post office was maintained here from 1898-1902. This is one of four mining camps constructed during the Yukon gold rush boom of 1898-1910. More fabric remains at Star City than at any of them. Additionally, the town's integrity is intact, threatened only by the forest and time.

CONDITION:

Ten cabins remain on a bench approximately 100 yards away from the river. All cabins have lost their roofs, but most of the walls are standing. Built mostly of unneeled logs, the insides are generally squared off. The average size measures 12 by 14 feet. There are a few caches and a couple of rotting boats along the side of the cabins.
CONDITION (continued)

Very little trash was found; a few metal cans and a leather boot were about all. Initially the townsite is difficult to determine because the cabins are 50-75 yards apart and a thick growth of trees separate them from each other. The town cannot be seen from the river nor is it on any maps, thus, obscurity has preserved it from man's ravages. The last cabin at the town at the mouth of Seventymile River washed away by the 1950's.

TREATMENT:

Preservation is recommended. A National Register nomination would be valid. The town can tell a visitor quite a bit about the men that lived there. This townsite is outside the Yukon - Charley proposal area.

SOURCE:

Melvin Ricks; Donald J. Orth; James Wickersham; Alfred H. Brooks; E.C. Barnard; Tappan Adney; George Beck; Barney Hansen; Charlie Biederman.

Photographs available.
LOCATION:

The cabin is 1 mile from the mouth of Seventymile River along the mail trail.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

A recent trapper built this line cabin. The cabin of unpeeled logs, chinked with moss, complete with sod roof, is illustrative of trappers' line cabins both historically and currently. Trapping has always been an important activity for the Yukon - Charley area, and this lifestyle needs fabric for interpretation. In addition the mail trail is now used as a trapper's trail.

CONDITION:

The cabin has been built in recent years. Although it slants slightly, the roof is intact. It stands 9-10 logs high with a bunk opposite the door. The cabin is roughly built and not as tight as the home-base cabin would be.

TREATMENT:

Preservation for possible interpretation is suggested. This cabin is outside the proposed area.

SOURCE:

David Evans.

Photograph available.
#29 MILLER'S CAMP

LOCATION:
Miller's Camp is on the right bank of the Yukon River near the mouth of the Tatorduk River, located by name on U.S.G.S. Charley River Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000 and Charley River (A-1), scale 1:63,360.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
Frank Charles "Heine" Miller initially chopped cordwood for the steamboats at Montauk. Then he went to the mouth of the Tatorduk River and bought out Lucky Laughton. Here he built what came to be known as "Miller's Camp". He hired John Pierson to build the house for him. The ridgepole is one of the largest in the country but Pierson's response: "a little too small". Nothing was large enough for the man. Miller obtained a patent to this homestead March 30, 1925. He used the land as a wood cutting area for the riverboats plying the Yukon River. His house also served the mail carriers and other visitors as a roadhouse. Miller died in 1936. When mail ceased to be carried by dogs and steamboats ceased operating, the roadhouse lost its importance.

CONDITION:
The site consists of a log house, cabin, cache, and storage shed. The house is in ruins caused by a Yukon flood that washed the house off its foundation. The excellent workmanship of the house is still graphically visible with a ridge pole of 15 inches in diameter, glass windows, wallpapered walls, and two rooms, each measuring 10 by 15 feet. The cache,
CONDITION (continued)

storage shed, and cabin are still intact, although the cache is now seated on the ground. The cabin, with a barrel stove, is still used as a stop-over by winter travelers today. Remains of a home-built canoe and boat can be seen. This land is privately owned.

TREATMENT:

Preservation is recommended. Although the site cannot be seen from the river, it is on the topographic maps and, therefore, subject to vandalism and destruction. A National Register nomination could be completed. The camp is outside the proposal area.

SOURCE:

Barney Hansen; Horace Biederman, Jr.; Roger L. Trimble's Antiquities; Charlie Biederman.

Photographs available.
#29A, 29B WOODCHOPPER CABINS  
(not specifically located on the Tatonduk River)

LOCATION:

The cabins are up the Tatonduk River from Miller's Camp. Cabin #29A may be the cabin indicated on Charley River Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000. It is uncertain where Cabin #29B is.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Since steamboats travelling upstream used 40-50 cords of wood a day, they needed enormous quantities of cord wood for a 21-day trip. At the steamboats peak, during the Klondike rush, over 130 of them plied the river. Woodchoppers signed formal woodchopping contracts with the transportation companies to supply a certain quantity of wood at an agreed upon price, usually $8-10. From the 1920's to 1936, Heine Miller had such a wood contract. He hired a number of men to chop wood for him. Two of these woodchoppers lived up the Tatonduk River. They were close enough to be able to haul the wood to Miller's Camp without hardship but far enough away to find good timber. The men usually chopped wood all winter then during the summer went into Eagle where they grew gardens.

CONDITION:

These cabins were not visited nor specifically located. They are off the Yukon but still may be susceptible to floods on the Tatonduk. Since they are contemporary with the cabin on Wood Island, it is likely that the roofs have collapsed.
TREATMENT:

Even though the cabins are outside the proposed area, the woodchopper's story is interesting and significant. Thus the cabins should be specifically located and evaluated. Most of the interpretation, if any is to be given, can be done at the Wood Island cabin.

SOURCE:

Charlie Biederman; James T. Gray; Walter Curtin.
#29C MAX DREWS' CABIN

LOCATION:

The cabin is approximately ½ mile from Miller's Camp on the right bank of the Yukon River. It is indicated on the Charley River Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Max Drews built the cabin in the late 1920's as a woodchopper's cabin. He chopped wood for Heine Miller who had the wood contract for that portion of the Yukon. Transportation companies contracted for several thousand cords of wood each year, usually placing one man in charge of a certain camp. Max Drews, an old-timer from the area, arrived with the Klondike rush then went to work as a woodchopper for Heine Miller. Men seemed to enjoy woodchopping because it allowed them to be their own boss. Generally independent and self-sufficient, the solitary life of a woodchopper and trapper attracted men like Max Drew who also did a little mining during the summer.

CONDITION:

The cabin is in excellent shape. The roof has been restored by a trapper from the area. It is currently used as a fish camp, and may be a Native allotment.

TREATMENT:

The cabin is outside the proposal boundaries but does characterize the woodchopper's life and more particularly, Max Drews. The cabin should be preserved with adaptive use. The cabin began as a woodchopper's cabin,
TREATMENT (continued)

and now is a fish camp. Several scenes of Yukon life occurred here.

SOURCE:

Charlie Biederman.
#30 WOOD ISLAND CABIN

LOCATION:

The cabin is 4 miles from Miller's Camp on the largest of 3 islands referred to locally as "Wood Islands".

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Bane Beechman from the University of Hawaii built the cabin in the late 1930's. After spending one summer floating the Yukon with some University of Hawaii students, Beechman returned to stay for a winter. He spent the winter cutting wood and writing. When he left to move to Central, Heine Miller used the cabin for a woodchopper he employed. The cabin is probably the woodchopper's cabin used by Willie Juneby and can be used to interpret life of a woodchopper. Hundreds of cords of wood were chopped for the sternwheeler that plied the Yukon. Later the wood was dragged by caterpiller to Miller's camp. Enough fabric remains, in addition to a trash pile, that a feeling for the life is created. The cabin was also used by Angus Alec when he trapped the adjacent area.

CONDITION:

The cabin that measures 17 by 13 feet and stands 8-11 logs high is without a roof. The door and window frames are painted white. Boxes nailed to the wall served as shelves and a small table near the door completed the interior furnishings. Cans, bottles, and trash give details to the life of a woodchopper.
TREATMENT:

Preservation is definitely recommended. This was the only woodchopper's hut found still standing. Since few people know of its existence, it has not been vandalized or picked apart by souvenir seekers. A National Register form could be completed.

SOURCE:

Wyman Fritsch; George Beck; Horace Biederman, Jr.; Richard Cook; Charlie Biederman.

Photograph available.
PLATE 2

#30 Wood Island Cabin, view to the south.
#31 WOOD ISLAND ROAD

LOCATION:

The road is 4 miles from Miller's Camp on the largest of 3 islands referred to locally as "Wood Islands".

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Willie Juneby dragged the cord wood by caterpiller during the winter to Miller's Camp. This road cuts across the island through a stand of spruce near the center of Wood Island. At least 6 spur roads branched off the main road.

CONDITION:

Although the road has become overgrown with willow, alder, and rose bushes, it is still visible as a double track trail. It passes next to the Woodchopper's Cabin.

TREATMENT:

Preservation or, at least, minor maintenance in accordance with preservation of the Woodchopper's Cabin is recommended.

SOURCE:

Wyman Fritsch; George Beck; Richard Cook.
#32 INDIAN HUNTING CAMP

LOCATION:

The camp is 4 miles from Miller's Camp on the smallest of 3 islands known locally as "Wood Islands".

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

An Indian hunting camp, although of recent origin, is illustrative of traditional subsistence and lifestyles.

CONDITION:

The camp consists of a few benches and a table around a rock fireplace. Racks for drying meat are still standing back in the woods.

TREATMENT:

Little remains to actually preserve. The site, however, should be interpreted as the continuation of a Native cultural lifestyle. The hunting camp is within the Yukon - Charley proposal.

SOURCE:

David Evans.
LOCATION:

The mail trail is 10 miles from Miller's Camp, near the mouth of Montauk Creek, directly across from Montauk Bluff, and runs parallel to the Yukon for 2 miles.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Regional significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

This is part of the Eagle-Circle mail trail used by all winter river travellers as a means of communication and transportation. It served to join communities and give greater cohesion and unity to the region. The trail's greatest use came during 1898-1940.

CONDITION:

The trail is very visible. The black scrub spruce line both sides of the trail. A 7-foot width has been brushed out, but the muskeg is over shin-deep. This portion of the trail cuts off a horseshoe bend in the Yukon. There are several different trails all leading the same direction. After 2 miles the visible trail is lost.

TREATMENT:

Preservation would simply entail keeping the trees from encroaching on the trail.

SOURCE:

George Beck; Charlie Biederman.

Photograph.
#33 Mail Trail near Montauk.
#34 MONTAUK ROADHOUSE

LOCATION:

The roadhouse is on a bench of land directly across from Montauk Bluff.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Although described by James Wickersham and C.A. Bryant, the roadhouse must have fallen into disrepair upon the rise of Miller's Camp as a roadhouse. C.A. Bryant tells about the owner becoming insane and being a danger to river travellers. Later the roadhouse or the location became mostly a wood camp. Tom Gazu had it then Heine Miller. Initially the main channel of the Yukon passed near the left bank rather than the right bank as it does today, thus the location was ideal for a wood stop.

CONDITION:

The exact location was not found. It may have been washed away or it may have fallen down and is out of sight among the woods. This may be a Native allotment.

TREATMENT:

Finding the exact location of the site and preserving what remains is recommended. The site should be documented.

SOURCE:

George Beck; James Wickersham; C.A.Bryant; Charlie Biederman.
LOCATION:
The trail begins 7½ miles upriver from Nation City, indicated on U.S.G.S. Charley River Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000 and Charley River (A-2), scale 1:63,360, and follows Trout Creek for 6 miles.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
Jack Duvald who was a partner with Johnny Olson and Axel Johnson on the Seventymile River, brought in a caterpiller at the mouth of Trout Creek, followed the creek to its head, then dropped down into the Little Washington Creek, and onto the Seventymile claims. Trapper Al Arp used the trail and two prospectors, Joe Donahue and Mickey Rich. The trail is illustrative of a trapper's and miner's trail. It joins the Gillman Creek Cabin with the Yukon River. Not only was the trail used for trapping but as the main trail for carrying supplies. There are trappers' blazes along the trail indicating trap sets.

CONDITION:
Unfortunately, the forest fire of 1969 has made the trail almost non-existent. Even out of the burn area, the trail is easily lost among the muskeg and swamp.

TREATMENT:
The burn has made it difficult to preserve. The area may once again be trapped and the subsequent trappers will find and maintain the trail for their own adaptive use.
SOURCE:

Charlie Biederman.
LOCATION:
The camp is 3 miles from the mouth of Trout Creek along the Trout Creek Trail.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
Al Arp built it for a trapping line cabin. Al trapped Michigan Creek and Fourth of July Creek as well. His main base camp was the old Ivy City. A typical way station for trappers or a halfway point to Gillman Creek Cabin. Enough remains to piece together a lifestyle of the person using the camp.

CONDITION:
The tent frame is five logs high with a framework onto which a canvas tent can be placed. There are bunks in the rear and shelves along the frame. Part of the framework has fallen down. Ten feet away is a teepee pole arrangement with a Yukon stove built out of an oil barrel and a water bucket with a wooden handle made from a blazo can.

TREATMENT:
Protection from vandals and souvenir seekers is recommended until more information is gained.

SOURCE:
Charlie Biederman.
#36 Trout Creek tent-frame camp, view to the northeast.
LOCATION:

The cabin remains are 6 miles from the mouth of Trout Creek at the terminus of the Trout Creek Trail.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Joe Donahue and Mickey Rice built the cabin as they prospected the surrounding area. They stayed at the cabin until 1941. No one else used the cabin after that. The 1969 forest fire burned the cabin to the ground.

CONDITION:

The cabin, cache, and dog house were all burned to the ground during the 1969 forest fire. All that remains are 2 of the poles that held up the cache, marked by metal piping typically used to keep small animals out of the cache. Nothing remains of the 10-by-12-foot "cabin". It lies in a depression as if part of the hill had been dug out for the cabin. Even the foundation logs are badly burned. Inside the ruins are badly burned junk metal of cans, Yukon stove, and lanterns.

TREATMENT:

Since nothing but the site remains and the forest fire destroyed much of its integrity, recognition of the site is all that is suggested.

SOURCE:

Charlie Biederman.
#37 Gillman Greek Cabin, view to the north showing cache poles.
#38 TROUT CREEK MOUTH CABIN

LOCATION:
The site is approximately 7½ miles upriver from Nation City near the mouth of Trout Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
Max Drew built the cabin about 1935. He built it of cottonwood logs on the ridge overlooking the creek. It was listed on U.S.G.S. topographic map of 1951. Drew was an old prospector and had travelled all over Alaska before coming back to Eagle. For a while he chopped wood for Heine Miller from a cabin just above Miller's Camp.

CONDITION:
This cabin was not found. Since the area was badly burned by the 1969 forest fire, it is unlikely anything remains of the cabin.

TREATMENT:
It is recommended that oral history research be done to find out more about the cabin.

SOURCE:
U.S.G.S. 1951 topographic map; Wyman Fritsch; Charlie Biederman.
LOCATION:

The road is ¼ mile from the Yukon on the left bank of Nation River crossing a horseshoe portion of land to the Yukon River.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

This is part of the road used to carry the coal from the Nation River mine to the Yukon River.

CONDITION:

Tall spruce trees frame the road that has since become overgrown with willow, alder, and rose bushes. The road is approximately 15-20 feet wide and is a short cut to the Yukon by cutting off last small horseshoe of the Nation River, about 75 yards long. There are no signs of coal along the Yukon River bank, but river floods and channel changes could have wiped out any traces.

TREATMENT:

Recognition of the road and interpretation of the logistical problems involved in mining coal and other non-precious minerals is all that is needed.

SOURCE:

George Beck.
LOCATION:

The mine is 1 mile from the Yukon River on the left bank of the Nation River.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

In 1897 the Alaska Commercial Company attempted to open a coal mine on the left bank of the Nation River 1 mile from the Yukon. About 2,000 tons of coal were mined, sledded to the Yukon, and burned on river steamers or transported to the Dawson market. Owing to the irregularity of the coal deposit, the consequent uncertainty of the supply, and the expense of mining, the mine was abandoned before 1902. Several features around the Nation River relate directly to this mine—roads, stockpiles of coal, even a cabin.

CONDITION:

The mine workings had caved in by 1903. Since the face of the bluff on which they are located is subject to local slides, the exact location of the mine cannot be determined.

