National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Snapshots *from the* Past

A ROADSIDE HISTORY OF DENALI NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE



Jane Bryant

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Front cover: The Alaska Railroad erected this rustic arch at the beginning of the park road, welcoming visitors to Mt. McKinley National Park.

Alaska State Library, Skinner Foundation Collection, 44-5-81

Table of Contents

Introduction....iv
Acknowledgements....v
Abbreviations....v
Map of Park Road Corridor....vi
Map of Denali National Park and Preserve....viii

McKinley Park Station to Park Headquarters

Section Map....2
The Journey Begins....4
McKinley Park Station....5
First Park Headquarters....7
Maurice Morino....10
McKinley Park School....12
The McKinley Park Hotel....14
Government Hill....16
Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp....17
Harry Karstens....20
Park Headquarters....23
The Warehouse....24
The Ranger Club....26
The Dog Kennels....28
Frieda Louise Karstens....30

Park Headquarters to Sanctuary River

Section Map....34
The 1922 Park Boundary....36
The Alaska Road Commission (ARC)....36
Trip Into Park....40
Savage Camp....41
Robert "Bobby" Sheldon....46
Savage River ARC Cabin....48
Tom "Savage" Strand....51
Savage River Bridge....52
Primrose Overlook....52
Sanctuary River Cabin....55

Sanctuary River to Toklat River

Section Map....58
Teklanika River....60
Mission 66....61
Teklanika CCC Camp....61
Archeological Excavations....62
Igloo Creek Cabin....65
Igloo Creek "Igloo"....67
Adolph Murie....68
East Fork Cabin and Coal Mine....71
East Fork Bridge....74
Polychrome Pass....75

Toklat ~ Heart of the Park

Section Map....80
Toklat River....82
Charles Sheldon's Camp....83
Toklat River Cabin....86
Pearson Cabin....88
Grant Pearson....90

Toklat River to Eielson Visitor Center

Section Map....94
Highway Pass....96
Stony Creek ARC Shelter Tent....98
Stony Creek ARC Camps....100
Bergh Lake....101
Stony Hill....103
Mile 66....106
Eielson Visitor Center....110
Joe Hankins....114
New Eielson Visitor Center....116
Pioneer Aviator Carl Ben Eielson....118

Table of Contents

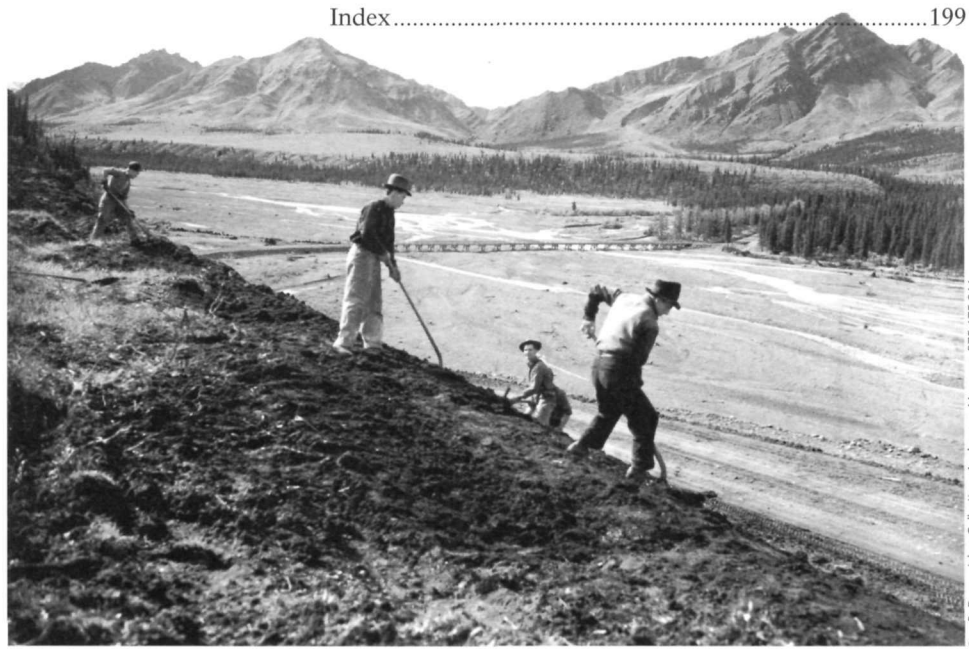
Eielson Visitor Center to Kantishna

Section Map....120
Copper Mountain Mining District....122
Wesley Earl Dunkle....124
Copper Mountain Patrol Cabin....130
Thorofare Cabin....134
Eielson Bluffs....136
Kantishna Ranger Station....138
The Original 1917 Boundary....142
Wonder Lake....142
Wonder Lake Ranger Station....146
John Rumohr....150
Anderson Roadhouse and Fox Farm....154
1932 Boundary Extension....156

Kantishna ~ Historic Mining District

Section Map....160
Kantishna....162
The Kantishna Gold Rush....163
Eureka Creek....165
Quigley Ridge....168
Little Annie Claim....170
Red Top Claim....171
Banjo Claim....173
Friday Creek....174
Living in Kantishna....176
Fannie Quigley's Yellow House....178
Hydraulic Mining on Moose Creek....180
Doc Sutherland....183
Busia Cabin....183
"Little Johnnie" Busia....184
Eureka Townsite....187
The Journey Continues....189

Notes....190
Bibliography....195
Index....199



Ray B. Dame, Ickes Collection; Anchorage Museum, B75.175.311

The original Teklanika River bridge was constructed in 1927. In this 1938 photo, an Alaska Road Commission (ARC) crew works to put finishing touches on the road embankment. The ARC replaced this original bridge in 1955 with the steel and concrete bridge in use today.



Candace Waugaman Collection

Park visitors pause for a break at the Igloo Creek cabin.

Introduction

Visitors come to Denali National Park and Preserve for many reasons — some to see spectacular scenery and the continent's highest peak, some to see wildlife, and some for a wilderness experience. In addition, there is the cultural story to discover, since humans have been a part of this landscape for thousands of years. Prehistoric hunter-gatherers roamed the hills, intent on providing food for their families; explorers trekked through the area making maps, prospectors and miners searched for valuable minerals, and park visitors have sought inspiration, education, and recreation.

Travelers on the long and winding park road view a snapshot in time, of life today, but the road passes sites that go back in time, rich in history. This book presents snapshots of the past and tells stories about the sites, providing the perspective of decades.

The book is arranged to follow the park road from east to west, from the park entrance to Kantishna, 92 miles away. There are few mileage markers to assist in locating sites. Instead, directions are given using landmarks whenever possible, and detailed maps are included at the beginning of each section.

Acknowledgements

Production of this book has been a long and winding journey that has benefitted from the input and encouragement of many individuals. I am indebted to the Denali National Park and Preserve Leadership Team and Superintendent Paul Anderson for supporting this project, to former Cultural Resource Manager Ann Kain for believing in me and in the project, and to Cultural Resource and Subsistence Manager Amy Craver for continuing to support this work every step of the way.

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With great appreciation I thank my friends, coworkers, and colleagues who shared their ideas, inspiration, and encouragement. I am indebted to everyone who has shown an interest in park history and who has asked questions. Keep asking.

All errors and inaccuracies are mine. New information, site discoveries and historic photograph collections await discovery and are welcomed.

Abbreviations

ARC — Alaska Road Commission

CCC — Civilian Conservation Corps

DNP&P — Denali National Park and Preserve

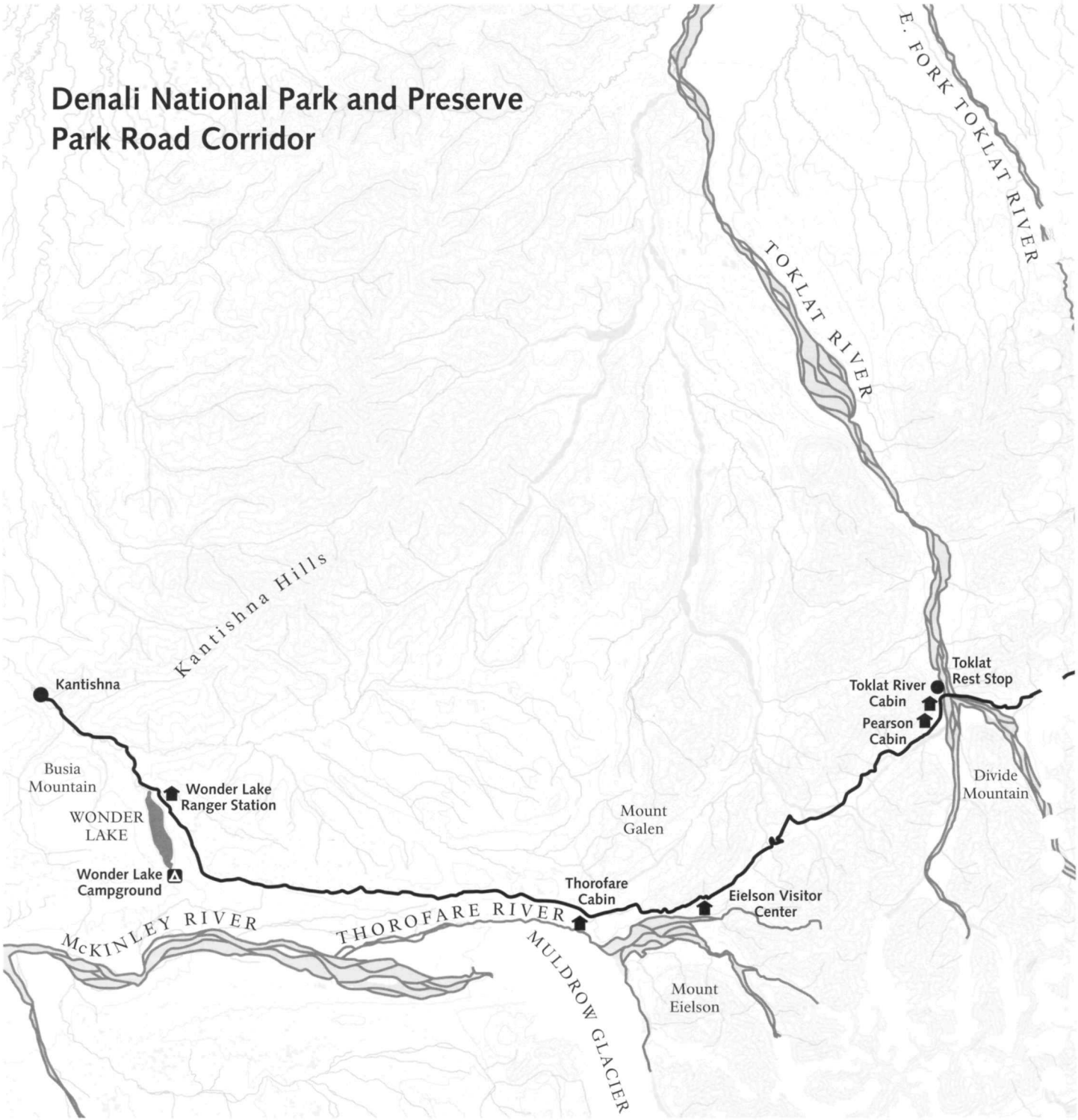
MMT&T Co. — Mt. McKinley Tourist & Transportation Company

NARA — National Archives & Records Administration

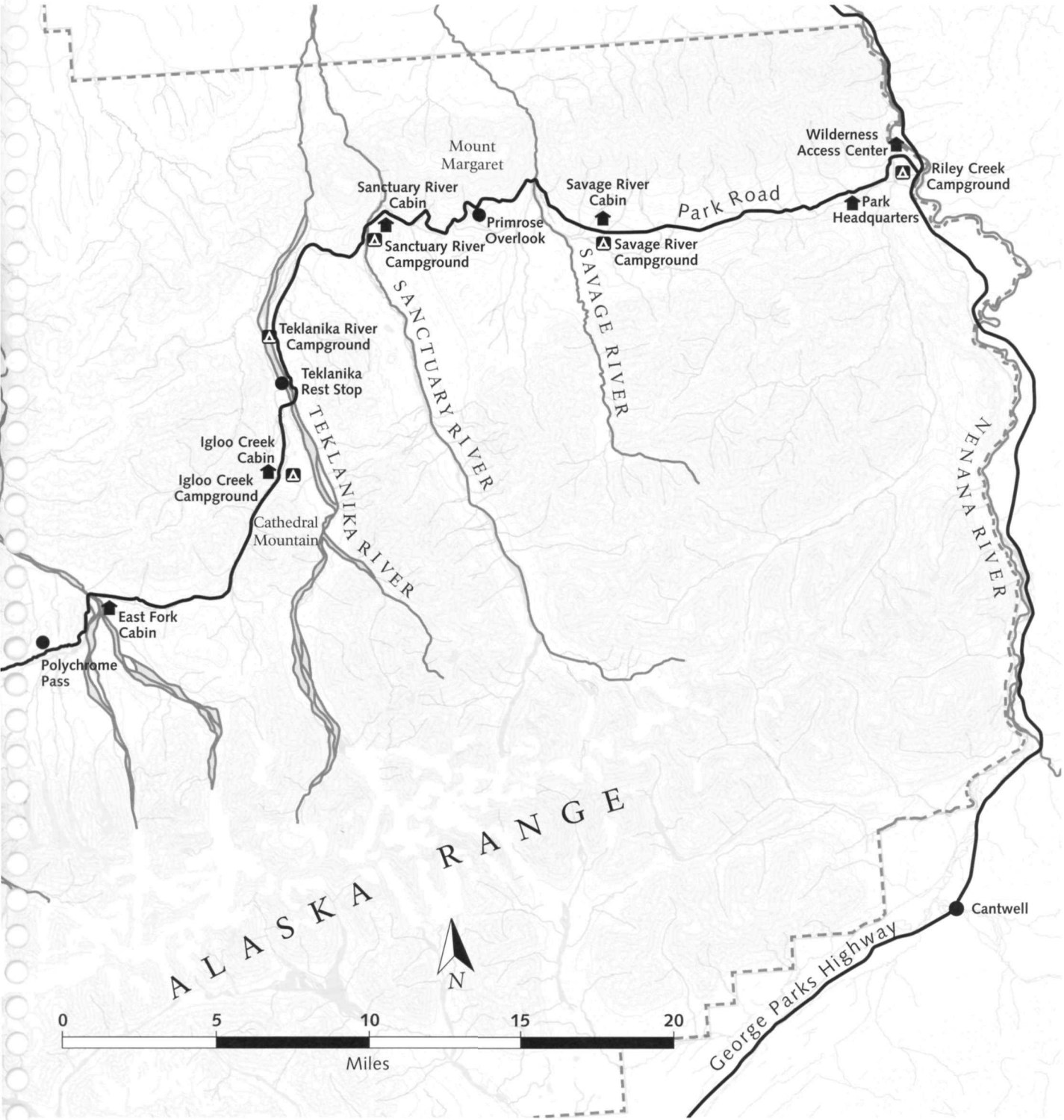
NPS — National Park Service

SMR — Superintendent's Monthly Reports

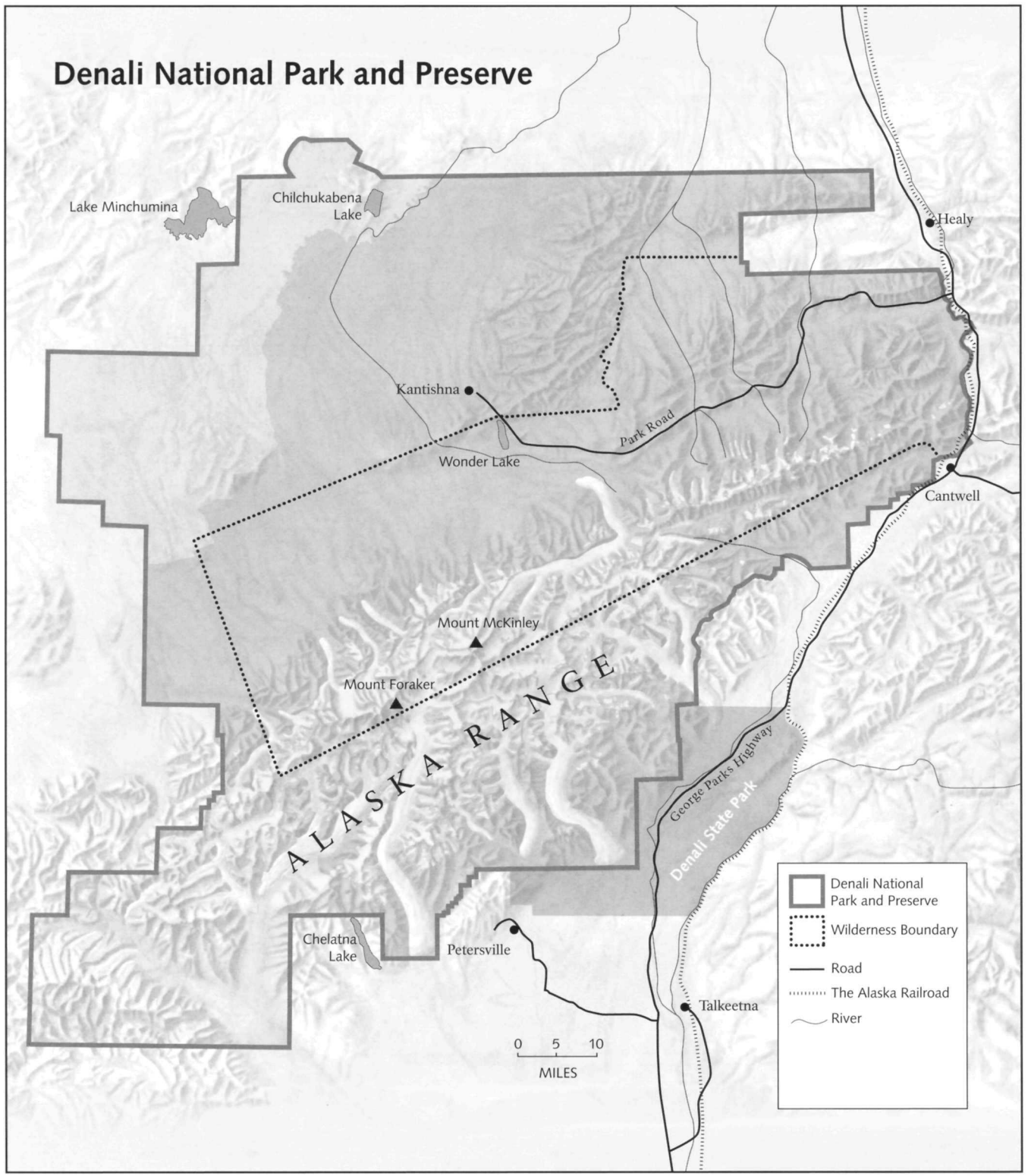
USGS — U. S. Geological Survey



Map pages 120-121
Map pages 160-161
Map pages 94-95
Map pages 80-81



Map pages 58-59
Map pages 34-35
Map pages 2-3


Denali National Park and Preserve
Lake Minchumina
Chilchukabena Lake
Healy
Kantishna
Park Road
Wonder Lake
Cantwell
Mount McKinley
Mount Foraker
ALASKA RANGE
George Parks Highway
Denali State Park
Chelatna Lake
Petersville
Talkeetna
0 5 10
MILES
Denali National Park and Preserve
Wilderness Boundary
Road
The Alaska Railroad
River



McKinley Park Station *to* Park Headquarters

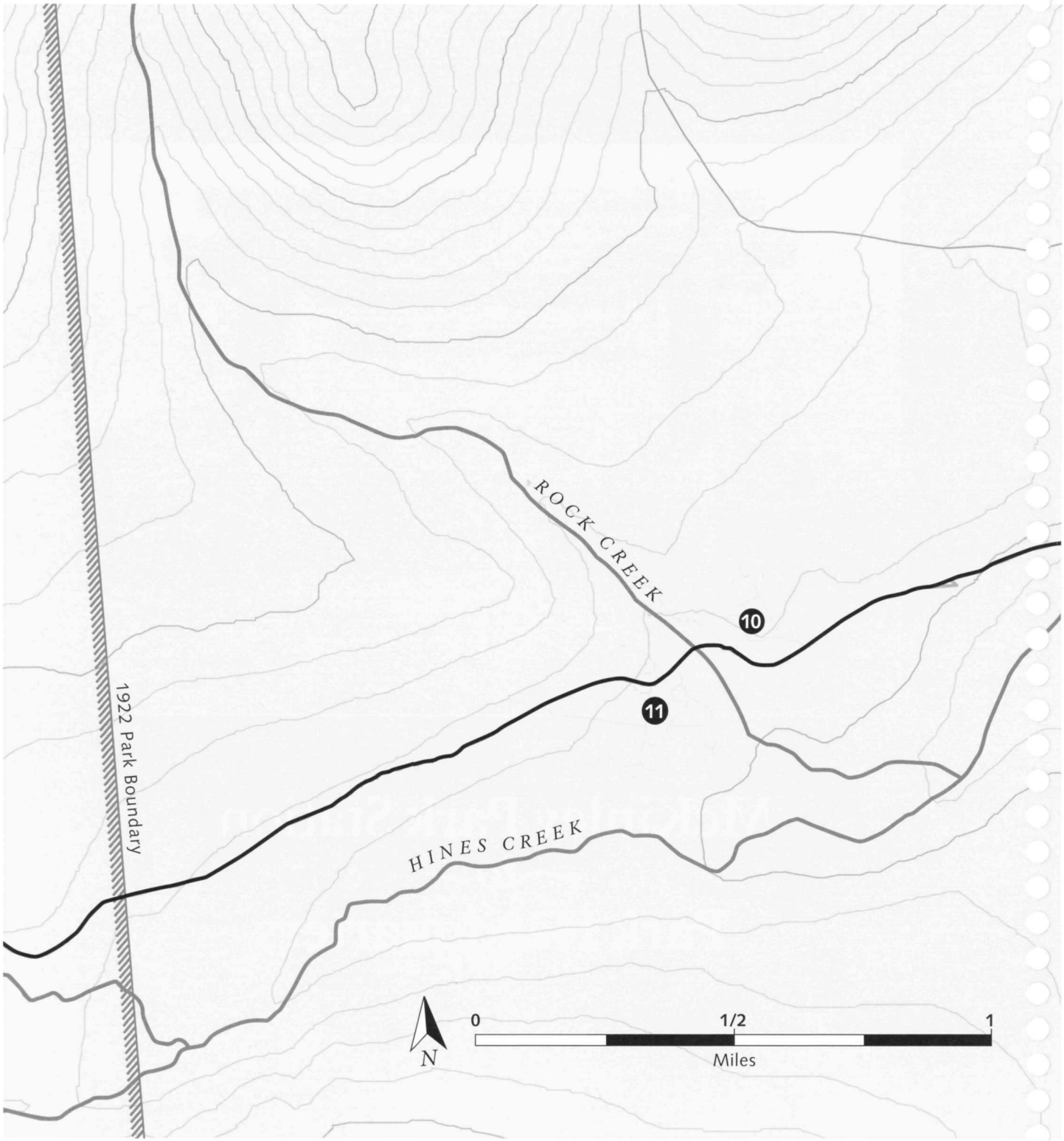
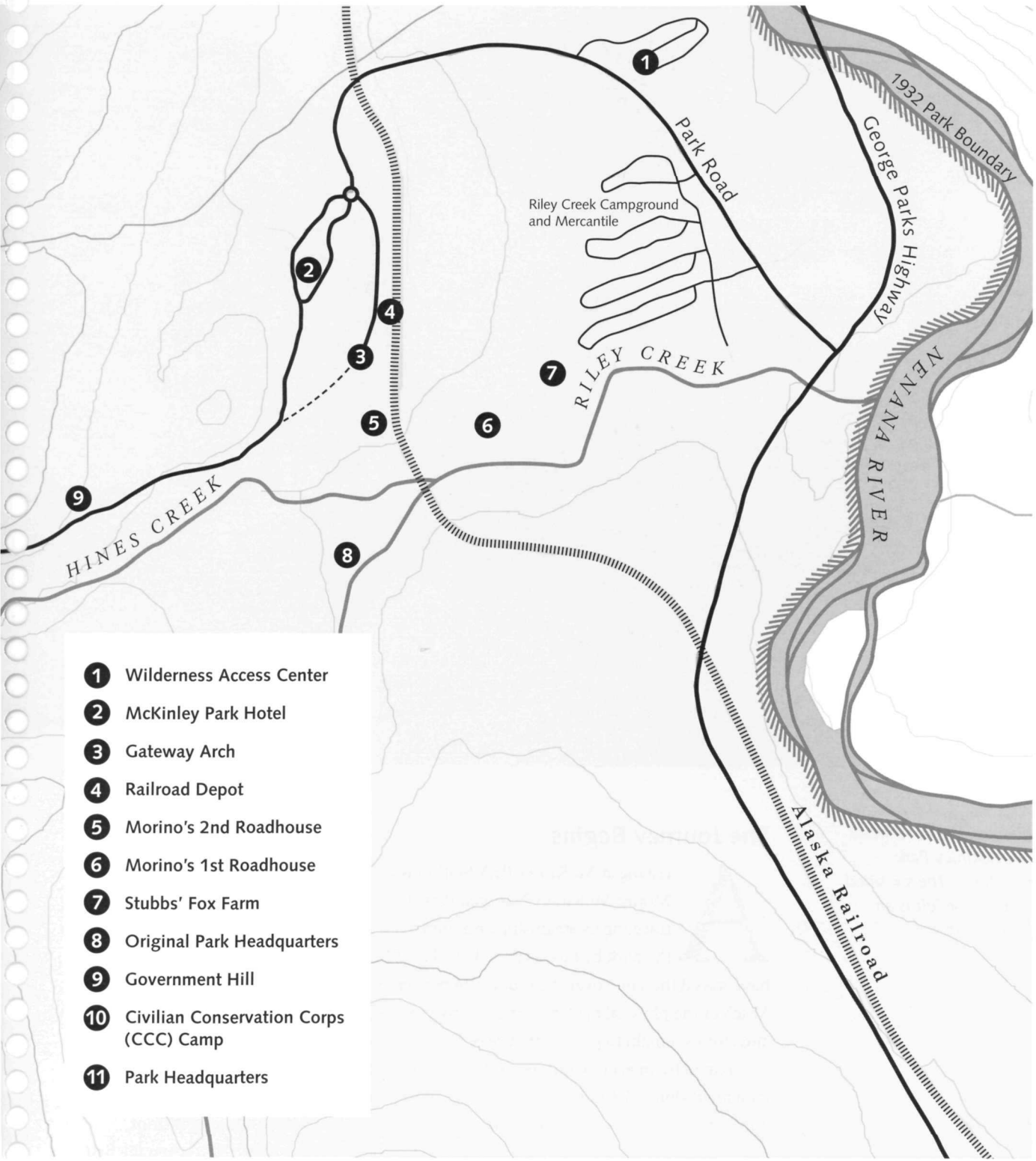


Photo previous page: Harry Hoyt and the entrance arch, Mount McKinley National Park, 1930s.
Morgan C. Edmunds Collection; Anchorage Museum, Gift of Elizabeth E. Donohoe, B88.12.84


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9
Park Road
Riley Creek Campground
and Mercantile
RILEY CREEK
HINES CREEK
1932 Park Boundary
George Parks Highway
NENANA RIVER
Alaska Railroad
1 Wilderness Access Center
2 McKinley Park Hotel
3 Gateway Arch
4 Railroad Depot
5 Morino's 2nd Roadhouse
6 Morino's 1st Roadhouse
7 Stubbs' Fox Farm
8 Original Park Headquarters
9 Government Hill
10 Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp
11 Park Headquarters



Alaska State Library, Skinner Foundation Collection, 44-5-74

Northbound Alaska Railroad train at McKinley Park Station, 1930s. The six-sided structure on the left is an interpretive kiosk.

The Journey Begins

Arriving at McKinley Park Station was an exciting event for early visitors to Mount McKinley National Park, the culmination of more than a week of traveling by steamship and train from Seattle. Most park visitors ventured into the park by bus, as they do today. While some aspects of a trip into the park have stayed the same over the years, others have changed, including the name of the park. Much of the physical evidence of the early years is long gone, but some of the photographs and stories remain to paint a picture of the park's history.

Created by an act of Congress in 1917, Mount McKinley National Park originally contained almost 1.6 million acres.[1] At the time, there was no access to the park by road, railroad or air. The area was reached in winter by dog team, and in summer by foot, horseback, or boat. The new national park received no funding until 1921, when the first

superintendent was hired with an appropriation of $8,000. The park was expanded in two small increments in 1922 and 1932. With the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act in 1980, the size of the park tripled, and its name was changed to Denali National Park and Preserve.

Even as the park was being created, indigenous people, prospectors, miners, explorers, and hunters used the area. A small community was already established along Riley Creek, at what later became McKinley Park Station. The Alaska Railroad was under construction to provide overland access through the Alaska Territory, from the coastal port of Seward to the interior city of Fairbanks. By the time railroad construction reached Riley Creek in 1921, government officials recognized it as the best location for access to the newly-created park. The stage was set for McKinley Park Station to become the hub of the new national park.

Today, most adventures into the park begin at the Wilderness Access Center. In the early days, park visitors began forays into the park from the McKinley Park Station depot. The short section of park road between the highway and the depot was constructed in 1957 to connect the park road with the newly completed Denali Highway.

McKinley Park Station

Beyond the roundabout, in the vicinity of the Denali Visitor Center and south on the lower benches of Riley and Hines creeks, a small, frontier community thrived. McKinley Park Station began around 1914 as a stopping place for prospectors traveling between gold camps, and it grew when construction of the Alaska Railroad began.[2] The builders of the railroad, the Alaska Engineering Commission, established a large camp on the south bank of Riley Creek to support construction of a bridge over the creek. Riley Creek was one of the last major gaps to be bridged, and the work was completed in February 1922.

Independent entrepreneurs claimed land and established themselves on the lower benches of Riley and Maurice (now Hines) creeks, an area referred to as "The Hole." Businesses sprang up to provide goods and services for railroad workers, prospectors, miners, and other travelers along the new transportation corridor.

One of the early entrepreneurs, Maurice Morino, saw an opportunity to turn his miner's cabin into a roadhouse, providing rustic accommodations and meals for travelers and workers. Park Ranger Fritz Nyberg recalled: "The bedding in the old Morino roadhouse was made from the



H.G. Kaiser, Alaska Railroad Collection; Anchorage Museum, Loan from the Alaska Railroad Corporation, AEC.H140

The Riley Creek railroad bridge and Alaska Engineering Commission camp, at center right, February 1922.



DENA 11-119, DNP&P Museum Collection

(Above) The Stubbs' fox farm near Riley Creek.

(Below) This 1921 photograph shows Maurice Morino's first (1) and second (2) roadhouses. Note that the railroad bridge had not yet been constructed (far left).

hides of caribou and the menu was always beans and caribou meat." Once the final railroad alignment was surveyed, Morino began building his second roadhouse closer to the depot in 1921.

Others also took advantage of the increased activity in the area. Pat Lynch ran a small roadhouse for a brief time. Mary Thompson operated a trading post, and Jack Donnelley ran a restaurant. Hunters returned from the surrounding hills with sheep and caribou meat to be served at local establishments. There were reports of illegal stills and alcohol sales by bootleggers, and business conducted by a few "ladies of the night."[3]

Duke and Elizabeth Stubbs claimed 36 acres of land along Riley Creek and operated a fox farm there. After Mary Thompson left the area in 1927, they operated her store, selling groceries and supplies until 1936, when they left Alaska. Railroad and seasonal road workers, prospectors, trappers and others lived in scattered cabins along Riley and Hines creeks.



Henry P. Karstens Collection, #e1011, Karstens Library



H.G. Kaiser, Alaska Railroad Collection; Anchorage Museum, Loan from the Alaska Railroad Corporation, AEC.G1444

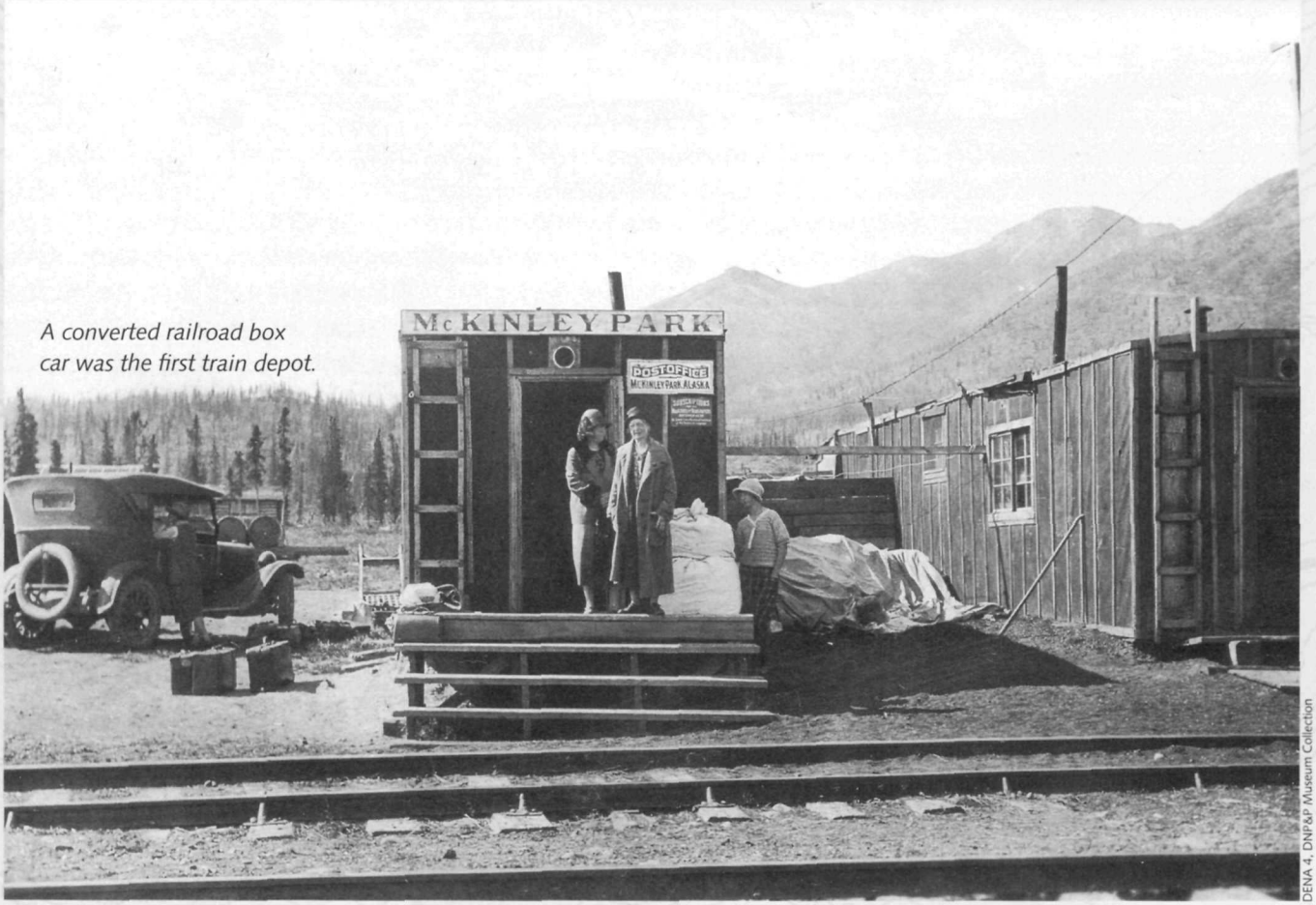
Maurice Morino and his first roadhouse, called "Park Gate Roadhouse."

The *Nenana Daily News* of November 24, 1921, described Morino's second roadhouse: "The new [Morino] hotel is a large, two-story log structure containing comfortable rooms, bunks and other accommodations for guests. It also has an annex which houses the dining room and restaurant and meals will be served there for the first time today, when a big Thanksgiving feed will be put on the table." Morino sold supplies and operated the post office in this roadhouse.

First Park Headquarters

In 1921, when the first park superintendent, Henry P. "Harry" Karstens, arrived at McKinley Park Station to establish the new park's headquarters, he found that the best building locations near the depot were already claimed. He had to settle for a less-than-ideal site near the confluence of Riley and Hines creeks. This location proved to be problematic — it was subject to frequent flooding and was very cold in winter. Also, it was an inconvenient location for meeting and greeting travelers heading to and from the park. Because of these problems, Karstens moved park headquarters to its present location in 1925.

Once the Riley Creek railroad bridge was completed, the hub of the community shifted to the higher bench north of the bridge, closer to the depot and Morino's second roadhouse. The Alaska Railroad provided transportation to the community, and the national park provided a new industry, tourism.



A converted railroad box car was the first train depot.

DENA 4, DNP&P Museum Collection

By the time railroad construction reached Riley Creek in 1921, government officials recognized that location as the best point along the railroad for the beginning of a spur road to the Kantishna mining district and for access to the new park.

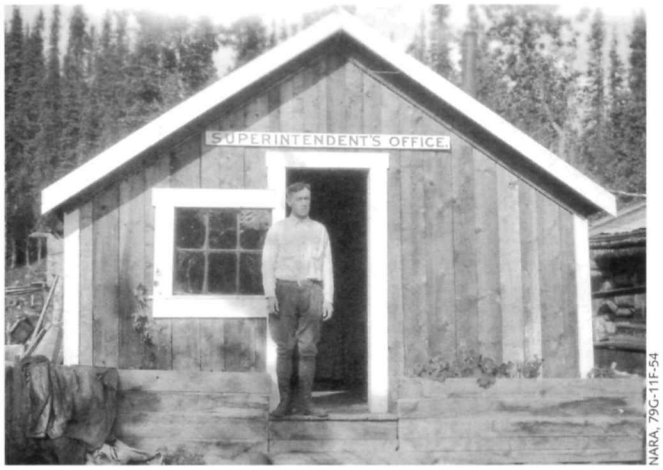


The second train depot at McKinley Park Station.

DENA 25-2.5, DNP&P Museum Collection

Along with the park came the beginning of government regulations. Enforcement of those regulations did not sit well with some of the independent Alaskans who had been hunting, trapping and prospecting in an area that was now closed to game harvest. There were conflicts over land use, poaching, and illegal liquor sales.

In 1932 the park's eastern boundary was extended to the Nenana River, an action that included McKinley Park Station and its residents in the national park. Morino died in 1937 and soon afterward his roadhouse fell into disrepair. Morino's homestead was acquired by the National Park Service (NPS) in 1947.[4] An accidental fire destroyed the roadhouse in 1950. Other aging and "unsightly" structures were removed during the same period. Remnants of McKinley Park Station still visible today include a few of the stone steps that led from the railroad tracks to Morino's roadhouse, a straight line of trees that once graced the front of the roadhouse porch, and the footprints of early roads in the area. Some of the historic roads are now incorporated into trails, and wayside exhibits mark the location of the roadhouse.



NARA, 79G-11F-54

Harry Karstens at the first park superintendent's office.

First park headquarters, built by Harry Karstens on Riley Creek.



Henry P. Karstens Collection, #2292, Karstens Library





Lingo Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

Maurice Morino

An Italian immigrant, Maurice Morino arrived in the Riley Creek area as a prospector around 1910. He soon saw promise in the roadhouse business, providing accommodations and meals for railroad construction workers, seasonal road workers, and travelers. He added on to his "miner's cabin" to make his first roadhouse near Riley Creek. The *Nenana Daily News,* on January 16, 1919, reported: "Maurice [Morino], who runs the roadhouse here, calls his place Park Gate, because a series of low passes run directly to McKinley Park, affording easy access from the railroad location. Maurice has a good roomy cabin, with accommodations for twelve persons. . . ."

In 1921 Morino filed for a 120-acre homestead and built a second roadhouse in a rustic "Italian villa" style, prominently located near the McKinley Park Station depot. This two-story roadhouse offered 20 to 25 sleeping rooms, a trading post, post office, and meals prepared with produce from two gardens. Morino served as postmaster from 1925 to 1937. In the 1930s he cleared land and planted hay, oats and barley, and cleared the first airstrip on his homestead. Morino died in 1937 at age 67. His roadhouse, no longer kept up, began to decay. The Superintendent's Monthly Report for May 1950 reported: "On May 30, 1950, at 11:30 pm the old familiar landmark, the Morino Roadhouse, burned to the ground. . . . A transient worker bumming his way over the Alaska Railroad went inside the roadhouse to sleep. He was smoking a cigarette [which caused the fire]."[5]

Seasonal employee Norma Hoyt recalled: "We were teachers from Fairbanks and we were to stay there [at Morino's roadhouse] during the summer. . . . We had never been there, so we took the biggest door that was next to the railroad and we rapped and rapped. Finally he came (I just remember this so clearly), and we said, 'Oh, did we come to the wrong door?' And he bawled, and he says, 'All our doors are open to you, as are our hearts.' I had never heard such a beautiful Italian greeting. He was a marvelous fellow. White hair, wore a red bandana and his Italian cap, and he sang Italian arias all day long."[6]



George Flood Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

Morino's second roadhouse, 1924.

(Left) Maurice Morino on the porch of his roadhouse, 1930s.



Henry P. Karstens Collection, #2334, Karstens Library

Local men, including Harry Karstens, built the McKinley Park School in October 1922. Due to the lack of enrollment, it closed in the fall of 1924.

PARK SCHOOL FLOURISHING: ADULTS ATTEND AT NIGHT

Nenana Daily News, December 2, 1922

McKINLEY PARK, Nov 30. After many difficulties and trials that seemed insurmountable at times, McKinley Park School was started on November 8 with an enrollment of eight pupils. Mrs. Fairburn, of Fairbanks, being teacher.

After continuing for three successful weeks, attention was attracted to the school by the adults of this vicinity, who interviewed the teacher to ascertain if she would conduct a night school three nights per week, which she agreed to do. So, at the present, McKinley Park has a day school, with an attendance of eight pupils, and a night school three times a week, with an attendance of six grown people. It is very gratifying to note the interest taken by these grown folks, who are desirous of improving their position in life.

Some mountain sheep are being brought in by hunters in this vicinity and the caribou are very numerous and not hard to bag.

Reports come from Nenana that Maurice Morino, who was taken to the hospital there about ten days ago, is doing very nicely and expects to return to McKinley Park soon. All his friends are pleased to hear of his improvement.

(Right) This cabin was one of several that Morino allowed to be built on his land. Once the builder moved on, Morino would collect rent from the next occupant.

(Below) The Alaska Road Commission (ARC) warehouse and office at McKinley Park Station, 1930s. The Alaska Road Commission base of operations was near the depot. Between 1922 and 1938 the ARC built the 90-mile park road from McKinley Park Station to the mining community of Kantishna. They continued to maintain the road until 1956.



Pearl Adams Photo, DNP&P Museum Collection



Hoyt Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection



DENA 12-15, DNP&P Museum Collection

The McKinley Park Hotel became the new hub for park visitors in 1939.

The McKinley Park Hotel

As one era drew to a close, another began when the McKinley Park Hotel opened in June 1939. Long in the planning phase, hotel construction was started in 1937 by the Works Progress Administration, a federal government work program. The new hotel, with its modern amenities, was located where the Denali Visitor Center parking lot is today. When park visitors arrived at the depot, they were only a short walk from their accommodations. Bus trips into the park were provided from the hotel.