TREATMENT:

The mine and its influence on other developments on the Yukon River should be recognized and interpreted. It can be tied into the problems of fuel for the steamboats and the resourcefulness of commercial companies.

SOURCE:

Arthur Collier.
#41 CHRISTOPHER 'PHONOGRAPH' NELSON CABIN

LOCATION:

The cabin is near the mouth of Hard Luck Creek, on the right bank of the Nation River, 7 miles from the Yukon.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

The cabins on the Nation River at Hard Luck Creek, Tindir, and Jungle were referred to by Nelson as 7 mile, 22 mile, and 35 mile trapping cabins. He considered the 35 mile cabin (near Jungle) as his home base. There are many stories in the local lore about 'Phonograph' Nelson. He was a trapper whose early and illegal trapping caused problems with Fish and Wildlife. These cabins are associated with him and the Bluff cabin at the mouth of Nation River. All have his characteristic style for triangular dog houses.

CONDITION:

None of these sites were visited. The condition of the cabins, therefore, is also unknown.

TREATMENT:

These sites should be documented and evaluated for preservation purposes and the Park record. This cabin is not within the proposed boundaries.

SOURCE:

George Beck; Horace Biederman, Jr.
LOCATION:

The cabin is near the mouth of Tindir Creek, 22 miles from the Yukon River on Nation River.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

The cabins on the Nation River at Hard Luck Creek, Tindir, and Jungle were referred to by Nelson as 7 mile, 22 mile, and 35 mile trapping cabins. He considered the 35 mile cabin (near Jungle) as his home base. There are many stories in the local lore about 'Phonograph' Nelson. He was a trapper whose early and illegal trapping caused problems with Fish and Wildlife. These cabins are associated with him and the Bluff cabin at the mouth of Nation River. All have his characteristic style for triangular dog houses.

CONDITION:

None of these sites were visited. The condition of the cabins, therefore, is also unknown.

TREATMENT:

These sites should be documented and evaluated for preservation purposes and the Park record. This cabin is not within the proposed boundaries.

SOURCE:

George Beck; Horace Biederman, Jr.
LOCATION:
The cabin is near the junction of Jungle Creek with the Nation River, 35 miles from the Yukon River.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
The cabins on the Nation River at Hard Luck Creek, Tindir, and Jungle were referred to by Nelson as 7 mile, 22 mile, and 35 mile trapping cabins. He considered the 35 mile cabin (near Jungle) as his home base. There are many stories in the local lore about 'Phonograph' Nelson. He was a trapper whose early and illegal trapping caused problems with Fish and Wildlife. These cabins are associated with him and the Bluff cabin at the mouth of Nation River. All have his characteristic style for triangular dog houses.

CONDITION:
None of these sites were visited. The condition of the cabins, therefore, is also unknown.

TREATMENT:
These sites should be documented and evaluated for preservation purposes and the Park record. This cabin is not within the proposed boundaries.

SOURCE:
George Beck; Horace Biederman, Jr.
#44 LOG CAPSTANS

LOCATION:

The capstans are 20 yards upriver from the Nation Bluff Cabin (Christopher Nelson's Cabin). One is just below the cabin depression; the other is near the Yukon River bank separated by 20 yards.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

These capstans may have been built and used by Christopher Nelson to help pull his big inboard motorboat up onto the bank, or these may have been built by the coal company and used by Nelson. More information is needed to determine their role.

CONDITION:

Two capstans stand 20 yards apart. One is in excellent shape with the wire cable still intact. The other looks as if it had been flooded and now stands in disrepair. There are 4 holes, 3 feet high which support 2 large poles which in turn support the center wood capstan. There is one long turning pole 12-15 feet long. Between the 2 capstans are 2 large logs 3 feet apart that might have served as rails.

TREATMENT:

Preservation and protection is strongly recommended. These are unique and fascinating even if their use is uncertain.

SOURCE:

George Beck; Jim Layman.

Photographs.
#44 Log capstan, view to the south.
LOCATION:

The depression is 20 yards upriver from Nation Bluff Cabin (Christopher Nelson's Cabin), approximately 50 yards away from the Yukon River.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

This may be a larger cabin than the current cabin standing 20 yards downriver. This may have been built during the coal mining period. There is no documentary evidence, thus, its role in history is unknown.

CONDITION:

A deep depression 10 by 12 feet large could have been a root cellar for a much larger house. There are logs remaining that suggest cribbing while others suggest floor supports. It is surrounded by new growth of willow and small aspen.

TREATMENT:

Archeology or more oral history may determine what the depression is. If it were a bunkhouse for the mine, the story of the coal mine could be well interpreted at this site. Preservation is recommended until its value is known.

SOURCE:

George Beck.
LOCATION:

The cabin is 1 mile upriver from Nation City, on the right bank of the Yukon River, shown on Charley River Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000 and Charley River (A-2), scale 1:63,360.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Christopher 'Phonograph' Nelson built the current cabin in 1934. He took the tent frame left from the coal mine operation and built it into the cabin. There are a number of stories in the local lore about 'Phonograph'. He got his name because he was a non-stop talker. If a pause came in the conversation, he filled it with "and-ah-and-ah" until he could think of something more to say. He was a trapper whose early and illegal trapping caused problems with Fish and Wildlife. Although he died of a heart attack, there are stories that he died from drinking turpentine.

CONDITION:

The cabin is in excellent shape. There is the original cabin made from square-cut-peeled logs measuring 12 by 12 feet and a frame addition that serves as an entrance and workroom that is 8 by 12 feet. The cabin has been covered with flattened cardboard boxes on the outside and paper on the inside. Tar paper covers the new roof on the frame entrance but flattened tin kerosene cans cover the sod roof of the original cabin. There are several triangle shaped dog houses, a standing cache and a fallen cache. There are remains of 4-6 boats in the area all in great disrepair.
TREATMENT:

The area has been badly abused by campers and hunters. It is strongly recommended that the whole area be placed on the National Register although at least two different periods and probably three are represented.

SOURCE:

George Beck; Charlie Biederman; Jim Layman; Eagle City Records; Horace Biederman, Jr.

Photographs.
#46 Christopher Nelson's Cabin, view to the north.
PHOTO NOT AVAILABLE AT PRESS TIME.

#46 Christopher Nelson's triangled-shaped dog house, view to the south.
LOCATION:

The coal is 30 yards downriver from the Bluff Cabin (Christopher Nelson's Cabin) and about 50 yards away from the Yukon River.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

The stockpile of coal is explicit evidence of the Nation River coal mine. In 1903 there were over 100 tons stockpiled from mining done in 1898 (Collier; 1903, p.35).

CONDITION:

The stockpile is very evident 30 yards downriver from the Bluff Cabin and on the same level as the cabin. The pile is approximately 15 by 20 feet large. A small road in the back of the cabin leads to the site.

TREATMENT:

Protection from any major disturbance and recognition of what coal represented to business, mining, and individuals is all that is recommended.

SOURCE:

George Beck.

Photograph.
#47 Stockpile of coal near Nation Bluff, view to the north.
#48 TRAPPERS' CUBBY SETS

LOCATION:

The cubby sets are in the vicinity of Nation Bluff Cabin (Christopher Nelson's Cabin).

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Cubby sets are a technique used by some trappers to trap lynx. They are built to attract the curiosity of the lynx. Oftentimes the cubbies were baited with fish during the summer, so that the lynx would associate the cubby with food. Then in winter when fur was prime, the cubby would be baited with a trap. A large number of cubby sets in the area show the great diversification of sets. Most trappers in the area now put traps where lynx travel rather than training lynx to come to the cubby sets. These cubby sets are no longer used and represent changing patterns in trapping.

CONDITION:

The cubby sets appear to be in good condition. Some of those built with branches have deteriorated but on the whole they all are recognizable as cubby sets.

TREATMENT:

Preservation and interpretation is recommended. Several are unusual cubby sets - the one made from the bow of a boat and the one made from scrounged-up wood.

SOURCE:

David Evans.
#48 Trappers' cubby set typically made from cut branches.
#48 Trappers' cubby set made from spruce boughs.
#48 Trappers' cubby set made from salvaged logs.
#48 Trappers' cubby set made from the bow of a boat.
#49 TRAPPERS' TRAIL

LOCATION:

The trails radiate out from Nation Bluff cabin (Christopher Nelson's Cabin) primarily following the Nation and Yukon Rivers.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Trappers' trails allow transportation by dog teams or on snow shoes. These trails are used primarily for setting out traps, but they are also used as a means of transporting supplies and travelling in the winter. The Yukon and its tributary streams and rivers have been trapped since the 1870's by white men and earlier by Indians.

CONDITION:

There are several trails from the Nation Bluff cabin up the Nation River. These are primarily marked by blazed on the trees. Winter travel along rivers is generally hard because overflow and wind cause drifting of snow. Thus, trails usually are cleared out in the woods.

TREATMENT:

Recognition and possible interpretation is all that is suggested. If trapping is allowed, trappers will maintain the trail.

SOURCE:

David Evans.
#50 TRAPPERS' TRAIL

LOCATION:

The trail follows the right bank of the Yukon River from the Nation Bluff cabin (Christopher Nelson's Cabin) to Rock Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

An important trail that runs along the north bank of the Yukon. It is not part of the mail trail which runs along the south bank. It was and is used as a trail along which traps are set.

CONDITION:

The trail is visible and well maintained by current trappers.

TREATMENT:

No recommendations. Trappers' trails are not advisable for hiking trails. They are primarily winter trails and often cross knee-deep muskeg and tussocks.

SOURCE:

David Evans.
LOCATION:

The Taylor Place lies directly opposite from Nation City, on the right bank of the Yukon River, just 1½ miles from the Nation Bluff Cabin (Christopher Nelson's Cabin).

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Jim Taylor mined Fourth of July Creek before the Fairbanks stampede. After 1902 the miners happily sold their claims to Taylor and went on to Fairbanks. Taylor tried to develop the mines himself, importing a donkey engine that walked itself from Nation City to the mines. Taylor eventually sold the consolidated claims to a Sedro-Woolley, Washington, mining companies which attempted hydraulic mining methods. Taylor also worked at the Washington Creek Coal Mine until they went bankrupt, owing him $2,400 in back wages. In disgust with mining he turned to trapping. He is associated with Nation City as well as his own well-built home. He died of cancer in 1933 willing most of his possessions to Ed Biederman.

CONDITION:

The main house burned to the ground several years ago caused either by lightening or by careless hunters. Two cabins remain with roof and walls intact. One has been turned into a recreation hall, 25 by 13 feet large, with a barrel stove, bar, and dresser drawers. The shop is smaller, 13 by 13 feet large, with a sod roof and a stove that once served as a forge. A summer dog-run for 4 separate dogs, built with evenly spaced spruce logs,
CONDITION (continued)
goes down to the running brook. The dog houses are carefully made of peeled and squared-off logs. The winter dogbarn, 10 by 10 feet, is divided into 6 dog stalls, and a picket-like fence provides a 30-foot run.

TREATMENT:

The complex should be preserved to distinguish between temporary trappers' or miners' cabins, and those built by settlers planning to stay indefinitely. The workmanship is some of the best on the river rivaled only by Miller's Camp, Woodchopper Roadhouse, and Slaven Cabin.

SOURCE:

Barney Hansen; Wyman Fritsch; Charlie Biederman.

Photograph.
LOCATION:

Nation City is located by name on U.S.G.S. Charley River Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000 and on Charley River (A-2), scale 1:63,360.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Regional significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

One of four mining camps or supply bases in Yukon - Charley area. It was the largest and lived the longest. The townsite and early mining claims are recorded in records that are part of Eagle City Records. This town served as a steamboat stop and supply center for Fourth of July Creek mining area. William E. Noyes who owned the roadhouse, also served as Postmaster from 1908-1919. Later Frank M. Young was appointed from 1917-1924. Nation is typical of small abandoned mining communities along the Yukon that suffered when new gold strikes were discovered.

CONDITION:

Two cabins have been built or rebuilt using logs from other old buildings around Nation. Many of the logs from other buildings were used for firewood, thus, the "City" itself consists of just a few foundations. The roadhouse, 30 by 33 feet large, has only a few logs plus a depression. A two-room cabin or store has walls 2 logs high. Counting the 2 rebuilt cabins, there are 11 buildings, a sled, a cache, some machinery and a few dog houses. Forty acres around this site is patented.
TREATMENT:

Preservation is recommended. The "Nation Post Office" is a three-foot mail box that resembles a rural mailbox. It is presently at the Taylor Place but is likely to be stolen and made into a dog house. The site, despite the rebuilt cabins, has kept its integrity. The boat landing is still visible. A National Register nomination can be completed. It should be protected from further destruction.

SOURCE:

Eagle City Records; Barney Hansen; Roger L. Tremble's Antiquities Site Survey for BLM; U.S.G.S. Bulletins; Donald J. Orth; Melvin Ricks; James T. Gray.

Photographs.
PLATE 14

#52 Rebuilt trapper cabin at Nation City, view to the east.
#52 Rebuilt smokehouse at Nation, view to the east.
#52 Possible foundation of Nation's Roadhouse, view to the north.
#52 A typical cabin remains at Nation, view to the southeast.
PLATE 18

PHOTO NOT AVAILABLE AT PRESS TIME.

# 53 Fred Krager's burned homestead cabin, view to the south.
LOCATION:
The Krager homestead is 1 mile from Nation City along the Fourth of July Creek road. The cabins are indicated on U.S.G.S. Charley River Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000 and Charley River (A-2), scale 1:63,360.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
Very few areas have been homesteaded and patented in the Yukon - Charley area. This homestead, although burned in the 1969 fire, was obviously cleared and farmed. The produce could have been sold to the Fourth of July mines or to the steamboats. George Matlock, Alaska's own brand of mountain man, had the farm first and built the first buildings. Fred Krager patented about 40-80 acres. At one time the Alaska Road Commission had built an airstrip nearby. This homestead figures strongly in a number of local stories.

CONDITION:
The homestead has returned to rosebushes and alders and the forest fire destroyed all buildings. The cabin remains still can be plainly seen as the Fourth of July road passes near them. One cabin was either a dug-out or had an 8-foot-deep root-cellar or meat-tunnel and extended into 2 rooms. Stoves, barrel drums, and pieces of metal can be found in the area.
TREATMENT:

Not much remains to be preserved but the area can easily interpret another facet of Yukon River life— that of homesteading and farming.

SOURCE:

George Beck; Horace Biedermeier, Jr.; Wyman Fritsch.

Photograph.
LOCATION:

The road begins at Nation City on the left bank of the Yukon River and follows the Fourth of July Creek 8 miles to the Fourth of July Creek mine, located by name on Charley River Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000 and Charley River (A-2), scale 1:63,360.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

The road began as a trail in 1898-99. When the Fourth of July area consolidated, a wider trail was put in to facilitate getting supplies and equipment from the Yukon riverboats. A donkey engine literally walked its way up the trail. After World War II, Yukon Placers built the road that now exists. The greatest development in hydraulic mining occurred at this time.

CONDITION:

The road is clearly marked although it has been overgrown with alders and rose bushes. Once the road leaves the low-creek land, near the bluffs, the road forks into a high road and a low one plus a walking trail. The high road is above the muskeg and has been improved considerably. It is at least 30 feet wide.

TREATMENT:

The road is easy walking unlike mining and trapping trails. The road represents the amount of work necessary to successfully mine an area. This
TREATMENT (continued)

road is one of two road systems in the Yukon - Charley area historically constructed. Trappers have also used the road. Most of the road resides inside the proposal.