The original hotel burned in September 1972, and it was quickly replaced with a "temporary" structure incorporating railroad cars as rooms. This building served as the hotel through the 2001 season. It had been determined that sufficient accommodations were available outside the park, making a hotel inside the park no longer essential. The structures were torn down or moved away and the Denali Visitor Center complex was built in its place, beginning yet another era of tourism activity.

En route to the main tourist camp at Savage River, visitors passed through a gateway arch, constructed by the Alaska Railroad in 1926. The arch served as a welcome to visitors, indicating that they had arrived in the vicinity of Mt. McKinley National Park. At the time, the park boundary was three miles west of the railroad depot. The arch was located west of the present depot parking lot on the original road alignment, which has since been rerouted.

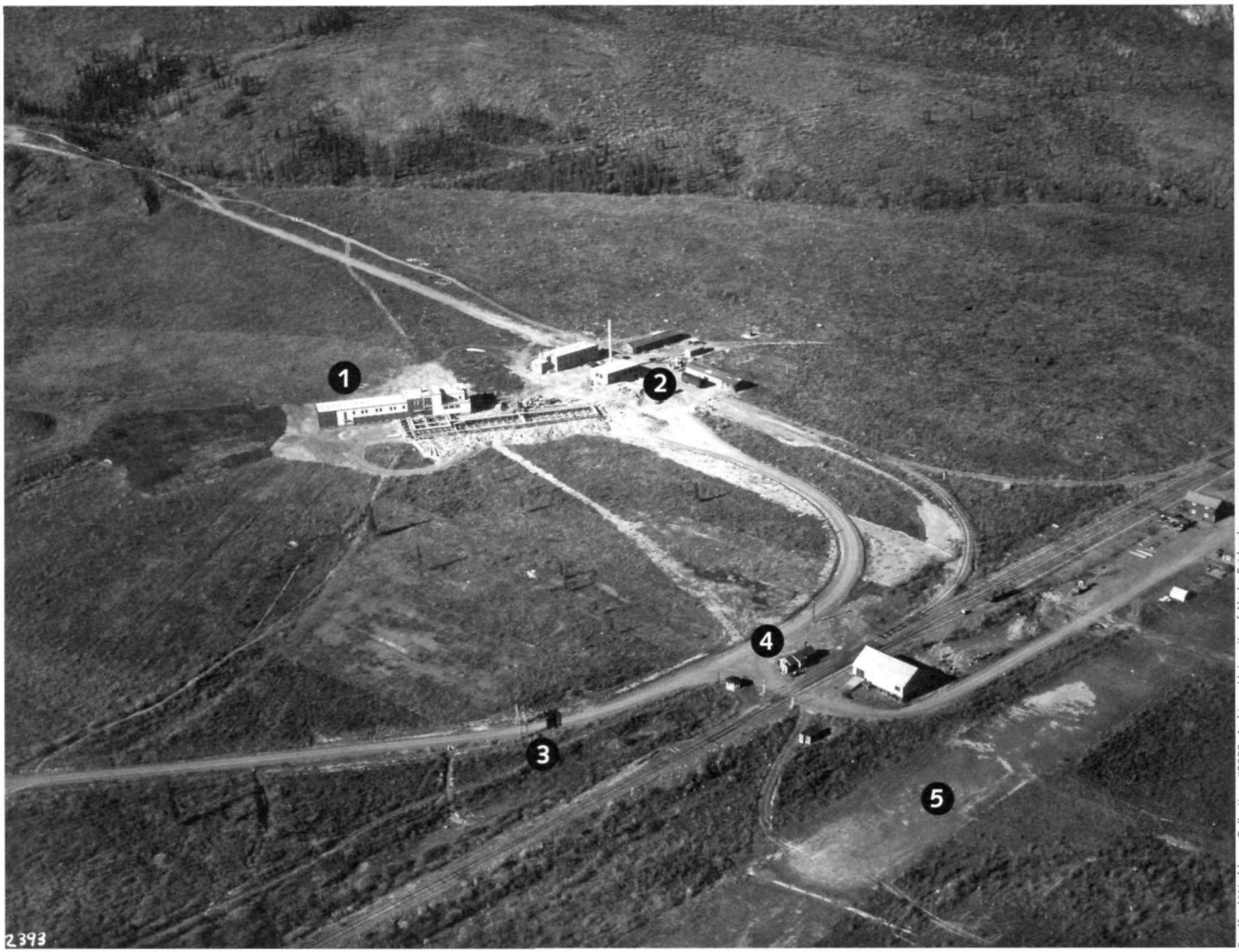
Mt. McKinley National Park gateway arch.



DENA 39-1, DNP&P Museum Collection

The aerial photograph below shows the McKinley Park Hotel (center) under construction in 1938. The new Denali Visitor Center and its associated buildings opened in 2005 on this site. The hotel powerhouse is the only remaining original structure.

1 McKinley Park Hotel
2 Powerhouse
3 Gateway Arch
4 Railroad Depot
5 Airstrip



Bradford Washburn Collection, #2393, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks



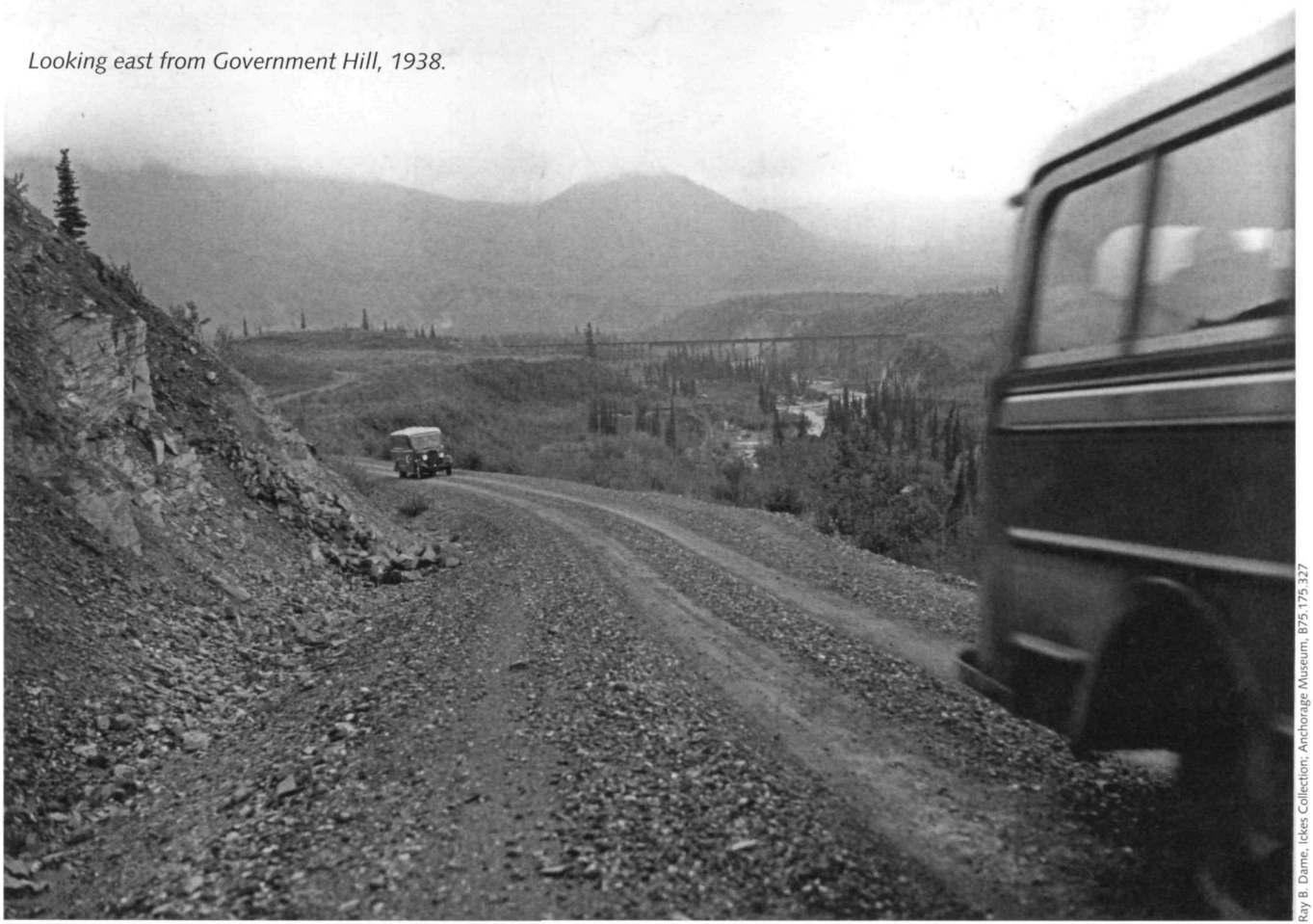
Tom Habecker Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

The Riley Creek railroad bridge seen from Government Hill, 1993.

Government Hill

Just beyond the Denali Visitor Center, the road climbs up "Government Hill." The Alaska Railroad bridge over Riley Creek can be seen from near the top of the hill. This bridge was built by the Alaska Engineering Commission during the winter of 1921-22. It is the original structure and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Looking east from Government Hill, 1938.



Ray B. Dame, Ickes Collection, Anchorage Museum, B75.175.327



Ray B. Dame, Ickes Collection; Anchorage Museum, B75.175.294

The CCC camp entrance, 1938.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp

The first road on the right beyond the top of Government Hill is the entrance to the former Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp. The CCC began in 1933 as one of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's nationwide New Deal relief programs. The CCC provided paid work, training, and discipline for 2.5 million young men who otherwise might have been jobless during the Depression. Enrollees were recruited by the Labor Department, the U.S. Army operated and supervised the CCC camps, while the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service provided the conservation projects. For two summers, 1938 and 1939, the CCC camp at Mt. McKinley National Park housed 200 enrollees and 12 supervisors. For their base camp, they erected several hard-sided buildings, tents for housing, and restroom facilities.

As many as four enrollees lived in each canvas tent. Tent rows were placed around the central mess hall, shower house and infirmary.



DENA 4-24, DNP&P Museum Collection

CCC mess hall, 1938-39.

The human story of the camp — from 6 a.m. reveille and calisthenics to after-hours sports and educational sessions — has been told by many of the enrollees, who in later years returned to the park to view the products of their labors, still very much in use.

William E. Brown,
Denali: Symbol of the Alaskan Wild

The building shown above was the kitchen and mess hall for the CCC camp. It is the only original structure remaining from the 1938-39 camp. Although one wing has been removed and it has been renovated several times, it is being preserved as a representative of the original CCC camp. The area is now called "C-Camp" and is used to house seasonal park employees. The mess hall is now a recreation center for residents.

The CCC accomplished a large amount of work in two summers. At park headquarters, they built employee residences, a machine shop, and a garage. In addition, they installed water lines, moved the dog kennels, constructed roads, removed fire hazards, landscaped, upgraded the telephone line along the park road, and built a ranger station at Wonder Lake.

In 1947 the infirmary and shower buildings were moved to the park headquarters area where they were combined and renovated into a residence, which was later converted to an office. Other original features still intact include several tent berms and the original site footprint.[7]



Beatrice Herning Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

CCC enrollees building a residence at park headquarters.



Ed Erickson Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

CCC enrollee on "clean up detail," 1938.



Bradford Washburn Collection, #2391, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

This 1938 aerial view of the CCC camp shows the layout of camp facilities and the original road alignment across Rock Creek.



Henry P. Karstens Collection, Karstens Library

Harry Karstens

Born in 1878, Henry P. "Harry" Karstens headed north to the Klondike gold rush when he was 18. He soon turned from prospecting to transportation, delivering mail by dog team in the winter, and working as a river freighter in the summer. By 1903 he had moved to Fairbanks, and carried mail to the Kantishna mining district during the gold rush there. In the summer of 1906 he served as assistant packer for naturalist and hunter Charles Sheldon on his trip to the Alaska Range, into what would later become Mt. McKinley National Park. Sheldon and Karstens returned to spend the winter of 1907-08 on the Toklat River, where they discussed Sheldon's ideas for creating a national park in the region.

In early 1913 Karstens teamed up with Hudson Stuck, Walter Harper and Robert Tatum to make

This fall or next spring the Alaska Engineering Commission expects the government railroad connected,...bringing a flood of tourists by the gates of the park with no facility for handling those who wish to go in. The main artery road through the upper passes is the park's most urgent need.

Harry Karstens,
Superintendent's Monthly Report, June 1921

Harry Karstens, first park superintendent, 1921 to 1928.

the first ascent of Mt. McKinley. One of the many challenges the expedition encountered was that their intended route on the main northeastern ridge had been shattered by an earthquake the previous year. It took Karstens and his party three weeks to chop a staircase up the ridge that had taken the 1912 Parker-Browne party only days to ascend. Stuck later named Karstens Ridge after the man who led the expedition up this difficult route.

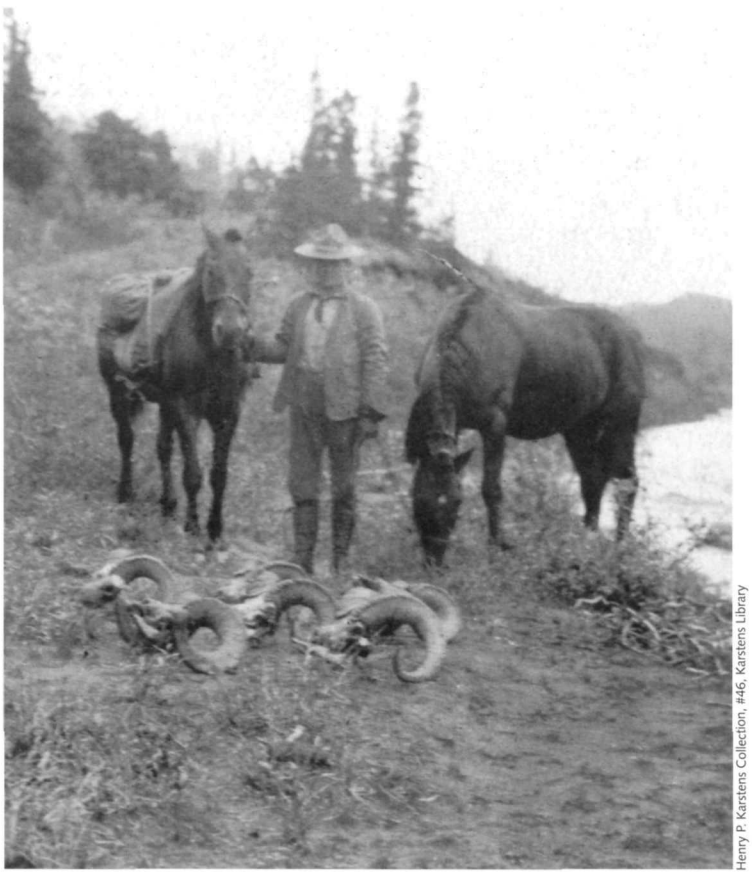
In 1914 Harry married Frieda Louise Gaerisch, a Fairbanks nurse. They had one son, Eugene, born in Nenana in 1917.

Karstens was an accomplished outdoorsman and was well known in the Territory of Alaska by the time he took on the job of first superintendent at Mt. McKinley National Park in April 1921. Karstens, age 42, was immediately faced with huge tasks, the



Hudson Stuck, *The Ascent of Denali*

(Above) Hudson Stuck and Harry Karstens, Mt. McKinley Expedition, 1913.



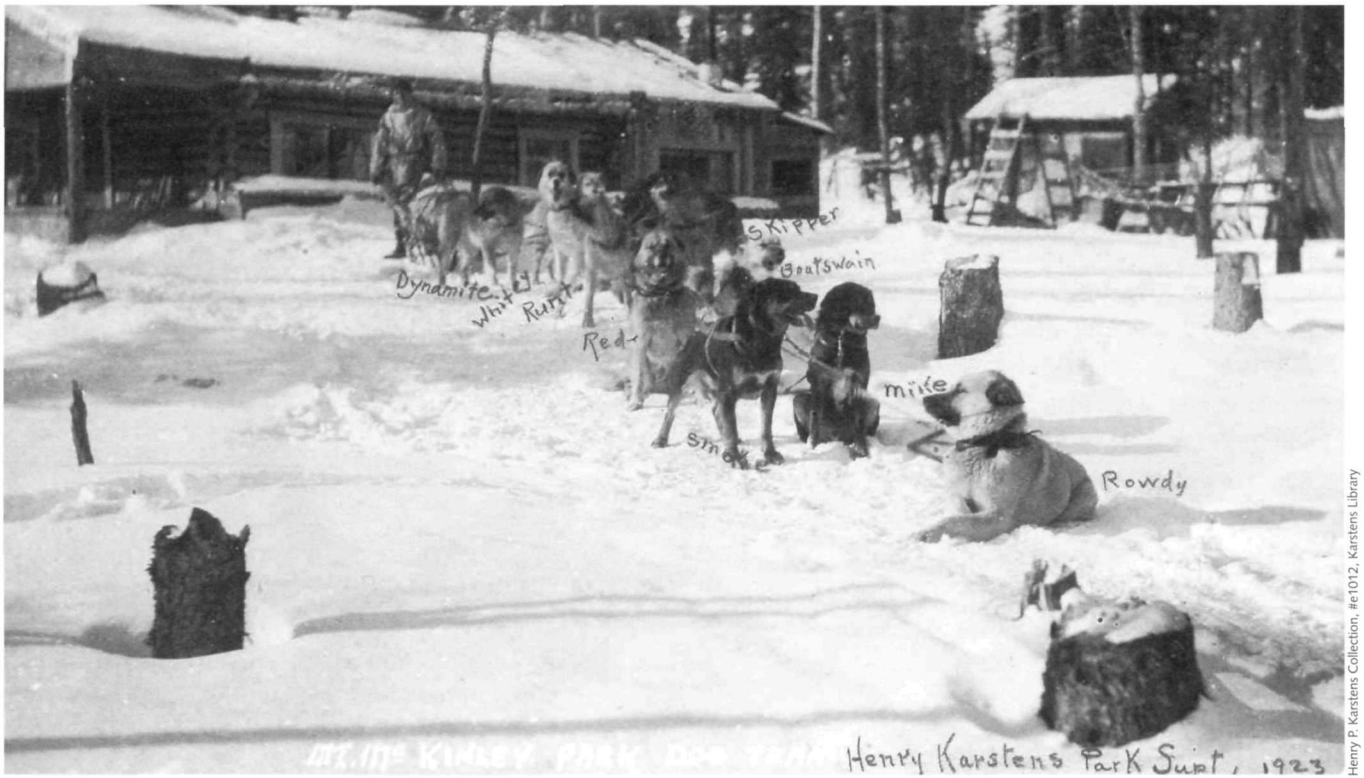
Henry P. Karstens Collection, #46, Karstens Library

May 9, [1913]: Walter & I tried ridge again... very slow work cutting ice steps at difficult angles. Last year's shake up has certainly ruined this ridge for good climbing.

Sunday, May 25: Walter and I work up ridge over some very bad places. Chopping steps in ice on steep slopes is rather trying, very slow work & requires patience.

Harry Karstens,
Diary of Mt. McKinley Ascent

Harry Karstens with Charles Sheldon's specimens near the Teklanika River, August 1906.



Henry P. Karstens Collection, #e1012, Karstens Library

Harry Karstens and his dog team at the first park headquarters, 1923.

first of which was to establish a national park in a land of big game hunting and proven mineral potential. His mission was to protect the wildlife and other park resources. He began by building a headquarters base, first along Riley Creek and then, in 1925, at the present headquarters site. Constrained by a meager budget, he hired rangers who not only patrolled the park by dog team to protect wildlife, but also built cabins, hauled coal, cut firewood, and greeted visitors. In short, the rangers and Superintendent Karstens did everything that needed doing.

Providing for park visitors was also an immediate priority. By 1923, the Alaska Railroad brought visitors who expected transportation and accommodations in order to see the new national park. Representing the NPS, Karstens worked with the Alaska Road Commission to begin construction of a road through the park. In addition, he granted a park concession to establish a tourist facility at Savage River and provide transportation services into the park.

As Mt. McKinley National Park's first superintendent, Karstens met the challenges of the job. With his "can-do" outlook, necessary for a pioneer park superintendent, he was largely responsible for establishing and shaping the park. In 1928 he left government service. He and his family moved to Fairbanks where he engaged in various business enterprises. The end of the trail for him came on November 28, 1955. He now rests in the Birch Hill Cemetery in Fairbanks.

He [Harry Karstens] is a tall, stalwart man, well poised, frank, and strictly honorable. One of the best dog drivers in the north, . . . he proved a most efficient and congenial companion.

Charles Sheldon,
The Wilderness of Denali

Park Headquarters

After the road passes the C-Camp entrance and crosses the Rock Creek bridge, a prominent flagpole, sign, and parking area on the left mark the site of park headquarters. The road to the left of the flagpole is the main road leading into the Headquarters Historic District. The superintendent and many of the park's permanent staff work here.

Harry Karstens decided to move park headquarters from Riley Creek to this site in the fall of 1924. In preparation for the move, he wrote to the NPS Director, "There is a beautiful spot, with ample room for expansion, one and two-thirds miles from the railroad.... My idea is to make this a permanent location, plotting out the site with a view to future development and adequate sanitation. Such buildings as we can construct will be built of logs, having an eye to their permanency and attractiveness, and also for warmth and comfort. Building headquarters at this point will simplify the work of checking persons entering the park or leaving it."[8]

Karstens and his rangers moved rapidly. They dismantled several structures at the first headquarters and reused the materials to build three one-room log cabins. A barn and other temporary structures were erected at the new headquarters site. Between the fall of 1925 and the end of 1927, nine structures were completed here. The rangers used logs and rough-sawn lumber, resulting in buildings that closely resembled those built by local miners, trappers, and hunters.[9]

Mt. McKinley National Park headquarters, at its current location, 1928. Seen from the main park road (foreground), the superintendent's office is on the left and the two cabins on the right are ranger residences. Note the weather station on the far right. Official weather observations have been recorded at park headquarters continuously since 1925.

Candace Waugaman Collection





Haskell Photo, DENA 14976, DNP&P Museum Collection

Visitors at the superintendent's office, July 1927.



Interpretation Collection, DNP&P

The superintendent's office was relocated to the hill north of the park road across from its original location.

Rangers constructed the superintendent's office with local spruce logs in 1926, along the park road near the entrance to the main headquarters road. This one-room building served as the superintendent's office until 1941. In "dilapidated" condition, it was converted to the first park museum. The building was moved a short distance to the utility area in 1950, and in 1952, it was moved again to its present location north of the park road. It was used in the 1950s as a museum and exhibit room, and since 1960, it has served as a residence for park employees. It is the oldest original structure at park headquarters.[10]

The Warehouse

Beginning in 1928, NPS landscape architects began designing buildings for the park, and they continued the rustic natural log construction style. Between 1928 and 1937 park rangers and hired carpenters replaced earlier structures with more permanent ones. They built a warehouse in 1928, which is now the oldest architect-designed building at headquarters.

The Superintendent's Monthly Report for July1928 related: *In securing logs for the construction of log buildings this year, it was decided to get the logs out ourselves. This proved to be a bigger job than was anticipated. It was necessary to float them down a nearby stream a distance of three miles. The stream was full of big boulders and exceedingly hard to keep the logs*

running. The men on the job were up against it and in order not to take a chance of losing the logs should high water come on, it was necessary for the superintendent, clerk and rangers to assist for several days. The hauling of the logs to headquarters was another difficult job which was overcome by getting an old worn out tractor from the Alaska Road Commission which they did not want anymore, repaired it with old parts and hauled all the logs except 25, when it went out of commission entirely.

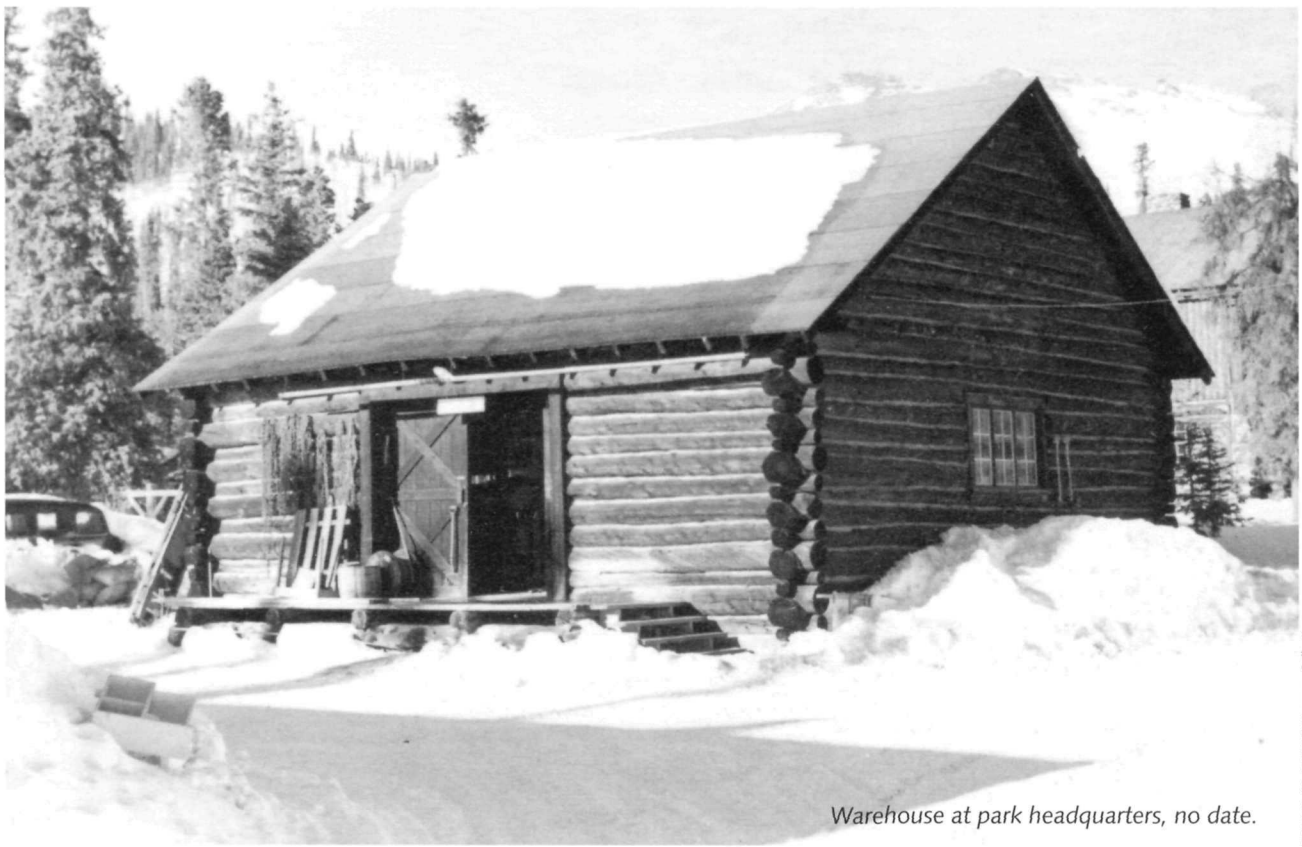
Most of the construction of the warehouse was done during the summer of 1928. Superintendent Karstens noted in his September report: "The construction of physical improvements has been shut down for the winter. The warehouse is practically completed except for the installation of windows and doors, which can be done during the winter."[11]

The warehouse was used as an unheated storage facility until it was converted into office space in the early 1980s. It is currently used by the Division of Interpretation.



Dan Wilder Collection, Courtesy of the Wilder Family

Ranger Dan Wilder described the 1928 warehouse builders: "The crew, left to right: Alex MacCrimmon, 50, a former Canadian Government Arctic explorer-surveyor; Tom Hamlin, sourdough prospector-miner; Harry Karstens, superintendent; Pat King, 81, lifelong steel bridge builder."



DENA 3-15, DNP&P Museum Collection

Warehouse at park headquarters, no date.



Beatrice Herning Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

Rangers Grant Pearson, John Rumohr, and Lou Corbley at park headquarters, c. 1930s.

The Ranger Club

The ranger dormitory combined log and log veneer construction, characterizing the rustic style. In February 1934, rangers cut and hauled suitable logs, and construction began in late summer. The dormitory was completed in May 1935. It was designed to provide housing for bachelor rangers and included a communal kitchen and living room with a stone fireplace. Called the "Ranger Club," the building served this purpose for nearly twenty years.

Continuing the tradition of adaptive reuse of buildings in the headquarters area, the Ranger Club experienced its first change in 1954 when it was converted to serve as the park's administrative headquarters. Since then the building has undergone many additional interior changes, but the historic character of the exterior has been preserved. It still serves as the superintendent's office and the park's headquarters.

Structural fires have been responsible for the loss of several buildings in the headquarters district, including the original combination garage, workshop and blacksmith shop, which burned to the ground on January

(Below) View looking down the headquarters road from the flagpole, c. 1940.

DENA 3-7.7, DNP&P Museum Collection

1 First Superintendent's office (moved)
2 Powerhouse (now an office)
3 Employee residence (burned, no longer there)
4 Ranger dormitory (now headquarters office)
5 Warehouse (now offices)
6 Auto shop (now offices)



DENA 3-36, DNP&P Museum Collection

(Right) The "Ranger Club," or ranger dormitory, now the superintendent's office.

(Below) CCC enrollees construct a new machine shop and garage, 1939.



DENA 3-1, DNP&P Museum Collection



DENA 11-6, DNP&P Museum Collection

Dog feed cache and cookhouse, 1939.



DENA 11-13.5, DNP&P Museum Collection

(Right) Sled dog demonstration, 1940.

13, 1938. The superintendent reported, "This fire was the most disastrous in the history of the park.... The building, all tools, equipment and one Ford pickup truck were a total loss."[12] In 1939 the CCC enrollees built a replacement for this structure, using reinforced concrete. The interior of the building has been remodeled several times, changing its function from a machine shop and garage to a carpenter shop, and most recently to offices.

The Dog Kennels

In February 1922, Harry Karstens purchased the first NPS dog team for winter transportation.[13] Since that time, the NPS has maintained kennels to support dog teams for winter patrols. In 1930 the current log and plank "dog feed cache and cookhouse" was constructed for storage of dog food and equipment, and for preparation of dog food. In 1938 CCC crews moved the building and dog kennels a short distance to their present location. This structure continues to serve its original function, supporting the historic activity of dog team travel.

Summer sled dog demonstrations have been offered at the kennels for park visitors since the 1930s, and continue today as a popular attraction. The highlight of the program comes when five dogs are hitched to a wheeled sled and an interpretive ranger takes the team for a short run around a gravel track.

The headquarters area is a historic district listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Fourteen structures built between 1926 and 1941 contribute to its historic significance. The building exteriors and basic layout of the historic district have undergone relatively few changes since this period. The NPS continues to preserve the historic district for its importance in the early growth of conservation and tourism activities in Mt. McKinley National Park.



Fritz Nyberg Album, DNP&P Museum Collection

Superintendent Karstens at the dog kennels.



Frieda Louise Karstens



Henry P. Karstens Collection, #297, Karstens Library

Frieda Louise Gaerisch Karstens first came north in 1905, and returned to stay in 1909. Louise, as she was known, worked as a nurse in the Fairbanks and Nenana hospitals. She married Harry Karstens in 1914, and they made their home on First Avenue in Fairbanks. Their son, Eugene, was born in 1917 at the Alaska Engineering Commission hospital in Nenana, where Louise had worked.

In late November 1921, Louise and Eugene joined Harry at the newly-established park headquarters on Riley Creek, near McKinley Park Station. She wrote of her arrival: "Our cabin was not finished so we lived in a tent. It was 15 below zero the day I arrived there. When we arrived at the park we were all loaded on a double-ender [sled] with one horse on one end and a couple of men on the other end, as we had to go down a steep hill. It was very dark and I guess the old horse must have stumbled over a stump for we all rolled off the sled and halfway down the hill before we stopped, where we picked ourselves up."[14]

In 1925, the family moved to the new park headquarters. Eugene recalled: "I had my own room; we had a kitchen, a living room and dining room. We had a room with a tub and washbowl. Mother heated water for these facilities on the stove."

Eugene also recalled that the nearest doctor was in Fairbanks, so Louise acted as the community nurse, helping anyone who came to her. He remembered one time when a fall off the back porch tore his lip, and his mother stayed up all night holding his torn lip in place until it began to heal.[15]

Like many NPS spouses during the early years, Louise was an ad hoc part of the park work force. As Harry Karstens noted in the September 1925 Superintendent's Monthly Report, "The park personnel during the month consisted of a superintendent, clerk and two rangers, Mrs. F. L. Karstens making a third ranger, at $1 per month, to give her a legal status for assisting the superintendent in his work."

Louise often cooked and served meals in her home for small groups of dignitaries or NPS officials. Eugene related that "they never expected to get the kind of meal that Mother prepared for them, served on good china and fine crystal in a log house on a homebuilt table. Mother would serve fresh vegetables from our garden, wild or domestic meat, and usually a big piece of apple pie with homemade ice cream."[16]

In her short memoir, Louise recalled, "Our life in the park was very exciting and interesting." Louise passed away on October 4, 1974 and is buried beside her husband in Fairbanks.[17]



Harpers Ferry Center, NPS

(Above) Louise, Harry and Eugene Karstens on left, with NPS Director Stephen Mather, second from right, McKinley Park, August 1926.

(Left) Harry Karstens, Louise, family friend Helen Livingston, and Eugene at the McKinley Park Station depot.

Aug. 12, 1924: Mrs. Karstens accompanied by Miss Turner and Miss Newton arrived on last night's train. . . . I took them in auto to head of Savage River where they saw considerable sheep and caribou, returning to Savage Camp for the night. . . . They have the distinction of being the first visitors to go into the park by auto.

Harry Karstens,
Superintendent's Monthly Report, August 1924



Candace Waugaman Collection



Park Headquarters *to* Sanctuary River

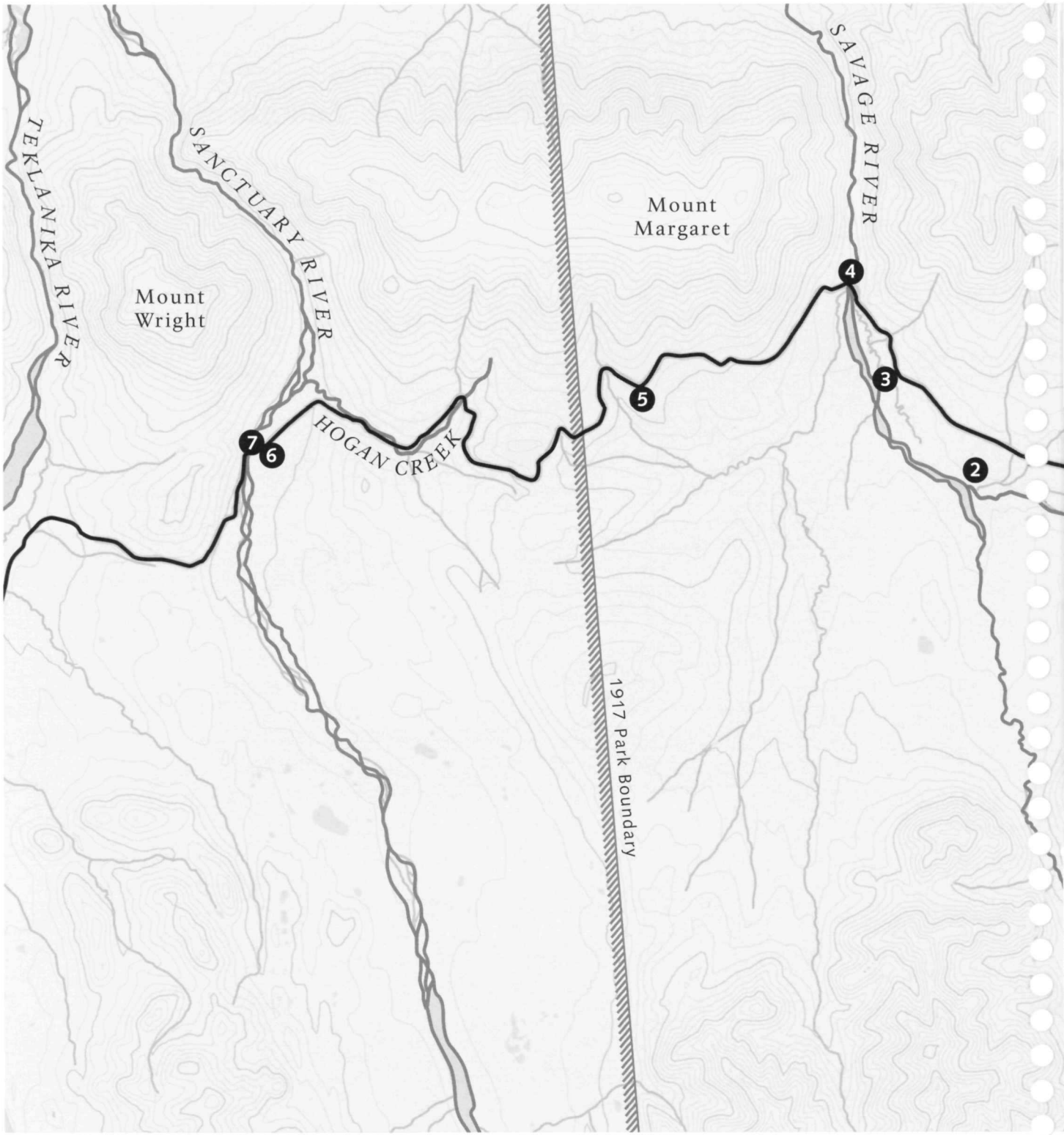
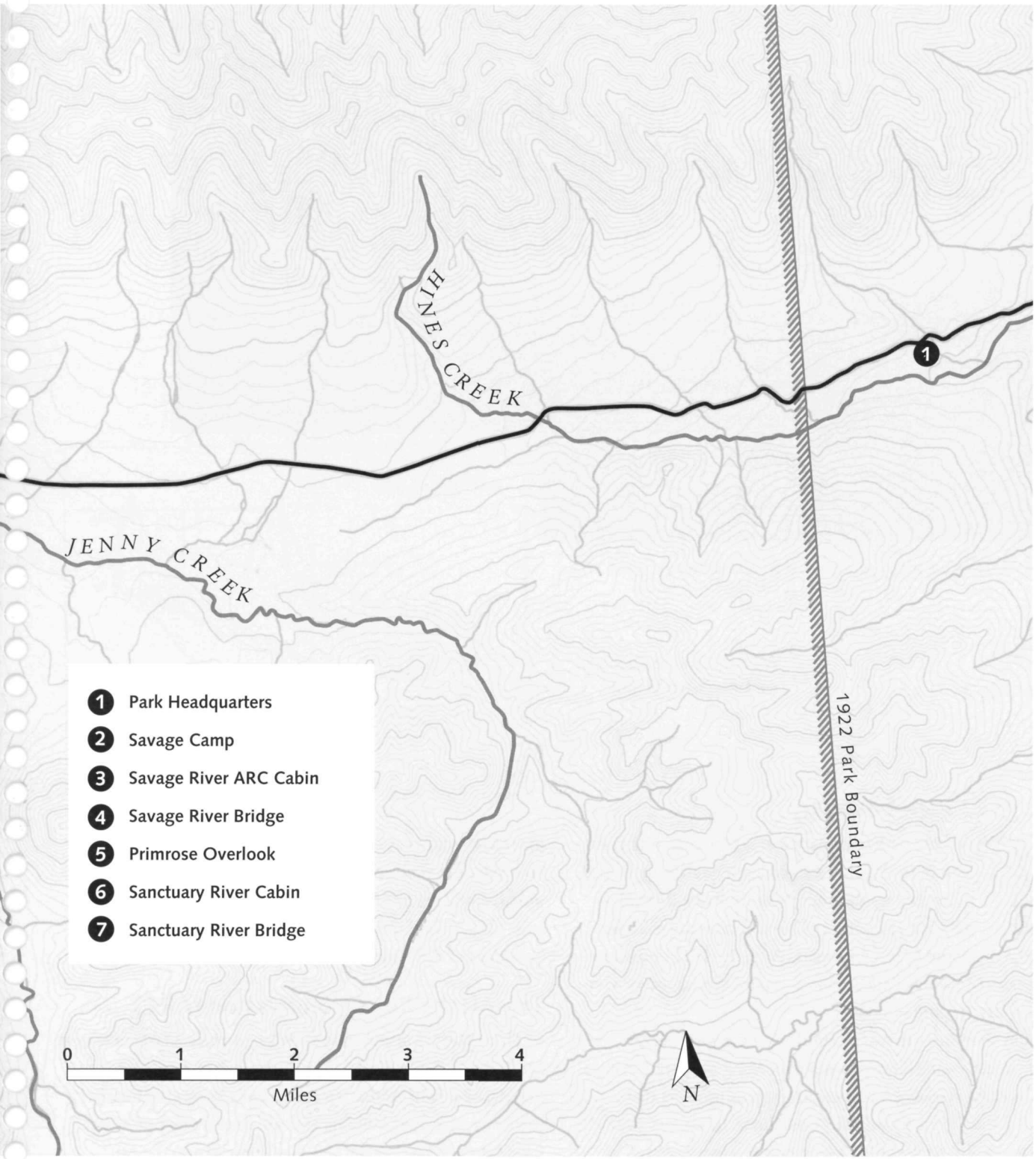
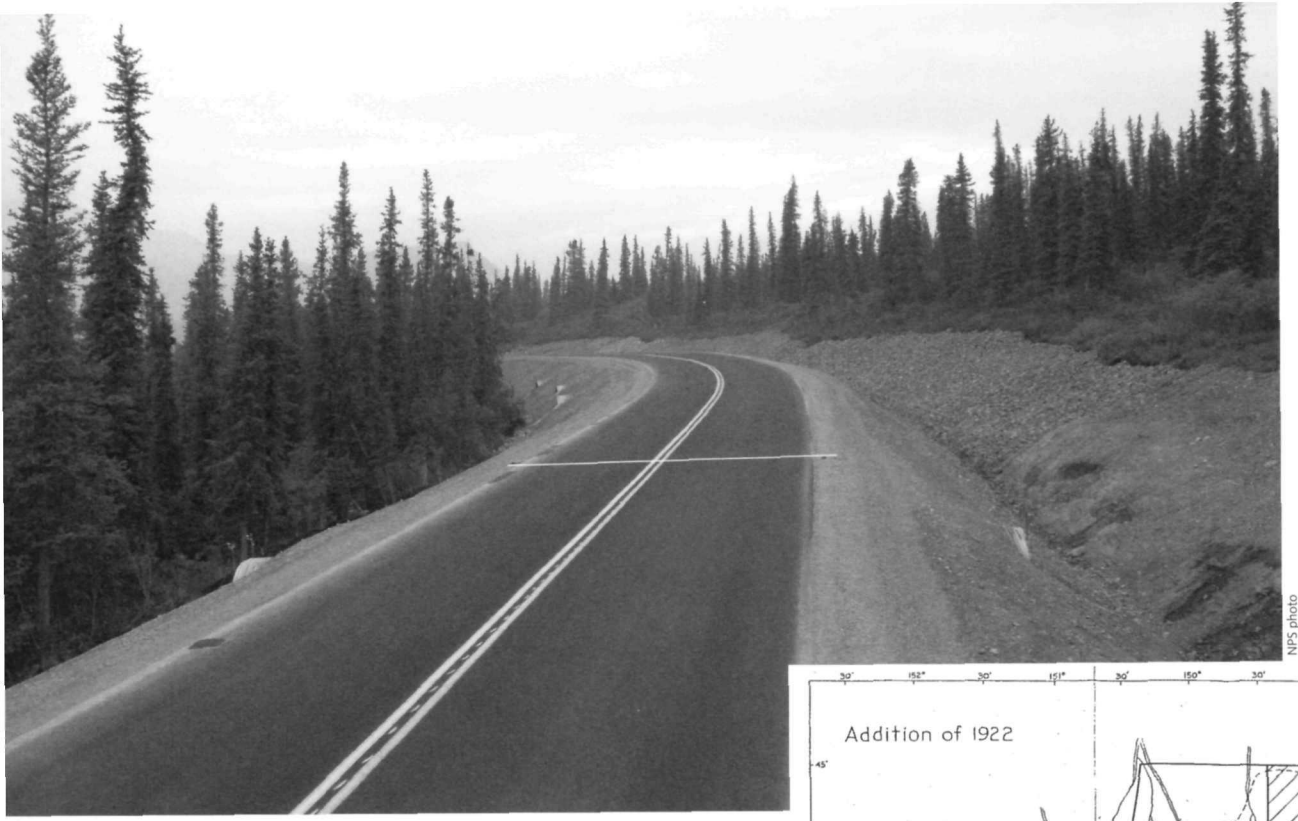


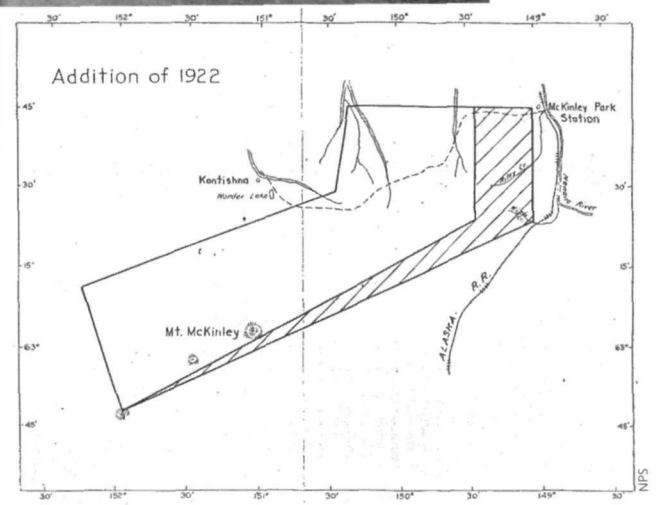
Photo previous page: Park visitors at a picnic stop in upper Hogan Creek, 1926.
Nyberg Collection, DENA 42-2.5, DNP&P Museum Collection


HINES CREEK
JENNY CREEK
1922 Park Boundary
1 Park Headquarters
2 Savage Camp
3 Savage River ARC Cabin
4 Savage River Bridge
5 Primrose Overlook
6 Sanctuary River Cabin
7 Sanctuary River Bridge
0 1 2 3 4
Miles
N



NPS photo

The 1922 park boundary, shown as a white line on the road.