SOURCE:

Barney Hansen; U.S.G.S. Bulletins.
LOCATION:

The mine is 8 miles from the left bank of the Yukon River along the Fourth of July road that leaves the Yukon River at Nation City, located by name on U.S.G.S. Charley River Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000 and Charley River (A-2), scale 1:63,360.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Regional significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

This hydraulic mine was the largest producer in the Yukon - Charley area until 1936 when dredges began operating on Coal and Woodchopper Creeks. Before the 1902 Fairbanks stampede over 50 people worked claims here. At this time most of the miners sold their claims to James Taylor who attempted to develop the mine himself. With a large donkey engine he started a sawmill. Taylor later sold the consolidated claims to a Sedro-Woolley mining company who in turn hired George Matlock to manage the mine. Matlock, Alaska's own brand of mountain man, built a 9-mile ditch to bring water from Washington Creek for the hydraulic plant. Richard Bauer bought the mine about 1926. It then went to Casper Ellingen who in turn leased it to Central Mining Company. Finally after the war, Yukon Placers put in the road and made the most money from it. The mine, however, is most closely associated with Richard Bauer. He hired a number of local miners who worked long enough for their own grubstake. There are many tales about Dick Bauer from how he froze his feet to how he spent his money in Las Vegas each year. A number of artifacts remain to interpret placer mining.
CONDITION:

There remains only 3 standing buildings and 1 cache. Most of the buildings have been used for firewood because of the dearth of trees in close vicinity. One serves as a shop with a blacksmith forge; another is the living quarters for the current caretaker; the third is a house with a painted yellow interior, hot water heater, and a root cellar. Scattered around the area are metal wheels, pipes, machinery, and other mining apparatus. Once there were stables, machine shop, bunkhouse, and a sawmill whose boiler (part of Taylor's original donkey engine) still remains. The house has logs numbered—the house had been moved log by log from another location on the creek.

TREATMENT:

Preservation is recommended as is National Register nomination but the mine is currently private property. This site is outside Yukon—Charley proposed area.

SOURCE:

Barney Hansen; U.S.G.S. Bulletins; Wyman Fritsch; George Beck; Charlie Biederman.

Photograph available.
#55 Fourth of July Creek mine - boiler used in sawmill.
#55 Fourth of July Creek mine - pump used in hydraulic mining.
#55 Fourth of July Creek mine - rocker box used in simple placer mining.
55  Panning for gold on Fourth of July Creek, David Evans and Jack Wheeler.
LOCATION:

The cabin lies 6½ miles from Nation City, along the Fourth of July Creek road, near the mouth of Crowley Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Yukon-Charlie, Charlie Loapkey, built the cabin in the early 1940's. He was grubstaked for a number of years by Herman Joshlin, a bush pilot who flew the area. Yukon-Charlie mostly prospected and did the necessary assessment work but no real mining. He was also known as "Yukon Wind" because he would rather lie and tell long-winded stories than tell the truth, simply because it took longer. This cabin is illustrative of a well-built and maintained mining cabin.

CONDITION:

The cabin, 18 by 24 feet, is in good shape although the roof has caved in on one end. The ridgepole is held up by 3 inside support poles. The walls are squared off and may have been wallpapered at one time. A stove, table, 2 bunks, and plank floor show touches of a more permanent nature than most cabins in the area.

TREATMENT:

Preservation ought to be considered because of the quality of the cabin. Since the Fourth of July mine is out of the borders of the proposed park, this cabin could interpret the mining done on the creek.
SOURCE:

Charlie Biederman; Jack Wheeler.

Photograph.
#56  Crowley Creek Cabin, view to the north.
LOCATION:

The 9-mile ditch joins Washington Creek and Ruby Creek that in turn runs into Fourth of July Creek. The ditch is indicated as such on Charlie River (A-2) scale 1:63,360. The ditch is outside Yukon - Charley proposed boundaries.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Before the 1902 Fairbanks Stampede, there were around 50 people working claims on Fourth of July Creek. Most of the miners sold their claims to James Taylor. Taylor began by bringing in a large donkey engine which pulled itself from Nation to the mines under its own power. The steam engine powered the sawmill. Taylor then sold out to a Sedro-Woolley mining company in Washington. The Sedro-Woolley outfit hired George Matlock to manage the mine. To increase the water for hydraulic mining, Matlock constructed a 9-mile ditch to bring water from Washington Creek over a pass to Fourth of July Creek. Unfortunately because of the porous rock base, the only time water flowed in the ditch was during a heavy rain when the mine did not really need it. The mine was then sold to Richard Bauer about 1926 and it changed hands a few more times. The ditch never functioned as the developers had envisioned.

CONDITION:

The ditch was not visited. Reports state it looks like a dry stream bed.
TREATMENT:

The ditch should be visited and its value determined before preservation measures can be adopted. Even though the ditch is outside the proposal's boundaries, its history has a direct impact on the proposed park's history.

SOURCE:

Barney Hansen; Jack Wheeler.
#58 IVY CITY

LOCATION:

The remnants of Ivy City lie about 3 miles from Nation City, at the mouth of Schley Creek, which is right across from a big rock known as Near Rock.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

One of 4 mining communities that began with the Yukon boom of 1898-1900. It competed with Nation City to supply the miners of Fourth of July Creek and eventually lost out. It also served as a steamboat stop--drawn on Captain James Gray's track chart of 1899. Some years later, Alvin Arp built a cabin near the abandoned city and used the old buildings for firewood.

CONDITION:

The exact location was not found. The forest fire of 1969, however, devastated the land. Only by actually walking over the foundations could the town be found. It is doubtful that much remains to even mark out a townsite.

TREATMENT:

It would be good to search out the upriver side of Schley Creek for the remaining foundations so that the townsite can be properly interpreted and documented.
SOURCE:

George Beck; U.S.G.S. Survey Bulletins; Donald J. Orth; J.C. Cantwell;

James T. Gray.
LOCATION:

The Rock Creek Tent Frame is 7½ miles below Nation City, on the right bank of the Yukon River, at the mouth of Rock Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

A modern tent frame 20 by 15 feet is set up only 15 feet from Rock Creek Cabin. It is unknown who built it, probably hunters.

CONDITION:

Since the frame is only a few years old, its condition is excellent. Lots of modern garbage and trash lie about.

TREATMENT:

If modern day use and hunting methods are to be interpreted then the tent frame should be preserved. Otherwise it has little local significance.
LOCATION:

The Rock Creek Cabin is 7½ miles below Nation City, on the right bank of the Yukon River, at the mouth of Rock Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Harry Parker claimed Rock Creek Cabin. He was a mechanic, not a trapper, from Rampart and Fairbanks. One day near Rock Creek, Parker's partner heard a shot and a shout. He ran toward the shot to find a cow moose dead, but before dying she had trampled Parker to death.

Chris Peterson, a Canadian, and Larry Dennis, an American, also used Rock Creek mainly as a thoroughfare to the Kandik, but they may have trapped the creek and used the cabins as well.

CONDITION:

A 15-by-13-foot cabin with 3/4 of its sod roof fallen in stands 8-9 logs high with a small root cellar and pole bunks. Household utensils, stove, and bob sled are scattered about the yard. Its cache had a log foundation but only a tent frame for sides. The cache was built without nails, instead, wire was used.

TREATMENT:

More documentation is required before a full evaluation can be made however, the cabin should be preserved if significance warrants it.

SOURCE:

George Beck; Barney Hansen.
PLATE 24

PHOTO NOT AVAILABLE AT PRESS TIME.

#60 Rock Creek cabin, view to the north.
LOCATION:
The older cabin lies 100 yards back from the right bank of the Yukon River 7\frac{1}{2} miles below Nation City.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
The cabin may be an old trapping cabin of Peter Summerville's. He trapped Rock Creek during the early 1920's. He trapped up Rock Creek to the Kandik. Each summer he would take his supplies up the Kandik in a poling boat and cache them for winter trapping.

CONDITION:
Only 3 logs on one wall plus foundation logs remain of the old cabin. It is approximately 13 by 11 feet large, built of unpeeled logs, 10 feet from the creek. The tree cache is 20 feet high with 4 poles stretching across to 2 trees. The ladder still remains.

TREATMENT:
Little remains of the cabin or cache to preserve. They should be documented for Park record.

SOURCE:
George Beck; Charlie Biederman.

Photographs.
#61 Older Rock Creek cabin, view to the west.
LOCATION:

The trail begins at the mouth of Rock Creek, on the right bank of the Yukon River, 7 1/2 miles below Nation City. The trail follows Rock Creek for 7 1/2 miles then joins one of the Kandik tributaries.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Supposedly Chris Peterson, a Canadian, and Larry Dennis, an American, trapped together in the upper Kandik— one trapped the American side, the other the Canadian. They used Rock Creek as the most direct route to the upper Kandik but it is uncertain if they trapped it. The trail is an excellent example of a trapper's trail following the transition zone—that area between the flat muskeg and black spruce and the birch and white spruce. It also follows the creek so that animals must cross the trail, maybe even follow it, if they want water. In certain places the trail skirts around rock outcroppings just as animals would do. The trail may have been part of the aboriginal trail system that went up Rock Creek to the Kandik above Johnson's Gorge. Pete Summerville trapped along this trail in the early 1920's.

CONDITION:

The trail is easy to follow and well blazed.

TREATMENT:

If the trail is used by current trappers it will be preserved.

SOURCE:

George Beck; Barney Hansen; Wyman Fritsch; Charlie Biederman.
LOCATION:

The deadfall is 3/4 of a mile up Rock Creek Trail, which is 7½ miles below Nation City, on the right bank of the Yukon River.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Deadfalls were once the major method of trapping before the introduction of the metal trap and the metal snare. Now deadfalls are seldom made. They involve a great deal of work and aren't always successful. Only 2 deadfalls were found in the Yukon - Charley area. This was the largest and best constructed.

CONDITION:

It is a small 3 sided cabin with a roof and walls six logs high. The fourth side consists of a heavy door made of heavy logs. When the animal enters, he triggers the door that falls and crushes him. The deadfall, 5-feet-square, is in excellent shape.

TREATMENT:

It is recommended that the deadfall be preserved as a remnant of another period and for its uniqueness in the Yukon - Charley area.

SOURCE:

David Evans.

Photographs.
#63 Trapper's deadfall on Rock Creek Trail, view to the north.
LOCATION:

The cabin is at the mouth of Glenn Creek, on the left bank of the Yukon River, 12 miles below Nation City.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

During the 1950's Dr. LeFevre of Fairbanks built the cabin as a hunting cabin. When the doctor died as a result of wounds obtained in an airplane crash, the cabin fell into disrepair. Apparently Frank Warren of Circle repaired it and uses it as a hunting cabin. The cabin is easily seen from the river--the house 'log' shows many visitors.

CONDITION:

The 14-by-14-foot cabin is in excellent shape with a tin roof, rain gutters, fiberglass insulation, and plywood paneling. Inside is a wood-burning cook-stove, 3 cots, chairs, stools, and houseware. A frame storage shed with cans piled along side, an old rotting boat, and a new boat complete the site.

TREATMENT:

Preservation is recommended. It is one of the most habitable buildings on the river. Adaptive use is suggested.

SOURCE:

George Beck; Barney Hansen.

Photographs.
#64 Glenn Creek Cabin, view to the northwest.
LOCATION:

The coal-mining road departs from the main trail at the Washington Creek Roadhouse, goes up the Yukon River, crosses Washington Creek and follows the right bank of the Creek for 5 miles, then crosses to the left until the mines are reached.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

There are very few roads that have been built in Yukon - Charley. This road was one of the first and was built with the future possibility of a railroad in mind. The small one-man placer mines of the area never developed the land to the extent that larger companies often did. The Nation coal mine, Fourth of July gold placer mine, Woodchopper and Coal Creek dredge mines, and Ben Creek placer mine were the only other enterprises to invest in expensive road building.

CONDITION:

The road parallel to the Yukon River has been recently cleared by a bulldozer attempting to pull the steam tractor out from the muck. The road parallel to Washington Creek, however, is overgrown. Only tall spruce trees frame the 20-foot-wide road that scrub spruce and alder have overgrown.

TREATMENT:

No preservation treatment is recommended but recognition and interpretation of the road is advised.
SOURCE:

Arthur Collier; Hudson Stuck.

Photographs.
#65 Washington Creek coal mining road parallel to Washington Creek.
LOCATION:

The 3 coal mines are reported between 10-12 miles from the Yukon River along the mining road that follows Washington Creek. Two mines are on the right bank and one is on the left bank of Washington Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Regional significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Coal was discovered on Washington Creek in 1897 by N.B. LaBrie who turned the location over to Alaska Coal and Coke Company. Five tons of coal were mined, and horses and dog teams sledded the coal to the Yukon River during the winter. The mines, now caved in, lay 12 miles from the Yukon. Casper Ellingin of Alaska Coal and Coke Company had a shootout on the San Francisco courthouse steps over the mine. Although the coal tested satisfactorily, the coal seams lay below water level, thus, development would necessitate expensive pumping and hoisting plants in addition to expensive transportation. Many of the historic remains along this creek are relics from this period.

CONDITION:

The mines had caved in by 1903 and the exact location would be difficult to determine, yet their presence can be interpreted by the steam tractor and the mining road.

TREATMENT:

No preservation treatment is recommended.
SOURCE:

Arthur Collier; Hudson Stuck; George Beck.
LOCATION:
The cabin is approximately 10 miles from the Yukon at the junction of Surprise Creek and Washington Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
The cabin originally served as a winter sled for the Washington Creek coal mine. The steam tractor pulled these large sleds filled with coal from the mines to the Yukon approximately 10-12 miles away. The sleds had runners made of 3-inch fur planking and 5/8-inch sled shoes that were 6 feet long. One prospector took the abandoned sled and made it into a cabin near the mouth of Surprise Creek. If the cabin remains it would illustrate the size of the operation at Washington Creek and would show the adaptive use typical to bush life.

CONDITION:
The cabin has not been specifically located, thus its condition cannot be evaluated.

TREATMENT:
The cabin, if it still remains, should be located and its condition evaluated. It would be a unique cabin for the area. Not only could it interpret the Washington Creek coal mine and the logistical problems in transporting the coal, but it could depict the prospector's life style. This cabin is outside the proposal area.
SOURCE:

Charlie Biederman.
LOCATION:

The cabin is 22 miles downriver from Nation City on the left bank of the Yukon River, 1 mile downriver from the mouth of Washington Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

George Beck built the cabin in 1947-1948 to be used only as an over­night cabin when he was carrying supplies from the Yukon to his mining cabin up Washington Creek. The cabin is characteristic of small one-man cabins or of line cabins along trap lines. Trails lead up Washington Creek and along the Yukon River. George Beck never trapped from the cabin but it was used by Dr. LeFevre.

CONDITION:

The cabin is in excellent shape though George says it brings in water. It measures 10 by 11 feet. Built of unpeeled logs, the roof still stands. The door is still hinged, but the stove is in the yard rusted away. The cache has fallen down. Four dog houses still remain formed by logs with spruce piled high to serve as a roof. Lumber is still carefully stacked on a rack beside the house.

TREATMENT:

The cabin should be protected. It has not yet suffered the fate of vandalism. Life along the river from 1920-1950 could be easily interpreted here. Adaptive use is suggested.
SOURCE:

George Beck; Horace Biederman, Jr.

Photographs.
#67 George Beck's Washington Creek Cabin, view to the southeast.
#68 WASHINGTON CREEK ROADHOUSE

LOCATION:
The roadhouse is 23 miles downriver from Nation City on the left bank of the Yukon River, 1 3/4 miles downriver from the mouth of Washington Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
The roadhouse built by David Koontz was a frequent stopping place especially during winter travel along the mail trail. James Wickersham, C.A. Bryant, and Hudson Stuck all mention the hospitality of the roadhouse. Stuck tells about one of the lady owners taking rifle shots at those people who did not stop at her roadhouse. He remembered well the intimidating and cajoling placards she posted along the trail. The roadhouse, like others along the mail trail, captured certain aspects of warmth, companionship, and hospitality of a by-gone era.

CONDITION:
The roadhouse was two rooms or 36 feet long and 17 feet wide. The inside squared-off-wall was papered with 1906 newspapers. Only 1/8 of the sod roof still remains and the wall facing the Yukon has buckled, weakened by the door and window. The back wall, 8 logs high, stands intact. The house is well built, using wooden dowels for strength and endurance. A second house, possibly the bunkhouse, is less preserved. It measures 18½ feet by 17½ feet. Only 3-5 logs on each side remain. It is also made of unpeeled logs outside and chinked with moss. The name, Nord and
CONDITION: (continued)
Olson, was written on the shuttered windows. A dog barn with 5-6 stalls completes the setting.