Mount McKinley National Park additions of 1922.

The 1922 Park Boundary

The 1922 park boundary crosses the road one mile west of the headquarters flagpole, at the upper end of the first uphill grade. Visitors arriving by train between 1922 and 1932 would have traveled this far from the depot to reach the park. After the 1932 boundary extension, McKinley Park Station and park headquarters were both inside the park boundary.

Soon after the park was established, there was concern about an increasing human population along the park's eastern edge, and the resulting hunting and trapping pressure that would certainly impact wildlife populations. In January 1922 the eastern and southern park boundaries were extended to include important wildlife habitat, especially for Dall sheep. However, extending the eastern boundary to the 149th meridian still did not solve all of the wildlife issues. Ten years later, in 1932, the boundary was extended again to the natural boundary of the Nenana River, where it is today.

The Alaska Road Commission (ARC)

Once Harry Karstens had established a base of operations at McKinley Park Station, he took on the task of providing access into the new park. At that time the Alaska Road Commission (ARC) was the road-building entity in the Territory of Alaska. Established in 1905 by the U.S. War Department, the ARC

was charged with providing winter and summer trails and wagon roads throughout Alaska. When the Alaska Railroad was completed, the ARC planned to build roads and trails that would connect with the railroad corridor. The ARC was interested in providing road access from the railroad to the Kantishna mining district, and the NPS was interested in a road for tourist access into the park. The two government entities agreed on a cooperative project to construct a 90-mile-long road serving both needs, utilizing a route over "the high passes," the present park road route. In 1922 the ARC flagged and brushed a trail through the park, and set up shelter tents at frequent intervals.

The ARC established a base of operations near the McKinley Park Station depot, with a warehouse, offices, and garages for equipment and vehicle maintenance. Road work began in 1923 and progressed west in slow, incremental stages. The ARC faced daunting challenges, including harsh subarctic weather conditions, short construction seasons, and rugged terrain. The park's remote location required that all equipment and supplies be shipped to the park by



Henry P. Karstens Collection, #1439, Karstens Library

Each ARC shelter tent had a sign with estimated mileages and directions to other locations along the trail.

The ARC has an outfit of three men and two pack mules working on the trail from McKinley Park Station through the park to the Kantishna mining district; they are erecting 7 ft. x 8 ft. tents, with a stove in each, at twelve to fifteen mile intervals, also putting up sign boards and blazing the trail.

Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1922



Henry P. Karstens Collection, #1452, Karstens Library

An ARC shelter tent and sign along the park trail at the Savage River, 1924.

railroad and freighted to each construction site. Limited and sporadic funding dictated construction progress. Each summer as many as 100 men, or as few as a dozen, were divided into small work crews based at temporary tent camps established along the section of road then under construction. Five log cabins were built along the route at major construction sites, serving as the cooking facilities for work crews. The 90-mile-long road was completed to Kantishna in 1938, but the ARC continued to upgrade and maintain the road until 1956.



Alaska State Library, Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-2-26

Tractor-crawler pulling a grader.



Herbert Heller Collection, 79-44-1376, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Arthur Gardner driving a motor grader, c. 1929.

Over the 16 summers of park road construction, a variety of equipment and techniques were used.

ARC workers grading the road with horses in 1924.

Alaska State Library, Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-2-31



Miles of road constructed each year, funds expended, and visitation, 1921-1938.

Summer Season	Initailly Opened. Passable for vehicles	Widened to Double-width	Funds Expended		Park Visitors
Year	Milepost/(Location)	Milepost	NPS	ARC	
1921	Preliminary reconnaissance	-	$ -	$ 500.	-
1922	86 miles brushed out, tripoded	-	-	1,999.	7
1923	2	-	700.	4,261.	34
1924	12 (near Savage River)	-	80,020	6,566	62
1925	22 (Sanctuary River)	-	50,000.	2,539	206
1926	22 (" ")	-	16,001.	1,032.	533
1927	34 (Igloo Creek)	-	60,000.	1,591.	635
1928	38 1/2 (Sable Pass)	-	65,000.	6,351.	802
1929	43 1/2 (East Fork Toklat)	-	160,821.	0.	1,038
1930	46 1/2 (Polychrome Pass area)	-	167,817.	0.	951
1931	54 1/2 (Toklat River area)	-	96,238.	0.	771
1932	66 1/4 (Copper Mountain)	-	76,791.	?	357
1933	67 1/2	-	62,219.	?	386
1934	74 1/2	-	113,727.	?	628
1935	80	15	?	?	877
1936	85	25	?	?	1,073
1937	88 1/3 (north park boundary)	32 1/2	?	?	1,378
1938	-	44	?	?	1,487

Adapted from: Evans, Gail E. H., *From Myth to Reality: Travel Experiences and Landscape Perceptions in the Shadow of Mount McKinley, Alaska, 1876-1938,* 1987, Appendix B.

These ARC seasonal workers (c. 1929) drove their trucks on barely-passable roads and lived in canvas wall tents at construction sites. There were no scheduled days off during the short construction season.



Herbert Heller Collection, 79-44-1425, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

TRIP INTO PARK IDEAL VACATION

People of Fairbanks and, indeed, of Alaska in general can find no more wonderful spot in which to spend their vacations than McKinley Park, in the opinion of John Kelly, who returned to Fairbanks on the last train after a week in the Park. Residents of the Interior are inclined to think of the Park merely as a scenic attraction for tourists while as a matter of fact the topography and environment, differing entirely from that of the Fairbanks district, offers the change so greatly desired while vacationing.

Leaving Fairbanks on the morning train, you arrive at the Park station about 2 o'clock in the afternoon. There you are met by a string of Studebaker automobiles operated by the Mt. McKinley Tourist and Transportation Company. After your baggage has been loaded into a truck and you are comfortably seated in the car the ten mile ride to the company's base camp at Savage River begins. After you have gone about two miles you come to the headquarters of Harry Karstens, superintendent of the Park. The group of log cabins set in the encircling mountains and surrounded by a heavy growth of spruce, presents a picturesque appearance. There you are asked to register in order that a record may be kept of all visitors into the Park.

The rest of the ride to the camp is made over fine roads, and the automobile goes through rolling hills heavily wooded only to shoot out into the open country, giving at all times a pleasant variety to the trip. Always the high mountains of the great range stand out in relief.

Upon arrival at the camp you are pleasantly delighted; it is built in a sort of basin on a high plateau, and towering not far away are rugged peaks. Too, the appearance of the camp, so modern and clean, is refreshing for out in the wilderness you did not expect anything like it. It is situated not far from the Savage River, and fresh running water is supplied at all times by a hydraulic ram. The main buildings, the kitchen, dining room and social hall, are connected. The chef, William Phinn, has a well-merited reputation for excellent cooking. The dining room has four long tables, and unlike the ordinary camp, chairs are used instead of benches. You sit down at a table that is covered with snowy linen and napkins—articles scarcely looked for in the wilderness. The social hall has a fine floor for dancing and an orthophonic victrola. Tables are provided for those who care to play cards.

You register as you would at any hotel and are escorted to a tent. The tents are set along regular streets and each will house two persons comfortably as they are 10 feet by 12 feet in size. Two cots are placed in each; board floors and frames keep out the moisture. Hot water is brought to you in the tent each morning. It is camping de luxe.

Back of the main group of buildings is the corral, in which 27 horses are kept for those who wish to make side trips. They were brought from Montana by J. A. Galen, nephew of James Galen, vice president of the company. The Western effect is carried out by Galen, and for the entertainment of camp visitors he has two bucking bronchos which he rides. Brought from Yellowstone Park are two old fashioned stage coaches which are used in going to the head of the Savage River.

Or, if you care to, you may go to the head of the river in a Ford. There is no road, but the river bed is smooth and a great deal of fun is had in fording the stream and crossing bars. You most probably will see an abundance of wild game. On a trip up the Savage last week hundreds of caribou were seen, together with many sheep, a wolverine, and a grizzly bear with two cubs. Fox are so plentiful that at times they play around the camp. Recently a large band of sheep came down the hills about a quarter of a mile from the camp, crossed the plain and ascended the hill on the other side.

On a clear day you get a wonderful view of that giant of mountains, Mt. McKinley.

For those who wish to make longer and even more interesting trips into the Park, competent guides, saddle horses and pack horses are provided.

A revelation awaits the Interiorite who has not seen the beauties of the Park. No more interesting, educational and pleasure-giving vacation could be taken than a week spent in McKinley National Park.

John Kelly wrote this newspaper article regarding his experiences as a park visitor at Savage Camp in 1926.

Henry P. Karstens Collection, Scrapbook, Karstens Library

Savage Camp

Savage Camp was the main visitor destination between 1923 and 1938, and was the first concession facility established in the park. The camp was located where Jenny Creek enters the Savage River, on an open, dry bench with good water and expansive views in all directions, including a view of Mt. McKinley.

The park's first concessioner, Dan Kennedy, built a temporary camp in 1923, outfitted with a few canvas tents and horse transportation for visitors. By 1925 the concession operation was reorganized as the Mt. McKinley Tourist & Transportation Company (MMT&T Co.). Park road construction reached Savage Camp that year, allowing access by automobile.

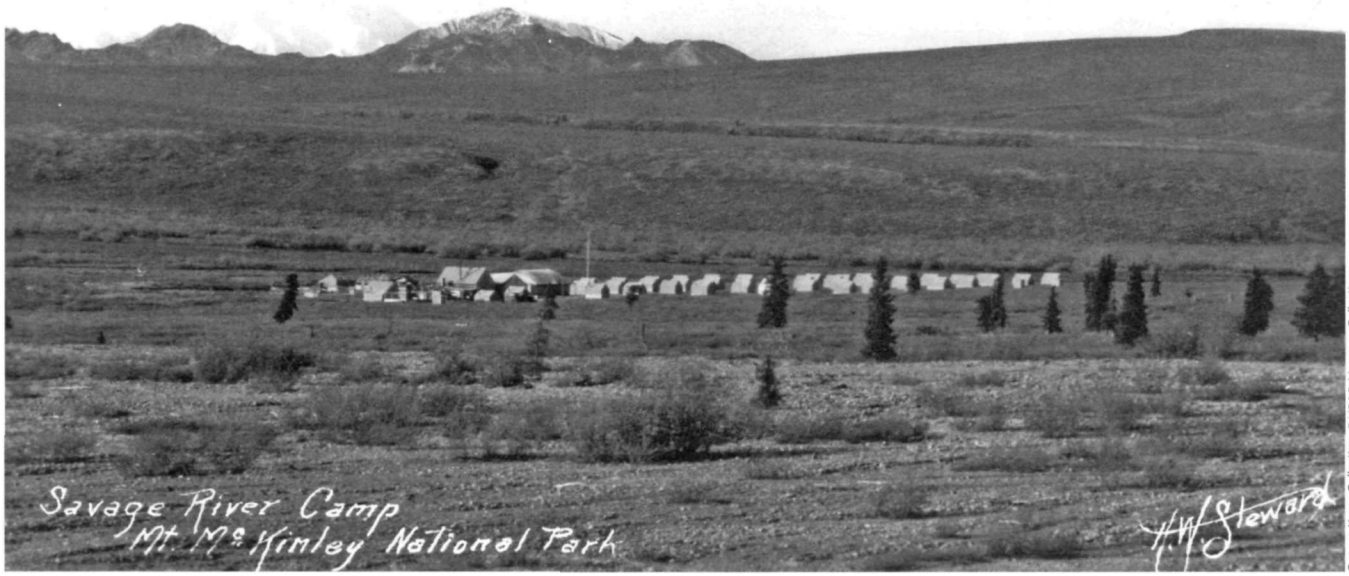
The MMT&T Co. provided transportation, accommodations and activities for park visitors at Savage Camp through the 1938 season. The company picked up visitors at the railroad depot in touring cars and buses, and transported them 12 miles to the camp. Park visitors usually stayed at the camp for 24 or 48 hours, where they enjoyed rustic but comfortable accommodations. They slept in 10 ft. x 12 ft. framed tent cabins, each with two beds, a wood stove and a washstand. Camp employee Norma Hoyt recalled, "Johnny Howard would go every morning and light the fire [in each tent] and put on the tea kettle. Bobby Sheldon [the camp manager] would say, 'You have running water, just tip the tea kettle, you know?' " Meals were served in the dining hall, and guests gathered to dance or play cards in the social hall.[1]

The MMT&T Co. entertained visitors with touring car or bus trips on the park road as far as it was constructed at

Savage Camp during its first year, 1923.

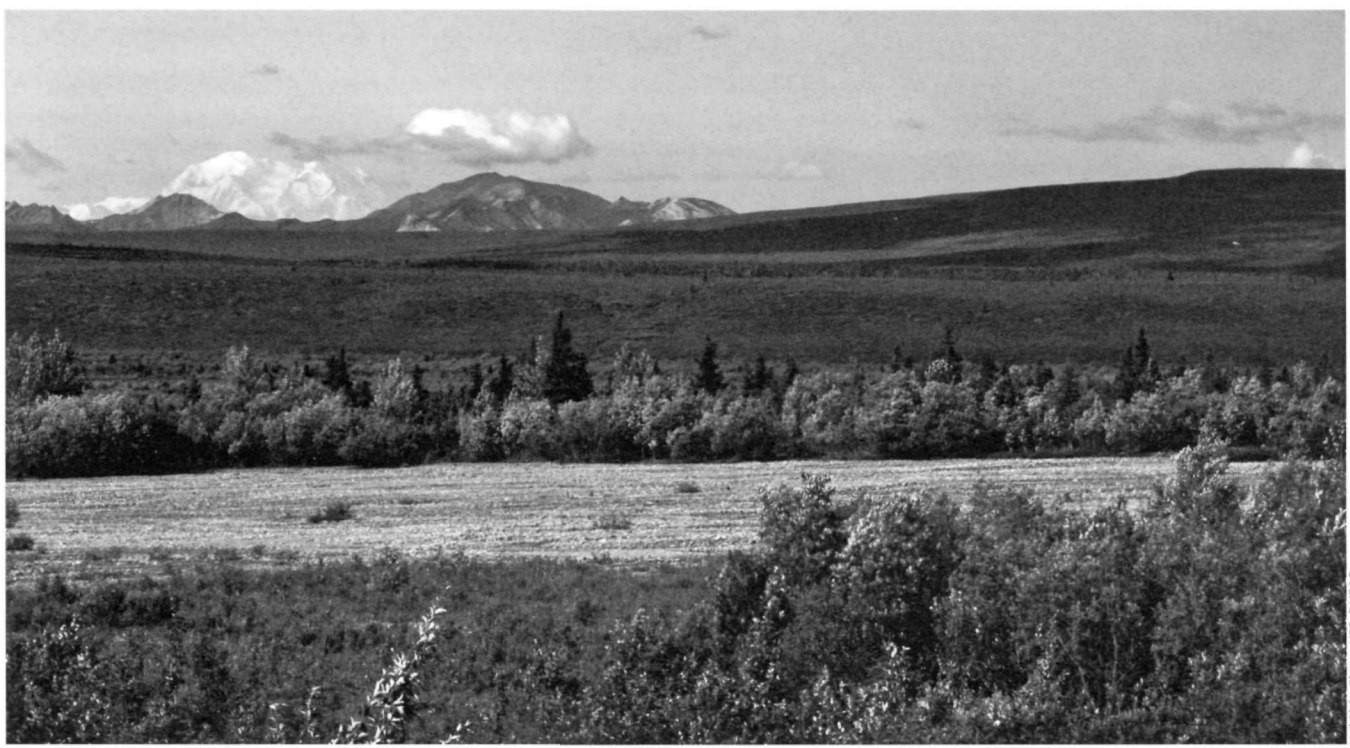


DENA 10499, DNP&P Museum Collection



George Keers Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

(Above) Savage Camp as it appeared in the 1930s. (Below) Current view of the historic Savage Camp area and Mt. McKinley, as seen from the park road at Mile 12.4, where the road crosses a gravel streambed.



Neil Blake Photo, NPS, DNP&P



DENA 42-6, DNP&P Museum Collection

Guests and guides at Savage Camp, 1930s.

the time. They also offered shorter trips about eight miles up the Savage River, on what was called the "Big Game Drive," to see sheep, caribou and foxes, and have lunch. There were guided horseback trips down the Savage River Canyon on a trail constructed by the ARC. In 1930 the first aerial sightseeing flights were offered from the Savage Camp airstrip. Visitors who stayed longer could take guided horseback trips farther into the park, beyond the constructed road, to temporary camps established at Igloo Creek, the Toklat River, and Copper Mountain (now Mt. Eielson). When park rangers or the superintendent stopped by Savage Camp, they gave interpretive talks.

When the McKinley Park Hotel opened near the depot in 1939, the hub of visitor activity changed



Candace Waugaman Collection

Touring cars at Savage Camp ready to go meet the train, 1931.



Morgan C. Edmunds Collection; Anchorage Museum, Gift of Elizabeth E. Donohoe, B88.12.242

Savage Camp in the late 1930s.



Alaska State Library, Skinner Foundation Collection, 44-5-14

Yellowstone National Park donated two stagecoaches to the MMT&T Co. in 1926, and two Concord stages were acquired from the White Pass and Yukon Route Railroad in 1928. The stagecoaches were used for an excursion called the "Big Game Drive," a trip up the Savage River on a wagon road pioneered in the early 1920s and upgraded by the NPS, the MMT&T Co., and later the ARC.

(Left) Stagecoach trip up the Savage River.

from Savage Camp to the new hotel. Savage Camp was no longer operated, although the MMT&T Co. continued to provide park transportation services through 1941. After World War II, some Savage Camp structures were moved to other locations, some were damaged by weather, and in the fall of 1954 the cook house burned. Today the only reminder of those lively early days is the footprint of the camp and photographs taken at the time.



Henry P. Karstens Collection, #844, Karstens Library

Harry Karstens greets visitors at Savage Camp.

The main thing was to see Mt. McKinley. . . . If it was cloudy, someone would stay up at night and, if the mountain came out, they would awaken the guests so they could see the mountain.

Lena Howard,
Savage Camp employee

We went horseback riding the next morning, and that was exciting because here were horses from my uncle's ranch up at Aldridge, Montana. And the wrangler was a friend of my father's. We had to have a little ride on these horses, and to have a ride we had to have some clothes, so the crew there, the helpers, loaned us outfits.[2]

Jessie Murray,
Savage Camp visitor, 1928

Jessie Murray and horse wrangler, Scotty (both on the right), 1928.

Jessie Murray Album, Jane Bryant Collection



Robert "Bobby" Sheldon

At the age of 14, Robert "Bobby" Sheldon arrived in the town of Skagway in December, 1897, en route to the Klondike goldfields with his father. The elder Sheldon fell ill on the trip over White Pass and returned to the states where he died a year later. Bobby stayed in Skagway, selling newspapers. There he witnessed the historic shooting of outlaw Soapy Smith in July, 1898. Mechanically adept, by age 20 Sheldon was an engineer in the Skagway power plant.

Although he had never seen an automobile, in 1905 Sheldon studied sketches and built the first car in Alaska. Powered by a salvaged marine engine, it could carry two passengers at the dizzying speed of fifteen miles an hour. He built the "runabout" to impress a beautiful Skagway belle, who went for many rides with him. When asked if he married the girl, he replied, "No, but three others have since then."

After moving to Fairbanks in 1908, Sheldon became manager of the Northern Commercial Company power plant. He pioneered commercial automobile transportation in Alaska when he purchased a four-passenger Model T Ford and started giving rides. On July 29, 1913, he set out with three passengers for an "impossible" trip over the Richardson wagon trail to Valdez. They jolted over washouts, plowed through slides and forded streams, covering 370 miles in 59 hours of driving time, making Sheldon the first person to drive an automobile over the Richardson "Highway." He sold the Model T in Valdez and pedaled back to Fairbanks on a bicycle, becoming the first person to ride a bike from Valdez to Fairbanks. He ordered more Model Ts and started Sheldon's Auto-Stage Line which he operated until 1926.

Acquainted with James Galen, the president of the MMT&T Co., Sheldon joined his tourist concession in 1925 as General Manager, living at Savage Camp. He operated a fleet of vehicles providing transportation for park visitors, and facilitated all services at the camp. Alongside his staff, he did whatever needed to be done: cooking, cleaning, cutting firewood, building fires in guest tents, repairing vehicles, and mending tents. He entertained visitors on drives farther into the park, and told stories of the shooting of Soapy Smith. His positive and good-humored personality fostered a warm atmosphere at the camp.



Jessie Murray Album, Jane Bryant Collection

Bobby Sheldon with a MMT&T Co. car, 1928.

Sheldon was a natural at public relations. One summer, in an effort to encourage Alaskans to visit the park, he placed a newspaper ad with special rates, personally guaranteeing that the weather and fall colors would be perfect for the Labor Day weekend. The paper advertised: "Bobby promises that the park will be more beautiful than at any other season.

He has had his crew out for the last week applying fall colors to the trees and bushes."[3]

During the winter of 1931, Sheldon and his family stayed in one of Maurice Morino's cabins at McKinley Park Station while he operated the post office. In 1933 Sheldon resigned from the MMT&T Co. to become the Fairbanks postmaster, a position he held until 1940. After Galen's death in 1939, Sheldon resumed his job with the MMT&T Co. and was "in active charge of operations." He also served two terms in the Territorial Legislature.[4]

A pioneer and jack-of-all-trades, businessman, humorist, politician, and a "great guy," Bobby Sheldon passed away in 1983 at the Pioneers' Home in Fairbanks, at age 99. His handmade 1905 car, owned by the University of Alaska Museum of the North, is on display at the Fountainhead Antique Auto Museum in Fairbanks until 2015.



Candace Waugaman Collection

Bobby Sheldon (left), Savage Camp manager, and Johnny Howard mend a canvas tent using a treadle sewing machine, 1927. Sheldon and Howard were very innovative people who could make anything work.

Bobby Sheldon, tourist guide and bus driver, 1939.



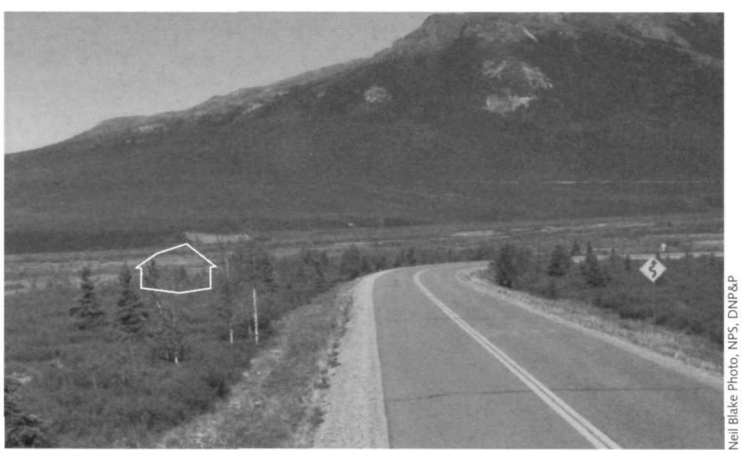
DENA 14-49, DNP&P Museum Collection



Alaska State Library, Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-2-60

The ARC began building a cabin and camp on a bench along the Savage River in fall 1924, and completed it in summer 1925.

The Savage River ARC cabin was originally located about 50 feet south of the road at the edge of the bench.



Neil Blake Photo, NPS, DNP&P

Savage River ARC Cabin

Just past the Savage River Campground, a long pullout on the north side of the road is the parking area for a short interpretive trail leading to the Savage River cabin. This was the first cabin built by the Alaska Road Commission (ARC) during construction of the park road. The cabin was moved to its present location in 1940. The original location of the Savage River ARC cabin was just south of the third curve past the campground.

The Savage River ARC cabin was the only one that combined two log cabins facing each other with an eight-foot-wide "dogtrot" in between. It was the first of five cabins built by the ARC during construction of the park road. Each of the ARC cabins was used as a cookhouse and dining room for the construction crews, who slept in canvas

(Top) Savage River ARC cabin, c. 1929.

(Middle) Camp chores inside the Savage River ARC cabin, c. 1929.

(Bottom) "Paddy" hauling water, Savage River ARC cabin, c. 1929.



Herbert Heller Collection, 79-44-1341, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks



Herbert Heller Collection, 79-44-1342, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Herbert Heller Collection, 79-44-1347, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks



wall tents nearby. During the winter season, the cabins were used for storage, and later, park rangers used them for overnight shelter during their dog team patrols in the park.

By 1940, concerned about the "general unattractiveness" of the ARC's Savage River cabin area, Superintendent Frank Been had the ARC move the cabin to a less conspicuous location. The two cabins were separated and moved east to the cabin's current location. One cabin was used as a ranger patrol shelter and the other cabin was eventually used for firewood. Since 1994 the ARC-built Savage River cabin has been a visitor destination where living history interpretive programs are presented.[5]



Herbert Heller Collection, 79-44-1339, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

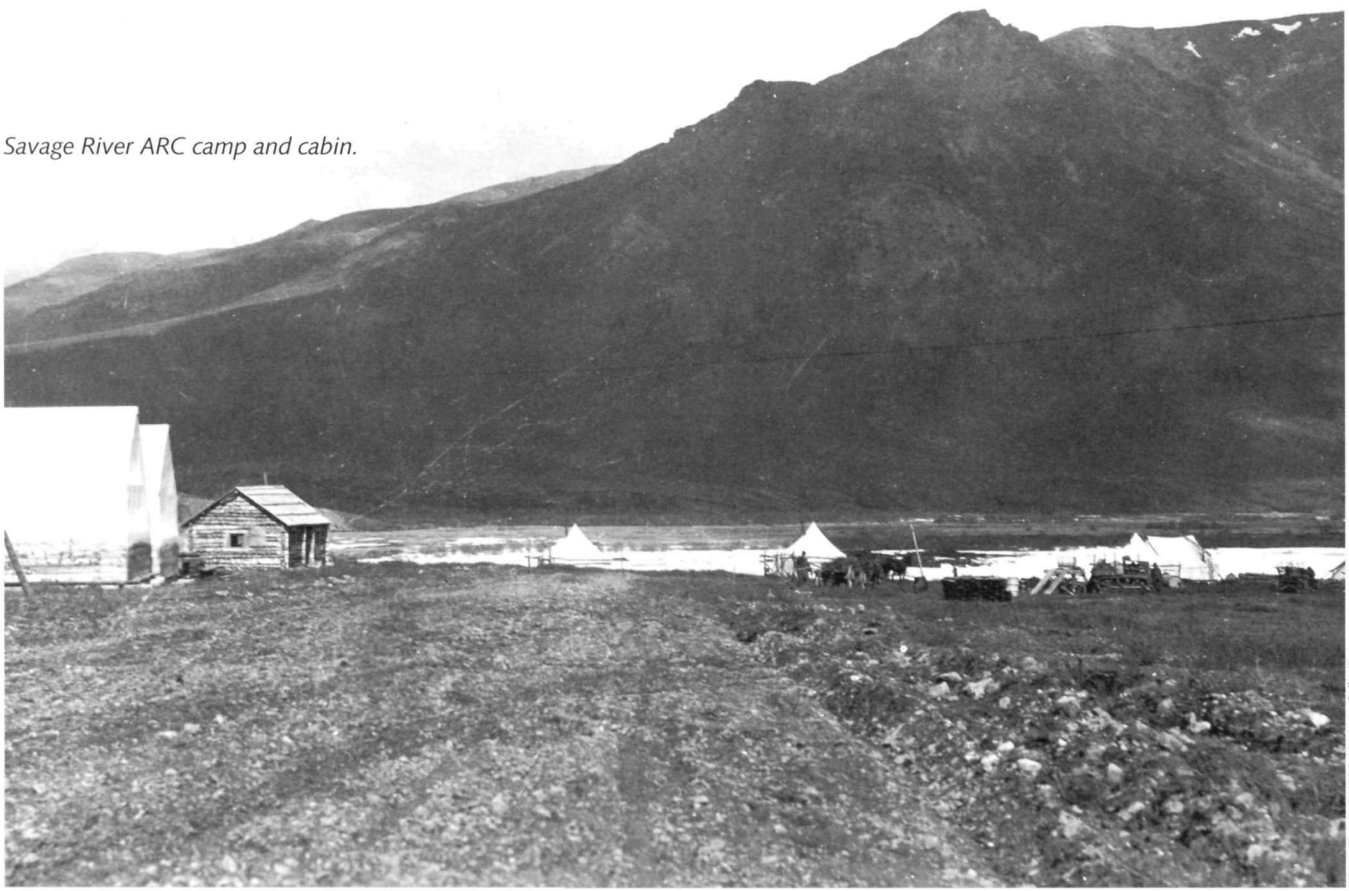
Savage River road construction camp, looking northwest, c. 1929.



Herbert Heller Collection, 79-44-1340, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Interior of a typical wall tent, Savage River ARC camp, c. 1929.

Savage River ARC camp and cabin.



DENA 25-0.2, DNP&P Museum Collection



George Bevier Collection, 98-190-389, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

This photo from George Bevier's album shows a group on a dog sled trip from Nenana to Mt. McKinley in December 1912. Tom Savage is on the right.

Tom "Savage" Strand

In an oral history interview, early park ranger Fritz Nyberg related that "Savage River was named after a trapper, you know, an old timer."[6] That trapper was Tom "Savage" Strand, who came north from Washington State during the Klondike gold rush and later made his way to the Kantishna mining district. It was here among several residents named Tom that he received his nickname "Tom Savage," possibly because of his partial Native American heritage. He worked as a prospector, miner, guide, mail carrier, and market hunter, and trapped along the Savage River. Tom Strand later made his home near the Nenana River at Ferry, and raised his family there. He passed away in 1953.[7]

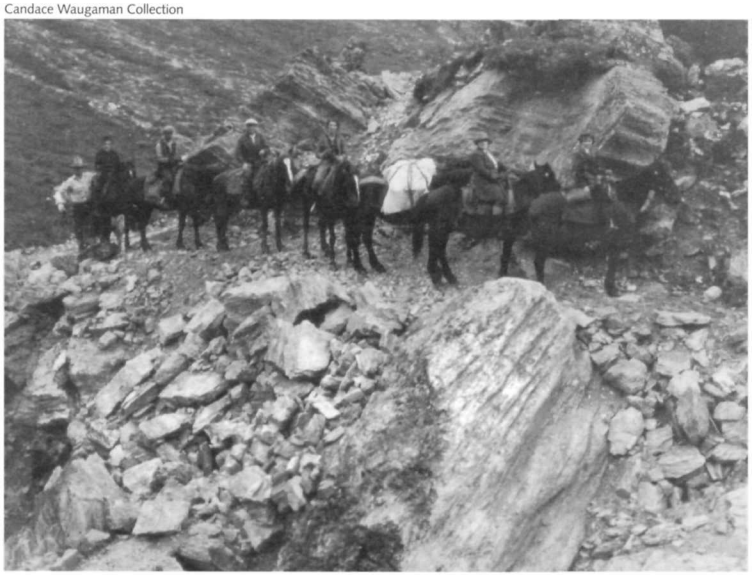


Alaska State Library, Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-2-45



Alaska State Library, Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-2-98

Candace Waugaman Collection



Savage River Bridge

The bridge crossing the Savage River was the first of several major bridges constructed by the ARC along the park road. The first Savage River bridge was completed in 1925 with timbers freighted to the site by teams of horses. This bridge was replaced in 1950-51, repaired in 1975, and replaced again in 1983.[8]

In 1928 the ARC began building a trail through the Savage River Canyon, four miles down the west side of the river from the road. The trail required extra funding and a considerable amount of rock work through the canyon. It was built to provide rangers easier access to protect game along the northern park boundary, and was used for the "interest and entertainment of park visitors."[9]

Primrose Overlook

West of the Savage River, the road winds uphill to a large pullout with an excellent view of the Alaska Range. Called Inspiration Point in the early days and now referred to as Primrose Overlook, this pullout offers one of the best views of Mt. McKinley before Sable Pass, 21 miles away. Sites like this, with expansive views of valleys and hillsides, were used by prehistoric hunters looking for game.

Primrose Overlook was not included within the original 1917 park boundary. The original eastern boundary crosses the road one mile west of the overlook. This indistinct location can be found by

(Top) Freighting timbers for the Savage River bridge, April 1925.

(Middle) The original Savage River bridge, 1925.

(Bottom) The MMT&T Co. guided park visitors on scenic horseback trips from Savage Camp along the Savage Canyon trail.



Alaska State Library, Skinner Foundation Collection, 44-5-16

Visitors enjoying the view from Primrose Overlook.

Original 1917 park boundary, at mile 18.4.



Neil Blake Photo, NPS, DNP&P



Lulu Fairbanks Collection, 68-69-128, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Steaming culverts, spring road opening, 1937.

counting curves beyond the overlook. Pass one large curve and one small curve to the left, then two curves to the right. The 1917 boundary crosses the road just before the next right curve. In 1922 the boundary was extended to the east to protect critical wildlife habitat.

Continuing on toward the Sanctuary River, the road descends to Hogan Creek. The ARC set up one of their temporary tent construction camps along the creek bed just beyond the big curve in upper Hogan Creek.

The scene above, located on Sanctuary Flats before the Sanctuary River campground, illustrates one of the challenges faced by the ARC during spring road opening. The snow and ice of winter required road crews to expend considerable energy opening the road each year before construction activities could begin in the summer. Usually a small ARC crew worked two or more months before and after the construction season to freight supplies, repair and maintain equipment, and build the

next log cabin along the road. Rarely could ground work begin on the road before late May or continue much past late September, making for a short construction season.

Sanctuary River Cabin

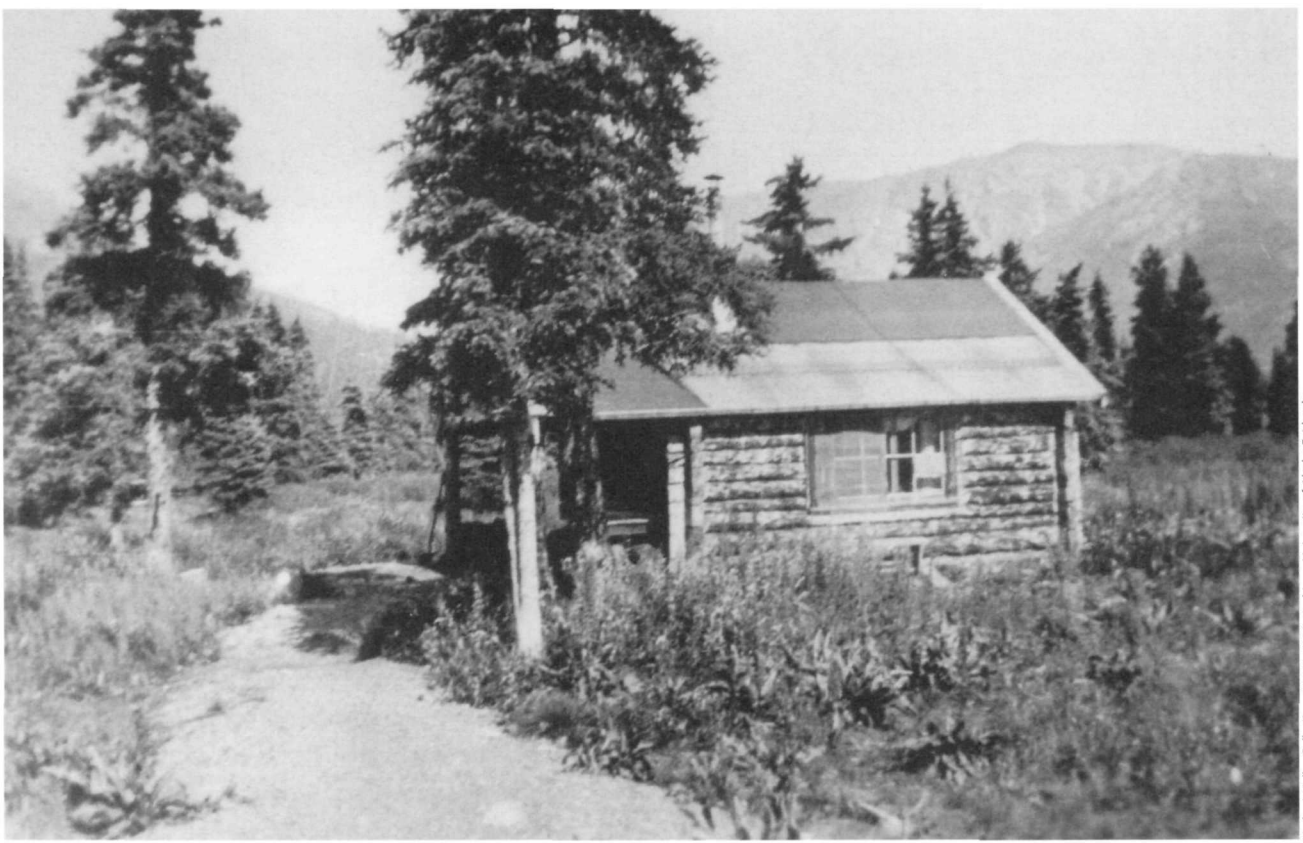
Located near the Sanctuary River bridge, the Sanctuary River cabin was constructed by the ARC in 1926, their second cabin built along the park road. Typical of all the ARC cabins, it was a 14 ft. x 16 ft. one-room structure with a porch, made with logs peeled and hewn flat on three sides. The furnishings were a bit less crude than those in the earliest cabins used by rangers. Park Ranger Grant Pearson peeked inside the Sanctuary cabin when it was only four months old and admired its "big iron range, plenty of cooking utensils, dishes, two spring cots and mattresses,



Alaska State Library, Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-2-95

This small, temporary ARC camp was located just west of the big curve at upper Hogan Creek. Writing on the photo refers to "21 Mile." The ARC mileage was calculated beginning at the McKinley Park Station depot and differs from road mileages today, which are calculated from the George Parks Highway.

The ARC cabin at Sanctuary River, c. 1929.



Herbert Heller Collection, 79-44-1390, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Herbert Heller Collection, 79-44-1385, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

(Above) Sanctuary River ARC road construction camp.
(Below) ARC road construction crew.



Hosler Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

and a wall-to-wall plank floor. I turned around," recalled Pearson many years later, "and said, 'Welcome to the Waldorf.' "[10]

Adjacent to the Sanctuary River cabin was a tent camp for ARC workmen. It had canvas wall tents for sleeping quarters and was arranged on a small loop road close to the cabin. The footprint of the ARC loop road has become the location of the present Sanctuary River Campground. The cabin, now on the south side of the road, has not moved, but in 1956 a new Sanctuary River bridge was built and the road was realigned to the north side of the cabin. Remnants of the original log bridge abutment are still visible along the river bank. The campground is not clearly visible from the road.