TREATMENT:
The buildings should be protected and interpreted. They were important during the turn of the century and probably played a role in the development of the abortive Washington Creek coal mine. A National Register nomination could be completed but other roadhouses, Woodchopper Creek for instance, are better preserved and more illustrative but also not as old.

SOURCE:
Arthur Collier; Hudson Stuck; James Wickersham; C.A. Bryant.

Photographs.
#68 Washington Creek Roadhouse, view to the northwest.
#68 Second cabin at Washington Creek Roadhouse, view to the northwest.
#68  Dogbarn at Washington Creek Roadhouse.
LOCATION:

The tractor is located 23 miles downriver from Nation City on the left bank of the Yukon River, 2 miles downriver from the mouth of Washington Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

The tractor was bought by Dr. Ryan, a San Francisco physician, for use in transporting supplies to the Washington Creek coal mine. The tractor pulled boxcar-like sleds filled with coal from the mines to the Yukon. One of the sleds was used as a cabin at the mouth of Surprise Creek. Unfortunately the coal did not prove of high enough quality for steamboats and the company went bankrupt. The tractor is one of the most dynamic relics of the Yukon - Charley area.

CONDITION:

The tractor stands 13 feet high and 26 feet long. The wheels alone are 8 feet high. The valves, gages, and gears are missing. George Beck took the boiler on 2 dog sleds to serve as a rain barrel at Biederman's Camp. The bolts in the Biederman fishwheel likewise came from the tractor's spokes. George also took the lumber from the cab to serve as doors and windows for his mining cabin up Washington Creek. Thus, parts of the tractor have been adapted by another era for other uses as is characteristic of the subculture of bush life.
TREATMENT:

The tractor is now visible from the river because within the last 2 years someone bulldozed the area and tried to remove the tractor. The tractor should be protected from further vandalism or destruction. National Register nomination is recommended especially if more details could be found or if its uniqueness in Alaska could be verified.

SOURCE:

Hudson Stuck; George Beck; Charlie Biederman.

Photographs.
#69 Washington Creek steam tractor, view to the northwest.
LOCATION:

The cabin ruins are 3½ miles upriver from the mouth of the Kandik River and on the right bank of the Yukon just across from the mouth of Westrinarin Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Frank Fish built the cabin probably in the 1930's as a trapping cabin. Unfortunately the cabin burned down. Subsequent floods following spring break-up have probably removed any trace. Frank Fish and his brother trapped the Kandik River. They obtained their supplies from the steamboat and then cached their winter supplies along the river in line cabins.

CONDITION:

The cabin was not specifically located. Since it was burned down, it is unlikely that much remains.

TREATMENT:

Aside from an attempt to document the exact location of the cabin, no treatment is recommended.

SOURCE:

Charlie Biederman.
LOCATION:

The cabin is approximately 3 miles upriver from the mouth of the Kandik River, on the right bank of the Yukon, across from the mouth of Westrinarin Creek, about ½ mile downriver from Frank Fish's Cabin.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Ingess Solomon built the cabin. He probably used it as a supply base. Obtaining his supplies from either the steamboats or Eagle, he would store them in the cabin until he could cache them in his line-cabins. He may have trapped from the cabin.

CONDITION:

The cabin was not specifically located. The condition of the cabin is unknown.

TREATMENT:

The cabin or its remains should be located and evaluated. Additional history of the cabin is also needed.

SOURCE:

Charlie Biederman.
#70 CHARLEY'S VILLAGE

LOCATION:

The village is 1½ miles from the mouth of the Kandik River, on the right bank of the Yukon River, between the upriver end of the S-shaped lake and the Yukon River.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Regional significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

This is the only historic Indian village that resided within the boundaries of Yukon - Charley. Frederick Schwatka first recorded the village followed by Billie Moore, and James Wickersham. Finally Hudson Stuck tells that in 1914 the village was washed away and the Natives moved to Circle. James Wickersham also tells several stories about Chief Charley. Henry Apell of Hudson Bay Company recognized the head of a musk ox that Charley had killed at the headwater of the Kandik. Reportedly, Chief Charley helped with the boundary survey. Travellers along the mail trail often stayed overnight at the village.

CONDITION:

The village was washed away. Nothing remains but a grassy bank. Archeology might yield something. Across the S-shaped lake on a bench covered with birch is the grave yard for Charley's Village. A picket fence encloses 3-4 graves.

TREATMENT:

The cemetery should be located and protected. Archeologists could
TREATMENT: (continued)

find the boundaries of the village. Since very little is known about the Han Indians, historically as well as prehistorically, this site is significant. A National Register nomination should be considered following the archeologists' report.

SOURCE:

   George Beck; Hudson Stuck; Fredrick Schwatka; Captain Billie Moore; Cornelius Osgood; Leroy N. McQuesten; Charlie Biederman.
LOCATION:
The cabin is 1½ miles upriver from the mouth of the Kandik, on the right bank of the Yukon, near the downriver end of the S-shaped lake.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
The small cabin whose origin is unknown is unique for Yukon - Charley. It may be a trapper's line cabin, a way station for the mail trail, or a dog house.

CONDITION:
It measures only 7 feet by 10 feet with a 26-inch-tall door. It stands only 3 feet high or 7 logs high. Some of the logs are even split in half lengthwise. It would not be a warm cabin. One pole remains that may be part of a cache.

TREATMENT:
Preservation is recommended until its origin and use are known. In any event it is unique for the area.

Photographs.
#71 S-Shaped-Lake Cabin, view to the southeast.
LOCATION:

The cache is 1½ miles upriver from the mouth of the Kandik, on the right bank of the Yukon, near the downriver end of the S-shaped lake.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Whose cache is unknown, thus its place in history cannot be determined.

CONDITION:

Only 1 cache pole still stands but 3 others have fallen down. No remains of a cabin were found.

TREATMENT:

No treatment recommended unless further documentation merits preservation.

Photograph.
LOCATION:
The trail begins 1 mile from the mouth of the Kandik River, the right bank of the Yukon River, near the upriver end of Kandik Slough and runs parallel to the Yukon 200 yards off the river.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Regional significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
The mail trail is very visible along the Yukon at this point. It is currently used as a trapper's trail but also as the best way for winter travel.

CONDITION:
The trail is wide, about 6 feet, and well-traveled and marked.

TREATMENT:
The trail should be preserved and used as it was historically—for winter transportation.

SOURCE:
Local trappers.
LOCATION:

The cabin site is 28 miles downriver from Nation City, on the right bank of the Yukon River, near the upriver end of the Kandik Slough, and 100 yards off the Yukon.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Frank Fish built a cabin and a cache near the Yukon where he could meet steamboats bringing his supplies. He would cache his supplies at this cabin while he carried as much as possible to his base cabin at the mouth of Three Mile Creek and the Kandik.

CONDITION:

Only 3 poles with metal around them that belonged to the fallen cache are easily discerned. A few notched logs are found randomly about with no apparent design.

TREATMENT:

No treatment recommended but documentation and possibly interpretation is strongly suggested.

SOURCE:

George Beck.

Photograph.
LOCATION:  
The cabin is at the mouth of the Kandik River on the right bank of the Yukon River.

SIGNIFICANCE:  
Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:  
Gordon Bertison from Circle built the cabin. Other details are not known.

CONDITION:  
The cabin is in excellent shape. It measures 12½ feet by 15 feet. It has its roof and a barrel stove. Only a few cabins have dirt floors; this is one. A tent frame covered with canvas stands 15 feet high and served as the cabin's cache. A lot of trash remains around the yard.

TREATMENT:  
Since the cabin is in good shape, it should be preserved and used accordingly.

SOURCE:  
George Beck.

Photograph.
#75 Kandik Mouth Cabin, view to the north.
LOCATION:

The roadhouse once stood 3/4 mile from the mouth of the Kandik River, on the right bank of the Yukon River, directly across from Biederman Camp.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Tom King built the roadhouse around the turn of the century and suffered through many break-up floods. This roadhouse rivaled the Washington Creek Roadhouse, which prompted the rather extreme measures of threatening or shooting travellers who by-passed the Washington Creek Roadhouse. At the same time, Tom King chopped and sold wood for the steamboats. He also had some of the few horses in the area.

CONDITION:

The roadhouse burned in 1918. Later Ed Biederman tore down what remained and moved it across the river to Biederman Camp where it stands solidly today.

TREATMENT:

The site should be located, documented, and evaluated as to proper preservation treatment.

SOURCE:

George Beck; Horace Biederman, Jr.; Hudson Stuck; Charlie Biederman.
LOCATION:
The camp is 3/4 mile from the mouth of the Kandik River, on the left side of the Yukon and is indicated on the Charley River Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000 and Charley River (B-4), scale 1:63,360.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Regional significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
This site is probably the most significant site in Yukon - Charley in fabric remaining and in historical significance throughout the region. Ed Biederman came from Bohemia at the age of 13. His father, who was in the export business, helped him get to America. In Philadelphia he became a baker's apprentice. Eventually he made it to San Francisco where he heard of the Klondike strike. In 1899 he headed north but diverted to Nome when he learned of the new stampede. Once in Nome, he discovered all the good ground had been staked so he went to St. Michael. He was working for the Northern Commercial Company when they got the bids for the mail contract. Initially he carried the mail from Rampart to Tanana and back, however, in 1912 when Northern Commercial Company changed their policy to subcontract with their drivers, Ed took the route between Eagle and Circle. During the summer he boarded dogs for trappers and gold miners who did not want the problems of caring for dogs in the off season. In 1918 he bought logs for $50 from the Fish brothers, trappers along the Kandik, and tore down Tom King's Roadhouse for his bunkhouse. Biederman Camp is approximately halfway between Eagle and Circle. Ed and his sons, Horace and Charlie, ran the mail by dog team from Eagle to Circle and return from
PLACE IN HISTORY (continued)

1912-1938, except for eight years when he lost the contract--four when he froze his feet and four others when horses and airplanes were used experimentally. After 1938, airplane pilots had the mail contract. The Biederman's stayed in Eagle during the winter, but during the summer they smoked and canned great quantities of salmon for dog food as well as for the dining room table. As high as 60 dogs a summer were boarded and as many as 3 tons of fish were caught annually. Biederman's also served as an informal roadhouse for travellers along the mail trail. A few trappers and gold miners used Biederman's as a base camp. Ed Biederman died in 1945 and the family moved into Eagle to remain year around.

CONDITION:

In July of 1976 the camp reflected a nostalgic return to the Yukon River of the 1930's. By August, however, the flavor was lost as the new owner of the Native allotment had removed much of the furnishings that had helped to transcend four decades of "progress". The house, 39 by 17 feet; the shed or bunkhouse, 14 by 16 feet; the cache, 12 by 15 feet; the steam house, 10 by 8 feet; and the meat tunnel are in excellent shape with roofs and walls intact. Only the dog barn has lost its roof and 2 of its walls. There are 8-10 boats in various stages of disrepair. The fish baskets, 8 by 10 feet, and the fish-drying racks, 71 by 16 feet, remain to depict very graphically the size of the operation. Numerous dog houses and various paraphernalia characteristic of the lifestyle add other dimensions.
TREATMENT:

Preservation is strongly recommended. National Register nomination is advised. The cooperation and enlightenment of the current owner would prevent unnecessary destruction of one of the most important historic sites in Yukon - Charley.

SOURCE:

Lois Kitchener; George Beck; Horace Biederman, Jr.; Charlie Biederman.

Photographs.
PLATE 36

#77 Biederman's House, view to the northwest.
#77  Biederman's shed, view to the west.
#77 Doghouses at Biederman's, view to the southwest.
#77 Form for dogsled runners at Biederman's.
#77 Fishracks at Biederman's, view to the northwest.
#77 Fishwheel baskets at Biederman's, view to the northwest.
LOCATION:

The cabin is 100 yards downriver from Biederman Camp on the left side of the Yukon River.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

George Beck arrived in the Yukon - Charley area in 1934. He worked for Dr. Patty at Coal Creek gold mining dredge until he met and married Nellie Biederman. For the next 10 years he lived in his own house near the Biedermans trapping, hunting, and fishing. For 2 winters he prospected for gold on Washington Creek. Because George Beck's lifestyle is characteristic of all whom have lived in Yukon - Charley and because he is one of very few oldtimers who not only knows the area's history and its people but actually lived it himself, the cabin is significant. George Beck is almost a culture hero to the people currently trapping on the Yukon River.

CONDITION:

The cabin is only 150 yards downriver from Biederman's Camp. It is in good repair with an aluminum roof covering the original sod roof. The root cellar and plank floor are in good shape. The cache, however, has fallen down.

TREATMENT:

The cabin should be preserved. If George Beck's approval and cooperation
TREATMENT: (continued)
could be obtained, a National Register nomination should be processed.

SOURCE:
    George Beck; Horace Biederman, Jr.

Photographs.
#78 George Beck's Cabin below Biederman's, view to the south.
LOCATION:

The way station is 3/4 mile from Biederman Camp, near the upriver end of the slough, on the left bank of the Yukon River.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

After Ed Biederman froze his feet in 1925, the mail contract went to John Palm for four years. During those years the Alaska Road Commission contracted with Sandy Johnson—a trapper, gold miner, and carpenter—to build a cabin downriver from Biederman's Camp. The cabin would provide a stopping place for those carrying the mail contract who did not want to use Biederman's Camp. This is one of very few cabins in the Yukon – Charley area built solely for the purpose of providing a way-station for mail carriers. The Biederman's built at least 2 cabins between Biederman's and Circle as way-stations, but these cabins were not located.

CONDITION:

The cabin measures 12 by 12 feet but has lost its roof and 2 of its walls. Its glass windows have fallen out, but a table and bunk still remain inside the house.

TREATMENT:

If the cabin were in better repair, preservation would be recommended. As it is, protection from further vandalism or destruction is advised.

SOURCE:

George Beck; Charlie Biederman.

Photograph.
#79 Mail Trail Way-station, view to the west.
LOCATION:
The trail follows a creek between Biederman Bluff and Chester Bluff 6½ miles from Biederman Camp on the right bank of the Yukon.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
This is a typical trapping trail. Like many trapping trails it follows the creek that allows a natural highway for animals and trappers. Blazes on the trees often located a trapper's set. Although the 1951 topographic map shows the mail trail going along this trail, mail carriers say that the mail trail was across the river. This may have been one of Sandy Johnson's trapping trails.

CONDITION:
The trail is well marked and visible. Trappers' signs are recognizable such as blazes on trees and occasional traps.

TREATMENT:
No treatment is recommended unless the trail is used for hiking, then interpretation of trapping could be done.

SOURCE:
1951 U.S.G.S. topographic map; Charlie Biederman.
Photograph.
LOCATION:

The cabin is directly across from the mouth of the Charley River on the right bank of the Yukon River.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Sandy Johnson arrived in the Yukon - Charley area about 1900. He prospected Sam Creek and Ben Creek. Although he mined during the winter, he also trapped. This cabin was across the river from Al Ames cabin. A cabin here allowed him to trap Andrew Flats. He may have made the trapping trail between Biederman Bluff and Chester Bluff. This cabin served as a line cabin. His base cabin was most likely the Sam Creek cabin. Sandy Johnson built a large number of the cabins in Yukon - Charley, and they usually remain in better shape for a longer period of time than their contemporaries.

CONDITION:

The cabin was not specifically located, thus its condition could not be assessed.

TREATMENT:

Since Sandy Johnson is a major figure in the twentieth century Yukon - Charley area, the cabin should be located and evaluated to supplement the existing knowledge of this fascinating person.

SOURCE:

Charlie Biederman.
LOCATION:

The cabin is 1½ miles from the mouth of Charley River, on the right bank of the Charley River, but on the left bank of the Yukon.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Al Ames built the cabin in the summer of 1941. He also built a cabin on Bonanza Creek. Presumably these cabins were built for trapping purposes.