Sanctuary River *to* Toklat River

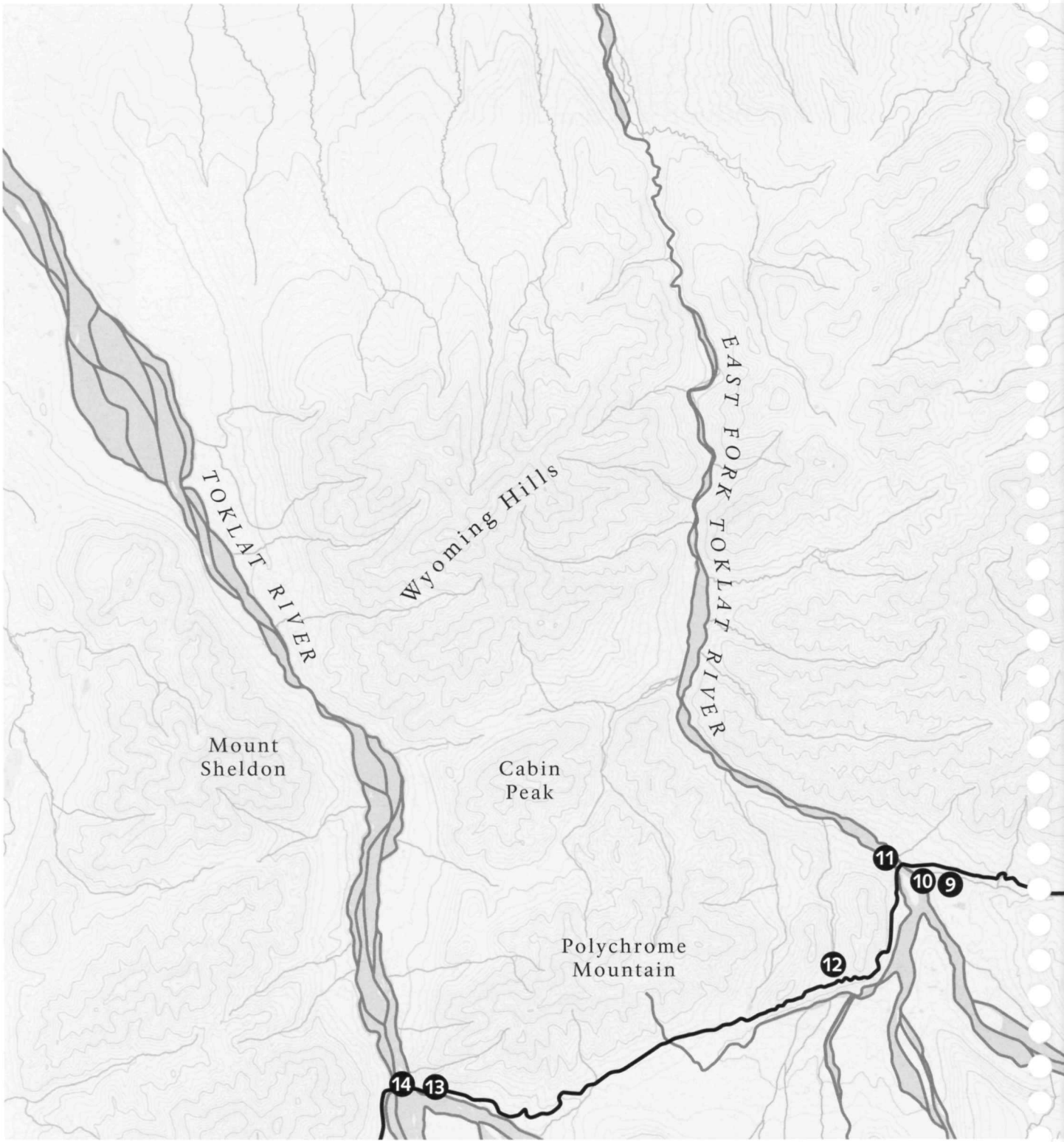
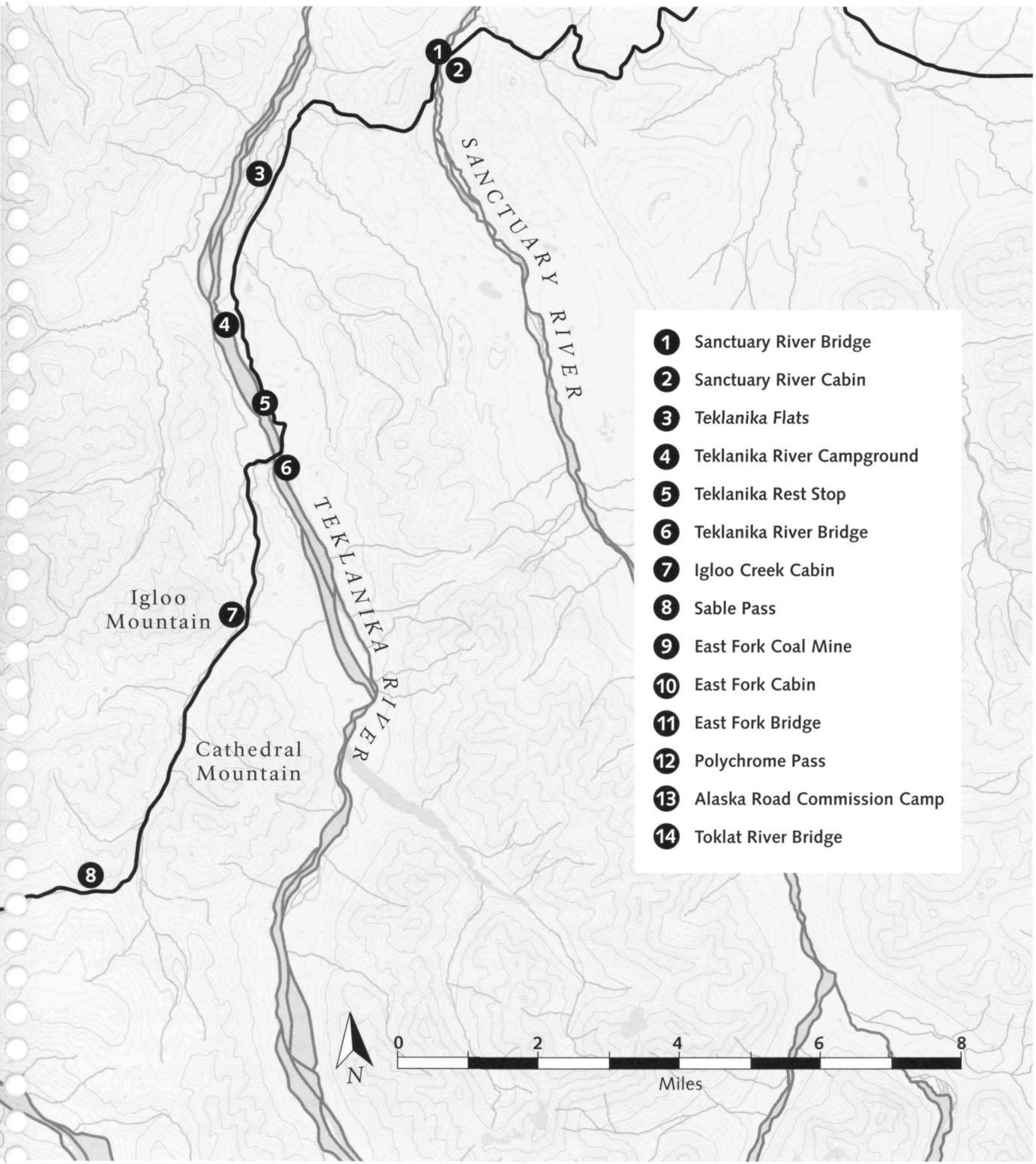


Photo previous page: Looking up the Sanctuary River Valley, 1.5 miles past the Sanctuary River bridge.
Alaska State Library, Skinner Foundation Collection, 44-5-17


SANCTUARY RIVER
TEKLANIKA RIVER
Igloo Mountain
Cathedral Mountain
1 Sanctuary River Bridge
2 Sanctuary River Cabin
3 Teklanika Flats
4 Teklanika River Campground
5 Teklanika Rest Stop
6 Teklanika River Bridge
7 Igloo Creek Cabin
8 Sable Pass
9 East Fork Coal Mine
10 East Fork Cabin
11 East Fork Bridge
12 Polychrome Pass
13 Alaska Road Commission Camp
14 Toklat River Bridge
N
0 2 4 6 8
Miles



DENA 34-23, DNP&P Museum Collection

Widened road on Teklanika Flats, 1962.

Teklanika River

Beyond the Sanctuary River bridge, the road crosses a low divide between the Sanctuary and Teklanika rivers. On the west side of the divide the road begins to descend and the broad, braided Teklanika River can be seen for the first time. The Teklanika River begins in the main Alaska Range and flows north some 90 miles to its confluence with the Nenana River. "Teklanika" is one of the few Athabaskan place names along the park road. Julius Jette, a linguistic scholar and missionary who spent 30 years with the Koyukon Athabaskan people along the Yukon River, wrote to the park superintendent in 1926 regarding the meanings of many "Indian" place names. Jette translated "Teklanika" to mean "glacier creek," or "stream issuing from a glacier."[1]

Ethnohistorian Dianne Gudgel-Holmes reported that early prospectors and trappers unofficially refered to the river as the "Middle River," and it appeared on the 1922 *Rand McNally Guide to Alaska and Yukon* map as "Teklanika (Middle) River."[2] Many old-timers called the river by another name, the "Steele Fork," named for market hunter and trapper Tom Steele, whose camp was located on the upper reaches of the river.[3]

Mission 66

This section of road is a good example of road widening that was carried out as part of a ten-year nationwide initiative (Mission 66) to upgrade infrastructure in national parks by 1966. In Mt. McKinley National Park, plans called for major changes to bring the road up to modern standards, including realignment, widening and paving. These road "improvement" plans were criticized by conservation groups who felt the upgrades would change the character of the park experience. Olaus Murie wrote in December 1959: "The national park will not serve its purpose if we encourage the visitor to hurry as fast as possible for a mere glimpse of scenery from a car, and a few snapshots. Rather there is an obligation inherent in a national park, to help the visitor get some understanding, the esthetic meaning of what is in the place."[4]

Because road improvements were a top priority, work started between McKinley Park Station and the Savage River in 1958. As a result of the escalating environmental objections to road development, paving was curtailed beyond the Savage River and widening stopped at the Teklanika River. By 1965, the NPS had significantly adjusted its park road construction standards so there would be fewer impacts on the natural landscape as the road progressed west.[5]

The road is a cultural artifact, reflecting the philosophy of the time in which it was built and changing with subsequent management decisions. It shapes the visitor experience to a large extent by determining speed of travel and landscape perspectives.

Teklanika CCC Camp

After a couple of sharp curves at the far end of Teklanika Flats, the road reaches Teklanika River Campground on the right. The campground was built on the site of a former ARC camp, where spruce trees were cut for use as "corduroy" on

The CCC spike camp at mile 29 in 1938, now the Teklanika River Campground.

Ray B. Dame, Ickes Collection; Anchorage Museum, B75.175.336



the roadbed in Igloo Forest, just west of here. In the late 1930s the CCC established a spike camp here to clean up the site, including removal of the remaining tree stumps.

In 1948 this area was designated as a public campground, although it offered few amenities. There was an open-air shelter for cooking, and the water supply was a small spring. When the Denali Highway connected the park with the Richardson Highway in 1957, the NPS prepared for an increase in private auto traffic by building its first developed campgrounds. In 1958 the NPS installed tables, fire pits, and outhouses at the Teklanika River Campground, providing for 20 camping sites. It has now grown to 53 sites.

Archeological Excavations

In the summer of 1960, members of a University of Alaska geology field camp discovered two archeological sites along the Teklanika River, designated Teklanika West and Teklanika East. University of Alaska students, under the direction of Frederick Hadleigh West, conducted excavations at both sites in 1961, and more work was done throughout the late 1960s by both West and Adan Treganza. More recent research at the Teklanika West site was carried out in 1992 by Ted Goebel, who was able to date the multiple levels of use at the site, and further excavations were conducted there in 2009.

Screening excavated material at the Teklanika West archeological site, August 1961.



DENA 19-17, DNP&P Museum Collection

Teklanika West was a lookout site, where prehistoric hunter-gatherers could watch a wide area for game. While they waited and watched, they were busy shaping or sharpening their stone tools, leaving traces of their activities buried in successive levels of windblown silt (loess). Previously, the earliest occupation at the Teklanika West site was dated at approximately 7,000 years before present.[6]

In 2009, excavations at Teklanika West were conducted by Dr. Ben A. Potter and graduate student Sam Coffman of the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Their work focused on clarifying the number and ages of different cultural occupations of the site, called components, and determining the extent of the site and the activities occurring there. They excavated 12.5 square meters, yielding two hearth areas with numerous bone and artifact fragments. Late Pleistocene/Early Holocene bison bone fragments were found associated with the oldest component, while caribou and Dall sheep bone fragments occurred in the uppermost component. Dating of the site was accomplished by radiocarbon analysis of bone and charcoal samples.

Results indicate that the site is older than originally believed; the earliest occupation of the site is thought to be as long ago as 12,900 years before present. Obsidian artifacts were geochemically traced to a source on the Koyukuk River, about 200 miles northwest of the site.

The earliest three components of the site range in age from 12,900 to 7,600 years ago and can be characterized as small-scale hunting camps. The fourth component (C4) ranges in age between 2,300 and 2,700 years ago and contains caribou and stone artifacts. The youngest component (C5) lies directly under the root mat and contains a small number of artifacts and faunal remains. This component ranges in age from approximately 1,300 to 1,400 years ago.[7]

The Teklanika East site occupies an exposed ridge with a chert outcrop that was a quarry for raw materials used to make stone tools. The site is undated,



NPS Photo

Artifacts, in place, at the 12,800-12,900 year-old level, just above bedrock in the excavation at Teklanika West, 2009.

Excavations at the Teklanika West site were carried out in 2009 by university student volunteers and high school students participating in the NPS Archeological Mentorship Program.



NPS Photo

Artifacts: The Legacy of Life

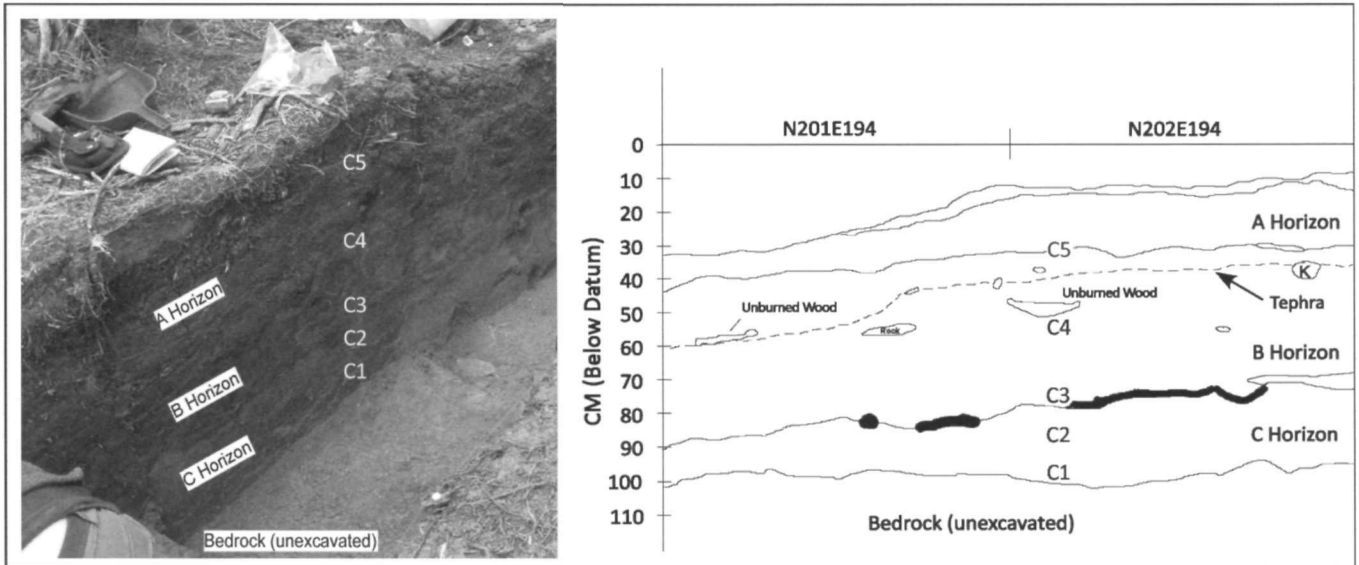
Artifacts are a testament to lives lived and lost, hopes realized and shattered, part of the rich heritage of our nation.

Please take nothing from Denali but inspiration for your soul, questions for your mind, a deeper understanding, and photographs for your memories.

Please leave any cultural items where you found them. Do your part in protecting and preserving our cultural heritage.

although the artifacts indicate a long period of use. Artifacts from the two Teklanika sites can be correlated with other sites and serve to broaden our understanding of prehistoric hunter-gatherer lifeways in central Alaska. The significance of these sites has led to their designation as the Teklanika Archeological District, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

The prehistoric people who occupied these sites were semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers living in temporary, seasonal camps. To date, no permanent village sites older than about 100 years have been discovered within the park.



Block 4 west wall.
K = Krotovenia, distributed area
Dark areas are paleosols
Component 1 (C1) 12,842-12,930 years ago, Coffman and Potter n.d.
Component 2 (C2) 9697-10,150 years ago, Coffman and Potter n.d.
Component 3 (C3) 7570-7680 years ago, Coffman and Potter n.d.
Component 4 (C4) 2350-2710 years ago, Coffman and Potter n.d.
Component 5 (C5) 1290-1400 years ago, Coffman and Potter n.d.
(calibrated ages before present)

Sam Coffman, University of Alaska Fairbanks

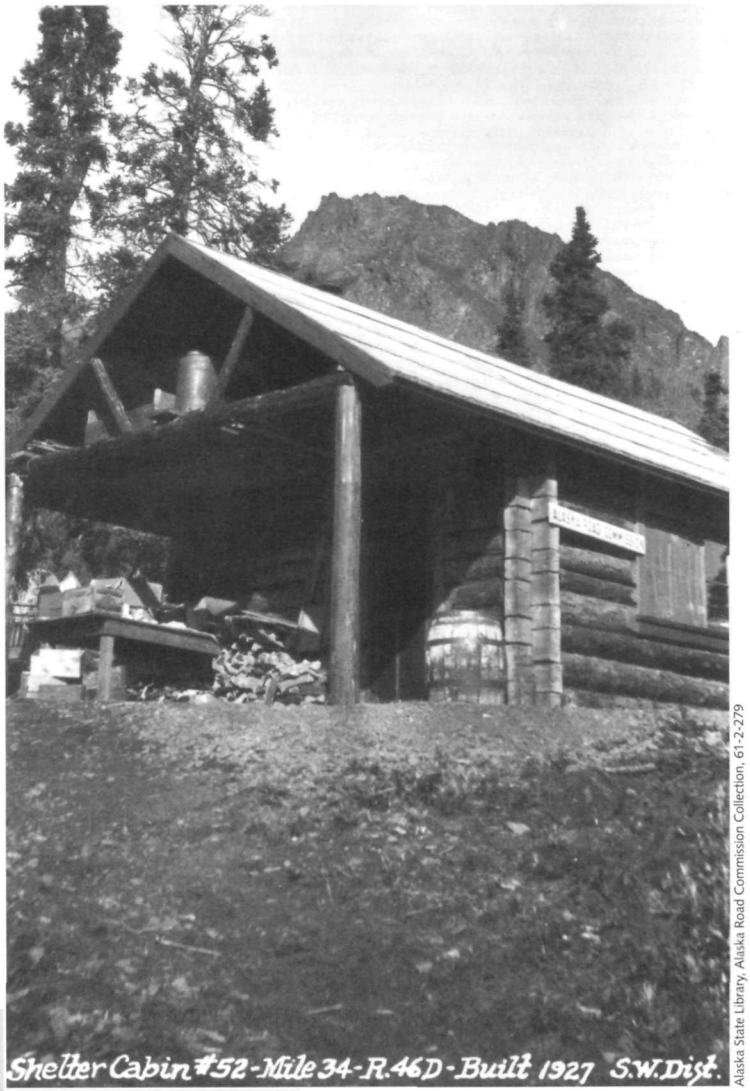
Results from the 2009 excavations at the Teklanika West site indicate a stratified sequence of five cultural occupations.

Igloo Creek Cabin

The Igloo Creek cabin is on the right side of the road just before the Igloo Creek bridge. It was built in 1927 by the ARC during park road construction. The Igloo Creek cabin and three other ARC roadside cabins are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, significant for their role in the history of transportation and wildlife conservation in the park. The Savage River ARC cabin is not included because it was modified and moved from its original location.

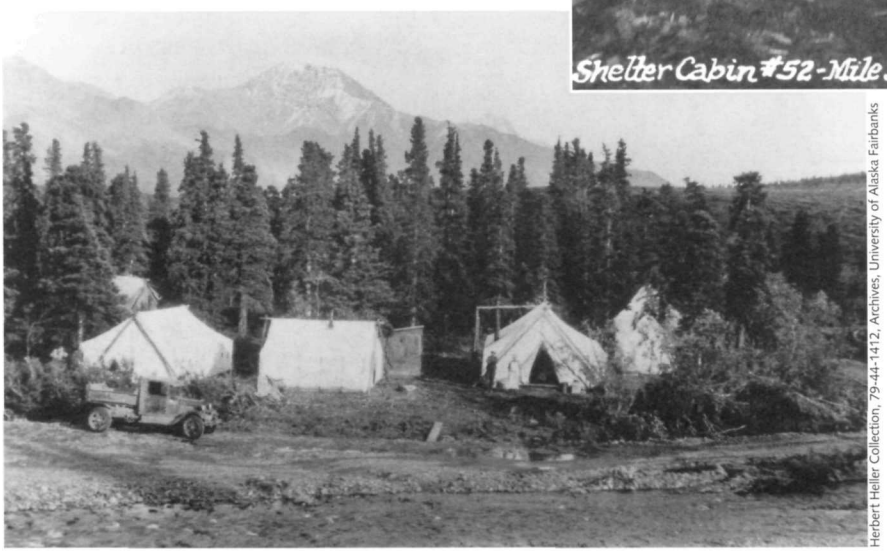
For 16 summers between 1939 and 1965, biologist Adolph Murie based his wildlife studies out of this cabin.[8] Since then the Igloo Creek cabin has been used seasonally as a ranger residence.

The Mt. McKinley Tourist & Transportation Company established a temporary overnight tourist camp on the site of the present-day Igloo Creek Campground. Before the park road reached Igloo Creek, visitors traveled to the camp by horseback. Later they arrived by bus or touring car. In 1952 the former tourist camp received its first picnic tables and became an official NPS campground.



Alaska State Library, Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-2-279

The Igloo Creek ARC Cabin.



Herbert Heller Collection, 79-44-1412, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

(Left) The ARC road construction camp along Igloo Creek, 1929.



Candace Waugaman Collection

Park visitors stop at the Igloo Creek cabin to stretch their legs and take a restroom break.



Lingo Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

The MMT&T Co. camp at Igloo Creek, 1930s.

Igloo Creek "Igloo"

Immediately after the Igloo Creek bridge, about 120 yards off the right side of the road, there was a small structure called the "igloo." It was described by a park ranger in 1948 as "not big, just a size to crawl into," and it was "quite decayed" at that time.[9] Whoever built the igloo cut spruce trees for its construction and filled the spaces between the poles with sod. Judging by its size and sturdiness, it could have been heated.

Thought to be the remains of a temporary shelter for a hunter, trapper, or prospector, the igloo could also have been a Native-built structure used as a sweat house. The exact history of its origin and use is not clear. Most likely it was used only occasionally for many years, and was not used for continual occupation.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, a group campsite and picnic area were located adjacent to the road here. As the igloo deteriorated, it most likely disappeared as convenient firewood for campers. The site is now naturally revegetated, and there is little to indicate where the igloo once stood.

The upper elevational limit of spruce trees on this and other north-flowing drainages provided camping sites that were favored by hunters, trappers and travelers. This site on Igloo Creek was an attractive location with shelter, firewood and water available, and sheep hunting nearby on Igloo and Cathedral mountains.

The word *igloo* is used to refer to a dwelling of any number of building types. The name of Igloo Creek is believed to originate from the "igloo" that was located along the creek. The *Dictionary of Alaska Place Names*, by Donald J. Orth, states that Igloo Creek is a "local name reported by Woodbury Abbey, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, on the blueprint of his 1921 Mount McKinley National Park survey."



The "igloo" at Igloo Creek, 1938.

Ray B. Dame, Ickes Collection; Anchorage Museum, B75.175.337



DENA 28-11, DNP&P Museum Collection

Adolph Murie in Igloo Canyon.

Adolph Murie

Born in 1899 in Moorhead, Minnesota, Adolph Murie first came to Alaska in 1922 to assist his older brother Olaus with a U.S. Biological Survey caribou study in the Brooks Range. In 1922 and 1923, the brothers captured caribou bulls in Mt. McKinley National Park as part of a project to enhance domestic reindeer by breeding them with the larger caribou. In 1925, Adolph graduated from Concordia College with a degree in biology, and the following summer he worked as a seasonal entrance gate ranger in Glacier National Park. After completing his dissertation on the ecological relationships of deer mouse subspecies in the Glacier region, he received his Ph. D. from the University of Michigan in 1929.[10]

In 1932 Adolph married Louise Gillette. The half-brothers, Olaus and Adolph, married half-sisters, Margaret and Louise. Both couples focused their work on wildlife ecology and wilderness conservation.

Murie was hired as a biologist for the newly-created Wildlife Division of the NPS in 1934. Based in Omaha, he studied a variety of species in several park units. In 1939 he returned to Mt. McKinley National Park to study wolves, which were thought to have caused a decline in the Dall sheep population. At the time, wildlife management favored prey species like Dall sheep and caribou, and controlled their predators. Murie's studies of predator-prey relationships convinced him that predators and prey were mutually beneficial for maintaining healthy populations in a naturally-regulated ecosystem, a controversial view in that era. In 1944 he published the results of his two-year wolf study in the book, *The Wolves of Mount McKinley.*[11] This classic publication played a significant role in changing NPS management philosophy, eventually replacing predator control with preservation

of intact ecosystems.

Murie became a full-time biologist at Mt. McKinley National Park in 1947, hired to monitor predator and prey populations. He and his family lived at park headquarters in the winters and at Igloo Creek cabin in the summers until the fall of 1950. He studied a wide range of species, and published books about the birds, grizzly bears, and mammals of the park.

After relocating to Wyoming, Murie spent each summer between 1958 and 1965 at Mt. McKinley National Park studying wildlife. Louise described his work during those years:

Ade [as he was known to his friends] spent many hours with telescope and binoculars watching the interactions of the various species of wildlife. It was his habit, after the evening meal, to write in his journal details of each day in considerable detail. But at the same time he was interacting with the people who visited the park, for he met and talked with many of the visitors from all parts of the world, and discussed with them the values inherent in parks. He was always a champion of the national park idea, and expressed the thought that the lands therein should be preserved in their natural condition.[12]

In the 1950s, Murie became concerned about the



Wallace A. Cole Collection

Adolph Murie and Joe Hankins at the Igloo Creek cabin.



Harpers Ferry Center, #10565, NPS

Louise, Jan, Gail, and Adolph Murie at the East Fork cabin during Murie's early wolf and sheep research, 1940.

Mission 66 development plans for Mt. McKinley National Park. In a written critique of the plans, he brought attention to the conflict between developing the park for public use and protecting its wilderness values. He opposed many of the projects including major road upgrades, a hotel at Savage River, and interpretive signs along the road. He disagreed with plans to construct backcountry trails in the park, considering them unnecessary intrusions. He also proposed an extension of the north boundary and a policy for quiet air space. His efforts once again helped shape park policy, and many of the proposed developments were put on hold.[13]

After retiring in 1965, his personal dedication to the park was both scientific and philosophical. He and Louise continued to travel north each summer until 1970. In all, Murie spent several full years and over 25 summers at Mt. McKinley National Park. He died on August 16, 1974.



Adolph Murie, field biologist and wilderness advocate.

Charles Ott Photo, DNP&P Museum Collection

East Fork Cabin and Coal Mine

At the top of Sable Pass, the ARC had a small camp between the road and the swale just south of the road. From there the road descends along Coal Creek, a name used by the ARC for this west-flowing creek adjacent to a natural outcrop of usable coal. Shortly after the road crosses the curved concrete bridge known as Ghiglione bridge, there is a large pullout on the left.[14] From the next straightaway, an unusual line of willows can be seen across Coal Creek, angling uphill from the creek. This line marks the small roadway that led from the creek bed up to the entrance of the East Fork coal mine.

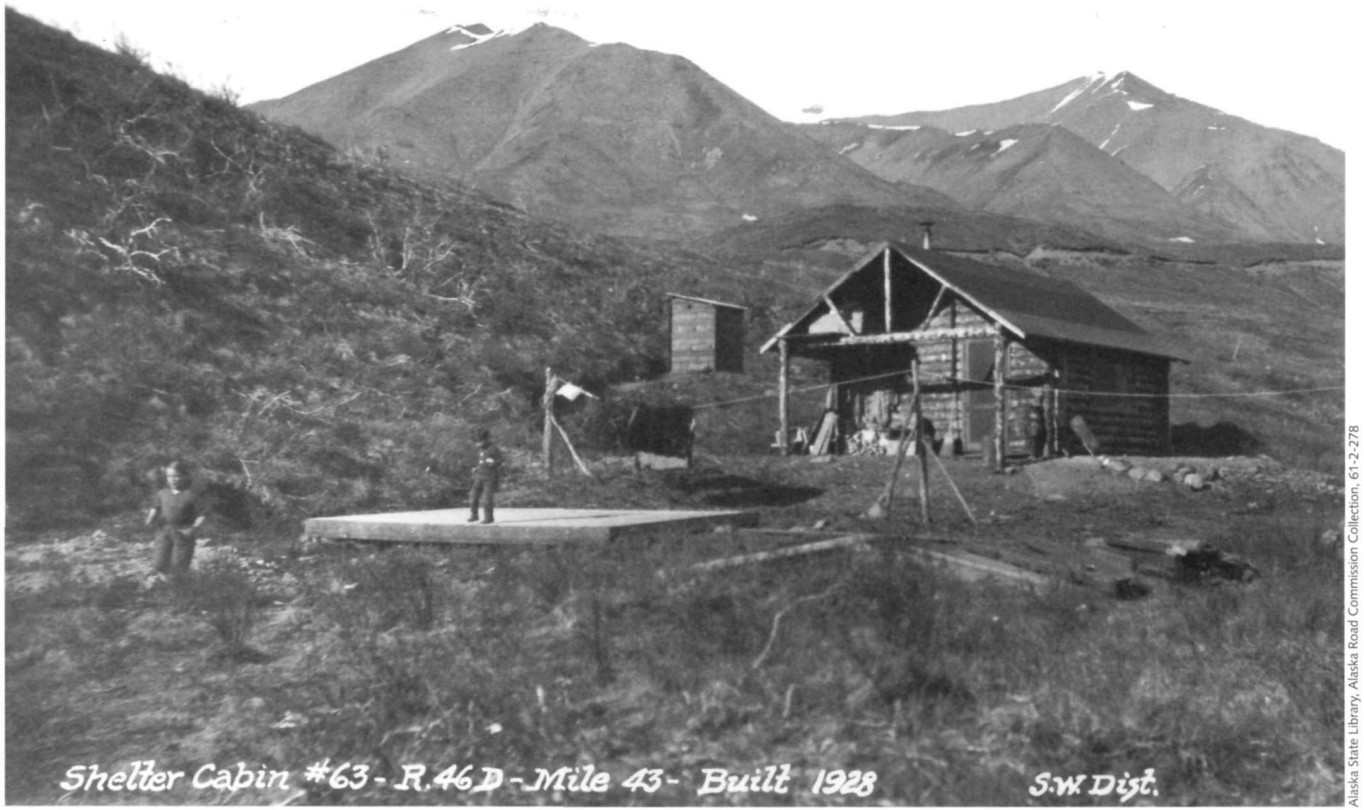
Directly below the obscured entrance to the mine, there is a conical pile of coal debris with a piece of wood sticking out. The black debris pile can be seen with binoculars. **Note: This is within the Sable Pass Wildlife Closure, and off-road hiking is not permitted.**

Natural outcrops of coal occur in various places throughout the park. The ARC developed the East Fork coal source to fuel road construction operations in above-timberline locations,



The East Fork coal mine on Coal Creek.

Alaska Railroad Collection, Anchorage Museum, Loan from the Alaska Railroad Corporation, BL79.2.10079



Alaska State Library, Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-2-278

The East Fork ARC cabin, built in 1928.



Alaska State Library, Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-2-231

An ARC worker gets his hair cut at the East Fork camp, 1930.

such as the East Fork camp and bridge. The coal was moved in a small coal cart that ran on steel rails. Use of the East Fork coal mine as late as 1940 was documented in the Superintendent's Monthly Report for September 1940, which stated that "coal was hauled from the East Fork mine to the Wonder Lake ranger station."[15]

Downstream from the coal mine, where Coal Creek meets the East Fork of the Toklat River, the roof of a cabin is visible from the road. This is the East Fork cabin, built by the ARC in 1928, and similar in design to the other ARC cabins. It was the center of another ARC road construction camp and the fourth of their roadside cabins. This camp supported construction of the East Fork bridge and much of the road over Polychrome Pass.

Louise and Adolph Murie, pictured here in 1965, lived in the East Fork cabin for eight summers between 1940 and 1970.[16]



DENA 28-78, DNP&P Museum Collection

(Below) The East Fork ARC camp and cabin, 1929.



Herbert Heller Collection, 79-44-1439, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks



Alaska State Library, Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-2-268

(Above) The first East Fork bridge under construction, 1930, and the finished bridge (below).



DENA #2-71, DNP&P Museum Collection

East Fork Bridge

The present steel and concrete bridge over the East Fork Toklat River was completed in 1954. It replaced the original bridge built in 1930, which was an example of the rustic log bridge style popular in national parks at that time.

The ARC encountered numerous challenges with the many rivers the road had to cross throughout the park. The glacial rivers and streams are susceptible to flooding and have broadly meandering channels, which meant that the ARC had to build several major bridges and install many culverts. Construction materials had to be shipped to the park and freighted to each construction site.

Polychrome Pass

Initial plans called for the park road west of the East Fork Toklat River to go over a low pass to the main Toklat River. However, guided by NPS road construction policies and a site visit by Chief Landscape Architect Thomas Vint in 1929, the NPS requested a change in the location of the road in this area, from the lowland route to one over what was called the "Highline" section. Chosen for its expansive views, this route, now known as Polychrome Pass, required more difficult construction, including large amounts of blasting. These design changes increased the cost of construction and delayed completion of the road, but produced a more scenic drive.

In August 1931 Horace Albright, then director of the NPS, wrote to Thomas Vint to say, "Yesterday, in company with Supt. [Harry] Liek, I inspected the so-called "Highline" between the East Fork Toklat and the main Toklat River which you suggested two years ago. This road is on a splendid location and is one of the most scenic highways in the National Park system."[17]

Ralph Courtnay Sr. and Walter Teeland both drove Ford Model T dump trucks for the ARC when the road was built over Polychrome Pass. Teeland, who drove the



Visitors on Polychrome Pass, late 1930s.

Lingo Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection



Alaska State Library, Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-2-237



Alaska State Library, Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-2-230

Morgan C. Edmunds Collection; Anchorage Museum, Gift of Elizabeth E. Donohoe, B88.12.256



first truck over the incomplete Polychrome Pass section, recalled that they were "conservative drivers"; not the most daring drivers who frequently got in trouble, but also not the slow pokes who were always getting stuck and had to be pulled out.

In the fall of 1931, they both worked until Christmas. Courtnay was the lone truck driver while Teeland was promoted to run the air compressor that powered the rock drills. When Teeland was first shown the air compressor, it didn't work. He made a replacement rotor for the distributor from some shoe soles and got the compressor running. "You had to be

(Top) Looking back at the ARC camp at Mile 45 on Polychrome Pass, July 1930. This tractor was pulling equipment into place for blasting rock on the "Highline" route.

(Middle) Building the road over the "Highline" route required specialized rock work. In some places, laborers shoveled by hand to establish a platform for equipment.

(Bottom) Rock drills, powered by a compressor, made holes for explosives.

inventive in those remote camps."

The crews lived in canvas wall tents with wood stoves, sometimes at temperatures as cold as twenty below zero. They received $150 per month in pay and had no days off. But jobs were difficult to find at the time, and they were happy to have the work.[18]

Norma Hoyt, an employee of the MMT&T Co., recalled the reaction of some visitors to the road over Polychrome Pass: "Often times they were scared to death to [travel] over Polychrome Pass. I would go along and then walk with those that were scared to ride."[19]



Morgan C. Edmunds Collection; Anchorage Museum, Gift of Elizabeth E. Donohoe, B88.12.236



Alaska State Library, Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-18-127

Alaska State Library, Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-2-224

(Top) The men of Johnson's crew, builders of the road over Polychrome Pass, 1930.

(Middle) Blasting broke up the rock, making way for the roadbed.

(Bottom) Debris was removed by shovel and dump truck.





Alaska State Library, Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-2-400

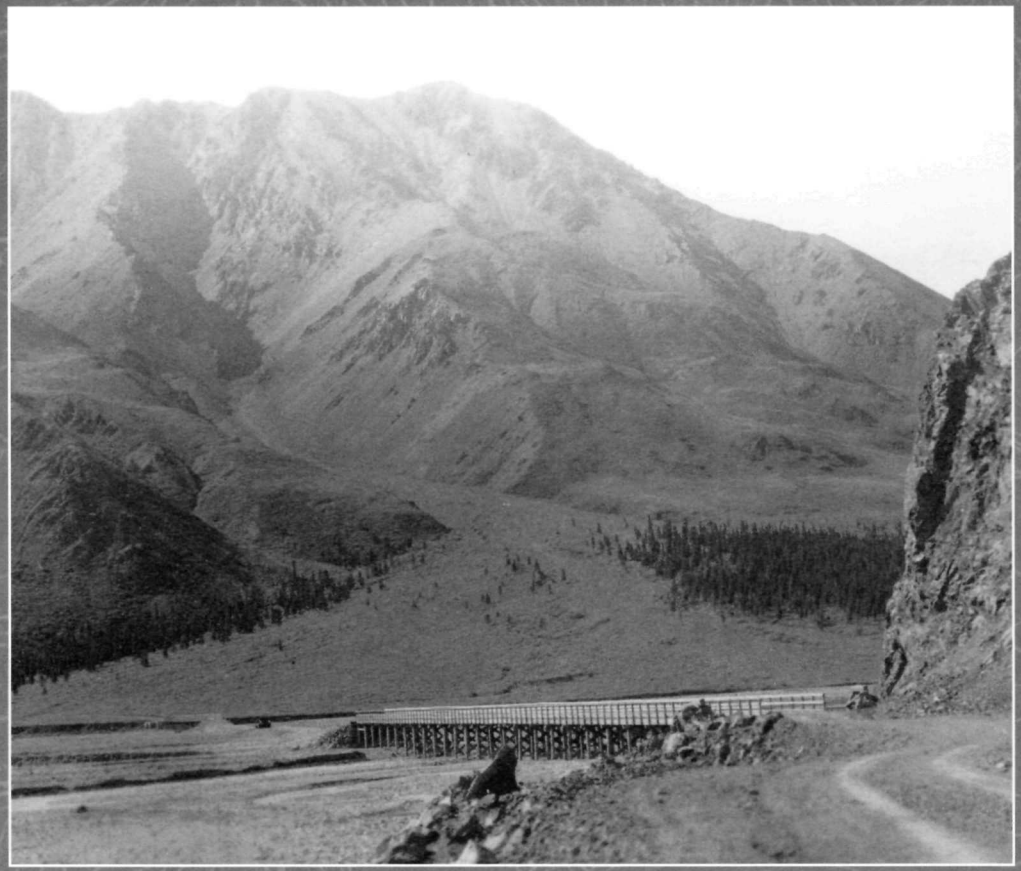
The Alaska Road Commission camp on the east side of the Toklat River, September 30, 1931.



Candace Waugaman Collection

As the road descends toward the Toklat River, it parallels a flat vegetated area to the left of the road. The farthest downstream end of that old gravel bar, just east of the rocky bluff, was used by the MMT&T Co. as a temporary overnight camp for visitors. Each summer they set up canvas wall tents for dining and accommodations. The same area was used by the ARC for a temporary road construction camp. This is another example of an area that is no longer in use, and is now reverting back to a natural landscape.

The Mt. McKinley Tourist & Transportation Company's camp just east of the Toklat River bridge.



Toklat

Heart of the Park

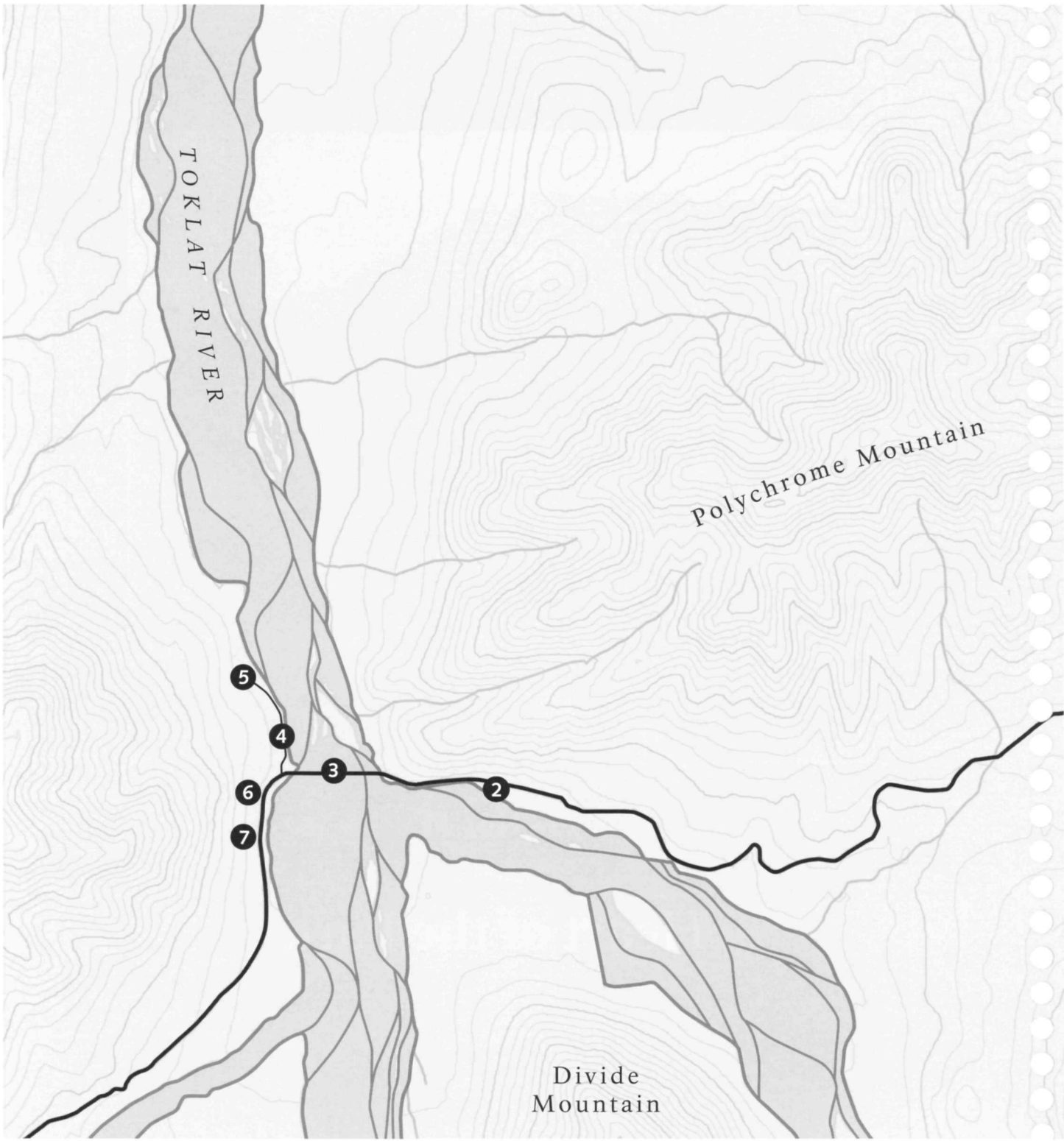
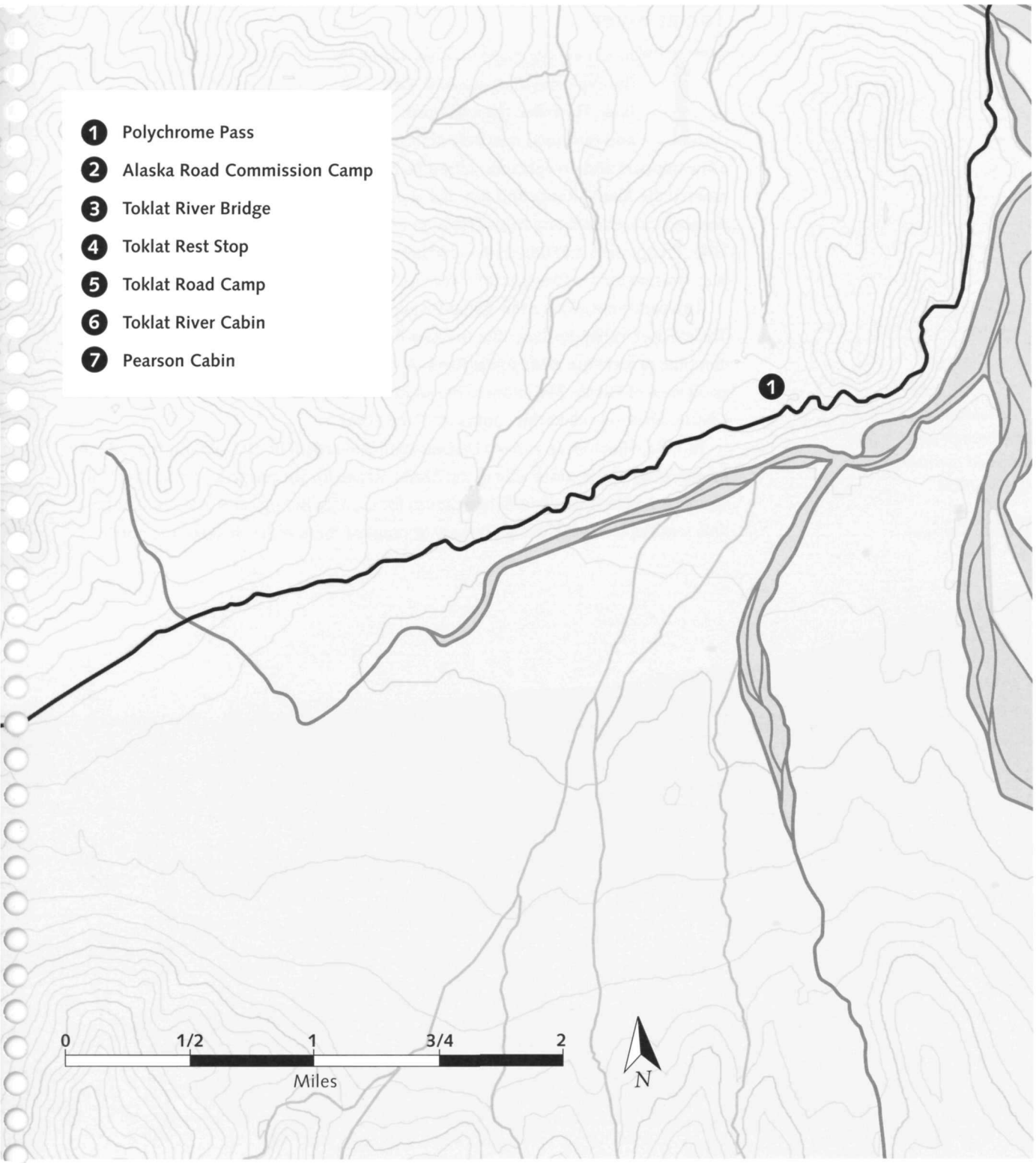


Photo previous page: The park road crosses the Toklat River at "the Forks," where the two upper branches of the river unite.
Candace Waugaman Collection


1 Polychrome Pass
2 Alaska Road Commission Camp
3 Toklat River Bridge
4 Toklat Rest Stop
5 Toklat Road Camp
6 Toklat River Cabin
7 Pearson Cabin
1
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Toklat River

The expanding quest for gold during the late 1800s and early 1900s spurred the exploration of much of Alaska, especially those regions accessible by boat. However, the area north of the Alaska Range was difficult to reach, and remained relatively unknown except by Alaska Native residents and a few trappers and prospectors. Alfred H. Brooks, of the U.S. Geological Survey, crossed the Alaska Range and traveled along its northern slope in 1902, contributing detailed information and maps. Then, in 1903, gold was discovered in the Kantishna Hills. Prospectors and miners flooded into the Kantishna district in 1905, and the stage was set for another type of visitor to the region.

The park road crosses the Toklat River at the upper limit of spruce forest in the Toklat River Valley. It's here that the East Branch and the West Branch of the river combine to form the main Toklat River. A stop on the west side of the river allows a good view of Divide Mountain to the south, between the two branches of the river. Charles Sheldon called this confluence "the Forks."

In 1906, Sheldon, an eastern businessman and ardent hunter-naturalist, made the long journey to the north side of the Alaska Range for the purpose of studying Dall sheep and collecting scientific specimens for the U.S. Biological Survey. At that time little was known about the life history or range of these white sheep of the north.

Charles Sheldon's expedition traveled through what is now the park road corridor in July and August 1906.

Schlein Collection, 2009-59-07,
Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks





Henry P. Karstens Collection, #43, Karstens Library

Jack Haydon and Harry Karstens at Sheldon's Toklat camp, 1906.

Charles Sheldon's Camp

On August 6, 1906, Charles Sheldon wrote: "Directly in front of our camp the two upper forks of the Toklat unite to form the main river. Between them is the magnificent mountain which from its position I named Divide Mountain."[2]

From this camp, sheep could be seen on the nearby and distant mountain slopes. Sheldon tramped in all directions, exploring the area and studying the wildlife. He kept a daily journal of his observations and collected scientific specimens of many species. The party camped at this site from August 6 to September 3, when they had to leave in order to catch a steamboat before freezeup. At the end of his stay, Sheldon wrote: "I realized that the life history [of the Dall sheep] could not be learned without a much longer stay among them and determined to return and devote a year to their study. With this in view I planned to revisit the region, build a substantial cabin just below my old camp on the Toklat, and

With five horses and equipment, Jack Haydon as packer, and Harry Karstens as assistant packer, Charles Sheldon set out to locate Dall sheep on the northern slopes of the Alaska Range. They traveled from Fairbanks by steamboat down the Tanana River and up the Kantishna River to the active gold rush town of Roosevelt, then overland to the Alaska Range. They first investigated the Peters Glacier area, but, not finding many sheep, they turned east and traveled through what is now the park road corridor. On reaching the Toklat River, they found the abundance of sheep that Sheldon was hoping for, and established a camp there on August 6. Sheldon wrote: "Our camp at the Forks was well situated. Nearby were plenty of dry spruces for fuel, an abundance of fine grass for the horses, and a fine spring of pure cold water. In addition, the conformation of the land on both sides gave excellent protection from the winds that swept up and down the valley. On the whole, this was the most attractive and convenient hunting camp I have ever occupied in the North."[1]



Schlein Collection, 2009-59-16, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Sheldon's photograph of his camp and Divide Mountain, September 1, 1906. This camp was determined to be about 350 yards west of the Pearson cabin trail, very close to the present road alignment.

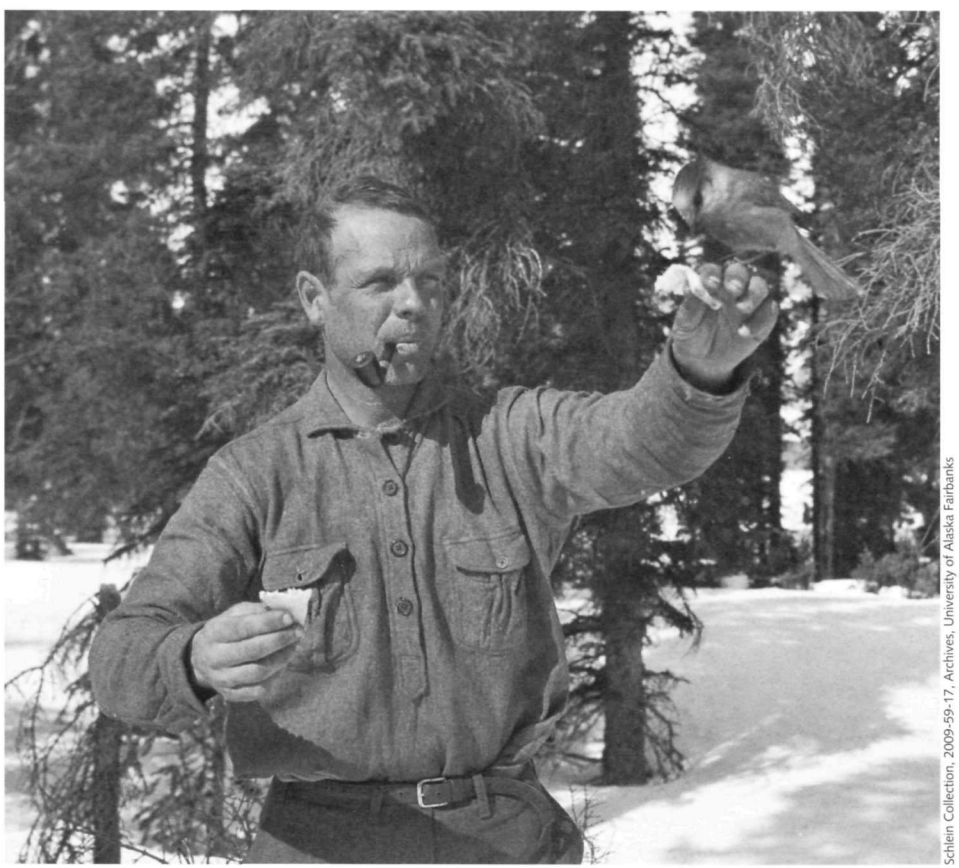


Charles Sheldon, *The Wilderness of Denali*

Sheldon's cabin on the Toklat River, August 1907.

remain there through the winter, summer, and early fall."[3]

True to his plan, he returned the next year, again with Harry Karstens. They built a cabin on an ancient river bar about three miles downriver from his camp of 1906. Nearby was an "old Indian cache" which was still usable, and water from a spring. A good stand of spruce timber provided building logs, firewood, and protection from storms. Sheldon and Karstens built the cabin and spent from August 8, 1907 to June 11, 1908 at this site. They observed wildlife and took notes on the distribution and movements of animals. They got to know people in the area and witnessed the effects of wholesale market hunting. It was here that Sheldon began to develop his ideas for the preservation of this area as a national park. Karstens later recalled: "He was continually talking of the beauties of the country and of the variety of the game and wouldn't it make an ideal park and game preserve.... We would talk over the possible boundaries of a park and

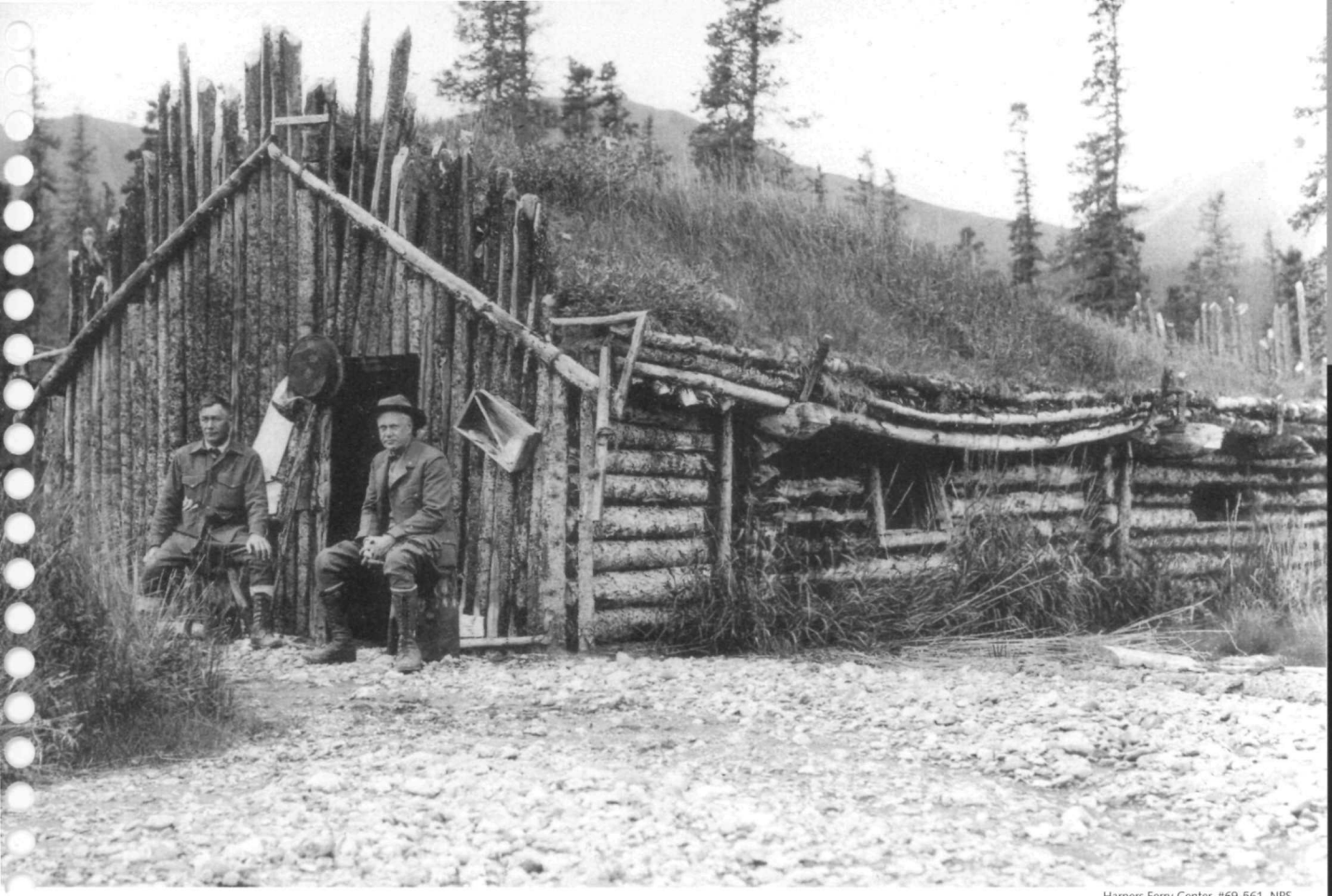


Schlein Collection, 2009-59-17, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Charles Sheldon on the Toklat River, 1907-08, before the area was designated a national park. Today's wildlife management policies prohibit feeding wildlife.

When Denali National Park shall be made easy of access, with accommodations and facilities for travel, as surely it will be, it is not difficult to anticipate the enjoyment and inspiration visitors will receive.

Charles Sheldon's journal entry for January 12, 1908, written on the Toklat River[4]



Harpers Ferry Center, #69-561, NPS

Harry Karstens (left) and Stephen Mather at Sheldon's cabin in 1926. An addition to the cabin was built in 1914 when Karstens spent five months there, guiding a group of three eastern hunters.

preserve which we laid out practically the same as the present park boundaries."[5]

After spending the 1907/08 winter in the shadow of Mt. McKinley, Sheldon never returned to the area, but his passion for this special place fueled his idea of a wilderness park. Sheldon was politically astute and committed to the relatively new concept that exceptional natural areas should be preserved without development. A member of the Boone and Crockett Club, he worked with other conservation groups to promote the idea of a national park in the Denali region. In the meantime, plans for a railroad through Alaska took shape. Park advocates saw the need to protect wildlife from increased hunting pressure. In large part due to Sheldon's efforts, Mt. McKinley National Park was established on February 26, 1917. It took another four years for administration of the park to be funded and for Harry Karstens to be hired as the park's first superintendent.

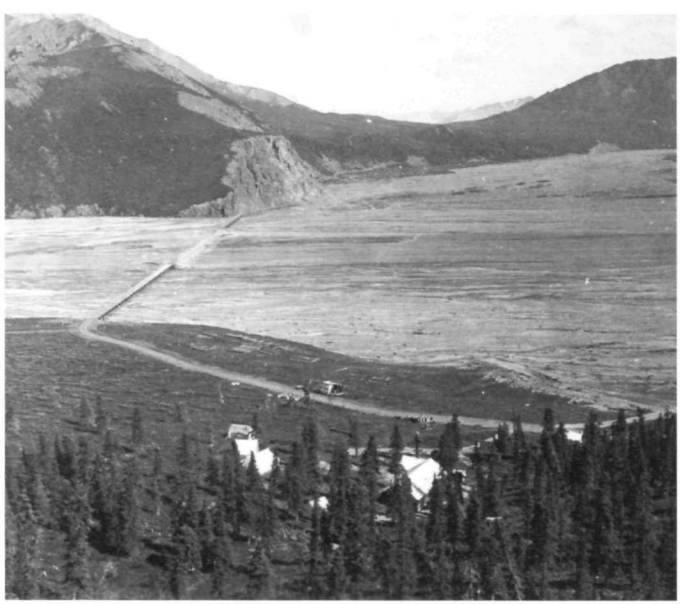
After Sheldon left the area, his cabin on the Toklat River was used by other hunters and travelers, but it housed no permanent residents. By 1926, when Harry Karstens took NPS Director Stephen Mather to visit the site, it was in poor condition. In the 1940s, the NPS considered the restoration and preservation of this historically significant structure, but it was too decayed. Adolph Murie argued: "The cabin . . . is deteriorating [and] a swing of the river may destroy it suddenly, but I have a feeling it should be left alone. I think that Sheldon, with his love for wild places, would like to have his cabin crumble to earth with age."[6] After more than 100



DENA 4-5, DNP&P Museum Collection

By 1941, Sheldon's cabin was in poor condition.

Looking down at the Toklat ARC camp and the Toklat River, 1930s.



Joseph Dixon Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

years, the rain and snow and the Toklat River have nearly eradicated Sheldon's cabin.

In 1951 the Boone and Crockett Club prepared a bronze plaque to commemorate Charles Sheldon and the vital role he played in establishing this park. It was attached to the rock cliff on the east side of the Toklat River bridges. In 1958, the Pioneers of Alaska sponsored a similar plaque in honor of Harry Karstens and placed it beside the Sheldon plaque. Both plaques were later moved to the Toklat Rest Stop where they can be viewed today.

Toklat River Cabin

Beyond the turnoff to the Toklat Rest Stop, the Toklat River cabin is visible to the right. The ARC built this cabin in 1930, the last of its five roadside cabins. Similar to the other ARC cabins and used in the same way, the Toklat River cabin now serves as a summer ranger residence and shelter for winter ranger patrols. It is also called the Toklat Ranger Station. All five of the ARC-built roadside cabins are maintained by the National Park Service to preserve their historic appearance and integrity, while still being used to support park operations.

Adjacent to the Toklat River cabin, an ARC camp was arranged around a circle drive. It consisted of maintenance and storage structures as well as tents for living quarters. The ARC used this camp for road construction in the 1930s and later as a road maintenance base camp. In 1956, ARC functions were transferred to the Bureau of Public Roads, and the maintenance base camp was moved downstream to the present location of the Toklat Road Camp, just beyond the rest stop. The Bureau of Public Roads transferred responsibility for park road maintenance to the National Park Service in 1960.[7]

The footprint of the original ARC camp, adjacent to the cabin, became the Toklat Campground in 1958. Containing six sites, it served independent car-camping visitors from 1958 until it was closed in 1972, the year the park began restricting private vehicle traffic on the park road.[8]

Beatrice Herning Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

The Toklat River cabin, late 1930s.



Ginger Burley Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

Toklat Campground, 1968.



DENA 2355, DNP&P Museum Collection

Superintendent Grant Pearson at the Pearson cabin in 1954.

Pearson Cabin

About 330 yards past the turnoff to the Toklat River cabin, a small foot trail leads into the forest on the right side of the road, uphill and away from the river bar. This trail leads to what was originally named the Toklat ranger cabin. It is now called the Pearson cabin, and is not visible from the road. *Note: The cabin is a residence for seasonal park employees, and is not open to the public.*

From the beginning, one of the primary missions of the NPS in Mt. McKinley National Park has been to protect park wildlife and natural resources. To further that goal, early park rangers patrolled the park on foot and by dog team (a tradition that continues today). They observed the wildlife and noted conditions in the park, met people traveling or working in the area, and checked on the activities of trappers and prospectors. In the early years, rangers used tents or abandoned cabins for shelter. Later, as more cabins were built, rangers were assigned to a certain area, and based their patrol activities out of one of the patrol cabins.

Rangers often kept a log of their patrols, including

observations and tallies of the miles they covered. For example, Grant Pearson's field notes for November 1935 read: "Sat., Nov. 16: Traveled down to [Lower] Toklat ranger's cabin. Bad overflow most of the way, had to leave the river about 4 miles above the cabin and take to the hillside. 25 miles. 8 sheep. Trail bad. 24 below."[9]

The main travel route through the park, over "the high passes," was flagged by the ARC in 1922, but road construction progressed slowly. By 1926 the road had reached just beyond the Sanctuary River. In the meantime, rangers patrolling the park had uncertain and inadequate shelter. Dog teams often traveled on overflow ice and sometimes broke through, dunking sled and driver in cold river water. It could be life-saving to reach a shelter in order to warm up and dry out.

The story of the construction of the Toklat ranger cabin (now known as the Pearson cabin) was told by Ranger Grant Pearson:

It was during the first part of March 1927 that I returned to Park Headquarters from a dog team patrol trip from the Kantishna District and I discussed with Superintendent Karstens the deplorable conditions of the tents we used as overnight stops at the various places.... I said to Harry Karstens, "We need a patrol cabin at various places through the park, but a cabin at Toklat River should be built now." Harry answered, "You are not crippled, are you? You know what is needed and you know how to build log cabins. Go ahead and build it."

This site on the slope of a hill at Toklat River was picked for two reasons — material to build the cabin was growing on the hillside and it was a well-sheltered spot — the only one for miles around. Fritz Nyberg, the Chief Ranger, picked the location.

A few days after my talk with Karstens, I made another dog team trip out in the park and I met another ranger, Lee Swisher, and we cut the logs and dragged them to the location by hand as the hillside was too steep to work dogs on.... In June, Lee and I hiked (the park road was only completed to Sanctuary River, a distance of 22 miles) out to Toklat River. We were carrying heavy packs loaded with necessary supplies. We started to remove the surface soil but we encountered frozen ground...so, the latter part of July we returned....We built that cabin and seven dog houses. The next year (1928) Fritz Nyberg and I returned to Toklat River and built the remainder of the dog houses, whipsawed enough lumber for the floor, door, table, window frames, and we put lumber on top of the moss and dirt roof to make it waterproof.

The only actual money we spent on this cabin was for the windows, door hinges, and a few nails. Karstens said we could spend $15.00 for needed materials and we had some money left over.[10]

Along with the roadside cabins built by the Alaska Road Commission, the ranger-built Pearson cabin is included on the National Register of Historic Places for its importance in the history of park ranger patrols and wildlife preservation activities. Although rangers on winter dog team patrols now stay in the larger Toklat River cabin, the Pearson cabin is still used during the summer to house seasonal park employees.



Dan Wilder Collection, Courtesy of the Wilder Family

The Pearson cabin is shown here a few years after it was built in 1927.





DENA 3996, DNP&P Museum Collection

Grant Pearson

After coming to Alaska in 1925 and working briefly as a miner and road worker, Grant Pearson started work as a temporary ranger at Mt. McKinley National Park in February 1926. He became a permanent employee in June 1926 and stayed at the park for most of the next 30 years. As a ranger Pearson helped build many of the park's cabins, and patrolled park boundaries by dog sled, snowshoe, and on foot. His ranger reports for 1928 indicate that he traveled 3,307 miles on patrol, including 2,459 miles by dog sled. In 1928-29, he left the park for six months to learn to fly an airplane.

In the early spring of 1932, Ranger Grant Pearson was invited to join Alfred Lindley, Erling Strom, and Park Superintendent Harry Liek on a climb of Mt. McKinley. Pearson and others freighted the expedition's supplies by dog team from park headquarters to 11,000 feet on the Muldrow Glacier. The climbing party pioneered the use of skis on the mountain, produced the first film of a climbing expedition on Mt. McKinley, and completed the first ascent of both the south and north peaks.

Pearson married Margaret Wolfe in 1938, and a year later he transferred to Yosemite National Park, returning to Mt. McKinley National Park as chief ranger in 1942. From February 1943 to July 1947, he was Acting Superintendent. It was during this time that Pearson earned the U.S. Army's Medal of Freedom for his organization and leadership of a 40-man rescue expedition to recover the bodies of 19 people killed in a military transport plane crash east of Mt. McKinley in September 1944. Starting from park headquarters on October 10, the expedition took snow tractors into the Alaska Range, investigated the wreckage, and returned on November 17.[11]

Pearson served as park superintendent from February 1949 until his retirement in November 1956. He moved to Nenana and had a second career in politics, as an Alaska State Representative from 1959 to 1965, and as an Alaska State Senator from 1965 to 1967.

Grant Pearson wrote the story of his life in the book *My Life of High Adventure*, published in 1962. He died in Anchorage on September 8, 1978, at the age of 78.

Pearson was well known for his hiking abilities, as illustrated in a story told by Savage Camp employee Lena Howard:

Grant was a great hiker. We took a trip to Copper Mountain [now Mt. Eielson], and we were on horseback and he walked, and he got to the Copper Mountain camp and had the fires going by the time we got there on the horses![12]



DENA 4844, DNP&P Museum Collection

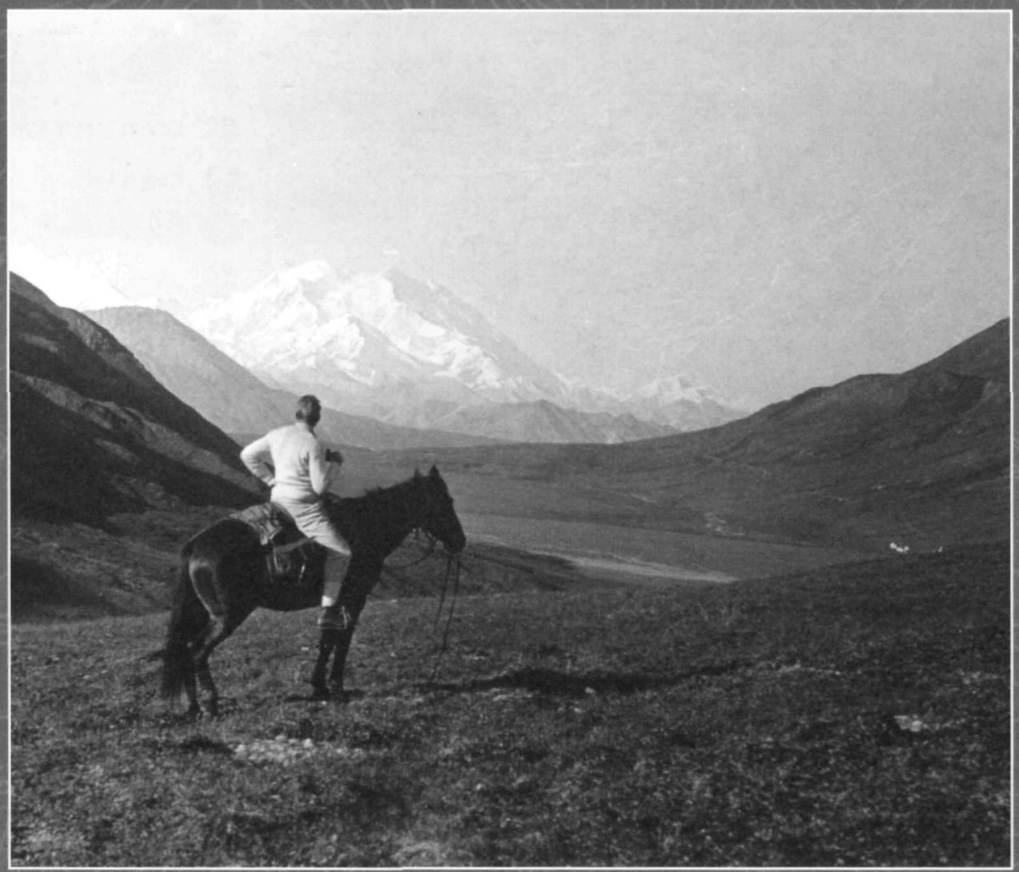
(Left) During his 30-year federal career, Grant Pearson was a ranger, chief ranger, acting superintendent and superintendent.

(Far Left) Pictured at the McKinley Park Station depot after their 1932 climb of Mt. McKinley are (left to right): Harry Liek, Grant Pearson, Erling Strom, and Alfred Lindley.



NPS, DNP&P

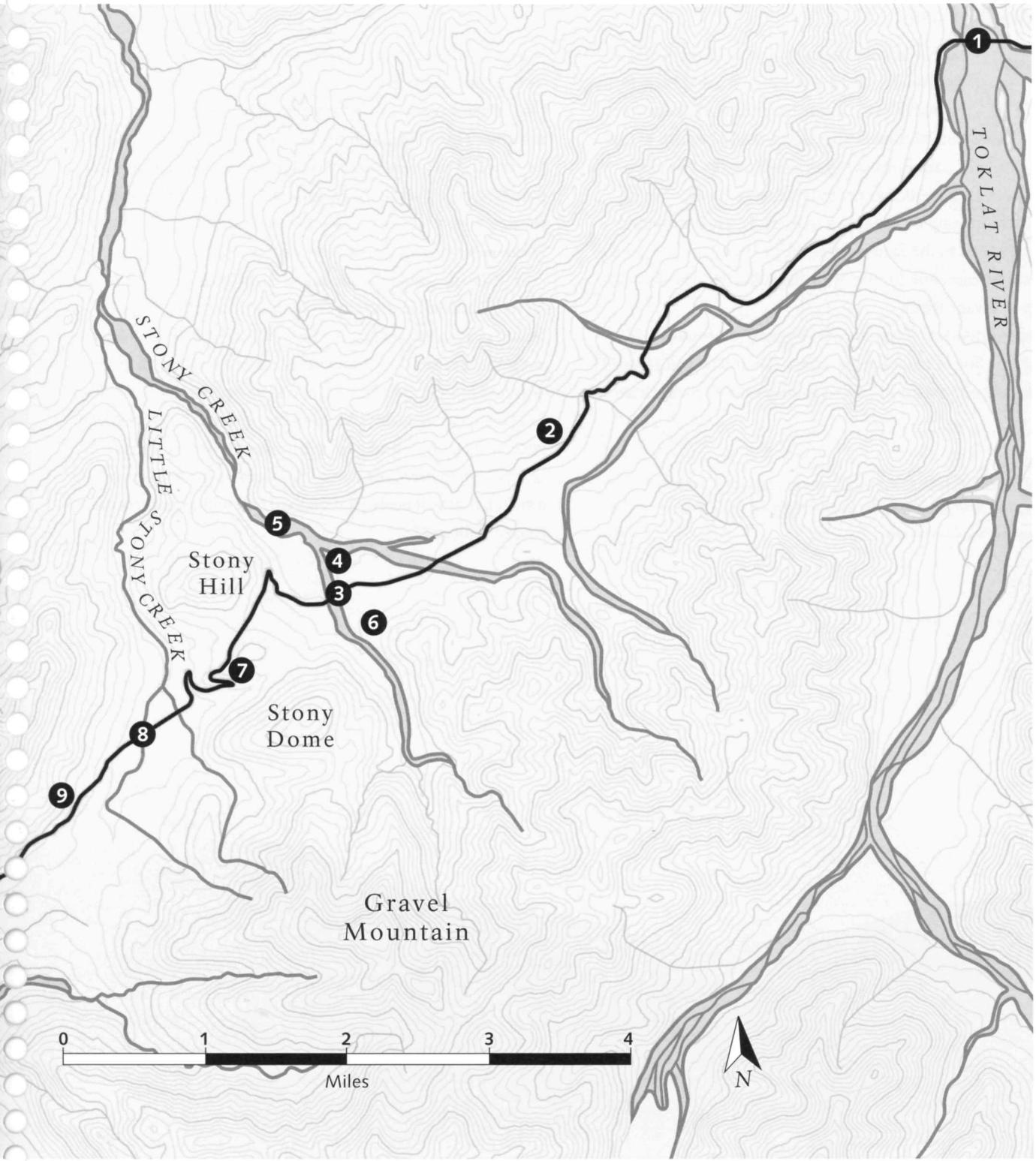
92 *Pearson cabin, 2006.*



Toklat River
to
Eielson Visitor Center



Photo previous page: View of Mt. McKinley from Stony Hill. Candace Waugaman Collection


1
TOKLAT RIVER
2
STONY CREEK
LITTLE STONY CREEK
5
4
3
6
Stony Hill
7
Stony Dome
8
9
Gravel Mountain
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Miles
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Highway Pass

As the road turns away from the Toklat River, it climbs west above the creek that descends from Highway Pass. At one time the park telephone line, mounted on tripods, could be seen in this valley. In 1924 park rangers began installing the line along the road from park headquarters to the Savage River, running it over the ground or hanging it in trees. It was overhauled and extended to the Sanctuary River in 1926. This was a vital communication link for the NPS, the ARC, and the tourist camp at Savage River.

Superintendent Karstens' son Eugene wrote about this telephone line in his autobiography: "My job [at age 10 or 11] was to take supplies and mail to [rangers in the park] twice a week — alone. The only thing I had in case of trouble was a telephone in the car [a Model T Ford] and two long wires. One of the wires I was to throw up and over the telephone wire that ran alongside of the road and the other wire was to be attached to a pipe that I would drive into the ground. After attaching the wires to the telephone I would crank one ring for the ranger's shack at the other end of the line or I could crank two rings for home. And it worked!"[1]

In 1930 the park contracted an Anchorage firm to construct an overhead telephone line from the depot to the Copper Mountain patrol cabin at the base of Mt. Eielson. By October, over 30 miles of tripods had been erected and the telephone wire strung. The telephone line was completed by December 1. The Superintendent's Monthly Report for December 1930 stated: "The line leading from Mt. Eielson to headquarters is one system in itself, but connection can be made by throwing a switch that will enable a person to talk with points on the Alaska Railroad."

In this 1937 photo, the tripods supporting the park telephone line can be seen to the right of the creek.

Fred Hotes Photo, Steve Carwile Collection





Alaska State Library, Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-2-250

Every year rangers spent considerable time maintaining this telephone line. Tripods often collapsed when the spring thaws came, wind storms blew them over, or wildlife pulled the lines down. In 1934 the telephone line was extended along the road between Mile 60 and Mile 70. In 1939, a CCC crew replaced the older line with 41 miles of new "metallic telephone line" on single vertical poles between the railroad and Sable Pass. Some new telephone poles were installed in 1953, but by 1955 the "old condemned park telephone line was removed."[2] Today's hikers still find a few scattered remnants of the telephone wire or insulators. These are cultural artifacts and should be left in place.



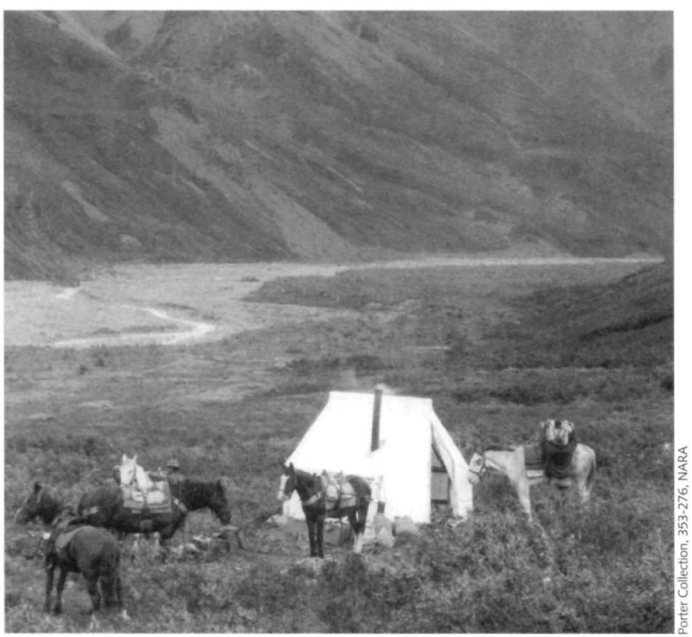
Leslie Viereck Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

(Top) ARC workmen riding to work in Highway Pass, 1930.

(Right) Seasonal ranger Les Viereck repairing the telephone line in 1950.



Morgan C. Edmunds Collection, Anchorage Museum, Gift of Elizabeth E. Donohoe, B88.12.168



Porter Collection, 353-276, NARA

Stony Creek ARC Shelter Tent

The road descends to Stony Creek on the west side of Highway Pass. One of the ARC shelter tents along the park trail was located on Stony Creek, upstream from the current bridge on the west bank, at the base of the hill. The shelter tents were erected in 1922 when the ARC flagged the trail through the park, and were available for use by all travelers.

(Top) The Stony Creek ARC shelter tent is on the far left of the photo. The tent was 10 years old in 1932 when the Stony Creek bridge was under construction.

(Left) Pack horses at the Stony Creek ARC shelter tent, 1923.

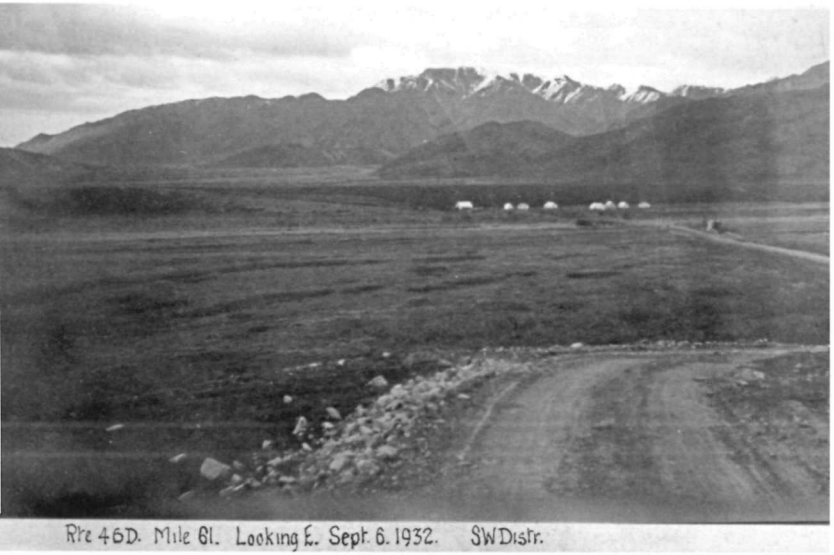


Porter Collection, 79G-11F-65, NARA

Every ARC shelter tent had a sign with directions and distances to other points along the trail. Superintendent Karstens guided C.J. Blanchard (above), with the U.S. Reclamation Service, on a photographic expedition in 1923.



Morgan C. Edmunds Collection; Anchorage Museum, Gift of Elizabeth E. Donohoe, B88.12.617



Morgan C. Edmunds Collection; Anchorage Museum, Gift of Elizabeth E. Donohoe, B88.12.171

Hoyt Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection



Stony Creek ARC Camps

The Stony Creek drainage was the site of two ARC camps. Downstream from the bridge a small branch of Stony Creek enters from the east, creating a "V" of land between the two creeks. This was the site of one of the ARC tent camps during road construction.

The second ARC road construction camp on Stony Creek was on the east bank and immediately upstream from the Stony Creek bridge, under construction in 1932. There were only tent structures here, and few traces remain of this camp.

(Top) Lower Stony Creek ARC camp after a snowstorm, looking north.

(Middle) ARC camp at Stony Creek bridge, looking east from the road on Stony Hill, 1932.

(Bottom) Looking back at the Stony Creek bridge and ARC camp from the road on Stony Hill, mid-1930s.



Bradford Washburn Photo, DENA 9010, DNP&P Museum Collection

"Quake Lake" at its highest level, August 12, 1953.

Bergh Lake

In May 1953, a U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey party arrived at the park to continue their Alaska survey and mapping work, and contracted airplanes and helicopters for moving the survey crews and camps. On June 11, a Piper Super Cub airplane hired by the survey party crashed just upstream from the Stony Creek bridge. The pilot, 44-year-old Knute Bergh, was scouting for a potential landing site along Stony Creek near the park road when the accident happened. The pilot and his 24-year-old passenger from the survey party, Lt. Gordon D. Scott, were both killed.

Later that summer, the weather was extremely wet, with four inches of rainfall during the first half of July. The rains saturated the clay soils on a steep slope above Stony Creek, and on July 12 an earthquake triggered a large landslide in the canyon about a half mile north of the park road (downstream

from the Stony Creek bridge). This created a dam in the creek bed, causing the water to back up and form a lake. "Quake Lake," as it was called locally, continued to rise until August 12, when water began flowing over the top of the dam.

Bradford Washburn, mountaineer and geographer, was in the park at the time and visited the site. He reported: "Everyone in the park called it Quake Lake. . . . [The creek] overflowed its earthen dam on August 12. We took a Camp Denali canoe out on it that evening and found it to be exactly 75 feet deep in the deepest spot."

Quake Lake was officially renamed Bergh Lake in commemoration of Knute Bergh, who was killed in the 1953 airplane crash nearby. A mountain in the Alaska Range, at the head of the Sunset Glacier, was named Scott Peak for Bergh's passenger, Lt. Gordon Scott. Scott Peak cannot be seen from here.

Many maps still show Bergh Lake, and hikers have wondered if they were lost, not finding a lake where the map indicates one. According to Robert Chapman of the U.S. Geological Survey, erosion of the earthen dam was significantly slowed by the large angular rocks in the outlet channel. The lake was small, but still in existence in 1984. By July 1988, it had disappeared.

Bergh Lake, seen from the road in 1954.

Bruce Campbell Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection





Morgan C. Edmunds Collection; Anchorage Museum, Gift of Elizabeth E. Donohoe, B88.12.179

Stony Hill

Road construction on Stony Hill, 1931, looking east. The lower Stony Creek ARC camp is on the right.

The August 1932 Superintendent's Monthly Report summed up one of the road construction problems faced by the Alaska Road Commission: "Stony Hill proved to be a problem with its switch-backs. There was apparently no bottom to the black gumbo soil in that section and it required a large amount of gravel to make even a passable road. When it is finished, this section of the highway will be beautiful, and the view of both Mt. McKinley and the whole Alaskan range will be the best from this point." Road crews ever since have encountered this black gumbo soil during culvert installations and road rehabilitation projects. Over the years, Stony Hill has posed additional challenges, from some of the deepest snow drifts on the road to mudslides and slumps due to solifluction (the slow movement of waterlogged soil due to melted permafrost).

During park road construction, the ARC advanced the road incrementally by first surveying upcoming sections for final location and grade. Those sections were then cleared while previous sections were graded and "completed" with a gravel driving surface. This process required several seasons of work. As the new construction advanced, other work crews spent time maintaining and upgrading previously-built sections. Regarding road construction in areas of permafrost, ARC President James G. Steese wrote: "Opening up frozen ground and completing a standard road in one season is impossible.... It is cheaper and better in the long run to extend operations over several seasons. The final surfacing should not be applied until sub-grade has



Morgan C. Edmunds Collection; Anchorage Museum, Gift of Elizabeth E. Donohoe, B88.12.173



Morgan C. Edmunds Collection; Anchorage Museum, Gift of Elizabeth E. Donohoe, B88.12.190

(Above) ARC grading with horses on Stony Hill, 1931.

ARC crew hand grading on Thorofare Pass (looking east), 1931.