CONDITION:

The cabin is in good condition. The roof is intact as are the walls and floor. There are 2 rooms; the back room is a more recent addition. The house measures 30 by 15 feet. Glass windows and doors are uncracked. Stove, tables, benches, and beds complete the furnishings. This site is a patented homesite.

TREATMENT:

The cabin should be preserved and maintained, at least, at its present condition. If more information dictates that it should be on the National Register, an application should be completed.

SOURCE:

George Beck; Horace Biederman, Jr.; Wyman Fritsch; Charlie Biederman.

Photographs.
PLATE 44

#81 Charley River mouth cabin, view to the northwest.
#81 Sluice box at Charley River mouth cabin, view to northeast.
LOCATION:

The cabin is 9 miles up the Charley River from the Yukon, on the left bank of the Charley River, near the mouth of Bonanza Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Al Ames built the cabin presumably as part of his trap line. The bomber pilot who crashed in the upper Charley River area during World War II used this cabin on his heroic trip to civilization.

CONDITION:

The cabin is in good shape even livable. It measures 18 by 15 feet with a wood floor, root cellar, stove, table, and beds. Adjacent to the cabin are a fallen cache and an outhouse with an attached steam bath.

TREATMENT:

The cabin should be maintained and preserved as it currently exists. If additional research provides sufficient data, a National Register nomination should be prepared.

SOURCE:

George Beck.

Photographs.
#82 Bonanza Creek Cabin, view to the southeast.
LOCATION:

The town is approximately 6 miles along Bonanza Creek from its mouth to where it makes a big bend.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

The Charley River was prospected thoroughly. Only on Bonanza Creek, however, did a small town evolve. George Beck reports that the town was large enough to merit its own recorder and recording district for mining claims. He states that the town lay at the bend in Bonanza Creek. The existence of this town makes the Charley River appear less pristine and untouched than it had initially seemed when compared to the gold mining of the surrounding area. Also, Dr. Ernest Patty sent teams into the Bonanza Creek region to test drill for possible gold dredging lands.

CONDITION:

Condition unknown.

TREATMENT:

It is strongly recommended that this town be located and evaluated for a clearer picture of the history of the Charley River.

SOURCE:

George Beck.
LOCATION:

The cabins are 23 miles up the Charley River from the mouth of the Charley, on the left bank of the river near the mouth of Silvia Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

The 2 cabins appear older than any cabins surveyed. Their style is also different from the later cabins built by trappers. The windows are small, only 12 by 10 inches big. The roofs of both have fallen in. The hand-hewn door has the word SILVIE written at the bottom. Two shovels are propped up in front of one of the cabins.

CONDITION:

The cabins stand between 4-6 logs high, but the loss of the roofs has caused substantial damage to the cabins' walls. Apparently very little lumber could be found to use for framing the door and windows. A bed and workbench remain but very little else.

TREATMENT:

Since the cabins may well be prospectors' cabins from the turn of the century, their preservation may be important. More information is needed before a complete evaluation can be made.

Photographs.
#84 Silvia Creek Cabin A, view to the northwest.
LOCATION:
The deadfall is 29 miles up the Charley River from its mouth, on the left bank of the river, nearly a ½ mile downriver from the mouth of Drayham Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
Deadfalls were once the primary method of trapping but have since been replaced by metal traps and snares. Since deadfalls require no metal, trappers who had more time than money used them. In recent times the craft is seldom employed, thus, this site is almost an antique artifact. This deadfall has 11 upright poles that provide a "cubby", which is baited. As the animal enters the cubby to get the bait, he triggers the killing log that falls and kills him. Some trappers during the 1920's and 1930's used this method of trapping but no one in the area today does.

CONDITION:
The deadfall is completely intact. The upright poles are 18 inches high and 3 inches in diameter, whereas the killing log is 5½ feet long and 6 inches in diameter. The deadfall is in a small saddle of a steep cliff that drops off 150 feet below to the Charley River, but on the other side it gently slopes into a wide flat valley. It characterizes not only the technique used in building deadfalls, but the psychology and thought behind their placement.
TREATMENT:

Preservation is strongly advised, maybe even a National Register nomination if no other deadfalls are found that are as representative of the trapping theme in Yukon - Charley history, that are as well preserved, or that depict such craftsmanship.

SOURCE:

David Evans.

Photograph.
#85 Marten deadfall on the Charley River, view to the northwest.
#86-#89 CABINS NOT SPECIFICALLY LOCATED ON CHARLEY RIVER

LOCATION:

A cabin is at the mouth of Drayham Creek (#86), a cabin is near the mouth of Highland Creek (#88), 2 cabins are near the mouth of Essie Creek (#89), and a couple of graves are on an island off Hanna Creek (#87).

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

There are supposedly cabins at the mouth of nearly every creek on the Charley River. Sam McCourtney built a cabin at the mouth of Drayham. The Drayham Creek valley proved so steep that in order to set up his sluice box he had to set poles across the creek to bridge the two sloping hills. There are also reported 2 cabins near the mouth of Essie Creek, a cabin near the mouth of Highland Creek that Earl Stout built while prospecting, and a couple of graves on a small island off of Hanna Creek. Al Brown and Phil Berail trapped the upper Charley River and consequently must have left trapping cabins.

CONDITION:

Condition unknown.

TREATMENT:

Location of these sites should be found, documented, and evaluated.

SOURCE:

George Beck; C.A. Bryant; Charlie Biederman.
LOCATION:

These sites are on Copper Creek, which is approximately 56 miles from the junction of the Charley and the Yukon Rivers. Copper Creek is approximately 27 miles long and is on the right side of the Charley River.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Regional significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Eleven prehistoric and one historic cabin were found in a 1976 archeological survey. Two historic cabins indicated on the map were not found. All prehistoric sites were located on prominent vantage points, had similar soil profiles, had easy access to water resources, were in strategic locations for game, and served as artifact manufacture and game lookout sites. This survey concludes that there has probably been intense aboriginal use of the Upper Charley River area over an extended period of time. The area may prove to be of prime importance in early-man studies.

CONDITION:

All the sites were undisturbed by man. Several are referred to as blow-outs--natural erosion has exposed artifacts. The historic cabin was without a roof, and had walls that are only 5 logs high. Numerous historic artifacts--shovel, buckets, stovepipe--lie about the cabin.

TREATMENT:

The high concentration of sites at the headwaters of Copper Creek should be investigated further for possible inclusion in National Register.
TREATMENT:(continued)
The area, in any event, should be protected until it has been thoroughly surveyed. The artifacts that are subject to vandals or pot-hunters should be collected and accessioned.

SOURCE:
   Peter Bowers and Dave Hoch, Copper Creek Archeological Survey.
LOCATION:

The crash site is on the left bank of the Upper Charley River approximately 4 miles upstream from the mouth of Copper Creek. The site is on the slope of a 5,510 foot mountain.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Regional significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

During a winter in World War II a bomber on a training mission malfunctioned and crashed in the mountains of the Upper Charley River. Before crashing, however, the crew were able to parachute out. Only the pilot survived the long ordeal to safety. He found Phil Berail's food cache but failed to recognize dried food or snowshoes. Miraculously he stumbled into Al Ames' cabin (on Bonanza Creek?) who took him by dog team to Woodchopper Creek Camp and safety. The story is one of the most dramatic and exciting stories told of the Yukon - Charley area in a national magazine, The New Yorker.

CONDITION:

The site of the bomber crash was not visited, therefore, its condition cannot be evaluated.

TREATMENT:

Exact details of the story need to be researched and interpreted. The airplane itself may qualify for preservation but is probably in poor
TREATMENT: (continued)

condition. In any event the site should be protected from vandals.

SOURCE:

George Beck; Jim Layman; John McPhee.
#105 UPPER CHARLEY RIVER TRAPPING CABINS

LOCATION:
The cabin on the tributary of the east fork of the Charley River is 27 miles from the mouth of Copper Creek. The other cabins are outside the proposal.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
Only cabin #105 lies within the proposal but cabins #106-#110 are adjacent to the area. Elmer Nelson trapped this area from 1946-1949. He used the upper Charley River even though the bulk of his cabins resided outside the proposed boundaries. The Pittsburg side of the divide, he felt, had better fur--mostly marten and wolf. He built cabin #109 on Pittsburg Creek, which measured 12 by 10 feet inside dimensions. The Charley River cabin #105 measured 15-foot-square. He air-dropped his supplies near his base cabin then landed at nearby Gold Run airstrip (for Pittsburg Cabins) or on frozen lakes near Charley River cabin. These cabins and associated trapping trails could be compared and contrasted with trapping cabins and trails elsewhere in the Yukon - Charley proposal. The history of trapping from 1920's to 1950's has never been thoroughly done.

CONDITION:
These cabins have not been visited, thus, their condition cannot be evaluated.
TREATMENT:

At least the Charley River Cabin should be visited, documented, and evaluated for preservation recommendations. The other cabins should be part of the state survey and considered for protection.

SOURCE:

Elmer Nelson.
#106-#110 UPPER CHARLEY RIVER TRAPPING CABINS

LOCATION:

The cabin on the tributary of the east fork of the Charley River is 27 miles from the mouth of Copper Creek. The other cabins (#106-#110) are outside the proposal.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Only cabin #105 lies within the proposal but cabins #106-#110 are adjacent to the area. Elmer Nelson trapped this area from 1946-1949. He used the upper Charley River even though the bulk of his cabins resided outside the proposed boundaries. The Pittsburg side of the divide, he felt, had better fur—mostly marten and wolf. He built cabin #109 on Pittsburg Creek, which measured 12 by 10 feet inside dimensions. The Charley River cabin #105 measured 15-foot-square. He air-dropped his supplies near his base cabin then landed at nearby Gold Run airstrip (for Pittsburg Cabins) or on frozen lakes near Charley River Cabin. These cabins and associated trapping trails could be compared and contrasted with trapping cabins and trails elsewhere in the Yukon - Charley proposal. The history of trapping from 1920's to 1950's has never been thoroughly done.

CONDITION:

These cabins have not been visited, thus, their condition cannot be evaluated.
TREATMENT:

At least the Charley River Cabin should be visited, documented, and evaluated for preservation recommendations. The other cabins should be part of the state survey and considered for protection.

SOURCE:

Elmer Nelson.
LOCATION:

The cabin is \( \frac{1}{4} \) mile up Sam Creek from the Yukon, on the left bank of Sam Creek, and on the left bank of the Yukon. It is indicated on the Charley River Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000 and Charley River (B-4), scale 1:63,360.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Sandy Johnson built the cabin as part of his mining and prospecting lifestyle and also as his supply base from which he met steamboats. Johnson also built a number of cabins in Yukon - Charley, all maintain his distinct building style and, as merit to his craft, are still standing. The bottom of each log is curved to overlap and tightly fit over the log immediately beneath it. Johnson came to the Yukon in the early 1900's, prospecting, trapping, and building cabins and trails until 1946. He built the Slaven Cabin as well as the mail trail cabin near Biederman Camp, and the Ben Creek Cabin.

CONDITION:

The cabin has recently been repaired. The roof and walls remain standing. A well-made cache 10 feet by 10 feet is almost as large as the cabin, 11 by 13 feet. A mining shaft and several trails are also in the vicinity.

TREATMENT:

Protection from vandals is recommended. The Ben Creek Cabin or Slaven
TREATMENT: (continued)

Cabin are better examples of Sandy Johnson's work. The cabin however, should be preserved and used adaptively rather than constructing new buildings.

SOURCE:

   Barney Hansen; Jim Layman.

Photograph.
#111 Sam Creek Cabin, view to the northwest.
#111 Sam Creek mining shaft, view to the east.
LOCATION:
The trail begins at the junction of Sam Creek and the Yukon River, passes the Sam Creek Cabin between the cabin and the cache, follows Sam Creek to Ben Creek, then up Ben Creek, over the hills to Boulder Creek and on to Coal Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
The trail leaves the Yukon and follows Sam Creek to Ben Creek. It was the major supply trail to Ben Creek before the Coal Creek Road and the subsequent Ben Creek Road were constructed in the 1930's. The trail is currently used as a trapping trail as it may well have been used during the winters in the 1910-1920's. In fact when river conditions prevented the mail trail from following the Yukon, the mail drivers used Sandy’s trail up Sam Creek over to Ben Creek and down Coal Creek. Being sheltered by the trees and being usually maintained, allowed this trail as a possible alternative to the more direct mail route.

CONDITION:
The trail is still well marked and reasonably well maintained. It is wide and skirts most of the muskeg. Since it is used as a trapping trail, it is kept in good repair.

TREATMENT:
Preservation is recommended. The trail is one of the very few existing
TREATMENT:

trails in Yukon - Charley that allows good hiking. Its historical significance does not merit National Register nomination unless more information details greater import.

SOURCE:

Barney Hansen, Jim Layman.
#113 BIG SMOKEY CREEK CABIN

LOCATION:

The cabin is about 2½ miles upriver from the mouth of Sam Creek, on the right bank of Sam Creek, just above the junction with Big Smokey (a locally known and named creek).

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

It is uncertain who built the cabin or when. It is believed that the cabin may have been used by the Brown brothers. Al Brown died of scurvy on Copper Creek in the upper Charley River country.

CONDITION:

Only 6 logs of each wall remain; the roof has collapsed. Wooden pegs were used to hold the logs together and to hold the door frame onto the logs. The 12-foot-square cabin has logs of 12 inches in diameter. The cache has fallen to the ground.

TREATMENT:

Protection from vandals is the minimum treatment advised. The site needs more documentation before a full evaluation can be made.

SOURCE:

Barney Hansen.
#113 Big Smokey Cabin, view to the north.
#114 ALFRED JOHNSON'S CABIN

LOCATION:

The cabin is reported at the mouth of Ben Creek where it joins Sam Creek approximately 4 miles along the Ben Creek trail from the Yukon River.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

In 1898 Alfred Johnson came to the Yukon River from Dawson with Sandy Johnson. While Sandy staked Upper Ben Creek area, Alfred "sniped" at its mouth. He built a cabin where he stayed for a while. The cabin burned down in October of 1928 with all Johnson's savings and contents. It is uncertain if the cabin was ever rebuilt. Alfred and Sandy Johnson, Martin Ademic, and Max Drews were the main gold miners and trappers of the Sam Creek-Ben Creek area prior to World War II. They lived a characteristic lifestyle of combining mining, trapping, and wage labor. Sandy Johnson is the best known of the 4 men.

CONDITION:

Neither the cabin or the cabin site was found, thus, its condition is unknown.

TREATMENT:

The cabin site should be found, documented, and evaluated for preservation treatment.

SOURCE:

Barney Hansen; The Alaska Weekly.
LOCATION:

The cabin is 4½ miles along Sam Creek from its junction with the Yukon and is on the left side of Sam Creek. The creek that adjoins Sam Creek is known locally as "Little Rosie Creek".

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Sandy Johnson built the cabin that Arthur 'Cap' Reynolds used. 'Cap' Reynolds had mined Fourth of July Creek before Jim Taylor consolidated the area. He even once had a small steamboat from which he acquired the nickname, 'Cap'. In the late 1940's Phil Berail, a local trapper, found him dead in the trail bringing in a load of freight. Later speculation arose when a freeloader who had stayed with 'Cap' was arrested for murdering a man for his money in the Juneau area. Sandy Johnson and Barney Hanson felt the freeloader not only took Cap's belongings but murdered him to do so.

CONDITION:

The sod roof of the cabin has fallen, but the walls are still standing. The house measured 18 by 12 feet with a small entranceway of 12 by 8 feet. The cabin's cache has also fallen down. There are a large number of historic artifacts--2 sleds, a toboggan, a trunk, several wooden barrels, saws, old bottles, radio, a sluice box, even old clothes.

TREATMENT:

The site should be protected and the surface artifacts collected and
TREATMENT: (continued)

accessioned before they are lost. The cabin is associated with a colorful character of the Yukon - Charley area. It might qualify for the National Register, but in order to be properly maintained, the roof would have to be restored. Since it is 6 miles from the Yukon, the expense might be prohibitive or at least of lower priority.

SOURCE:

Jim Layman; Barney Hansen; George Beck; Jess and Cathryne Knight.