(Opposite page) The view of Mt. McKinley from Stony Hill Overlook. Note the ARC road construction tent camp on Little Stony Creek (right side of photo) and the trail leading from Stony Dome through the center of the photo.

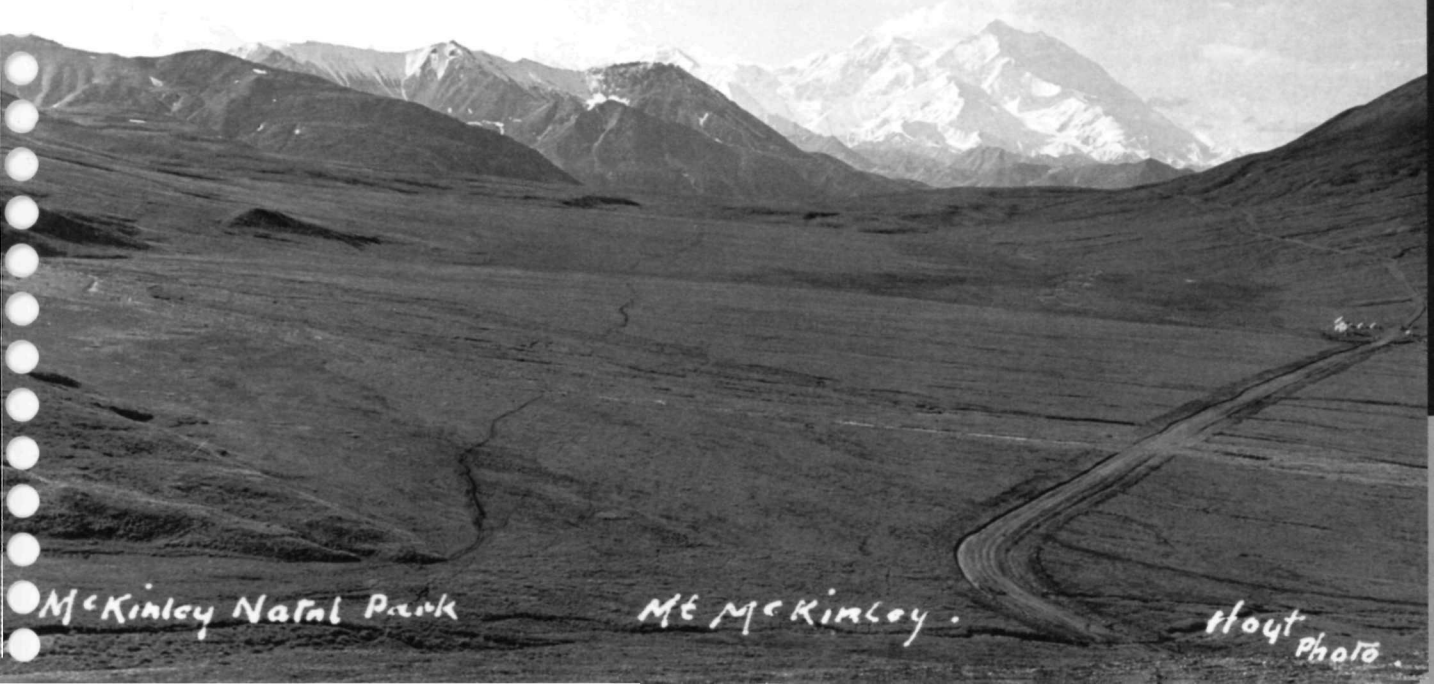
Hoyt Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

thoroughly thawed out, become drained, and stabilized."[3]

Another of the daunting challenges faced by the ARC during park road construction was the remote location of the project. Equipment was often unavailable in Alaska and needed to be shipped from "the States." In 1935 road construction was disrupted when an order of several dump trucks, rock crushing plants, and power graders on board the steamship S.S. *Denali* were lost because the ship struck a reef and sank near Ketchikan. In many cases the ARC had to make due with whatever equipment and supplies were available.

Although the ARC had the primary responsibility for engineering and building the park road, the NPS oversaw some aspects of construction and design. The NPS philosophy guiding road construction was aimed at minimizing the appearance of human activity on the landscape. Acting Director Arno Cammerer voiced the NPS viewpoint: "In our road projects in the parks, we desire to avoid the long straight lines. . . . We believe that the easy curved roadways are particularly charming and pleasing in national park work. . . . Care [should be] taken in clearing for the roadbed by protecting the trees and shrubbery, springs, or beautiful rock formations." Regarding layout of the Mt. McKinley National Park road, Cammerer noted: "Special attention should be given to its location to the best advantages in giving the visitor . . . the best possible views and vistas of the scenery."[4]

The view from Stony Hill certainly delivers all that the NPS road building policy intended. In addition to mountain scenery, it also provides a view of the natural travel corridor between the main Alaska Range to the south and the foothills to the north. This corridor has long been used by wildlife, and in the early 1920s it was selected by the ARC for the park road. The network of trails that extends from the base of Stony Dome to the draw leading down to the Thorofare River was made by the thousands of caribou that have migrated through this corridor over the millennia. Indigenous hunters also traveled this way,





Alaska State Library, Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-2-361

Looking eastward toward Stony Hill and the ARC camp at Little Stony Creek, 1931.

then prospectors and explorers, including Charles Sheldon in 1906. When the MMT&T Co. began taking park visitors by horseback through the park to Copper Mountain (now Mt. Eielson) and beyond, they took the same route, turning an old caribou trail into a horse trail. That well-used trail can still be seen today.

Road history continues with a place name added by the present NPS road maintenance crew. At the west end of Stony Flats (where the ARC tent camp is located in the photo above), the road crosses Little Stony Creek as the climb to Thorofare Pass begins. A large culvert carries water under the road and at the discharge end of the culvert there is a pool which often contains a few grayling. The road crew calls this "Fish Culvert." From 2005 to 2008, during construction of the new Eielson Visitor Center, shuttle buses turned around at this spot, in the footprint of the 1931 ARC camp. "Fish Culvert" became the slightly more poetic "Fish Creek" for the purposes of the bus schedule.[5]

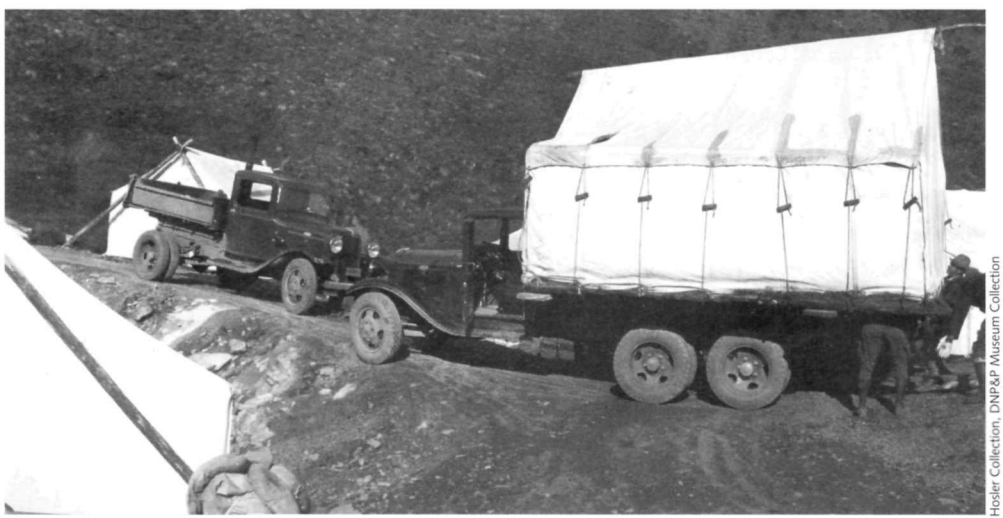
Mile 66

Park road construction reached Mile 66, the current location of Eielson Visitor Center, in September 1932. The combination of easy access and stunning mountain scenery made this an ideal location for tourist facilities. For years there had been mining activity in the Copper Mountain area, a ranger patrol cabin, and the park trail passing nearby. Construction of the road to this point brought not only



Alaska State Library, Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-2-311

Road construction reached Mile 66 (the present site of Eielson Visitor Center) in 1932.



Hosler Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

The ARC moving camp, 1932.



Hosler Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

The ARC established a camp at the inside curve of the road just east of Mile 66.

vehicle access, but also the beginning of many changes at this spectacular site.

During the late 1920s and into the 1930s, road building was a major park development activity. Both tourists and Kantishna miners were anxiously waiting for road access to the western sections of the park. Park planners were also looking ahead to a time when the road would provide access to the Copper Mountain (now Mt. Eielson) area. In 1929, NPS landscape architect Thomas Vint visited the park and investigated several possible hotel sites at the western end of the park road corridor. He selected a site at Mile 66, but interest in that site cooled when the 1932 boundary extension brought scenic Wonder Lake into the park. Attention shifted to construction of the McKinley Park Station hotel in 1937; however, for years afterward, the Wonder Lake area was considered as a potential hotel site.

From the 1920s through the early 1930s, the MMT&T Co. provided horseback trips into the park and maintained an overnight tent camp near the Copper Mountain patrol cabin. After the park road reached Mile 66, the MMT&T Co. moved their temporary camp to that site. For the next several years, they operated a "picnic camp" there. Visitors who toured the park by auto from Savage Camp stopped for lunch





DENA 32-1, DNP&P Museum Collection

Camp Eielson, 1939. Note the telephone tripods left of the road.

at Mile 66 and returned the same day.

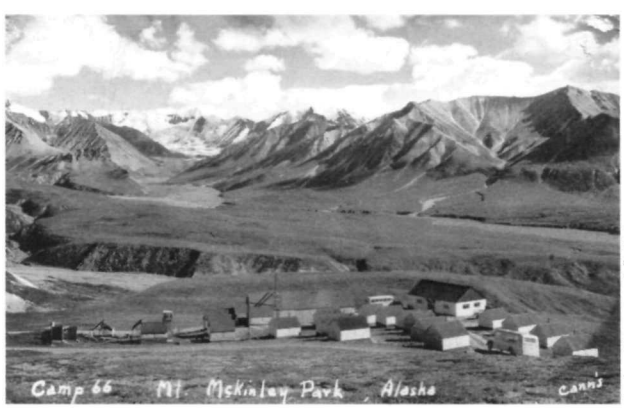
When the new hotel at McKinley Park Station opened in 1939, the MMT&T Co. closed Savage Camp and moved some of its facilities to Camp Eielson at Mile 66, where they began offering overnight accommodations. According to one source in 1940, Camp Eielson was "a comfortable tent hotel with cozy tent sleeping quarters and a large dining tent in charge of one of the best cooks in the Territory." It provided "that touch of primitiveness which visitors enjoy."[6] The MMT&T Co. operated Camp Eielson from 1939 through 1941.

The government-owned Alaska Railroad operated the McKinley Park Hotel near the depot, while the MMT&T Co. ran a privately-owned concession in the park. Congress felt that the park hotel and transportation services should be operated by the same entity, and by 1942 the Alaska Railroad had purchased all of the concessioner's property, ending the long partnership between the NPS and the MMT&T Co.

During World War II, the national parks operated on reduced budgets, and many NPS employees joined the war effort. Mt. McKinley National Park was utilized as a recreation site for military troops. The McKinley Park Hotel was the main facility used by the military, and trips out the park road were offered. Camp Eielson was not commercially operated during the war years, but the military used the facilities on a do-it-yourself basis.

After World War II ended, Camp Eielson was open for

(Right) Camp Eielson, c. 1940.



Candace Waugaman Collection

(Opposite page) Camp Eielson when it was a "picnic camp," late 1930s.

Transportation Museum Collection; Anchorage Museum, B91.23.21



Allan deLay Photo, DNP&P Museum Collection

A military recreation group at Camp Eielson, July 1944.

business during the summers of 1946 through 1948. It did not open in the summer of 1949 because of a lack of funds for needed camp repairs. The overnight camp was not operated again for several reasons, including insufficient funding, limited visitation, and another shift in management from the Alaska Railroad to a new private concessioner. By 1954 the NPS began to dismantle Camp Eielson and started planning for the next period in the evolution of the site.

Eielson Visitor Center

As the park was preparing for an expected increase in private vehicle traffic on the park road due to the opening of the Denali Highway in 1957, a nationwide federal initiative was launched. "Mission 66" was a long-range program for park development, intended to remedy a backlog of maintenance projects and improve park facilities for increased tourism. The plan called for a ten-year effort starting in 1956, and reaching completion on the 50th anniversary of the NPS in 1966. Mt. McKinley National Park was to receive $7.2 million for park road improvements and trails, and $2.5 million for buildings and utilities. Park planners set to work drawing up plans.[7]

Mt. McKinley National Park's Mission 66 Prospectus called for, among other things, construction of four visitor centers, one near the park entrance and one at Wonder Lake. The other two centers were to be interpretive



Oscar Dick Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

Camp Eielson, 1947.



DENA 39-8, DNP&P Museum Collection

Site preparation for Eielson Visitor Center, a Mission 66 project, 1957.

centers only, including one at Mile 66. Because the old Camp Eielson location offered such a superb view of Mt. McKinley and was the turnaround point of the bus tours, it was designated an interpretive site with limited visitor services. Of the four planned visitor centers, Eielson was the only one to actually be built. The 1957 planning document made it clear that the facility was not intended to be a complete visitor center, but a smaller facility housing an exhibit area, restrooms, and employee accommodations.[8]

The NPS Western Office of Design and Construction drafted plans for a small, compact building constructed with modern materials. It included an interpretive room with two massive window walls, an information desk, an office, a small multi-use room, restrooms and a basement apartment. J.B. Warrack, an Anchorage company, started construction in the summer of 1958. The completed visitor center opened to the public on July 28, 1960 and was formally dedicated on July 15, 1961.

The focal point of the new visitor center was the main observation room. Two walls of windows provided expansive views of the Muldrow Glacier, the Thorofare River Valley, and the surrounding mountains, including Mt. McKinley. There were a few exhibits, a spotting scope, and an information desk staffed by NPS ranger naturalists who also provided interpretive talks for visitors. The daily schedule revolved around groups of visitors who arrived by concession tour bus, staying only a short time.

By the second year of operation, the multi-use room, which served as a lunchroom, proved to be too small and visitors overflowed into the observation room, causing concern for the exhibits. In addition, the facility's septic system was strained by the numbers of visitors. The pressures of increased visitation were compounded by the completion of the George Parks Highway in 1972, which brought far more visitors to the park. In response, the NPS instituted a building expansion project in 1975, doubling the size of the facility.[9] Restrooms were expanded, a wrap-around galleria was built, and a covered outdoor viewing platform was added. The entryway was altered, and new exhibits were installed.

In 1978 the original visitor center multi-use room was dedicated to the late Joe Hankins, with a plaque honoring the longtime park supporter. This space later became a retail sales area for the Alaska Natural History Association (now Alaska Geographic). Park-related items such as books, maps, and postcards were offered for sale to park visitors.

The expanded Eielson Visitor Center in 1981.

R&RP Files, NPS, DNP&P Museum Collection





DENA 5-17, DNP&P Museum Collection

Eielson Visitor Center under construction in September 1959.



DENA 5-29, DNP&P Museum Collection

Eielson Visitor Center on the day it was dedicated, July 15, 1961.



DENA 5-33, DNP&P Museum Collection

Eielson Visitor Center's viewing windows were on the main floor. An apartment for on-site employees was at ground level, and a small shed housed the power generator, 1966.



DENA 5-45, DNP&P Museum Collection

Visitors could often spot wildlife from the Eielson Visitor Center observation room, pictured here in 1967.


BLUE BIRD



Zachary Price Photo, DNP&P Museum Collection

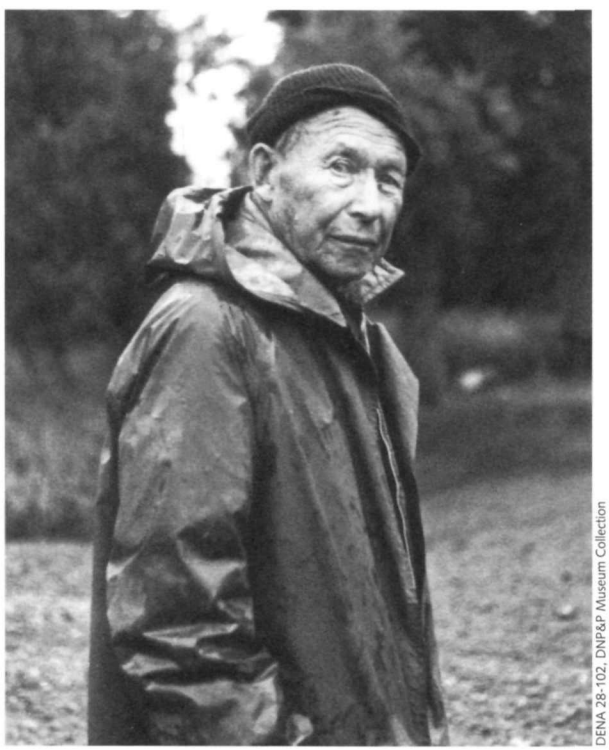
Joe Hankins

Joe Hankins was a retired logger who spent every summer from the mid-1950s through 1971 in Mt. McKinley National Park. Joe drove his old panel truck to Alaska every year and camped at Igloo Creek Campground. When the weather was good, he would get up at 3 a.m. and make the hike to what he called "Ram Country" to watch and photograph his favorite wildlife, the Dall sheep. He often took friends with him.

On other days he would board a tour bus at Igloo Creek cabin and regale visitors with his wildlife stories. He showed them photographs taken with his trusty Leica camera, and the bus drivers would give him extra box lunches from their buses. He loved simply being in the park.

A self-appointed naturalist, he did much to open the eyes and hearts of countless park visitors to Mt. McKinley's beauty. "He was one of the most eloquent interpreters McKinley will ever have," a friend recalled. Well-read and fluent in several languages, he kept in touch with hundreds of the people he met. He became so well known that a letter addressed to "Joe, McKinley Park" would reach him.

The 82-year-old bachelor died in Chehalis, Washington on October 9, 1975. "Old Joe" willed his entire estate to the National Park Foundation, one of the largest personal donations ever received, to be used to make parks more meaningful to visitors.



DENA 28-102, DNP&P Museum Collection

(Opposite page) Shown here in 1960, Joe enthralled visitors when he rode their tour bus and shared his knowledge of the wildlife.

(Left) Joe Hankins, 1970s.

New Eielson Visitor Center

Other minor revisions to the facility were made in 1995, including an interior rehabilitation and new exhibits. However, increasing visitation to the Eielson Visitor Center placed greater demands on the aging facility. Replacing it with a new visitor center would allow the park to continue to provide a quality visitor experience. The original Eielson Visitor Center's doors closed for the last time on September 20, 2004.

Before Eielson Visitor Center could be replaced it had to be evaluated for its historic significance, including eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. While the visitor center was an example of a Mission 66 project, it was not the work of a master architect. The original building had been significantly altered, and it lacked the higher standard of historical integrity required for a building less than 50 years old. Park staff, working with the State Historic Preservation Office, determined that the visitor center did not meet the requirements for eligibility. It was determined, however, that the *site* of the visitor center was eligible for the national register due to its long history of providing visitor services and an enhanced visitor experience.

It took three full summers, from 2005 through 2007, to demolish the old visitor center, prepare the site, and build the new facility on the same site. The second Eielson Visitor Center opened to the public on June 8, 2008, and was formally dedicated on August 12. The structure provides 7,422 square feet of space, including larger restrooms, a designated eating area, and interpretive program space with new exhibits. Based on sustainable building practices, use of recycled materials, and utilization of renewable energy, it has received platinum certification under the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating system of the U.S. Green Building Council.

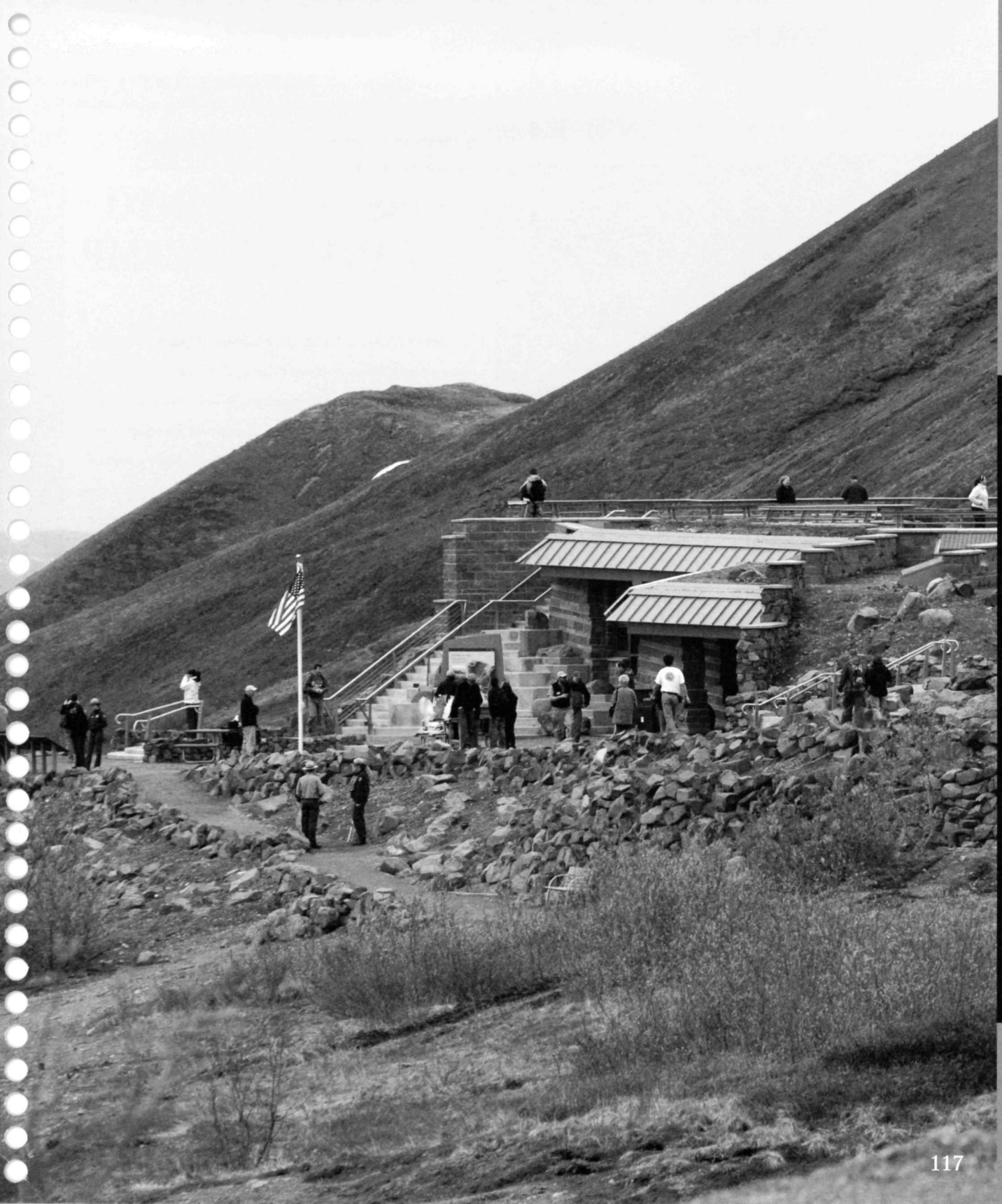
(Opposite page) Opening day for the new Eielson Visitor Center, June 8, 2008.

Kent Miller Photo, NPS, DNP&P

(Below) The second Eielson Visitor Center under construction, 2006.



NPS Photo, DNP&P



Toklat River to Eielson Visitor Center



Vertical File, 67-44-3, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Pioneer Aviator Carl Ben Eielson

Aviation history at Mt. McKinley National Park was made on June 17, 1924, when pilot Carl Ben Eielson made the first aircraft landing in the park. He transported Jack Tobin, a miner, to the Copper Mountain mining district and landed on a gravel bar known as the Copper Mountain Bar.

A pioneer aviator, Eielson proved the feasibility of using aircraft in the north. He obtained the first commercial contract in Alaska to deliver mail by air in 1924, and regularly flew passengers and supplies to remote locations. In 1929 Eielson was killed when his plane crashed during a rescue flight to the coast of Siberia. He was 32 years old. In 1930, the U.S. Congress officially changed the name of Copper Mountain to Mount Eielson in his honor.

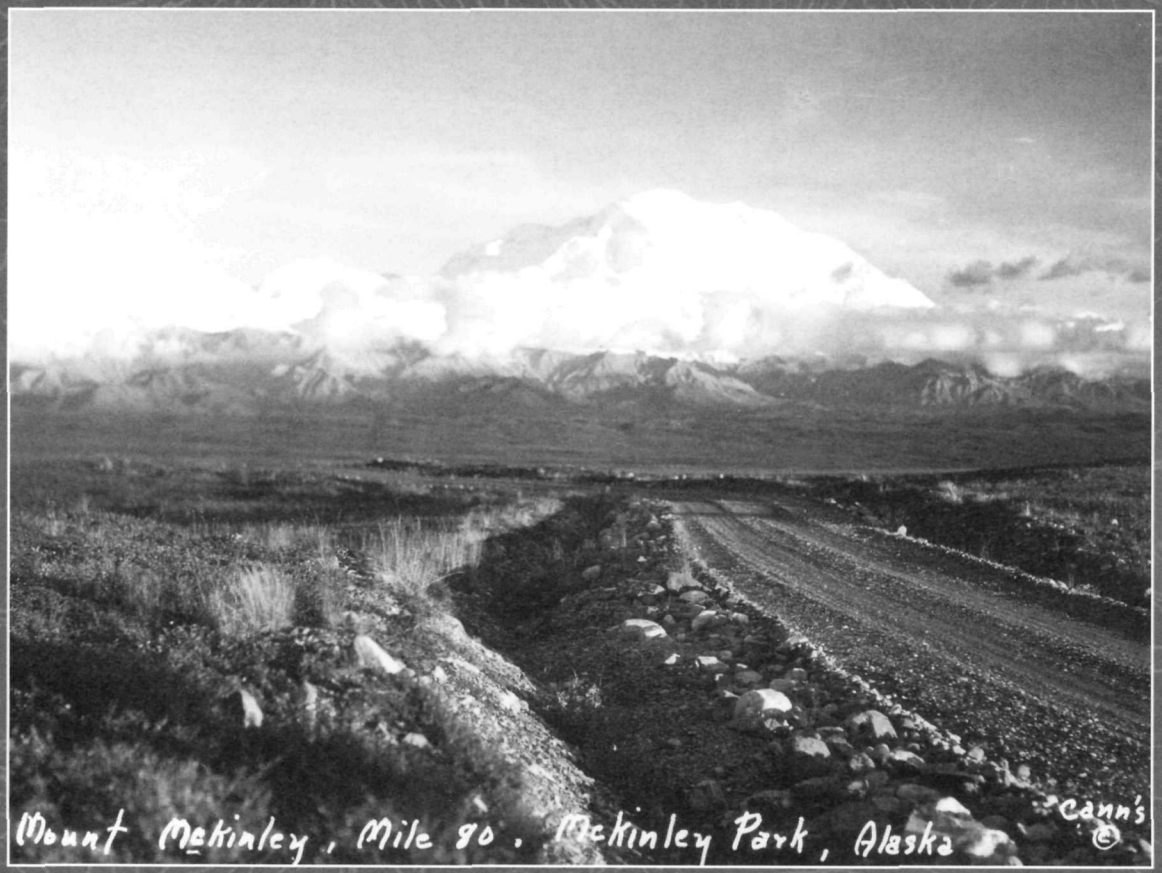
FAIRBANKS DAILY NEWS-MINER, JUNE 19, 1924

EIELSON CARRIES PASSENGERS INTO KANTISHNA CAMP

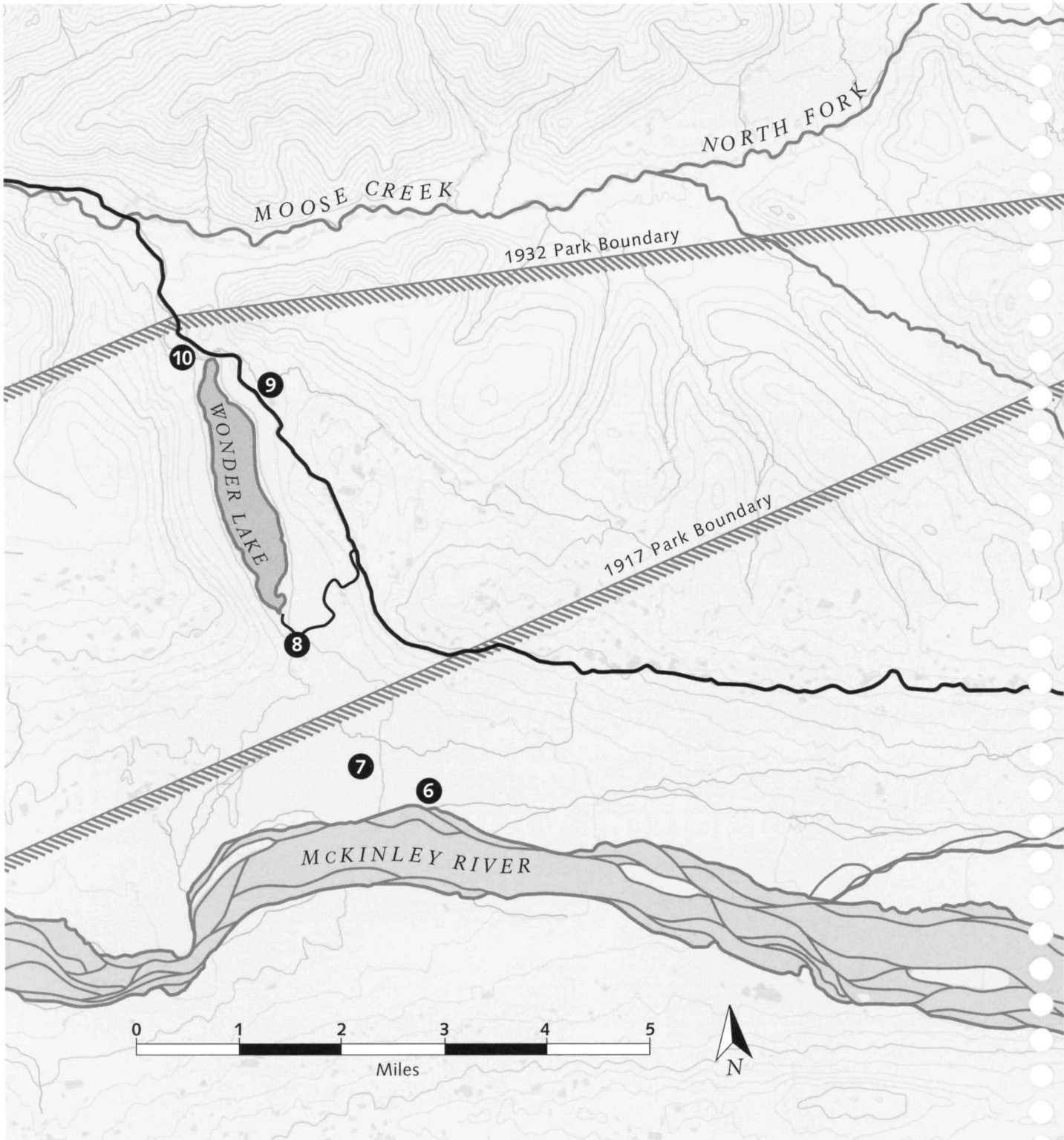
Ben Eielson, piloting the Rodebaugh plane, Tuesday opened up another Interior mining district to commercial flight when he landed a passenger, Jack Tobin, Kantishna miner, within 200 yards of his cabin door. The flight was made "in the dead of night," with the sun shining part of the time.

The plane took off from Week's Field here at 7:30 p. m., and the landing was made at the base of Copper mountain at 9:15, the flight requiring one and three-quarters hours, whereas by the usual mode of travel days of laborious tramping over the hills would have been required to complete the journey. Eielson did not fly to the field which had been prepared near the Quigley properties, but traveled direct to Copper Mountain, which saved his passenger a tramp of about fifteen miles and gave the pilot an opportunity to look over the ground there, as he is expecting to take two more passengers into that country within a week. Leaving some emergency gasoline he started back at 10:35 o'clock, and landed on the home field at 1:00 a. m.

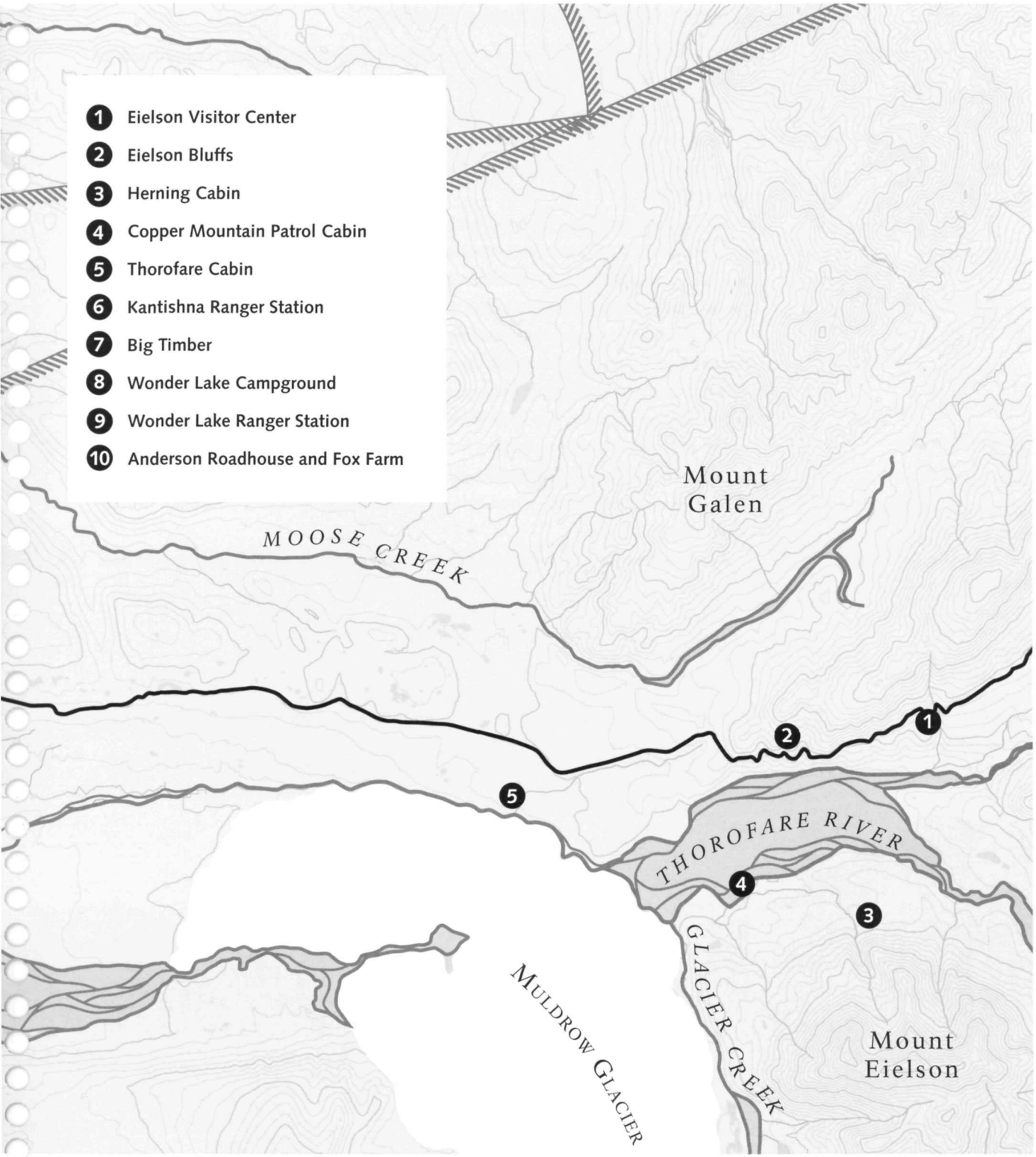
Eielson says the midnight trip was made through the prettiest country he has ever traversed. He flew at an elevation of 3,500 feet, with mountains on all sides of him that towered far above. Ridges and canyons, peaks and valleys were all bathed in the light of the low midnight sun.



Eielson Visitor Center
to
Kantishna



Previous page: George Keers Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection


1 Eielson Visitor Center
2 Eielson Bluffs
3 Herning Cabin
4 Copper Mountain Patrol Cabin
5 Thorofare Cabin
6 Kantishna Ranger Station
7 Big Timber
8 Wonder Lake Campground
9 Wonder Lake Ranger Station
10 Anderson Roadhouse and Fox Farm
Mount Galen
MOOSE CREEK
THOROFARE RIVER
GLACIER CREEK
MULDROW GLACIER
Mount Eielson

Copper Mountain Mining District

The view from Eielson Visitor Center toward Mt. Eielson reveals evidence of another chapter in park history. On the wide bench between the river bar and the steep north slope of Mt. Eielson, a cabin can be seen with binoculars. The Herning cabin, now crumbling to ruins, is a reminder of the mining activity that took place in the area, beginning in the 1920s and continuing into the 1970s.

About the time Harry Karstens became the park's first superintendent and well before the park road was constructed, a small mining district was established at the base of Copper Mountain, officially renamed Mt. Eielson in 1930. After World War I, a resurgence in mining activity began in many parts of Alaska, including the Kantishna region. Prospectors fanned out to many sections of the park in search of new mineral deposits, since park regulations allowed mining in the park. In addition, prospectors and miners were permitted by law to harvest game inside the park for their own needs, but not for feeding their dogs. In 1928 the law was changed to prohibit hunting in the park.

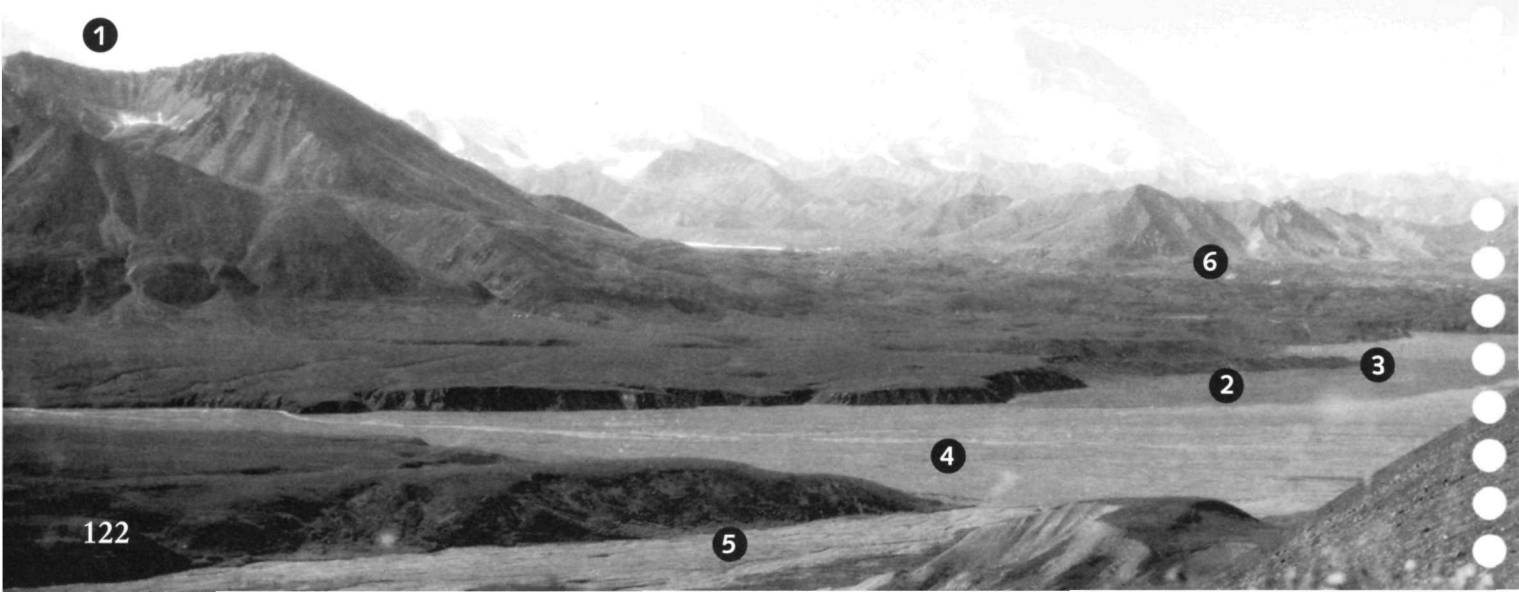
Joe and Fannie Quigley, pioneers from the Kantishna district about 25 miles away, investigated the Copper Mountain area, and were the first to stake claims there in 1920. These promising lead, silver, zinc and copper lode claims set off a small rush of prospectors to the area.

The Quigleys staked four claims, and later that year Bigelow and Perry staked two

View of Copper Mountain (now Mt. Eielson), Mt. McKinley and the Thorofare River, 1931.

J. C. Reed Collection, USGS

1 Copper Mountain
2 Copper Mountain Bar
3 Copper Mountain Patrol Cabin
4 Thorofare River
5 Gorge Creek
6 Muldrow Glacier





Hoyt Collection, Anchorage Museum, 894.22.188

Copper Mountain mining camp and the Grant cabin (left) in 1922.

more. In August 1921, Owen M. "Red" Grant and Frank B. Jiles staked 23 claims. That November, Grant and his partners freighted logs to Copper Mountain for building and mining, and continued to haul supplies and materials from Kantishna through most of the winter.[1] They built a cabin on Grant's "Snowdrift" claim in early 1922, and a mining camp of wall tents surrounded it. John A. Davis, superintendent of the Alaska Experiment Station for the U.S. Bureau of Mines in Fairbanks, reported that by the fall of 1922, the miners had hauled several tons of coal for their above-timberline camp, from an outcrop on Boundary Creek eight or nine miles to the north.

Harry Karstens described the activity in late summer 1922: "There has been considerable more good bodies of ore located around Copper Mountain; if they continue to develop as good as surface showings, [it] will develop into a large size camp." By fall there was an estimate of "about 50 claims." Most of the prospectors were going to Copper Mountain by way of Kantishna.[2]



DENA 11236, DNP&P Museum Collection

O.M. Grant's cabin at the base of Copper Mountain, c. 1926. Note the large earthen berms (piled up dirt, sod and rocks) around the base of the cabin and the heavy chinking on the exterior walls. Today, these berms are the only evidence of the Grant cabin. The Herning cabin, which is still standing, was built in front of the remains of this cabin.

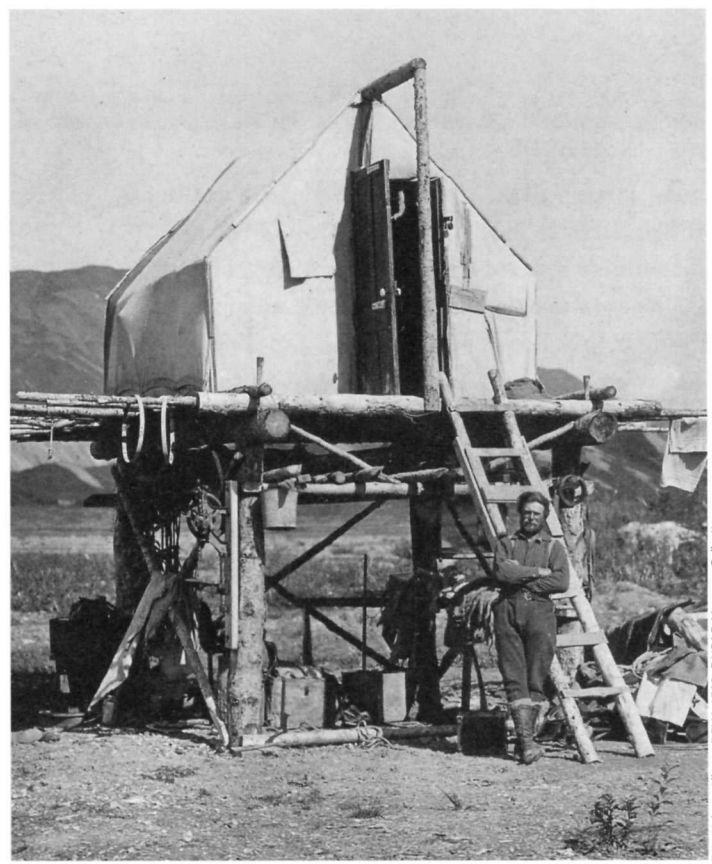
Wesley Earl Dunkle

Earl Dunkle, a field exploration engineer for Kennecott Copper Corporation, traveled by dog team to Copper Mountain in the spring of 1923. He returned in June with horses, and he and O.M. Grant made a reconnaissance trip as far west as Slippery Creek. In early July Dunkle needed to be in Anchorage, and had planned to catch a scheduled Tuesday southbound train at McKinley Park Station. On Monday afternoon Dunkle worried that he wouldn't be able to make the 60-mile hike in time to catch the train, so he decided to attempt an unfamiliar route that would be about 15 miles shorter. The route led up the eastern edge of the Muldrow Glacier, over Anderson Pass, and down the West Fork of the Chulitna River to the railroad stop at Colorado Station. First, Dunkle had to figure out which pass was Anderson; he had no map, and the pass was difficult to distinguish.

Once across the pass and on the West Fork Glacier, Dunkle had to "broad jump" over a crevasse on his route. Then he found the West Fork of the Chulitna River in flood stage, and needed to cross it six times. He considered himself to be in real danger only on the first crossing! He reached Colorado Station on time but then waited several hours for the train because it was late. Interestingly, Dunkle would later fly over this route many times, piloting his airplane between mining properties at Slippery Creek on the north side of the Alaska Range, and the Golden Zone Mine on the south side.[3]

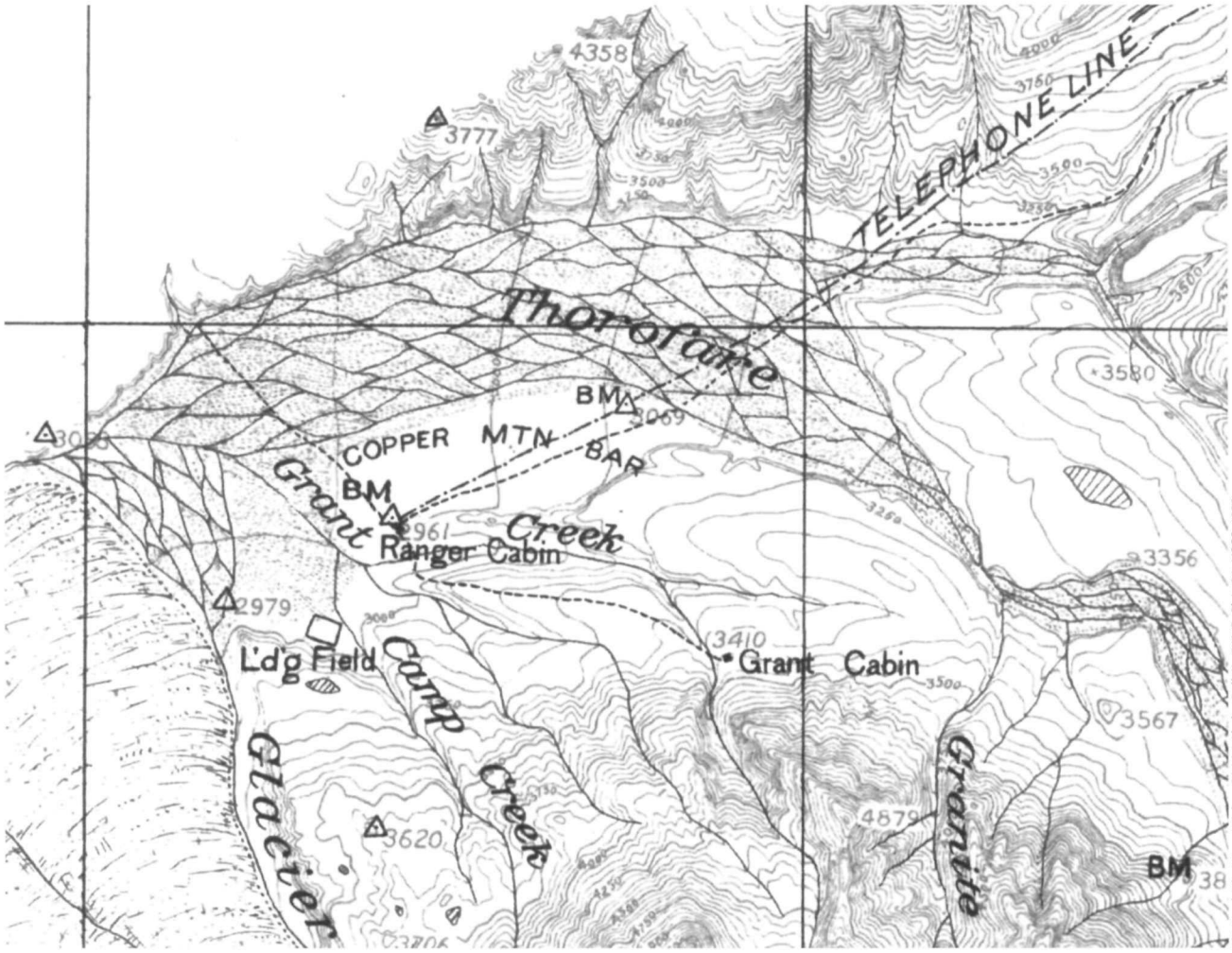
In March 1922 Grant & Jiles leased their claims to Thomas Aitken, who subleased a number of claims to the Kennecott Copper Corporation in June 1923.[4] It was hoped that this large mining company would finance development of the district. Under the direction of Wesley Earl Dunkle, geologist and field exploration engineer, the Kennecott Copper Corporation explored the property and drove at least one 100-foot tunnel on the Jiles claim. Dunkle concluded that the minerals were too far from the Alaska Railroad to be developed, and they dropped their lease. In 1925 Aitken's leased claims reverted back to O.M. Grant.

The Copper Mountain mining district consisted of lode claims along mineralized veins running underground and visible at outcrops. They were worked by digging tunnels or open pits to follow the veins. This method of mining was more arduous and costly than pick-and-shovel placer mining. Geologists evaluating the district reported that Copper Mountain showed extensive



Fritz Nyberg Album, DENA 1500, DNP&P Museum Collection

Prospector Ed Jern at his cache on the Copper Mountain Bar, c. 1923.



The first detailed map of the Mt. Eielson area was produced by the U.S. Geological Survey in 1931. Note the location of the "Copper Mountain Bar."

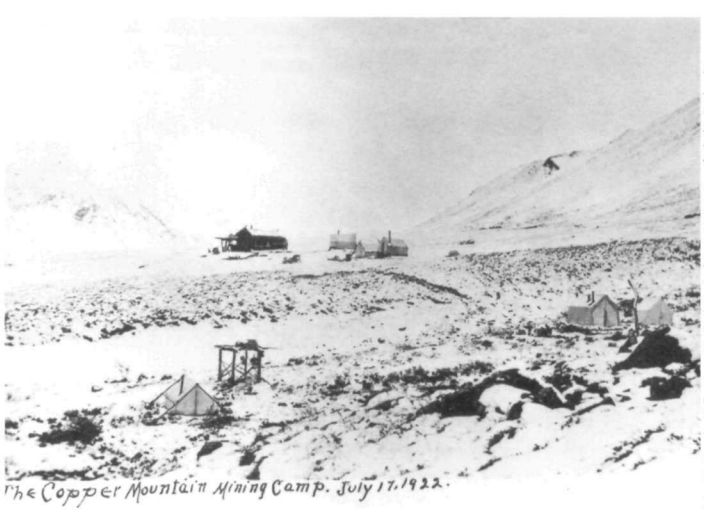
mineralization, but development work was needed to determine if there was sufficient ore of high enough quality to make mining profitable. Transportation of ore to the Alaska Railroad for shipment was the major hurdle. There was no road yet and no navigable waterway for transportation; access was by dog team in winter and by horse or on foot in the summer. Even after the park road reached Mile 66, there was still no year-round access capable of handling large and frequent ore shipments. The area could be reached by airplane, as Eielson had demonstrated in 1924, but ore transport by air was not economically feasible.

Earl Pilgrim, a mining engineer from the Department of Mines in Fairbanks and the man who later developed the Stampede Mine about 25 miles north of Copper Mountain, first visited the district in 1923. He held seven claims there and returned nearly every year through 1929. Pilgrim took 1,200 pounds of samples from more than 25 outcrops at Copper Mountain to the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines in Fairbanks where "a considerable



J.C. Reed Collection, 31AR174, USGS

U.S. Geological Survey topographer S.N. Stoner (right) and his assistant Abe Shallit mapping near Mt. Eielson, 1931.



John M. Brooks Collection, 68-32-313, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

A summer snowstorm at the Copper Mountain camp was documented in this photograph taken on July 17, 1922.

amount of work [was] done in laboratory tests." Pilgrim's 1930 report stated, "Plenty of evidence is present in this area of an extensive mineralization which is worthy of further work. The low grade character of the ores and their low content of the precious metals will not permit their being worked, even if large deposits are found, without a railroad."[5]

In 1931 the U.S. Geological Survey received funding from the Alaska Railroad to investigate the mineral potential of several mining districts that could be developed to produce tonnage for railroad shipment. Geologist John C. Reed, topographer S.N. Stoner, and their survey party spent nearly three months mapping and studying the Mt. Eielson district as part of this project. Their summary report states:

Very little development work has been done in the

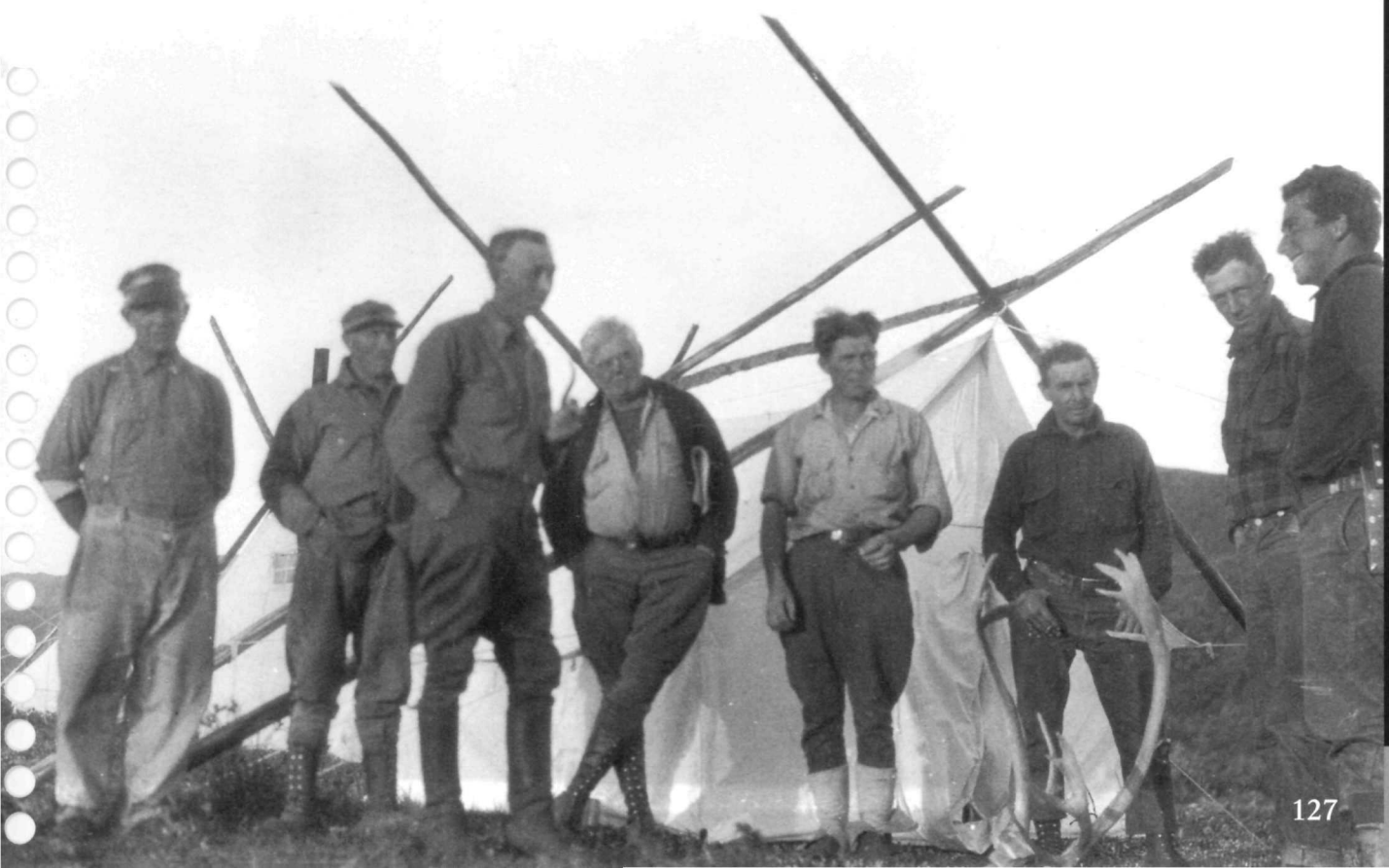
district, and, since much of the potentially valuable ground is beneath a cover of postmineral deposits, the most urgent need is for more systematic prospecting. Assays showed a reserve of many hundreds of thousands of tons of zinc and lead bearing material.... The ore could be developed but some conditions are not favorable.... It seems doubtful that a successful mining enterprise could be carried on at Mount Eielson under the existing prices of metals and the adverse transportation conditions, although it is entirely possible that with changed conditions profitable operations could be instituted there.[6]

O.M. Grant, the district's most persistent prospector-miner since 1921, continued to do the required yearly assessment work on claims at Copper Mountain. In 1942 he secured the interest of a Canadian mining development company and the prospects were optimistically examined, but after 1945 the company had no further involvement in the claims. Starting as early as the 1920s, tourists and geologists passing through the park referred to Grant as the knowledgeable and hospitable "tour guide" of the Copper Mountain district.

O.M. Grant sold his claims to Harold Herning in 1945. Herning had worked in Mt. McKinley National Park as a ranger and caretaker of the dog kennels in the late 1930s. He was one of the "bachelor rangers" who lived in the Ranger Club (today's headquarters building). He met his

Geologist John C. Reed identified the men gathered in this 1931 photograph as "Gus, cook, O.M. Grant, prospector, Lou Corbley, ranger, Stoner, topographer, Grant Pearson, ranger, Arch Sisley, packer, Slim Sisley, packer, and Abe Shallit, recorder, at camp on the Copper Mountain Bar."

J. C. Reed Collection, 31AR154, USGS



future wife, Beatrice, at the park, the daughter of the CCC supervisor. Herning left the NPS to pursue mining, aircraft maintenance, and construction elsewhere in Alaska.

In 1954 Herning built a cabin in Fairbanks, took it apart, and hauled it to his claims on Mt. Eielson by "improving the old [ARC] road from the [park road] to the Thorofare River gravel flats." (This ARC access "road" down the creek east of Mile 66 was used to reach the Thorofare River during road construction.)[7] Herning reassembled the cabin directly in front of the remains of O.M. Grant's cabin. It served as a base camp for Herning and his family during annual work on their claims for more than 20 years.

By the 1960s and 1970s, mining activity in the park had declined and was increasingly viewed by environmental groups as incompatible with park values. During the early 1970s, several mining legislation proposals were formulated, culminating in passage of the Mining in the Parks Act in September 1976. The act stopped all new mineral entry within Mt. McKinley National Park and imposed a four-year moratorium on further surface disturbance. In addition, it called for validity studies of mining claims in the park, to be completed by September 1978. Recommendations would then be made regarding government purchase of mining claims.

To implement this legislation, NPS geologists examined every mining claim in the park and concluded in October 1978 that there were no claims within the park which showed minerals of the quantity, quality, and potential value to be considered "valid." Herning's 13 claims at Mt. Eielson were included in this determination. Herning disputed the assessment, and after multiple hearings, the claims were determined to be invalid. Herning did not appeal the final decision, and the case was closed in 1983. So ended more than a half century of persistent and dogged mining efforts

A tourist party visiting the Copper Mountain mining camp at O.M. Grant's cabin, 1925.

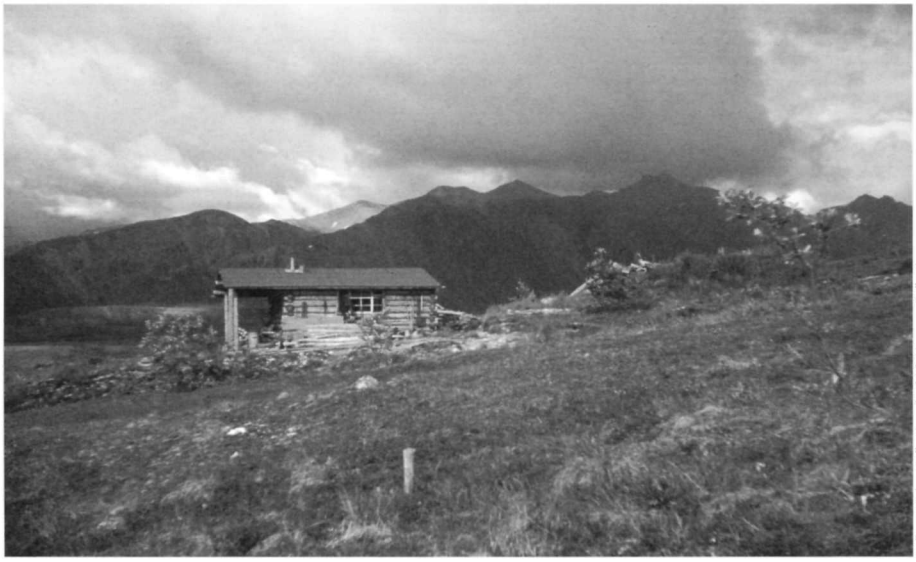


Transportation Museum Collection, Anchorage Museum, B91.23.25

at Mt. Eielson.[8]

In total, miners conducted very little development work in the Mt. Eielson district. In addition to several small adits on the Jiles claim, there were between 200 and 250 small prospect pits and open cuts. There was no production from the district and no claims were patented.

Today the Grant cabin foundation berm, a few tent frame foundation berms, water pipes, a ditch, and the deteriorating Herning cabin are visual reminders of the continuous use of this site from 1920 to the late 1970s by prospectors who believed in the potential of mineral resources at Mt. Eielson. As those independent individuals toiled at Mt. Eielson — developing their claims, completing their yearly assessment work, and cooking their meals — they must have paused now and again to enjoy the view of the highest mountain in North America.



William Weber Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

The Herning cabin is shown here in 1956, two years after it was built. The berm and old logs directly behind the cabin are the remains of O.M. Grant's cabin. A claim corner stake can be seen in the foreground.



NPS Photo, Cultural Resources files, DNP&P

The Herning cabin, pictured here in August 2003, illustrates the demise of a natural wood structure over nearly 50 years.

Copper Mountain Patrol Cabin

The main trail through the park, flagged by the ARC in 1922, passed along the Thorofare River and the Copper Mountain Bar (below the present Eielson Visitor Center). Park rangers who used the trail soon found the need for shelters along the route to facilitate their patrols.

A November 1927 ranger report clearly states the situation:

There was four inches of snow during the month making about ten inches on the level. About two thirds of the month was bitter cold being about thirty-five to forty below towards the last of the month. The winds in the canyons and passes were very penetrating. Streams were overflowing and glaciering up very rapidly. During the coldest weather the dogs had to travel through water which was very hard on the dog's feet during the cold weather. The relief tent at East Fork is all surrounded by overflow ice. The new cabin at Toklat and the dog houses made this stretch of freighting much less disagreeable than heretofore. If there were several more of these cabins along the trails and along the boundary, patrol work could be carried out much more effectively. It is not fair to the rangers to ask them to patrol in the cold weather and get wet in the overflows and then have to spend the night out in the open under a spruce tree. Especially as they travel alone it is too dangerous to ask any man to do. This month Ranger Pearson was caught in a blizzard in the Copper Mountain basin with the nearest cabin or shelter of any kind 17 miles away. There was no timber in the basin for wood to make a fire and he had to double back 17 miles to the Toklat cabin, arriving late at night. It is important that there should be a cabin at Copper Mountain.

Chief Ranger Fritz Nyberg,
November 1927[9]

An additional purpose for having a ranger cabin as a base camp in the Copper Mountain area was to better enable the rangers to keep an eye on the prospectors and miners there, monitoring their hunting and wood cutting activities in the park. Rangers had already built a patrol cabin along the McKinley River in 1926, called the Kantishna Ranger Station. In 1927 the Toklat ranger cabin (now called the Pearson cabin) was built, and in 1928 rangers began building a cabin on the Copper Mountain Bar.

The Copper Mountain patrol cabin was built at a site that



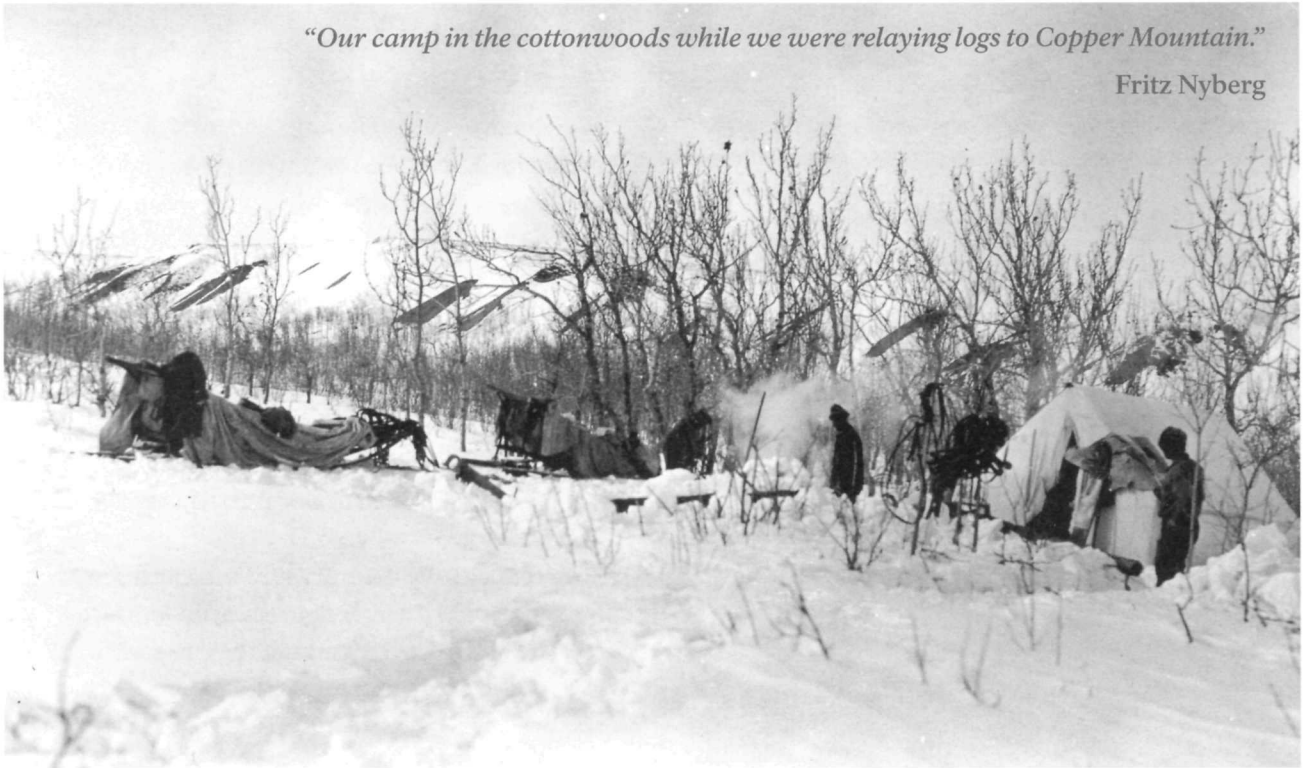
NPS Photo, Cultural Resource files, DNP&P

The circle indicates where the Copper Mountain patrol cabin once stood. A cluster of willows now grows on the site.



"Logging near Mt. McKinley."
Fritz Nyberg

(Above and Below) Nyberg Photo, Joseph Dixon Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection



"Our camp in the cottonwoods while we were relaying logs to Copper Mountain."
Fritz Nyberg

"Coming up along Muldrow Glacier with load of cabin logs for Copper Mountain."
Fritz Nyberg

Nyberg Photo, Joseph Dixon Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

The Copper Mountain ranger patrol cabin and cache, 1930. The cache (right) kept supplies safe from wildlife and inclement weather.



DENA 3975, DNP&P Museum Collection

can be seen by looking from the Eielson Visitor Center toward Mt. Eielson. Look across the wide gravel bar of the Thorofare River to the edge of the vegetated bench on the south side of the river. Follow the top edge of that bench toward the west (downstream to the right) to where it becomes a long, undulating ridge that gradually descends to a point, on what was called the Copper Mountain Bar. Off the end of that point and 50 yards toward the Thorofare River is the site where the Copper Mountain patrol cabin once stood. The cabin has disappeared, swallowed by glacial gravel and silt from the Thorofare River.

According to the February 1928 Superintendent's Monthly Report, "Ranger Pearson cut the logs for a relief cabin at Copper Mountain. These logs will have to be hauled twenty miles by dog team. Firewood must also be hauled by dog team. Copper Mountain is from 17 to 20 miles from timberline. Freighting the logs and



Clyde Wahrhaftig Collection, #37, USGS

This 1943 photograph shows the extent of the vegetated gravel bar where the Copper Mountain patrol cabin was built. Log dog houses had been added to the site and firewood was stacked in a "teepee" formation for drying.

poles for this cabin will take three men nearly a month." As shown by the photographic record, the logs were probably cut along the McKinley River, in an area called Big Timber. The cabin logs were freighted by dog team up the McKinley River, through the Thorofare River Gorge (along the edge of the Muldrow Glacier), to the building site on the Copper Mountain Bar.

Rangers continued hauling logs to the Copper Mountain cabin site through the early spring, and in June, Fritz Nyberg and Grant Pearson constructed the cabin. The one-room structure was 10 ft. x 12 ft., with log walls and a plank floor. Each wall contained a window, and a plank door opened onto a porch with a 6-foot overhanging roof.

This strategically-located shelter cabin served more than rangers. Other travelers along the park trail between McKinley Park Station and Kantishna used the cabin, including tourists, geologists, and mine inspectors. The

A U.S. Geological Survey party camped for nearly three months at the Copper Mountain patrol cabin in 1931. Their white wall tents can be seen adjacent to the darker-colored MMT&T Co. wall tents near the cabin.[10]



J.C. Reed Collection, 31AR155, USGS



Leslie Viereck Collection, LV-58-A-105, DNP&P Museum Collection

(Above) When Les Viereck arrived at the Copper Mountain cabin in 1958, planning to stay there while he conducted vegetation studies, he found that the Thorofare River had changed its course and was running through the area, depositing silt and gravel in and around the cabin. Viereck was unable to use the cabin because the door would not close.



DENA 6-48, DNP&P Museum Collection

In 1966 the cabin was mostly filled with Thorofare River gravel and silt. The cache, behind the cabin, had fallen down and was also being covered with gravel.

MMT&T Co. established a wall-tent camp nearby as an overnight accommodation for park visitors on guided horseback trips.

When the glacially-fed Thorofare River changed its course from the north side of its wide gravel bar to the south side, it began to deposit silt and gravel in the area of the cabin. A visitor to the site in 1955 reported that periodic flooding had deposited silt against the base of the cabin. The dog houses were still usable, although the cache had fallen down. By 1958, the cabin was filled with a layer of gravel and silt, and the door would not close. In 1979 only the roof remained above the river bar. At that time, park rangers again decided that a shelter cabin was needed along the winter trail between Toklat and Wonder Lake. A few remaining pieces of the old Copper Mountain cabin were salvaged to be incorporated into a new cabin.

Thorofare Cabin

NPS staff built the new cabin at park headquarters, disassembled it, and reassembled it in its new location at Government Draw in 1979. Government Draw is a wide gully at the mouth of a small tributary creek feeding into the Thorofare River. The drainage originates near the park road just west of the Eielson Bluffs, flows past the 70-mile gravel pit, and enters the river in the Thorofare Gorge, along the edge of the Muldrow Glacier. The Thorofare cabin is perched near the top of the gully and is not visible from the road. Today, it is reached in summer by a short trail from the 70-mile gravel pit and in winter by the dog sled trail through the Thorofare Gorge.

By 2005, the only remaining structure from the Copper Mountain cabin was a portion of the cache roof.



NPS Photo, Cultural Resources, DNP&P



NPS Photo, Cultural Resources, DNP&P

The new Thorofare cabin and its builders, shortly after completion, 1979.



NPS Photo, DNP&P

Thorofare cabin in winter, with Mt. McKinley in the background. It is used primarily as a winter shelter cabin for dog sled travelers.



George Keers Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

View from Eielson Bluffs, looking toward Mt. McKinley.



DENA 25-0.5, DNP&P Museum Collection

Eielson Bluffs

West of Eielson Visitor Center is a section of road referred to as the "Eielson Bluffs." In 1933, ARC crews tackled the job of cutting the park road into the side of the bluffs. That season M.C. Edmunds, ARC Superintendent of Roads, established two road construction camps, one at Mile 66 and the other at Mile 72. By the end of September the Mile 66 crew had made a passable road for about two and a half miles, and had reached the first "big canyon where either a bridge or a fill [would] have to be constructed before they [could] start on the heavy

ARC crews constructing the road across Eielson Bluffs in 1933.

rock work." The Mile 72 crew had been stripping vegetation and ditching, but by the end of September, deep snow and freezing tundra halted their work.[11]

Road construction began again in May 1934 when a crew of 22 men was stationed at Mile 66 to continue with the rock work and fill on Eielson Bluffs. By the end of August, two and a half miles of road were widened to Mile 69, two and a half miles were surfaced from Mile 70 to Mile 72.5, and four miles were stripped and partly graded from Mile 76 to Mile 80, in addition to other routine road maintenance work. Dry, warm weather in September allowed the ARC to work later in the season than usual, bringing the total number of completed road miles to 72.5.



DENA 25-0.4, DNP&P Museum Collection

Road construction on Eielson Bluffs, 1934.

Until the road was built on Eielson Bluffs, all travelers followed the trail on the river bar below the road. Today's winter trail still follows the old river bar route. West of the gravel bar is the lower portion of the Muldrow Glacier, which blocks the continuation of the Thorofare River Valley and forces the river into a narrow gorge between the side of the glacier and the bench of land to the north. The traditional travel route descends through that gorge to the McKinley River Bar.

The Eielson Bluffs road pullouts are good places to view the site once occupied by the Copper Mountain patrol cabin. At the west end of the Eielson Bluffs, the road turns away from the bluff edge at what is called "Grassy Pass." Here the character of the scenery changes dramatically as the road winds along on moraines of the Muldrow Glacier. After a mile or two, there are good views of the stagnant snout of the Muldrow Glacier to the south. This inactive portion of the glacier has an uneven surface of little hills and depressions, so deeply covered with soil, rocks and vegetation that it is hard to see the ice underneath unless a fracture or slump has revealed it.

After the Klondike gold discoveries sparked a search for gold in Alaska in the late 1890s, the U.S. Geological Survey was directed to explore and map more of Alaska's interior. In 1898, an expedition led by geologist George Eldridge and assisted by topographer Robert Muldrow mapped the Susitna River and reached as far inland as the Nenana River. They documented the large pass on the south side of the Alaska Range that we use today, Broad Pass. Robert Muldrow made the first professional triangulations of Mt. McKinley and confirmed its height to be over 20,000 feet. Four years later, Alfred H. Brooks named the largest glacier on the north side of Mt. McKinley in honor of Robert Muldrow. The Eldridge Glacier, on the south side of the Alaska Range, was named for George Eldridge.[12]

Today there is a gravel pit on the left side of the road at Mile 70, used by the NPS for road maintenance projects in the area. This was the site of an ARC camp during road construction, likely the "Mile 72" camp mentioned above. The Thorofare cabin is located in the drainage beyond this pit, but is not visible from the road.



NPS Photo, DNP&P

First view of Big Timber from the road, looking west.

Kantishna Ranger Station

About eight miles west of Grassy Pass, a dark stretch of spruce forest is visible along the north bank of the McKinley River. Known as Big Timber, it is both the largest acreage of spruce in this area and the upper limit of forest on the McKinley River.[13] For travelers venturing into country above treeline, Big Timber provided the last good place to camp, with shelter and wood. Its large spruce trees have been used for construction of log cabins by prospectors, trappers, and the NPS. Today, the McKinley Bar Trail follows the main travel route through Big Timber between Wonder Lake and the McKinley River. This is the trail used by mountaineers en route to McGonagall Pass on their way to climb Mt. McKinley and other nearby mountains.

Early in 1922, Superintendent Karstens recognized the need for a ranger to be based near the mining district of Kantishna for the protection of game and to keep a record of the prospectors, mining activities, and cabins at the west end of the park. The original (1917) northern park boundary was located between Wonder Lake and the McKinley River,



Kantishna Ranger Station, cache and dog houses in winter, 1928.

making Big Timber a logical site for a ranger station. It wasn't until the summer of 1926 that Karstens sent a ranger there to establish a western base of operations.

Chief Ranger Fritz Nyberg, new ranger Grant Pearson, and four pack horses arrived at Big Timber in August 1926 to build a cabin at what Karstens termed "the western entrance" of the park. Each horse carried 200 pounds of construction tools, mail for the Kantishna residents, and supplies to last Pearson four months. They selected a cabin site on a point along the edge of Big Timber that offered a view up and down the McKinley River.

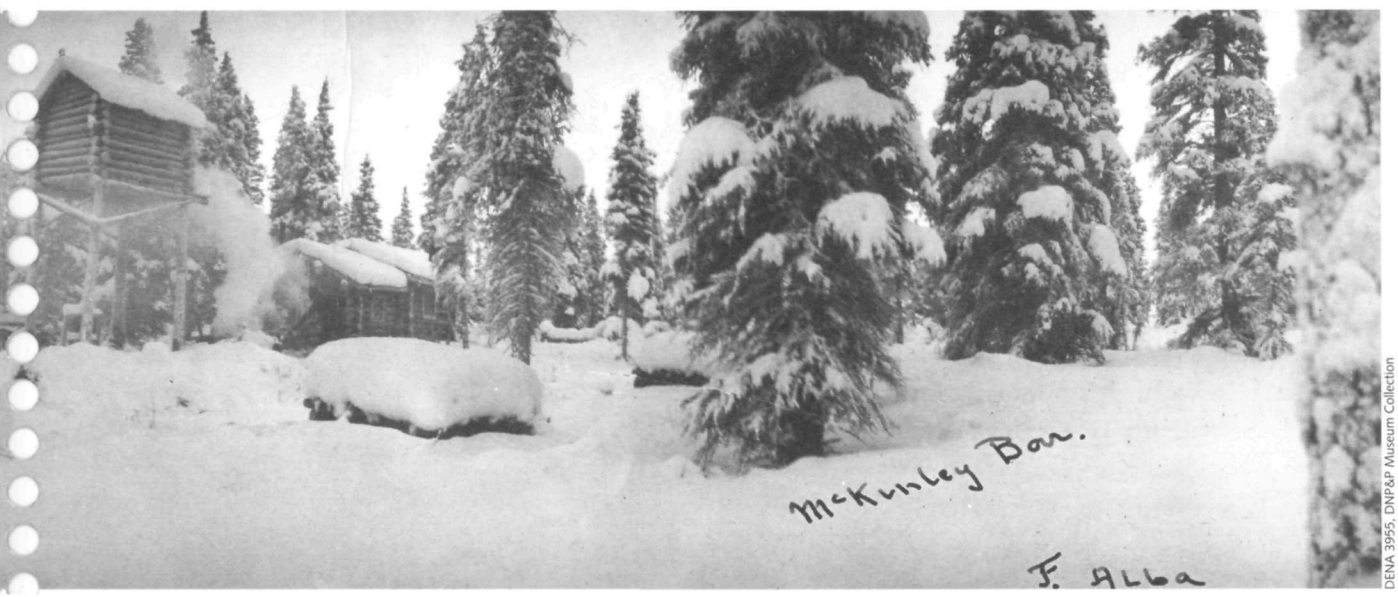
The two rangers cut logs and hauled them to the building site with the horses. After Nyberg and the horses returned to headquarters, Pearson set to work building the 10 ft. x 12 ft. cabin. He described the process in his book, *My Life of High Adventure*:

First you clear away the moss down to firm dirt, and level it off. The actual start of your cabin resembles a pen: Two logs are placed on the ground at the width you want (ten feet for me), exactly parallel to each other and notched at each end on the upper side. Two more logs are placed crossways in the notches, and they too get a notch on the end of the upper side. You just keep on doing this until your walls are high enough so you won't bump your head on the roof. Pack moss firmly into the chinks between the logs to make your home air-tight.



DENA 39-37, DNP&P Museum Collection

Mrs. Corbley, Lou Corbley and Grant Pearson at the 1917 park boundary markers south of Wonder lake, 1930.



DENA 3955, DNP&P Museum Collection

If you want a door, or windows, you do not, as in ordinary house construction, cut your timbers first to allow for the openings. When your log cabin walls are lintel height (about two logs below the eaves) you put wedges between the logs along the lines where the jambs will come, then simply saw out the holes.

The best Alaska cabins have a double roof, and that was the kind I was going to have. I piled moss on split spruce poles slanting down from the ridge pole, then put on four inches of topsoil. After that I whipsawed logs into boards and gave the entire top an over-lapping board cover that would shed a cloudburst. Once warmed up, this kind of roof is not only watertight, it retains the cabin's warmth for many hours after the stove has gone out.

All this took me a total of sixteen days. I planned to finish off the cabin by whipsawing more lumber for a floor, bunks, shelves and furniture but in the meantime I had business for Uncle Sam I wanted to get on with. There were some sizeable bundles of mail stored in the shelter tent [for the Kantishna residents].[14]

By October, the cabin was complete. It became known as the Kantishna Ranger Station and was later called the McKinley Bar cabin. It served as a base for rangers patrolling the park, and Pearson spent the next two winters stationed there.

After the 1932 boundary extension, this cabin was no longer of such strategic importance. The Wonder Lake Ranger Station, close to the new park boundary, was built in 1939, and the Kantishna Ranger Station was used only occasionally by rangers on patrol. In June 1946, a bear entered the McKinley Bar cabin and "literally wrecked the place."[15] The next month rangers made extensive repairs, including a new roof, windows, doors, cupboards, and table, and replaced equipment and supplies. In the 1940s and 1950s, hikers and mountaineers used the cabin as a welcome shelter to dry out in after crossing the McKinley River. It was discovered burned to the ground in June 1956, and was not rebuilt.



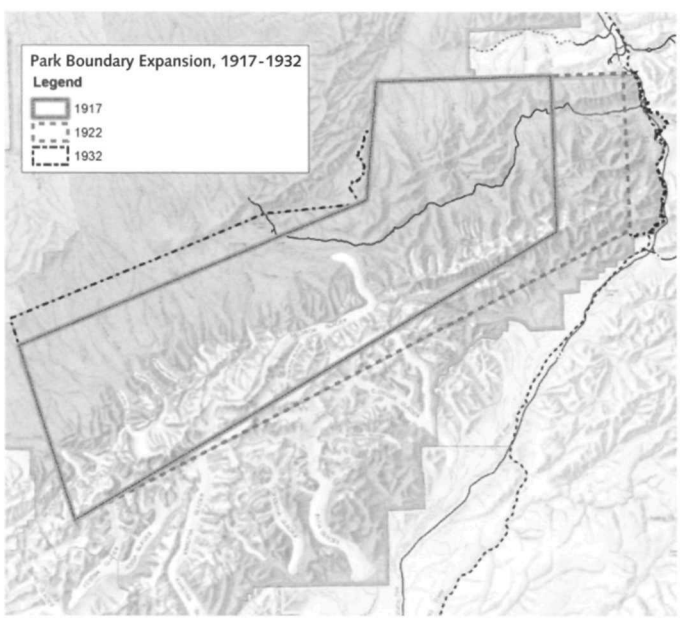
Kantishna Ranger Station, late 1930s.

Beatrice Herning Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection



NPS Photo, Cultural Resources, DNP&P

Mile 82.6, location of the original 1917 north boundary (Big Timber is visible on the left, beyond the edge of the road).



NPS, DNP&P

The three historic park boundaries show expansion of Mt. McKinley National Park from 1917 to 1932.

The Original 1917 Boundary

Shortly after the first view of Big Timber, where three small tundra ponds can be seen below the road, the original 1917 north boundary of Mt. McKinley National Park crosses the road at mile 82.6. Surveyed and cut by General Land Office engineer Woodbury Abbey and his crew in 1922, the boundary line can still be seen from the air, but it is difficult to see from the ground. The original park boundary was drawn to avoid interference with the Kantishna mining district.

Wonder Lake

Beyond the 1917 boundary, the road rounds a curve and Wonder Lake appears. A remnant of the Ice Age, the lake occupies a depression scoured by a precursor of the Muldrow Glacier thousands of years ago. The area around Wonder Lake has been the object of NPS planning and deliberation since the 1920s. The road that branches off to the left from the main park road, at what is called the "Y," was originally built to access a proposed hotel site. It is now the road to the Wonder Lake Campground.

Park visitation was low during the 1920s and 1930s, but the NPS believed that a hotel at the western end of the park would spur tourism. In 1927 Superintendent Karstens suggested a hotel site on Clearwater Creek, south



(Right) View from the proposed Wonder Lake lodge site southwest of Wonder Lake, 1966.

of the McKinley River. Two other sites were proposed in the Copper Mountain area. In 1929 the chief landscape architect for the NPS, Thomas Vint, visited the park and selected Mile 66 for a hotel. By then the road had inched its way only to the East Fork of the Toklat River, making hotel construction at Mile 66 unfeasible for a few years.