Photograph.
#115 'Cap' Reynolds' Cabin, view to the west.
LOCATION:

The camp is 4½ miles along Ben Creek Road from the center of the Coal Creek airstrip or 7 miles via road to the Yukon. The cabin is on the right bank of Ben Creek approximately 3 miles from its junction with Sam Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

In 1898 Sandy Johnson and his partner, Alfred Johnson, built a raft at Lake Bennett and came down the Yukon. They stopped at Sam Creek and prospected up to Ben Creek where they found some gold. Between 1898-1917 Sandy built the large cabin currently existing at Ben Creek as well as the cabin at the mouth of Sam Creek, the Alaska Road Commission wayside station near Biederman, the Slaven Cabin, and 'Cap' Reynolds cabin on Sam Creek. He prospected six claims along Ben Creek almost to the junction of Sam Creek. During the winter he ran a trap line as well as drift-mined Ben Creek. During the summer he would sluice the stockpile of frozen paydirt. Barney Hansen bought the claim in 1945 but only worked it for a year or two. In 1961 he sold the mine to Jim Layman who currently spends each summer mining the claim.

CONDITION:

The mining district looks like a gold mine. There is a portable drill, a portable steam boiler, which was once used for thawing frozen ground, a "Giant" for hydraulic mining, an automatic dam, and two sizes of sluice
CONDITION: (continued)

boxes. The cabin, next to the Slaven Cabin, is one of Sandy's best built cabins. It measures 20 by 20 feet and is currently lived in each summer. A porch has been added as well as a small shed--each modified by using the thin metal from which the Daily-News Miner is printed.

TREATMENT:

The site is the epitome of what a gold mine should look like. Since there remains all the fabric that represents a small-scale mining outfit, I would recommend the site for the National Register. Sandy Johnson is closely associated with the site as is Barney Hansen, an oldtime miner currently living in Eagle. The mining equipment from the steam boiler to the bulldozers to the sluice boxes should be preserved and protected as essential to the meaning of the site. Cooperation with the claim's owner is strongly advised. Jim Layman would most likely be interested in any preservation ideas.

SOURCE:

Barney Hansen; Jim Layman.

Photographs.
#116 Sandy Johnson's Cabin at Ben Creek, view to the East.
#116 Ben Creek Mining District, left to right, portable drill, cache, sharpening wheel.
#116 Portable steam boiler at Ben Creek.
PLATE 56

#116 Ben Creek Mining District, 'Giant' hydraulic piping.
#116 'Automatic mining dam' on Ben Creek.
#116 Cross-cut for sluice and hydraulic mining at Ben Creek.
#116 Sluice box on Ben Creek.
#116 'Clean-up' sluice box at Ben Creek Mining District.
#117 BEN CREEK AIRSTRIP

LOCATION:

The airstrip is approximately 2 miles along Ben Creek Road from the center of Coal Creek airstrip or 5½ miles from the Yukon River by road. Charley River (B-5) has the airstrip misplaced.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Barney and Jim Hansen built the airstrip in the late forties. They shipped in supplies both by barge and by constructing a raft of twelve 55-gallon drums then freighted them by cat to the top of the ridge. When completed the airstrip was 3200 feet long and could handle a DC-3. The airstrip continues to be used in expediting the transport of food, supplies, and equipment for use in the Ben Creek mining district.

CONDITION:

Since the airstrip is used routinely, it is in excellent shape. It is still at least 2500 feet long. A small overnight cabin, 10 by 6 feet, on skids rests at the end of the runway. The cabin is equipped with a propane stove, bed, and a few groceries.

TREATMENT:

The airstrip is the twentieth century's modification to old-time mining by applying current technology to the transportation of supplies and equipment. The airstrip is associated with Barney Hansen, a warm,
TREATMENT: (continued)

friendly old-time miner. Its historic value in other areas appears minimal. As long as the Ben Creek area is mined, it is expected that the airstrip will be maintained.

SOURCE:

Barney Hansen.
LOCATION:

Ben Creek Road departs from the Coal Creek Road 3 miles from the Yukon or approximately half-way down the airstrip. It crosses Coal Creek, climbs the ridge, traverses to Ben Creek airstrip, then drops off the ridge into Ben Creek mining district.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Before World War II, Ernest Patty built the road from Coal Creek up over the ridge to Ben Creek. The road was built to expedite exploration of the Ben Creek mining district, which had been mined since 1898. Although Patty drilled the area, no further large-scale development followed. The road, nonetheless, allowed easier transportation of supplies than the trail from the mouth of Sam Creek. It also allowed the introduction of large machinery to construct an airstrip and to mine larger areas of land.

CONDITION:

The road is in excellent shape. The grade is quite steep so four-wheel-drive vehicles are recommended. The road makes a nice hiking trail. It leads directly to the airstrip, but then forks--one going to Ben Creek and the other to 'Cap' Reynolds Cabin on Sam Creek.

TREATMENT:

The road will be maintained as long as it is needed for the current
TREATMENT: (continued)

mining operations on Ben Creek. Its historic significance does not merit
large sums of money to preserve it indefinitely. It makes a pleasant
hiking trail.

SOURCE:

Barney Hansen.

Photograph.
#118 Road to Ben Creek Mining District, view to the west.
LOCATION:

The cabins are located 4½ miles downriver from the mouth of Sam Creek on an island in the Yukon called Dalphus Island.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

These cabins belonged to a group of Natives who chopped wood for the steamboats. Among them were Woodchopper Joe Henry, an Indian from Circle, and Captain Dalphus, an Indian from the Kandik River area. Captain Dalphus also spent some time at Charley's Village. Later Woodchopper Joe returned to Circle, and Captain Dalphus helped board dogs at Biederman's. The cabins were common sites along the Yukon. Steamboats, moving upstream, burned an average of 40 cords of wood a day, consequently great quantities of wood were needed to supply the 30 to 40 steamboats that plied the Yukon. Natives often used the occupation as a means of getting the white man's supplies. Sometimes they trapped at the same time.

CONDITION:

These cabins were not specifically located. Since they were built on an island in the Yukon, it is highly possible that the spring floods have washed them away.

TREATMENT:

These cabins should be located and evaluated. If these cabins exist, they would supplement the woodchoppers' story that is represented only by the Wood Island cabin.
SOURCE:

Charlie Biederman.
#119 SLAVEN CABIN ON COAL CREEK

LOCATION:

The Slaven Cabin is on the left bank of the Yukon just downriver from the mouth of Coal Creek. It is indicated by name on the Charley River Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000 and Charley River (B-5), scale 1:63,360.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

In 1917 Sandy Johnson built the large cabin that became associated with Frank Slaven who had been a prize fighter and Klondike gold miner. The cabin also served as a roadhouse and post office for river travellers and residents. About 1936 Gold Placers, Inc. built a road joining the Yukon River with the Coal Creek camp. At this time, the Post Office moved from Woodchopper to Coal Creek. Even after the dredge shut down, the Slaven Cabin served for the caretaker of the mine and as a contact point along the Yukon.

CONDITION:

The cabin remains in excellent condition. It is two stories high with some recent additions and several out-buildings. All windows, doors, roofs and walls are intact.

TREATMENT:

The cabin should be preserved for its role in the Coal Creek gold mine, its association with Frank Slaven, and the craftsmanship of Sandy Johnson. The site might qualify for the National Register. Additional
TREATMENT: (continued)

field work would be required. The existing occupants were very paranoid about NPS visitors, thus, little site documentation was obtained.

SOURCE:

George Beck; Alaska Weekly; Ernest Patty; James Wickersham.
LOCATION:

The dredge lies about 2½ miles from the junction of Coal Creek and the Yukon River. It can be reached by road or by following the Creek. It rests ½ way between the road and the Creek at the end of the tailings pile on the left side of Coal Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Regional significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Gold Placers, Inc. bought the consolidated gold mining claims on the creek in 1934 and test-drilled extensively across the valley. The test results encouraged the construction of the first dredge in Yukon - Charley in 1935. By the summer of 1936 the dredge was operating. After the first two weeks the dredge produced $27,000. The steel dredge had a pontoon hull which was a relatively new departure at the time. Purchased from San Francisco, the dredge had to be broken down and transported by steamboat and railroad to Coal Creek. Ernest Patty, who developed the mine, served as resident manager and part owner. He is a significant person in Alaskan history being one of the University of Alaska's presidents as well as a well-known mining engineer. The dredge operated until the early 1960's when it was closed down.

CONDITION:

The dredge operated in the summer of 1975, but gold prices did not encourage operation during 1976. Although this is the original dredge, it is in good repair. The digging ladder consists of 62 buckets of 4 cubic...
CONDITION: (continued)

feet capacity. Its power plant consists of diesel engines.

TREATMENT:

Preservation is strongly advised. A National Register nomination might be justified on three merits: 1) the first gold dredge in the proposal area; 2) a new design for dredges; and 3) the recognition of an important Alaskan figure—Ernest Patty.

SOURCE:

Ernest Patty; Ernest Wolff; Dan Colben; U.S.G.S. Bulletins.

Photographs.
#120 Coal Creek dredge, view to the north.
#120 Coal Creek dredge's ladder, view to the northwest.
#120 Coal Creek dredge's stacker, view to the west.
#121 COAL CREEK MINING CAMP

LOCATION:

The mining camp is 3½ miles up the Coal Creek mining road from the Yukon. It is indicated by name on Charley River Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000, and Charley River (B-5), scale 1:63,360.

SIGNIFICANCE:

State significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Between 1900-1925 Coal Creek had been mined by one-man outfits. By 1925 the claims had been consolidated into two major claims, one headed by Frank Slaven. In 1934 when Gold Placers, Inc. took over, the valley was drilled extensively proving the feasibility of dredge work. By 1936 the dredge was put into operation. First the ground was stripped of trees, washed with hydraulic nozzles, and then the dredge could begin work. The gravels yielded between $.60-$1.00 in gold per cubic yard. World War II slowed down production and forced rising costs still higher. After the death of Patty's oldest son, Patty pulled back from the actual operation to become President of the University of Alaska. With the increased costs of mining, in labor, supplies, and transportation, and the price of gold at $35 an ounce, the management decided to shut down the dredge until costs were lower or gold prices increased. Ernest Wolff and Dan Colbin bought Coal Creek in 1972. The dredge operated once again in the summer of 1975, but with the declining price of gold in 1976, the dredge did not operate. At its peak the operation employed 30-40 men.
CONDITION:

The camp itself is spread out. All buildings were built from the salvaged Fort Egbert gymnasium and were built on skids to be readily moved along with the dredge as necessary. Thus, there are small frame structures throughout the valley. The main camp has 10 individual cabins serving as office, gold room, power plant, mess hall, tool shed, pool hall, and bunk houses. All appear reasonably well maintained although a few windows are broken.

TREATMENT:

The camp is a functioning gold mine, thus, the structures will at least be minimally maintained. The tailing piles and the dredge could be interpreted as examples of larger placer-mining operations. Too often, placer mining connotes only the gold pan or the rocker, whereas dredges, hydraulic mining, and large sluice boxes produce the greatest quantity of placer gold. Coal Creek can easily be used to interpret the whole evolution of placer-mining history. Preservation is recommended. A cooperative agreement with the owners might ensure some interpretive program. As an example of a gold-mining camp, however, Woodchopper is more compact and altogether.

SOURCE:

Ernest Patty; U.S.G.S. Bulletins; Ernest Wolff; Dan Colben; George Beck.

Photographs.
#121 Coal Creek Camp, overview showing tailings, view to the northwest.
#121 Coal Creek Camp, view to the west, left to right, office, goldroom, Post Office.
LOCATION:

The road begins at Slaven Cabin on the left bank of the Yukon. It parallels Coal Creek for 6½ miles then crosses the ridge to Woodchopper Creek Camp for a total of 14 miles.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

In 1936 Gold Placers, Inc. constructed an automobile road from the mouth of Coal Creek upstream for six miles to the site of the dredging operations, and thence westward across the ridge into the valley of Woodchopper Creek. The road served all the principal mining plants on Coal and Woodchopper Creeks. Along the road a telegraph line connected the two camps. The road facilitated communication and transportation of supplies between the two camps owned and managed by General A.D. McRae and Ernest Patty. The road was the best constructed and longest enduring road in the Yukon - Charley area.

CONDITION:

The road is still in good enough condition to be driven. It makes a good and easy hiking trail. There is very little muskeg to cross. From the mouth of Coal Creek to Woodchopper Camp is approximately 15 miles.

TREATMENT:

The road should be preserved at least as a hiking trail. The telegraph
TREATMENT: (continued)

wire can still be seen along the road. Since the two mining camps are no longer owned by the same company, the road may easily fall into disrepair. The road is currently being used as a winter trapping trail.

SOURCE:

Ernest Wolff; Ernest Patty; Joe Vogler; U.S.G.S. Bulletins.
#123 BOULDER CREEK MINE

LOCATION:

Boulder Creek mine is ¾ mile up Boulder Creek from its junction with Coal Creek and is on the right side of the Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Mines at Boulder Creek and Colorado Creek, tributaries of Coal Creek, remained independent from the large dredging operations of the 1930's and 1940's. These mines continued the small-scale mining operations common throughout the region. Thus, even today the evolution of placer mining can be traced from these single-man drift mines to the large-scale mining operations of the dredge and cross-cut sluice mining.

CONDITION:

These two mines were not visited. Some assessment work was done this summer on the Boulder Creek Mine. The condition of the cabins is unknown.

TREATMENT:

Documentation of these sites is recommended and then recommendations regarding preservation should be made. If the cooperation of all mining operations could be obtained, this area could become a "living" history of placer-gold mining. The Coal Creek district could be easily interpreted and easily walked unlike the rest of the area where muskeg, swamp, and thick underbrush hampers comfortable walking.
SOURCE:

Dan Colben; U.S.G.S. Bulletins.
LOCATION:

Colorado Creek mine is 3/4-1 mile up Colorado Creek from its junction with Coal Creek and is on the right side of the Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Mines at Boulder Creek and Colorado Creek, tributaries of Coal Creek, remained independent from the large dredging operations of the 1930's and 1940's. These mines continued the small-scale mining operations common throughout the region. Thus, even today the evolution of placer mining can be traced from these single-man drift mines to the large-scale mining operations of the dredge and cross-cut sluice mining.

CONDITION:

These two mines were not visited. Some assessment work was done this summer on the Boulder Creek mine. The condition of the cabins is unknown.

TREATMENT:

Documentation of these sites is recommended, and then recommendations regarding preservation should be made. If the cooperation of all mining operations could be obtained, this area could become a "living" history of placer-gold mining. The Coal Creek district could be easily interpreted and easily walked unlike the rest of the area where muskeg, swamp, and thick underbrush hampers comfortable walking.
SOURCE:
Dan Colben; U.S.G.S. Bulletins.
LOCATION:

The cabins are 1 mile up Mineral Creek from its junction with Woodchopper Creek on the right bank of the creek. The cabins are indicated on Charley River Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000 and Charley River (B-5), scale 1:63,360.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

The gold discoveries on Mineral Creek predate any discoveries in the Coal - Woodchopper Creek. The first deposits that proved to be of paying quality were discovered on this Creek. The creek was initially staked in 1898 but not seriously mined until the 1920's. The gold obtained was a higher grade ore than that obtained elsewhere in the region. One of the well-known old timers, George McGregor, last owned the cabins but eventually sold out to General McRae's and Ernest Patty's Alluvial Gold, Inc.

CONDITION:

There are two cabins remaining, but the mining operations are not visible. One cabin still has its roof and walls and measures 14 by 16 feet. The sod roof has been covered with boards. The other cabin, 12 by 16 feet, has fallen down. A good number of historic artifacts, from an axe to a gold pan, lie around the cabins. National Geographic Magazines from the 1930's are stacked in the fallen cabin.
TREATMENT:

Preservation of the one solid cabin and accession of the surface artifacts is recommended. These cabins probably predate the dredge mining and thus are illustrative of the small-scale mining operations.

SOURCE:

George Beck; Barney Hansen; U.S.G.S. Bulletins; Charlie Biederman.

Photographs.
#125 Mineral Creek Cabin A, view to the west.
LOCATION:

The cabin is ½ mile up Iron Creek from its juncture with Woodchopper Creek on the right bank or about 6 miles from the Yukon River.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

The first serious dredging activity began at the mouth of Iron Creek where it joins Woodchopper Creek. Small-scale mining had been carried on intermittently for many years prior to the consolidation by General McRae and Ernest Patty in the 1930's. As with Boulder Creek, if enough fabric remains, Iron Creek can be used to interpret the evolution of placer mining from one-man outfits to dredge construction.

CONDITION:

According to the 1956 U.S.G.S. map, a cabin remains at Iron Creek. This cabin was not visited or documented, thus its condition cannot be ascertained.

TREATMENT:

The site should be documented and an evaluation of its value and treatment completed. Ideally it could be a contrast with the larger Woodchopper Camp only ¾ mile away--depicting two different approaches to placer mining.

SOURCE:

U.S.G.S. Bulletins.
LOCATION:

Woodchopper Creek Camp is the terminus for the Coal Creek - Woodchopper Creek Road at 15 miles from Slaven Cabin or 5½ miles from the junction of Woodchopper Creek and the Yukon River. The camp is indicated by name on Charley River Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000 and Charley River (B-5), scale 1:63,360.

SIGNIFICANCE:

State significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Ernest Patty began this camp in 1936 to support dredging activities. The earlier and smaller mines were consolidated by Frank Bennett and later bought by Alluvial Gold, Inc., owned by General McRae and Ernest Patty. The dredge began operation in 1937. The initial drillings showed that the gold of Woodchopper Creek was somewhat higher grade than Coal Creek's. A ditch, built for hydraulic operations, brought water 3 miles with adequate pressure for hydraulic nozzles. Over 30 men were employed during Patty's management. After Patty withdrew from the operation and returned to the University of Alaska, Ted Matthews, during the early 1960's, leased both creeks. Joe Vogler bought Woodchopper from Ernest Patty in 1970-71.

CONDITION:

The camp is built on both sides of the airstrip, which in turn has been constructed from the dredge's tailings. A large 18 by 14 foot shop still houses parts for the dredge and associated vehicles. There are also 2 log
CONDITION: (continued)
cabins but most are built of frame construction. The alders and willows
have encroached on most of the cabins. The messhall must have also
served as the movie house--a projector screen still hangs above the door.
A laundry room is adjacent to the messhall. There is a pool table in one
cabin and several locked cabins whose functions could not be discerned.
Across the airstrip was the manager's 2-bedroom house. Curtains, sofa,
even children's toys remain. Although the camp has not been maintained
or used in years, the flavor of its past is more prevalent than at Coal
Creek.

TREATMENT:
The camp should be protected and preserved. Although the camp is
on private property, a National Register nomination as a historic district
should be encouraged. Coal Creek and Woodchopper Creek have the most
fabric remaining of the largest mining operations in the Yukon - Charley
area.

SOURCE:
Ernest Patty; Ernest Wolff; Joe Vogler; U.S.G.S. Bulletins.

Photographs.
#127 Overview of Woodchopper Creek Camp showing tailings and airstrip, view to the west.
PLATE 69

#127 View to the east across airstrip to main row of cabins at Woodchopper Creek Camp, Cabins B-G.
#127 Manager's House (Cabin H) at Woodchopper Creek Camp, view to the west.
LOCATION:

The cabins are located 4½ miles up Woodchopper Creek, at the mouth of Mineral Creek, on the left bank of Mineral Creek, but on the right bank of Woodchopper Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

These 4 cabins have been moved from Woodchopper Camp to the mouth of Mineral Creek to serve as a base for the work of the current owner, Joe Vogler. The one-room-frame cabins are all on skids. Ernest Patty built the frame structures from Fort Egbert's gymnasium about 1936-37. These cabins serve as living quarters for Vogler and his wife, a bunkhouse, shop, and office. There are a number of large trucks, bulldozers, and equipment in the vicinity. The cabins had been built to move downstream with the dredge.

CONDITION:

The 4 cabins still retain their tin roofs and most of their windows. Since the cabins are used each summer, they are kept in good repair by Joe Vogler.

TREATMENT:

These cabins are maintained to some extent, but protection from vandals is still a problem. Since these cabins represent the Ernest Patty
TREATMENT: (continued)

years and are currently being used for associated mining work, they can illustrate the lifestyles of mining personnel. Since the cabins are on patented land, the cooperation of Joe Vogler is strongly recommended.

SOURCE:

Joe Vogler.

Photographs.
#128 Mineral Creek mouth cabins, view to the west, left to right, shop, living quarters, bunkhouse.
LOCATION:

The dredge is 3½ miles from the confluence of Woodchopper Creek and the Yukon River. It rests near the northeast end of the tailings pile and near the mouth of Slate Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Regional significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Only a few dredges remain that once mined gold deposits of the Yukon River basin. Two of these dredges lie in Yukon - Charley proposal area. Ernest Patty built the Woodchopper dredge in 1936. The new automobile road allowed the freighting of supplies and equipment from the steamboat stop at Coal Creek. The dredge was completed and operating in 1937. Although the gold proved to be of higher grade than Coal Creek, the concentration of gold on the bedrock was spotty. Patty eventually sold the claims and the dredge to Joe Vogler in 1970.

CONDITION:

The dredge has not been operated for a number of years, thus, it is not as well-maintained as the Coal Creek dredge. All major parts appear to be in order.

TREATMENT:

Preservation should be encouraged. Vandals have caused some damage. Since the dredge is privately owned, cooperation with the owner is encouraged.
TREATMENT: (continued)
The dredge would make an excellent vehicle for interpretation of large-
scale-placer-mining.

SOURCE:
   Ernest Patty; Joe Vogler; U.S.G.S. Bulletins.
#130 McGregor Cabin

LOCATION:

The cabin is 1 3/4 miles below Slaven Cabin on the left bank of the Yukon River. The cabin is indicated by name on the Charley River Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000 and Charley River (B-5), scale 1:63,360.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

George McGregor arrived in the Yukon - Charley area about 1915. He worked in the Circle-Central mining district then bought the Mineral Creek claims. From here he lived the typical lifestyle of miner-trapper. His trapline ran up the Woodchopper and into the upper Charley. Later he built this cabin in 1939, known locally as "McGregor's Fishcamp". He fished during the summer and trapped in winter. As life slowed down on the Yukon and the Welch's left Woodchopper, McGregor got lonely and moved to Eagle in the 1950's. McGregor, like Sandy Johnson, is an old-timer with many associated stories.

CONDITION:

These are two cabins: one is chinked with moss to insulate against the winter cold, the other is not chinked and probably functioned only in the summer. The roof, walls, and glass windows are still intact. Each cabin's cache has fallen down. There are various artifacts lying around from a barrel stove to a trunk to several boats.
TREATMENT:

This site, like Mineral Creek, is associated with George McGregor. There is more fabric remaining here, but less information as to how he used the area. Since the two cabins are in reasonably good condition, they should at least be preserved for adaptive use. A National Register nomination might also be in order.

SOURCE:

Joe Vogler; Dale Ruck; Barney Hansen; George Beck; Charlie Biederman.

Photographs.
#130 McGregor's main cabin, view to the northwest.
LOCATION:

The cabins are 1 3/4 miles below Slaven Cabin on the left bank of the Yukon River behind McGregor's Fishcamp near the base of the hill.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Woodchopper Joe, an Indian from Circle, trapped the Yukon - Charley area especially the Kandik River. He built a string of cabins directly in back of George McGregor's Fishcamp. Woodchopper Joe and fellow woodchoppers moved here from Dalphus Island above Coal Creek. Dalphus Island is named after 'Cap Dalphus'. The woodchoppers built cabins while they chopped cordwood for steamers during the 1920's and 1930's.

CONDITION:

The cabins were not visited. It is unknown how many cabins still exist or in what condition they are.

TREATMENT:

The cabins need to be exactly located and further documented before any evaluation can be made.

SOURCE:

George Beck; Charlie Biederman.
LOCATION:

The roadhouse is 3½ miles below McGregor's Cabin on the left bank of the Yukon. The roadhouse is indicated by name on Charley River Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000 and Charley River (B-5), scale 1:63,360.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Regional significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Roadhouses largely served winter travellers along the mail trail. Here was room and board, offering hospitality and a chance to learn the news. Generally several outbuildings supported the main house—including bunkhouses and dog houses. Woodchopper, prior to the development of Coal Creek, served as the Post Office. A safe still remains on the site. Although Fred Brentlinger, a well-known prospector, had the roadhouse in 1927, it is most closely associated with Jack Welch. Jack Welch never had the mail contract as stated by Ernest Patty but earned his living from the roadhouse he bought from Fred Brentlinger who, in turn, had bought it from Woodchopper Smith. In the late 1930's when airplanes replaced dog teams for carrying the mail, Jack Welch turned to trapping, fishing, and boating. During the war, the flood at break-up scarred the Welches. Mrs. Welch became bedfast, and Jack attempted suicide. When his wife died, Jack got into his boat and floated out to the Bering Sea. No one else acquired the roadhouse.

CONDITION:

The roadhouse is a large, 24 by 36 feet, two-story log house. On the walls are remnants of fabric wallpaper. It stands about 20 feet high with
roof and windows intact. The first floor has been flooded so often that the floor is unsafe, but the second floor is solid. The second floor is divided into 4 individual rooms with bed frames and wardrobes still standing. There is only one other cabin with the roof intact. It is tightly built and is 18 by 16 feet large. Two other cabins have lost their roofs. One was 20 by 20 feet large; the other was 18 by 16 feet large. There are several dog houses and a wheeled vehicle that might be a portable drill with large fly wheels. Artifacts such as a safe, cook stove, rocking chair, tables, lie about the vicinity.

TREATMENT:

Since this is the largest structure with its roof in the proposal area, it is recommended that it be restored if a lodge is ever needed for the park. A National Register nomination would give added protection. Its association with Jack Welch, its value as a roadhouse, post office, and fish camp, and its local architectural style qualify for nomination. The artifacts ought to be collected and accessioned before all are lost. Jack Welch's trapper's sled, built by Charlie Mayo in 1934, currently rests in the University of Alaska Museum.

SOURCE:

Ernest Patty; George Beck; Charlie Biederman; U.S.G.S. Bulletins; Alaska Weekly.

Photographs.
#132 Woodchopper Roadhouse, view to the northwest
#132 Cabin #5 at Woodchopper Roadhouse, view to the southwest.
#132 Portable drill (?) at Woodchopper Roadhouse, view to the southeast
LOCATION:
The roadhouse is reported approximately 9 miles from Woodchopper Roadhouse on the left bank of the Yukon near the mouth of Webber Creek.

SIGNIFICANCE:
Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:
James Wickersham, Eagle district judge from 1899-1903, reported staying at the Webber Creek Roadhouse in 1901. He described Webber as a crank and a nuisance. The 1951 U.S.G.S. Charley River Quadrangle shows a cabin on Webber Creek.

CONDITION:
The location of the roadhouse was not found. Old-timers are not sure where it is. Ray Bell has trapped the area for 10 years but never found the roadhouse.

TREATMENT:
The roadhouse should be found and documented. If there is any fabric remaining, it should be evaluated regarding its preservation.

SOURCE:
James Wickersham; U.S.G.S. 1951 Charley River Quadrangle; Ray Bell.
#134 WEBBER CREEK TRAPPING TRAIL

LOCATION:

The trapping trail follows Webber Creek from its mouth on the Yukon on up the Creek for several miles. The first couple of miles the trail is on the left bank.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Trappers have utilized Yukon - Charley since the early trading days of the 1870's. It is still being used. The Webber Creek trail has been used in recent years by a trapper in the area. These trails are generally winter trails and, thus, often cross snow-covered muskeg that makes difficult summer walking. This trail is typical of trapping trails in the Yukon - Charley area.

CONDITION:

The trail is well marked by tree blazes and worn vegetation. It is about 5 feet wide and fairly brushed out.

TREATMENT:

Aside from being used for interpretation of trapping activities, the trail has little historical value.

SOURCE:

Ray Bell.
LOCATION:

The cabin is behind an island 150 yards down the Yukon from the mouth of Webber Creek on the left bank of the Yukon.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

The cabin was built in 1975 by 2 men who were later apprehended by the State Troopers. They were charged with larceny and other charges. They attempted to mine Webber Creek and cut a bulldozer road to the creek. Local accounts imply that they had very little gold mining experience or knowledge.

CONDITION:

The cabin was built of peeled logs. The roof is unfinished. Two pickups without tires were also abandoned. Inside the shell campers were various personal items.

TREATMENT:

The story behind this cabin is an interesting one, but the overall historical importance and impact has yet to be evaluated. Protection from vandals is the minimal protection advised. Greater documentation from local inhabitants and from the State Troopers is recommended.
LOCATION:

The cabin is 9½ miles down the Yukon River from Woodchopper Roadhouse on the right bank of the Yukon. The cabin is 1½ miles upriver from the mouth of Eureka Creek. The cabin is indicated on Charley River Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

The cabin was probably built by Charlie Moon in the late 1920's or early 1930's. Charlie had a claim on Woodchopper Creek that he sold to Ernest Patty. Hank Connette took it over when Moon left. Connette did a little trapping but lived simply on less than $100 a year. The cabin is associated with Hank Connette who died of a stroke. Phil Berail, Ernest Patty's hydraulic foreman, also lived at the cabin. Patty regarded him as one of the toughest men he knew. He trapped primarily the upper Charley River. Ray Bell has occupied the cabin most recently. From this cabin he has trapped and fished commercially.

CONDITION:

The condition of the cabin was not evaluated. There are several outbuildings and a large garden.

TREATMENT:

The cabin was not visited. Further documentation is needed before evaluation can be made.
SOURCE:

George Beck; Ray Bell; Ernest Patty; Charlie Biederman.
#137 THANKSGIVING CREEK ROADHOUSE

LOCATION:

The roadhouse may be near the mouth of Thanksgiving Creek on the Yukon River.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Little documentation exists on Thanksgiving Creek Roadhouse. George Beck, a trapper-miner from 1934-1946, reports that one existed.

CONDITION:

The exact location and its condition is unknown.

TREATMENT:

The exact location should be found and further documentation researched before any evaluation of its significance is made.

SOURCE:

George Beck.
LOCATION:

The cabin is approximately 28 miles from Circle or 22 miles from Woodchopper Roadhouse, on the right bank of the Yukon, at the downriver end of a slough. It is indicated on the Charley River Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000 and Charley River (C-6), scale 1:63,360.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

During the Klondike Stampede, Albert Hughes stopped to make tea as he floated down the Yukon. He took some samples from an outcropping and went on to Nome. Years later he had the samples assayed and they were supposedly tellurite, a very rare mineral that occasionally combines with gold. In the early 1920's Albert Hughes found what he remembered to be the site except that the hill had slid down and buried the outcropping. Along with his partner, Joe Gove, who was a hard-rock miner, Hughes decided to tunnel into the hill. Since it was a slide area, the shafts had to be timbered. They put a lot of work into the mine. A promoter, Marian Edmundson, tried to put a pump in and wash the hillside out. Although several people put up money for the project, no gold was found. They mined until 1942, and World War II closed all gold mines as non-essential. Shortly therefore, Gove and Hughes got sick and died. Later Paul Connell, who worked in the summer in Central, moved into the cabin during the winter and read. He did a little trapping, but he became a solitary reader. Gove and Hughes probably designed the handmade tools. The site is fascinating
for its "lost mine" story and for the quality of life that the artifacts and fabric impart.

CONDITION:

The cabin is in excellent shape with roof and walls intact. The sod roof has been covered with flattened kerosene cans, the walls are chinked with moss and covered with a sandlike cement, and there are double-pane windows. In the area is a shed, a cache, an Indian hunting canoe, and 5 dog houses. This site contains more artifacts than any site except Biederman Camp. There are old dishes, Charm magazines, a handmade wheelbarrow, toboggan, drill, boiler, old clothes and shoes, stove, and other fascinating objects.

TREATMENT:

The cabin lies behind an island just off a slough that gets very little water so it is difficult to reach even though it is marked on the U.S.G.S. map. The cabin should be protected and the artifacts accessioned. Since the cabin is habitable, adaptive use would be in order. More research might determine that the site qualifies for the National Register.

SOURCE:

George Beck; Jess and Cathryne Knight; Charlie Biederman.

Photographs.
#138 Rear of Paul Connell's Cabin, view to the east.
#138 Paul Connell's Cabin showing handmade sled, toboggan, and wheelbarrow.
#138 Paul Connell's Cabin showing Indian hunting canoe.
#139 TWENTY-SIX MILE VILLAGE

LOCATION:

The village is reported 26 miles upriver from Circle on the left bank of the Yukon near Takoma Bluffs.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Native informants from Fort Yukon reported this Native village to archeologist F. Hadleigh-West in 1965. The site is connected by trail to the important Medicine Lake across the hills. The age and extent of the site are unknown.

CONDITION:

The site has been reported in two different places--at Twenty-six mile or near Takoma Bluffs. It needs to be exactly located, surveyed, and evaluated for its significance.

TREATMENT:

The site should be located, surveyed, and evaluated. If evaluation determines that it qualifies for the National Register, an application should be completed.

SOURCE:

Elizabeth Andrews' 14(h)(1) survey; F. Hadleigh-West; Ed Hall.
LOCATION:

The cabin is approximately 26 miles from Circle on the mail trail on the left bank of the Yukon River.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Mail carriers needed way-stations to stop, rest, and have hot tea. Sometimes these way-stations served as overnight cabins when no roadhouse existed or weather conditions slowed the carrier and prevented him from reaching them. During the late 1930's Horace and Charlie Biederman built this cabin as a stop-over between Circle and Coal Creek. Unfortunately, they built the cabin in the late fall from green logs. These logs promptly froze solid and provided very little insulation from the sub-zero temperatures. Thus, they called it "Biederman's Ice Box". The mail trail at this point cut across a bend in the river so the cabin is back off the river. This is only one of three known way-stations whose sole purpose was to provide the mail carriers with shelter.

CONDITION:

The cabin was not found nor its fabric assessed. It is uncertain what condition the cabin is in. Since the cabin is off the river, it is unlikely that it has been flooded. The roof has probably collapsed.

TREATMENT:

The cabin should be specifically located and evaluated. The mail carrier's story is one of the primary themes of the Yukon - Charley area.
Throughout contemporary sources, the mail carrier is Alaska's unsung hero. Since Charlie Biederman was the last dog team mail carrier, he could provide greater detail to this theme as well as to this particular cabin.

SOURCE:

Charlie Biederman.
LOCATION:

The cabin is approximately 20 miles from Circle, on the mail trail, on the left bank of the Yukon River.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

During the late 1930's Horace and Charlie Biederman constructed this cabin as a mail carrier's way-station between Circle and Coal Creek. If weather or trail conditions prevented them from reaching a cabin or roadhouse, the carrier had to bivouac. In temperatures of forty below zero or greater, bivouacking was uncomfortable. Therefore, the Biedermans, who generally carried the mail from 1918-1938, built a few way-stations between Eagle and Circle.

CONDITION:

The cabin was not specifically located. Since the cabin is about 1 mile off the river, it is unlikely that it has been flooded. Yet forty years have passed since the cabin was built so it may not be in very good condition unless a trapper has used it as a line cabin.

TREATMENT:

The cabin should be located and its condition evaluated. Since the mail trail was the major route for winter travelling, many historic themes tie into its story--roadhouses, freighting, dog teams, and even trapping and mining.
SOURCE:

Charlie Biederman.
LOCATION:

The cabin is approximately 22 miles from Circle or 26 miles from Woodchopper Roadhouse, on the right bank of the Yukon, behind a sand bar. It is indicated on the Charley River Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000 and Charley River (C-6), scale 1:63,360.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

James Wickersham, judge of the third judicial division from 1898-1903, tells of staying in the Johnson's roadhouse in 1901, which was 22 miles from Circle. Later in the 1930's Henry Appele, who once worked with Hudson Bay Company at Fort Reliance, acquired the cabin. Reports state that the mail carriers occasionally stopped here on their way to and from Eagle. Appele quit trapping in 1940.

CONDITION:

The cabin roof and most of the walls have fallen down. A tree has fallen over most of the house. The cabin, which measures 14 by 16 feet, has between 4-7 logs of each wall remaining. A log bunk bed, table, and 5 dog houses remain.

TREATMENT:

The cabin should be protected from further vandalism. Alder and willow regrowth prevent the cabin form being seen from the river despite being exactly located on the U.S.G.S. map.
SOURCE:

George Beck; Horace Biederman, Jr.; Charlie Biederman.
#140 Twenty-two Mile Cabin, view to the northeast.
#141 SHAHNYAATI' GRAVE

LOCATION:

The gravesite is approximately 14 miles upriver from Circle on the right bank of the river.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Regional significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

This is the gravesite of the famed Yukon Flats Trading Chief, Shahnyaati'. It is reported that he died in 1892. As Kutchin tradition dictated he was placed on a platform cache when he died. One Native informant reported that from there a rainbow appeared and showed where he was to be buried, hence the historic gravesite. Shahnyaati' was so well known among the Natives and whites alike that following his death Yukon River steamboats would sound their whistle when passing his grave.

CONDITION:

The site has been reported in oral history surveys but has not been specifically visited. Thus, the condition of the gravesite cannot be evaluated.

TREATMENT:

The site should be definitely located and evaluated as to its place in history and its qualifications for the National Register.

SOURCE:

Elizabeth Andrews' 14(h)(1) survey; Richard Mathews.
LOCATION:

The village site is 9 miles upriver from Circle on the left bank of the Yukon.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

This was a Native summer settlement important in the history and culture of the Native people of this area. A trail connects the village to Medicine Lake where considerable subsistence activity such as duck and geese hunting in the spring and fall and possibly moose and caribou hunting in the later fall were carried on.

CONDITION:

Although archeologist F. Hadleigh-West located the site in 1965, no survey was undertaken to determine the extent and age of the site. Only a hearth and a few fire-cracked rocks were found.

TREATMENT:

The site should be definitely located and evaluated as to its place in history and its qualifications for the National Register. In the meantime the site should be protected from vandals.

SOURCE:

F. Hadleigh-West; Elizabeth Andrews' 14(h)(1) survey.
LOCATION:

Circle is indicated by name on the Circle Quadrangle, scale 1:250,000.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Regional significance.

PLACE IN HISTORY:

Circle was founded in 1893 as a result of a gold strike on nearby Birch Creek. Jack McQuesten grubstaked two Russian-Native Creoles, Pitka and Cherosky. Miners from the Fortymile stampeded to the new strike. McQuesten moved his store to the town named Circle believing it to be above the Arctic Circle. The miners built log cabins in Circle and used the town as a supply base and winter home. Saloons abounded and became known as "Paris of the North". The Klondike gold rush of 1897 drained the town of its population, however, a few stayed on, joined by disappointed Klondikers. Wickersham held court occasionally during his years in Eagle. During the stampede a small military camp remained to help keep law and order. Circle eventually settled down to a small, stable population that supplied persevering miners on the nearby Mastodon, Mammoth, Deadwood, and Birch Creeks. Circle is best known for perfecting the pre-Klondike social institution of Miners' Meetings.

CONDITION:

Most of historic Circle has been replaced by frame structures. For instance, McQuesten's two-story log store is gone. A historic survey by a historian and/or architectural historian is needed to evaluate the fabric that remains and its significance.
TREATMENT:

An appropriate survey to evaluate the historic district of Circle is recommended. There may be buildings remaining that can interpret the story of early Circle. The town's past is significant.

SOURCE:

David Wharton; William Hunt; Hudson Stuck; James Wickersham; Tappan Adney; Josiah Spurr; Arthur Walden.
This study has illustrated the continuity of themes and the common roots in the past of Alaska and the continental United States not only in history but in development, technology, philosophy, and lifeways as well. Yet at the same time it has characterized Alaska's uniqueness as a result of its environment and different time sequences. Thus various imported social institutions—local, state, and federal governments, commercial and industrial organizations, religious orders, and the military—confronted the Alaskan environment and adapted accordingly. The result projected new ways of life and new perceptions into the nation's continually developing culture.

The passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act allows an opportunity for Americans to keep a tie with the past, maintain a sense of orientation, and recognize continuity in diversity. For under this act the area known as Yukon-Charley may be selected by Congress to be managed by the National Park Service, traditionally the leading agency in historic preservation. Should this occur, the research of this narrative and survey should provide the foundation for historic resource planning and management. Other themes, however,
such as the oral history of the Han and Kutchin Indians, need to be studied in greater depth. But most important is the opportunity to control the development of a historic landscape that might otherwise be bombarded with disruptive and intrusive modern roads and pipelines, an opportunity for a visitor to vicariously explore the past and escape the present for a moment, and an opportunity for historic activities and lifestyles to continue.

Throughout all the changing frontiers and massive waves of people that have been described, one factor has appeared constant—the land. Despite the fact that the Army and steamboat companies nearly deforested the land, consuming thousands of cords of wood annually, the land has essentially returned to its pre-gold-rush appearance. To the modern visitor's eye the forest fire of 1969 wreaked more damage than the exploitive uses of miner, trapper, and townsman. Game populations have come and gone, possibly in response to human populations but also possibly from natural forces. People have also changed. The Indian, as a result of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, now has a different perspective of the land. Once a land user, he is now a land owner. Profit, not harmonious land use, confronts and subjugates traditional cultural values. The white trapper, ironically, has returned to the land to seek the almost mythical historic values of self-sufficiency and self-reliance. Only the land appears static.
It is the land, virtually untouched by modern intrusions, that creates the intangible elements of feeling and association and captures the historic scene. The land remains as it was for each frontier, a wilderness, and thus can be used to interpret any theme. Whether the land merely sets the scene for a trapper's cabin, a gold dredge, an Indian fish camp, or whether it is the sole factor that provokes a feeling of history in the visitor, the land and its preservation are essential to an understanding and appreciation of the patterns of history and the environmental forces that make each event unique yet common to all.
I. BOOKS


*Catalogus Provinciae Tavrinensis Societatis Desv. Tavrini: Ex Typographia Georph Derossi, 1900.*


Harris, A. C. Alaska and the Klondike Gold Fields. J. R. Jones, 1897.


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II. ARTICLES


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Guthrie, R. D. "Paleoecology of the Large Mammal Community in Interior Alaska During the Late Pleistocene". American Midland Naturalist 79:346-63.

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—. "Mining Law in Alaska". Mining and Scientific Press, 26 December 1908, pp. 855-6.


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III. NEWSPAPERS


The Alaskan. Sitka, Alaska. 1885 to 1907.

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Seattle Post-Intelligencer. 1905 to 1906.
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Yukon Press. Circle and Fort Adams, Alaska. 1894 to 1899.

IV. PUBLIC DOCUMENTS


V. MANUSCRIPTS


Deranja, John E. "A Short Autobiography of John Deranja, as Told to His Daughter, Mary, During Spring of 1933 When He Was Seventy Years Old". Typescript. Seattle: Manuscript Collection, University of Washington, 1933.


VI. COLLECTIONS

Eagle, Alaska. Records in Possession of Eagle, Alaska with copies in Anchorage in the State Division of Parks Office.


Fairbanks. University of Alaska Archives. C. S. Farnsworth Papers.

Fairbanks. University of Alaska Archives. Historical Tapes - "Here is a Pioneer".


VII. NATIONAL ARCHIVES RECORDS


VIII. INTERVIEWS

George Beck, resident of Yukon-Charley area during 1930's and 1940's, hunted, fished, mined, and trapped area, 19-20 September 1976, Eagle, Alaska.

Charlie Biederman, who was the son of Ed Biederman, grew up in the Yukon-Charley area, and was the last person to carry mail from Eagle to Circle by dog team, 30 June 1976 and 11 November 1976 telephone interview from Tok, Alaska; 12-13 February 1977, Fairbanks, Alaska.


Dan Colben, co-owner of Coal Creek mining claim within the Yukon-Charley proposal area, 6 August 1976, Coal Creek, Alaska.

Barney Hansen, a miner of the Seventymile and Fourth of July Creek and a resident of Eagle, Alaska, 13 December 1976, Fairbanks, Alaska.


Jim Layman, owner of Ben Creek mining claim within Yukon-Charley proposal, 8–9 August 1976, at his cabin on Ben Creek, Alaska.


Charlie Stevens, Native of Eagle Village, 22 July 1964 and 16 September 1964 interviewed by Mertie Baggen at Eagle Village.

Joe Vogler, owner of Woodchopper Creek patented mine within Yukon-Charley proposal area, 6–7 August 1976, at his camp at the mouth of Mineral Creek, Alaska.

Ernest Wolff, University of Alaska mining professor and co-owner of Coal Creek mining claim within Yukon-Charley proposal area, 3 August 1976, telephone conversation in Fairbanks, Alaska.

IX. MAPS

Map of Alaska, 1894. Rare maps in University of Alaska Documents.


Map of Eagle District. By the Alaska Road Commission, 1925. Files of Bureau of Land Management.


Map of Yukon. Lt. Frederick Schwatka's expedition, 1883. From Compilation of Narratives of Explorations of Alaska.


Track Chart of Yukon River. Microfilm 2073 in University of Alaska Library.
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<th>Year</th>
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*No open season. Caught during previous open seasons or Canadian skins sold and shipped from Alaska.

1 Table 1-6 data taken from Annual Reports of Alaska Game Commission to the Secretary of the Interior, Box 6, Records of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Record Group 22, National Archives, Washington, D. C. and The Alaska Weekly.
### TABLE 2

**Number and Value of Lynx Trapped Between 1925-1949**

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TABLE 3

Number and Value of Ermine Trapped Between 1925-1949

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### TABLE 4

Number and Value of Beaver Trapped Between 1925-1949

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<td>476</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>9,520.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>13,499</td>
<td>16.70</td>
<td>225,433.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>15,609</td>
<td>9.23</td>
<td>144,071.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>30,159</td>
<td>12.70</td>
<td>383,019.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>44,823</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>380,099.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>11,138</td>
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<td>90,217.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>25,046</td>
<td>12.40</td>
<td>310,570.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>1,882</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>24,466.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>31,397</td>
<td>14.75</td>
<td>463,105.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>14,630</td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>263,340.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>27,349</td>
<td>27.50</td>
<td>752,097.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>20,133</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>23,394</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Caught during open season of previous year.
### Table 5

Number and Value of Wolf Trapped Between 1925-1947

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Average Value</th>
<th>Total Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
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<td>$2,964</td>
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<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>2,784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>23.90</td>
<td>11,185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>26.00</td>
<td>13,936</td>
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<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>41.55</td>
<td>28,586</td>
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<tr>
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<td>355</td>
<td>26.00</td>
<td>9,230</td>
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<tr>
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<td>263</td>
<td>26.00</td>
<td>6,838</td>
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<td>1932</td>
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<td>387</td>
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<tr>
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<td>757</td>
<td>22.00</td>
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<td>13,642</td>
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<td>904</td>
<td>19.50</td>
<td>17,628</td>
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<tr>
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<td>730</td>
<td>23.75</td>
<td>17,337</td>
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<tr>
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<td>640</td>
<td>15.50</td>
<td>9,920</td>
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<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>599</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>8,985</td>
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<td>6,264</td>
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<tr>
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<td>418</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>6,270</td>
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<tr>
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<td>290</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>5,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>10.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>9,800</td>
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</table>
TABLE 6

Number and Value of Wolverine Trapped Between 1925-1947

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Average Value</th>
<th>Total Value</th>
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<tr>
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<td>260</td>
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<td>5.50</td>
<td>1,793.00</td>
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<tr>
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<td>87</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>1,305.00</td>
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<tr>
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<td>15.00</td>
<td>1,620.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>1,727.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>