After a U.S. Geological Survey investigation of the Kantishna–Wonder Lake area in the summer of 1930, geologist Fred Moffit met with Interior Department officials in Washington, D.C. He championed the outstanding possibilities for development in the Wonder Lake area, even though the lake was outside the park boundary. The next year, NPS director Horace Albright visited the park and planned to evaluate potential hotel sites. Unfortunately, he developed appendicitis and had to be flown to the hospital in Fairbanks. In spite of his shortened tour, he selected Wonder Lake as the preferred hotel site, and as a result, Congress included the Wonder Lake area in the 1932 park expansion. After that, interest in a hotel at Mile 66 declined.[16]

In 1935, when road construction reached Wonder Lake, NPS landscape architect Ernest A. Davidson visited the park. He proposed a new hotel site on a knoll just south of Wonder Lake. The next year, the ARC built a two-mile spur road connecting the potential hotel site with the main park road, but in 1937 Wonder Lake hotel plans were put aside in favor of a hotel at McKinley Park Station. By 1938, however, Davidson's plans for a modest lodge, a ring of nearby cabins, and adjacent NPS support facilities were backed by the Interior Department.[17]

Superintendent Frank Been, a former park naturalist, voiced a dissenting view in 1940. He told the NPS director that the existing concession camps were sufficient and he felt the park's greatest need was for "moderate accommodations and campgrounds." However, Alaska's new governor, Ernest Gruening, made several trips to the park and worked to obtain congressional funding for the Wonder Lake hotel project. By the fall of 1941, it seemed certain that the park would receive funding for the lodge, but World War II put the project on hold for several more years. In 1945 Wonder Lake hotel plans were dusted off and revised, calling for a larger lodge complex, but construction was again stalled by a lack of funding.

In the early 1950s, development of the Denali Highway brought outside road access increasingly closer to the park, and as a result, the NPS began planning for campgrounds along the park road. The private sector also began to respond to the commercial possibilities that road access would bring. In 1951, Morton Wood, Ginny Hill Wood, and Celia Hunter homesteaded land two miles north of Wonder Lake and built Camp Denali, the first privately-owned tourist lodge in the Wonder Lake-Kantishna area. During the early 1950s the NPS proposed more modest lodge



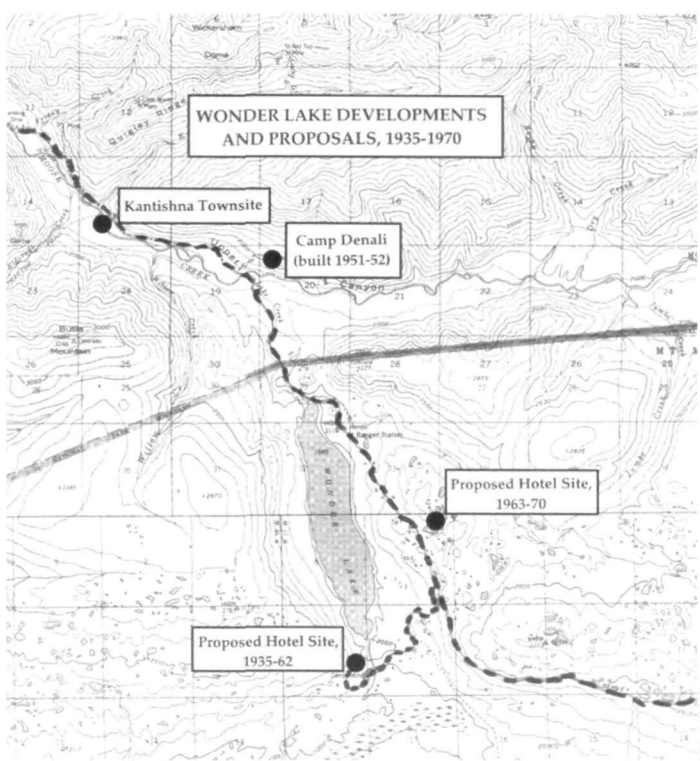
DENA file #10729, Mt. McKinley National Park Study – 1966, DNP&P Museum Collection



Alaska State Library, Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-18-110

Proposed Wonder Lake hotel site and new access road built by the ARC, 1936.

Wonder Lake development proposals, 1935 - 1970.



NPS, DNP&P

concepts at Wonder Lake, but none of those plans were funded. In the meantime, the NPS built a campground near the south shore of Wonder Lake. It opened in 1954.

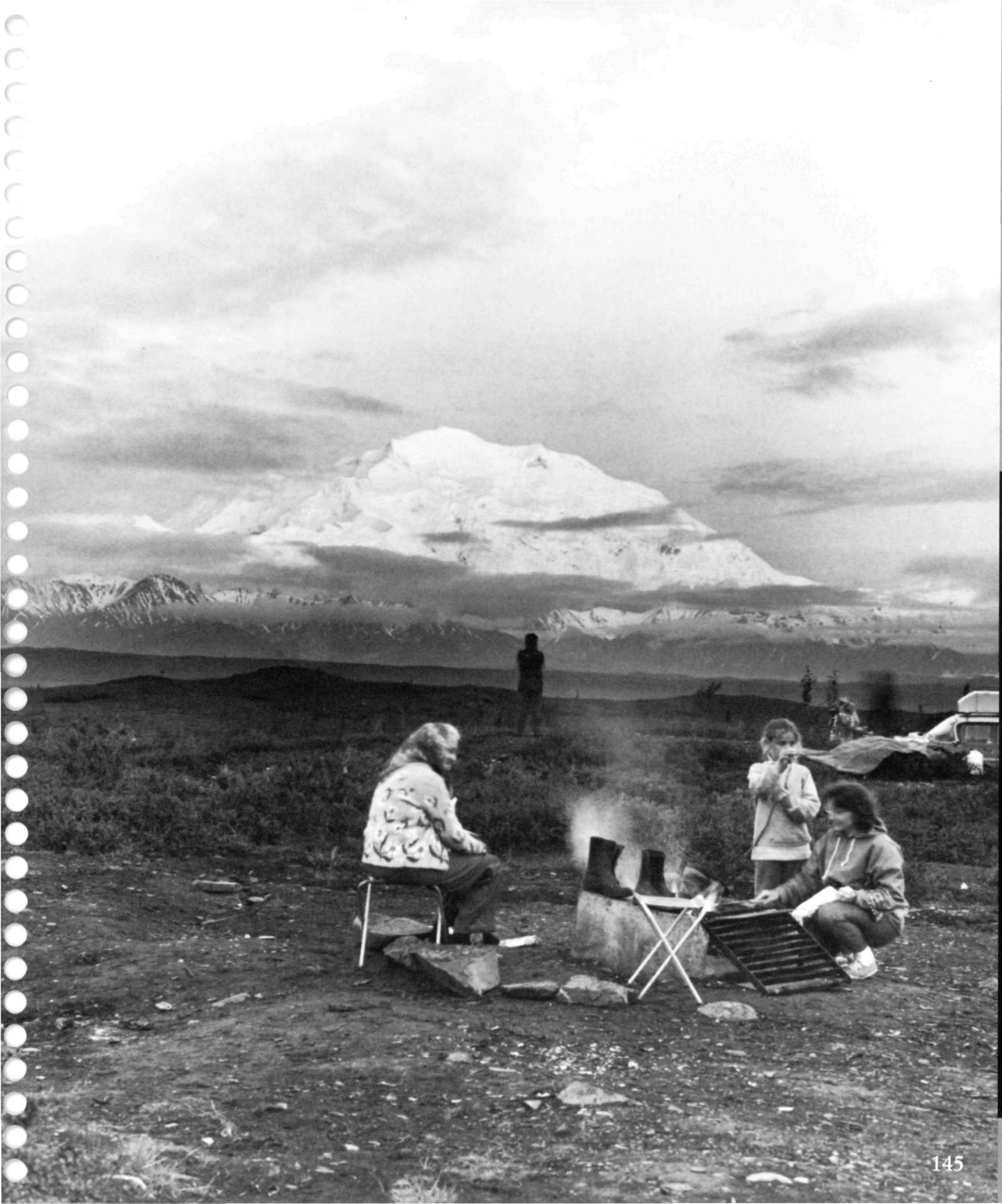
The late 1950s saw a significant increase in park tourism, due primarily to the completion of the Denali Highway. Alaska statehood in 1959 brought increased interest in the promotion of tourism, and NPS officials again planned for a development south of Wonder Lake. In 1962, regional NPS officials proposed yet another site, on a ridge east of Wonder Lake, a location that was suggested by NPS architect Harvey Benson in 1957. Planners envisioned a $3.3 million development including a lodge, cabins, service station, and campground, as well as NPS maintenance facilities, housing, and offices.[18]

Until the early 1960s, the only obstacle to constructing a hotel in the western section of the park was a lack of funds. Environmental protection had not been a pivotal concern. However, the 1960s spawned a growing environmental movement, and public advocacy groups such as the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society became increasingly high profile. Park superintendent Samuel King strongly supported the idea of a hotel at Wonder Lake, but the NPS regional construction chief was concerned that building a hotel would create ill will with conservationists. The Sierra Club argued that the park's unique "wilderness mood" would be ruined by a hotel at Wonder Lake. The NPS regional director agreed that Wonder Lake was fragile and the effects of development should be thoroughly studied before making a decision.[19]

In the summer of 1967, Sierra Club president Edgar Wayburn visited the park to view the proposed Wonder Lake hotel site. He believed the site should remain undeveloped and voiced his concern to the NPS director, George Hartzog. Pro-development groups continued to push the hotel idea, but the NPS began to consider other alternatives. Hopes for a hotel with a mountain view shifted to the south side of the Alaska Range, along the George Parks Highway (then under construction) and outside the park.[20]

(Right) Campers at the Wonder Lake Campground, 1960s.

Alaska State Library, Alaska Division of Tourism, 22-5-48





DENA 4-18.5, DNP&P Museum Collection

The CCC crew camped in tents (right) while they built the Wonder Lake Ranger Station. The ranger station foundation can be seen to the left of the temporary CCC frame structure.

Wonder Lake Ranger Station

The Wonder Lake Ranger Station is near the north end of the lake on the right side of the road. Construction of a ranger station at this location was prompted by the boundary extension of 1932, and by the park road finally reaching Kantishna. With growing pressure to develop a nearby hotel, there was need for a ranger station near the "Kantishna Entrance." In 1939, Superintendent Been took the opportunity to put Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) enrollees to work constructing this ranger station.

Been visited the Wonder Lake area in early June, and selected a building site near the boundary that offered views of the lake, Mt. McKinley, and the road. The location took advantage of an abandoned ARC gravel pit and was favorably located for a water system and sewage disposal.

Construction was started by late June, and "within two months the crews completed the full basement and had framed and insulated, walled and roofed the five-room ranger

station." Designed as a year-round facility, it was wired for electricity from a generator and was plumbed for water and sewer systems. It was completed in September.[21]

Superintendent Been administratively divided the park in half at the Toklat River and named John Rumohr the new Wonder Lake District Ranger for the western half of the park. He and ranger Raymond McIntyre were assigned to the Wonder Lake Ranger Station as their base for the winter of 1939-40.



DENA 6-6.5, DNP&P Museum Collection

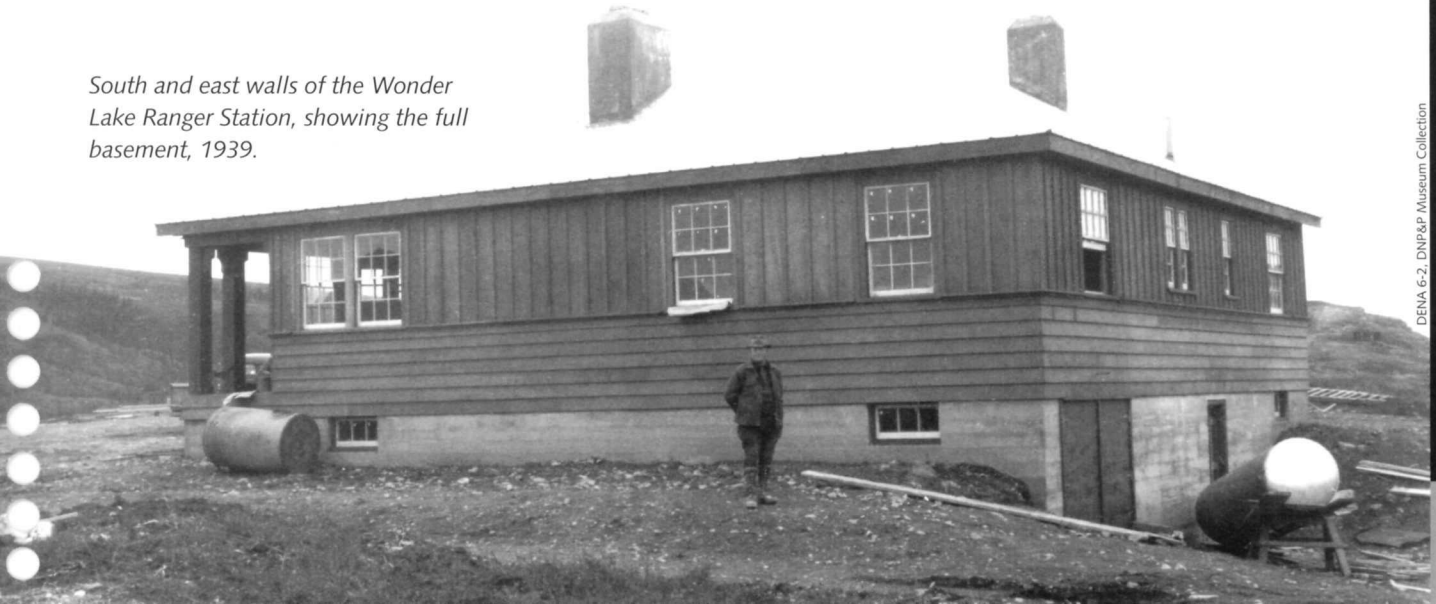
The Wonder Lake Ranger Station, 1940.

The two rangers settled in, applied finishing touches, and brought 16 sled dogs, 2 sleds, and supplies for their winter patrols. Coal was hauled from the East Fork coal mine for use in the furnace. They soon found the building to be less than satisfactory. It was exposed to winds from all sides, the heating system was not as efficient as expected, and the walls did not hold heat because they were only four inches thick. When the wind was blowing, water left in a dish in the kitchen sink would freeze during the night. Then the sewer system froze. The rangers spent a cold and uncomfortable winter trying to keep the ranger station's systems functioning.[22]

By March 1940, only six months after construction was completed, Rumohr reported major structural problems. The foundation was cracked, the south wall was sinking, and a chimney was leaning. Frost formed inside the walls, and whenever the weather turned mild, the frost melted and ran down onto the floor. Many of these problems were caused by heat from the building thawing the frozen ground beneath the foundation. This was the first and last winter anyone was assigned to live in the Wonder Lake Ranger Station for the entire winter.[23]

From 1943 to 1964, the ranger station was used in the summer for ranger housing, and the room opening onto the porch served as a visitor contact station and office. The resident ranger also provided maintenance services, including building repairs and campground caretaking. The basement contained a workshop area and storage. The

South and east walls of the Wonder Lake Ranger Station, showing the full basement, 1939.



DENA 6-2, DNP&P Museum Collection



ranger station was the center for operations at the western end of the park. Winter supplies were taken to the station before the road closed in the fall, and were stored in the basement for use by rangers staying there temporarily during the early spring.[24]

In the spring of 1948 the first park personnel to arrive at the Wonder Lake Ranger Station discovered that a grizzly bear had broken in and caused considerable damage. Wildlife biologist Adolph Murie recalled,

The flour bin had been carried into the dining room, and the rest of the groceries in the kitchen and pantry were strewn over the rooms and up and down the hallway. Doors were torn off cupboards and the kitchen range was pulled out into the middle of the room. The bear had gone into the basement and feasted on scores of boxes of surplus Army chocolate bars. A bucket of brown paint had been spilled and tracked about the place. To reach the basement, the bear had broken through a wall between the hall and the stairs, and had smashed all the basement windows. He had used a window leading off the front porch into the front bedroom for a door.

[A few days later] two road men stopped and cautiously walked into the house to view the damage. They had looked over things upstairs and began to descend the basement steps. They stopped and listened, but all was quiet. Just to be sure, they threw a stick of wood into the murkiness, across the basement floor. There was a clatter as it hit, then a cough and a commotion. Out the front door the two men exploded, and close on their heels was the grizzly. They made the car, and the bear fled across the tundra.[25]

Extensive repairs and cleaning took place that spring, but the bear could not forget those chocolate bars. That fall the bear returned after the road had closed, but the food had all been removed. The following spring 17 panels of wallboard were needed to repair the damage, and the ranger station was remodeled.

Various temporary structures were erected at the ranger station to house an increasing park staff, but in 1964 the first small, prefabricated cabin to be used as seasonal quarters was added to the site. A second cabin was added in 1967. These small, one-room cabins were easier to heat than the ranger station, and were used by rangers during winter patrols.

The ranger station's serious and ongoing structural



Frances Erickson Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

The Mt. McKinley Tourist & Transportation Co. took park visitors to the Wonder Lake Ranger Station from 1939 through 1941. Bobby Sheldon is standing by the left bus.

problems were evaluated many times, and in 1985 it was determined that they were caused by seasonal ground movement. It was suggested that the building be relocated to a new site and placed on a wood foundation with no basement. Soil tests in 1998 revealed that the ranger station was built on an ice lens. Changes in climate, removal of vegetation for parking, and heat from the buildings were identified as factors causing the ice lens to thaw. The primary reason for the foundation distress was differential settlement caused by the thawing and subsidence of the ice-rich permafrost soils beneath the structure.

Plans were set in motion in 1999 to remedy the situation. To provide for the functions that had been accommodated by the ranger station, temporary structures were placed at an old clearing near the "Y." The ranger station was temporarily moved in order to fill in the basement and construct a new foundation. The building was then moved back in place, and the interior was remodeled. This work was completed in 2000.[26]

The Wonder Lake Ranger Station is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It is significant for its part in administration of the national park and related tourism, and for the role it has played as a point of contact for communication between the mining community of Kantishna and the NPS. Today the Wonder Lake Ranger Station continues to be an important contact station for visitors in the western region of the park, and is a center of operations for NPS activities.



NPS Photo

Backfilling the Wonder Lake Ranger Station basement, 1999.





Beatrice Herning Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

In October 1939, the park provided a base "radio set" at the Wonder Lake Ranger Station and a portable set for dog team patrols. John Rumohr is pictured here using the portable radio at Wonder Lake, May 1940.[27]

John Rumohr

John C. Rumohr (Ru-MOR) was born in 1887 on his family's farm near Bergen, Norway. John studied agriculture in college and worked at an experimental farm in northern Norway for two years. He came to the U.S. in 1910 or 1911 and wound up in Valdez, Alaska. He couldn't afford transportation so he hiked from Valdez to Fairbanks, where he went to work for a mining company. He also tried his hand at prospecting, including a trip to the Koyukuk gold fields.[28]

In 1917, John enlisted in the U.S. Army. He served in Alaska, and was discharged at Fort Gibbon [now the village of Tanana] in 1918, at the end of World War I. He then cut wood for steamboats along the Yukon River and worked his way to the Cantwell area by about 1920. John and a partner contracted to prepare a mile of rail bed during construction of the Alaska Railroad. According to ranger William Nancarrow, "he spent two years working odd jobs there on the railroad, and in the wintertime, he lived in a cabin near Cantwell, spending many long, dark days of winter playing pinochle at John Carlson's store in Cantwell."[29]

In 1922 or 1923, John acquired a dog team and started a freight business between the Alaska Railroad at Cantwell and the mining camp at Valdez Creek, 50 miles to the southeast. He spent one winter rounding up a herd of reindeer that had been brought to the Cantwell area.

Park rangers (left to right) Wallace Anderson, John Rumohr, Grant Pearson, and Lee Swisher at park headquarters, 1932.

DENA 3065, DNP&P Museum Collection



Beatrice Herning Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

John Rumohr and Tige at Wonder Lake. Grant Pearson wrote that in February 1940, "Tige, a park sled dog, was awarded the Dog World International Diploma of Honor for saving the life of Park Ranger John C. Rumohr. Rumohr and his dog team and sled had broken through the ice on Toklat River into six feet of water. The temperature was below zero. Tige, the lead dog who was running free ahead of the team, excited the rest of the dog team and they were able to pull the sled to firm ice."[30]



DENA 27-23, DNP&P Museum Collection

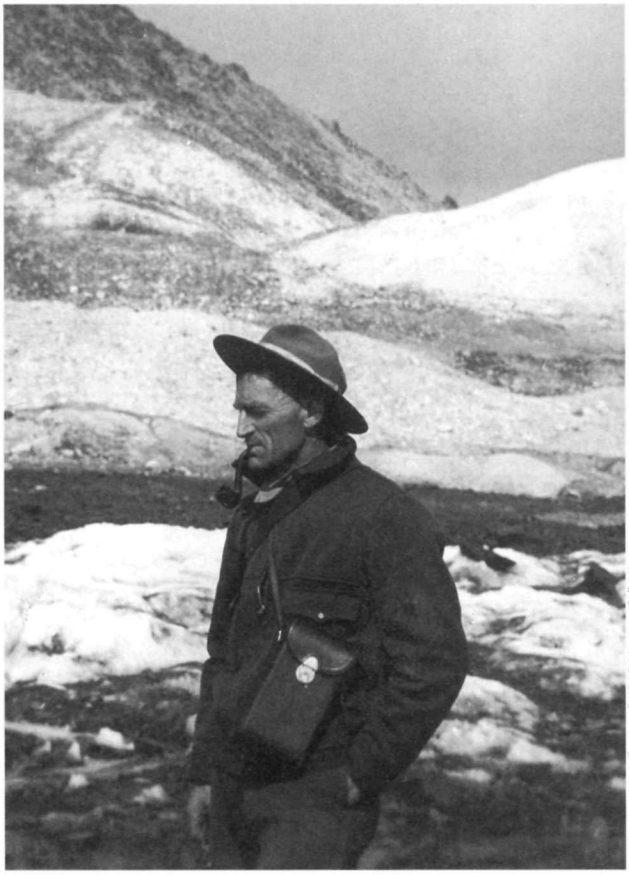
In March 1952, "a citation for Commendable Service was presented by the Superintendent [Pearson] to former Chief Ranger John C. Rumohr. The presentation was made before a gathering of park personnel at the Ranger Club." John's wife, Luella, is seated in front of John.[31]

John hired on as a ranger at Mt. McKinley National Park in 1930. At that time rangers worked at park headquarters in the summer, and in the winter each one was sent out with a dog team to live in a specific section of the park, based at the ranger cabin in that area. The Moose Creek patrol cabin (about eight miles east of Wonder Lake) was John's winter assignment for several seasons. At other times he was based at the Lower Toklat ranger cabin and other locations.

John met his future wife, Luella Kesselring, when she visited her friend, postmistress Maude Hosler, at McKinley Park Station. They were married on September 5, 1942. John and Luella were among the few people who remained at the park during World War II. Years later John recalled that he and Luella were the center of a close-knit social group living at park headquarters, hosting Sunday brunch for the park "family" at least once a month.[32]

John was appointed Chief Ranger in February 1943, and served in that capacity until his retirement in 1951. During World War II, the park's dog teams were recruited for wartime military service. Winter patrols were made on foot with snowshoes or skis until after the war, when an army surplus M-7 snow tractor was acquired. John Rumohr stated his feelings about this new form of winter transportation in the Superintendent's Monthly Report for December 1946: "The distance traveled in a day over unbroken trail exceeds the best a dog team could perform. But . . . dogs have less trouble with their carburetors. . . . You can cuss the snow tractor and it just sits there. When you cussed your dogs, they would at least raise their ears."[33]

On June 25, 1944, a group of people were enjoying a celebration at the Wonder Lake Ranger Station when the need arose for some ice for their martinis. John and Superintendent Grant Pearson volunteered to drive down to the south end of Wonder Lake where there was a lingering ice patch that would supply their needs. There John spotted a brownish frog about four inches long hopping across the road in front of him, something he had never seen before in Alaska. His report of the unusual sighting was at first discounted because of the suspected effects of the martinis, but this discovery of wood frogs *(Rana sylvatica)* in the park was later validated by Adolph Murie when he observed a substantial number of them in similar habitats.[34]



Beatrice Herning Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

John Rumohr at McGonagall Pass, c. 1940.

After 21 years of service at Mt. McKinley National Park, John retired on July 13, 1951. He and Luella built a cabin and settled in Cantwell. John died unexpectedly on February 9, 1966, while attending a friend's 90th birthday party in Anchorage. He was buried in Cantwell.

Stephen Foster Collection, 69-92-595, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Photographer Stephen Foster's caption on the photo above reads: "Polly [Paula Anderson], the first woman and only woman to cross the Alaska Range over the Muldrow Glacier. She came in the spring of 1918 and at present has acquired several interests in camp and in the words of slang, is quite a rustler."



Stephen R. Capps Collection, 83-149-2381, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Paula and John Anderson's roadhouse and fox farm were located at the north end of Wonder Lake. This was their home for nearly a decade.

Anderson Roadhouse and Fox Farm

Less than a mile beyond the Wonder Lake Ranger Station, a culvert allows the road to cross the inlet to Wonder Lake. From there, the site of Paula and John Anderson's roadhouse and fox farm at the north end of Wonder Lake can be seen. A cluster of tall willows and a level clearing mark the location of their establishment. Today a small access road to the left leads from the park road to the clearing.

John Anderson and Paula Liebau Anderson mushed their dog team from the Chulitna River, on the south side of the Alaska Range, over Anderson Pass to reach the Kantishna mining district in 1918. (Anderson Pass was named for Kantishna miner and Sourdough climber Pete Anderson.) They first mined on Glen Creek, as documented by Stephen Foster when he photographed

their operation in 1919. They were also part of the local rush to file claims in the Copper Mountain district, where John located nine claims in 1922. Those claims reverted to the public domain in 1929.[35]

By 1921, John and Paula had settled on the north shore of Wonder Lake where they built a cabin and soon turned it into a roadhouse, used as a stopping place for travelers going to and from the Kantishna mining district.[36] In 1922 when William Beach visited "Polly's Roadhouse," the original cabin was being enlarged. Beach described the roadhouse as "a well-built log cabin and inside furnished with elaborate combinations of caribou [antlers] that are used for seats, candle sticks, shelves and the like. Polly, from whom this stopping place takes its name, is known in real life as Mrs. Paula Anderson, but that being complicated for the simple and rough folks of the North, someone christened her Polly, and Polly she is to one and all."[37]



John Anderson Collection, Courtesy of Jay Hathaway

Polly's Roadhouse was filled with furniture and fixtures made of caribou antlers. Rugs, comforters, and seat cushions were made from caribou hides.

Beach stopped at the roadhouse for lunch and recalled, "We were somewhat late for our luncheon date but this made no difference to our hostess. Fresh trout and ptarmigan with various jams and vegetables, and a fine mess of blueberries was a feed befitting royalty. As we were about to depart, Polly, with due formality, presented to each of us a gold nugget scarf pin, stating in her presentation speech that she personally had washed out these particular nuggets from her grubstake."[38]

John and Paula made their living by gold mining, trapping, raising foxes and sled dogs for sale, and operating the roadhouse. In 1926 Paula filed a homestead claim for 160 acres running east-west and including the north end of Wonder Lake. She stated it was "for muskrat and beaver and fur farming purposes; no shooting, camping or building permitted within stated area." It was surveyed and approved at the end of that year and the claim was patented in August 1930.[39]

In the Superintendent's Monthly Report for March 1926, Harry Karstens referred to John Anderson as a "bona fide prospector" who respected park rules and regulations.



John Anderson Collection, Courtesy of Jay Hathaway

Polly's Roadhouse, 1922.



John Anderson Collection, Courtesy of Jay Hathaway

Paula Anderson poses with caribou hides and a chair made from caribou antlers.



John Anderson Collection, Courtesy of Jay Hathaway

Paula and John Anderson in a canoe at the north end of Wonder Lake.

That same year field naturalist Joseph Dixon conducted biological surveys in the park and found John and Paula to be excellent observers of the natural world. They kept weather records and notes on the earliest arrival and latest departure dates of various species during spring and fall migrations at Wonder Lake.[40]

John and Paula left Alaska in 1929 and settled in northern California near Mendocino. In 1933 and 1935 Paula Anderson offered her property for sale to the NPS, but no funds were available for its purchase. In 1938 Paula again offered her homestead for sale, suggesting a purchase price of $10,000. By this time the park road had been constructed across her private property without an easement, and according to a 1939 letter by ARC Superintendent M.C. Edmunds, "the cabin was burned down in 1934. It had been used by various persons traveling to and from the Kantishna, and had also been used by the men surveying the road. The place was isolated and it was not known definitely what time this happened."[41]

Several appraisals of the property value were made in 1939, including Superintendent Been's appraisal of $5,000, Joseph Dixon's valuation of $7,500, and landscape architect Ernest Davidson's recommendation of $16,000. In July 1940, Paula Anderson agreed to accept $3,190 for her property, but a lower valuation was pursued by the government. This disagreement on what constituted a "fair and reasonable price" led to a trial before the federal court in Fairbanks in February 1942, resulting in a federal government Declaration of Taking and a sum of $1,600 paid to Paula Anderson for her 160 acres of land. The property then became part of Mount McKinley National Park.[42]

1932 Boundary Extension

Beyond the Anderson roadhouse and fox farm, a sharp curve in the road is followed by a pullout on the left. The 1932 north park boundary crosses the road just before the pullout. This boundary extension included Wonder Lake within the park, and added land in the McKinley Park Station area.

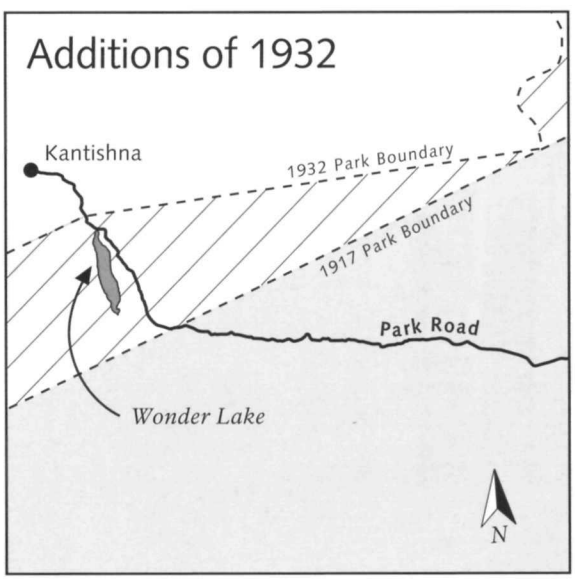
This was the northern boundary of the park from 1932 until December 2, 1980, when the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) was signed into law. Congress had worked for nearly a decade to craft this land protection act, and



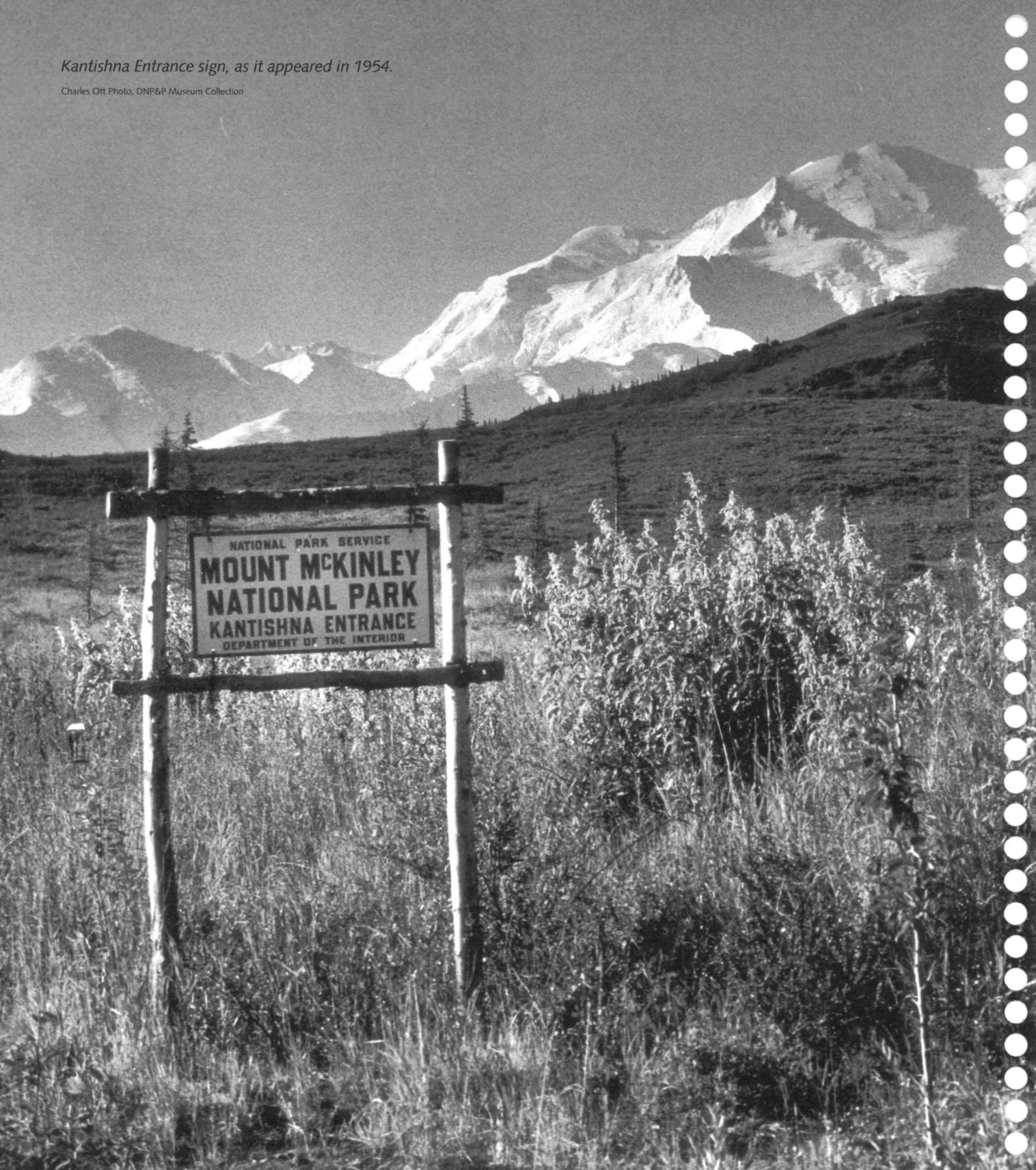
William Niemi Collection; Anchorage Museum, Gift of Celia Handley, B00.7.39

A view of Polly's Roadhouse and "fox ranch," looking north from the shore of Wonder Lake.

when it was finished, more than 104 million acres of federal land in Alaska were protected as new national parks, wildlife refuges, and conservation areas, or as additions to existing national parks, refuges, and forests. For Mount McKinley National Park, this legislation added more than 2.5 million acres of new park land, added another 1.3 million acres of national preserve, and changed the name of the entirety to Denali National Park and Preserve. It did not change the name of Mt. McKinley. As a result of ANILCA, the 1932 northern boundary is now the line between the "old park" and the new park additions.[43]



This map illustrates the area included by the 1932 boundary extension.



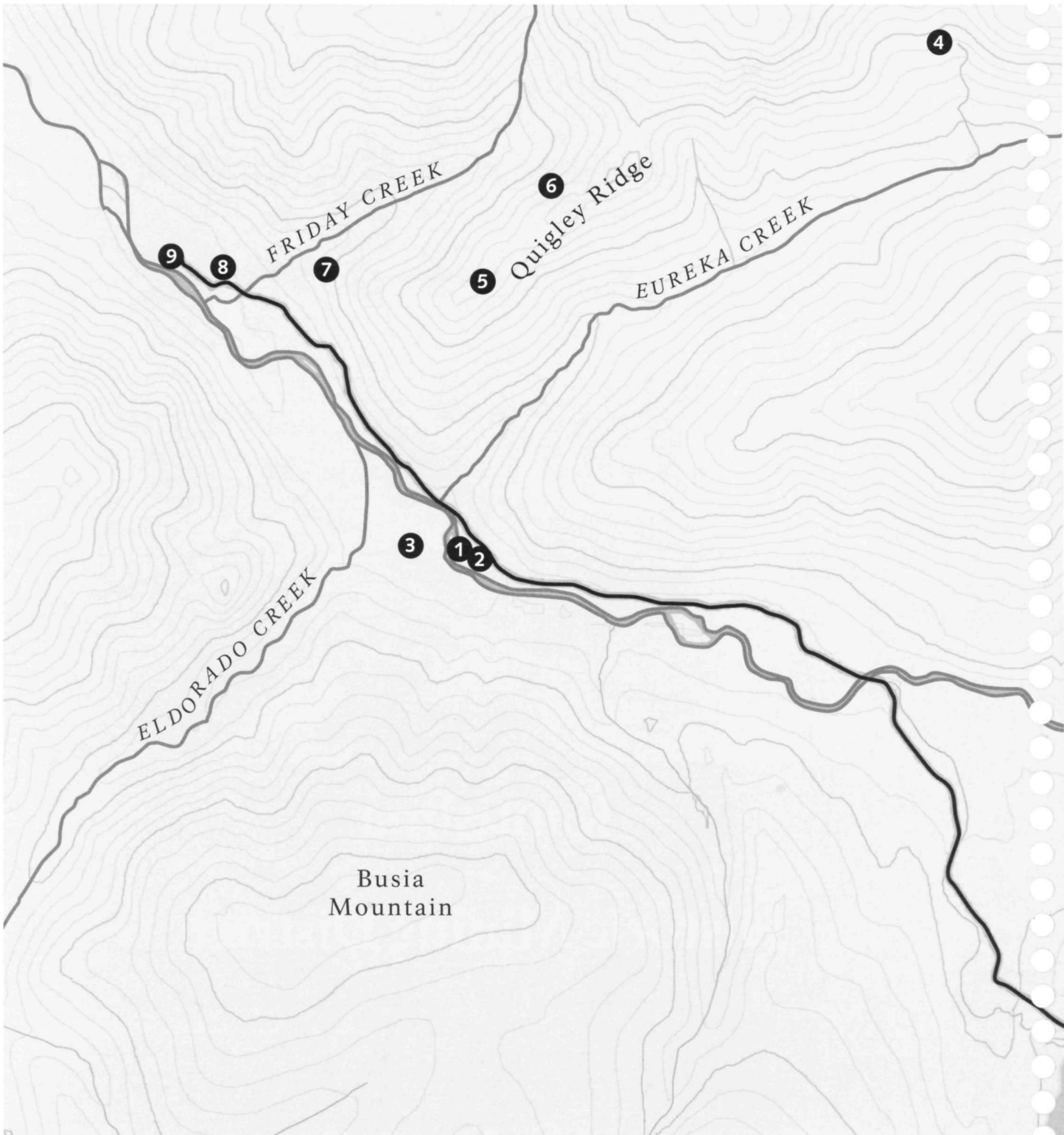
Kantishna Entrance sign, as it appeared in 1954.

Charles Ott Photo, DNP&P Museum Collection

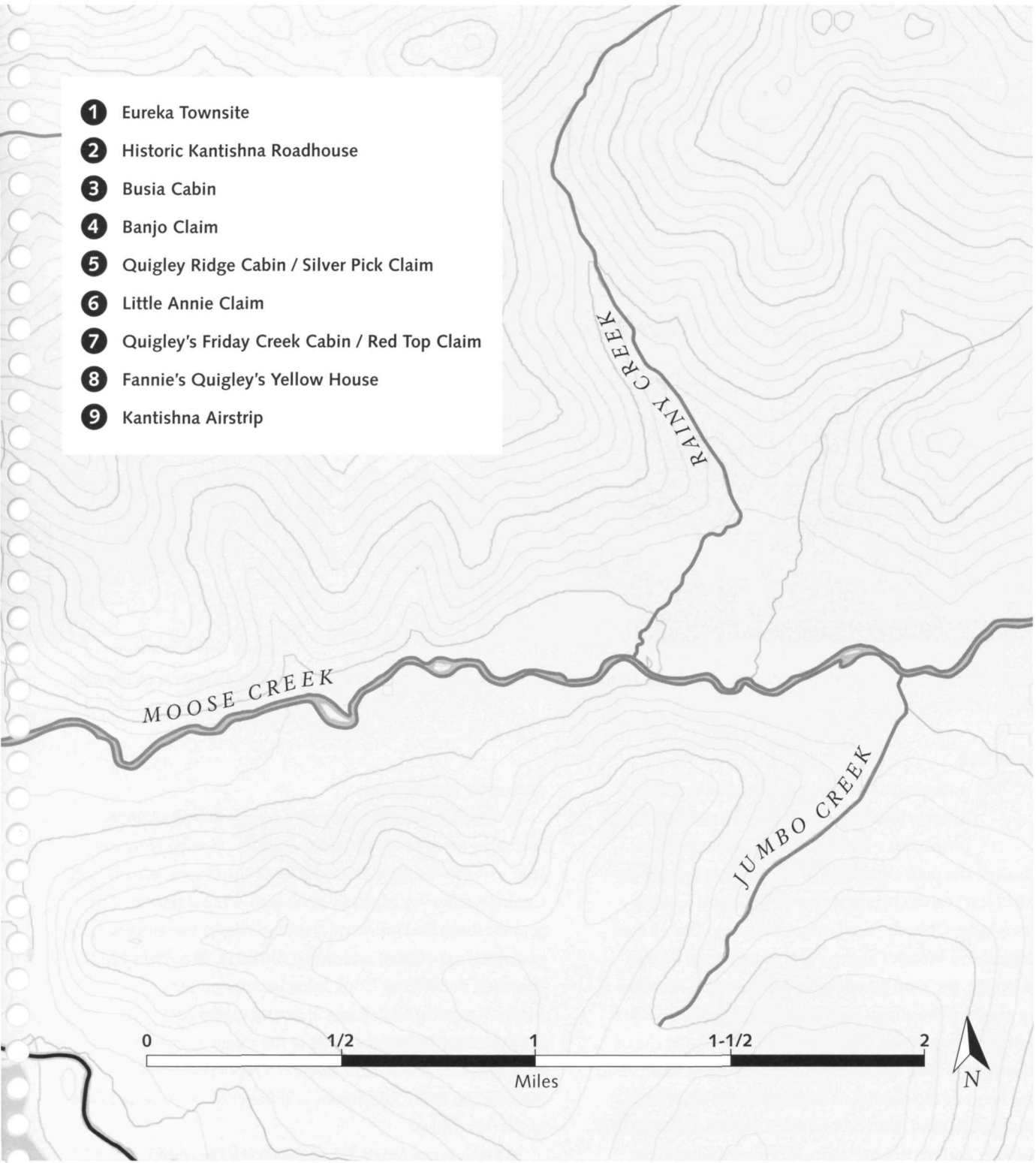


Kantishna

Historic Mining District



160 *Photo previous page: Hydraulic mining on Moose Creek.* DENA 16-1.6, DNP&P Museum Collection


1 Eureka Townsite
2 Historic Kantishna Roadhouse
3 Busia Cabin
4 Banjo Claim
5 Quigley Ridge Cabin / Silver Pick Claim
6 Little Annie Claim
7 Quigley's Friday Creek Cabin / Red Top Claim
8 Fannie's Quigley's Yellow House
9 Kantishna Airstrip
RAINY CREEK
MOOSE CREEK
JUMBO CREEK
0
1/2
1
1-1/2
2
Miles
N



Victor Kallit Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

On the road to Kantishna, 1955. The historic Kantishna Roadhouse is in the center of the photo and the Busia Cabin is to the left of Moose Creek.

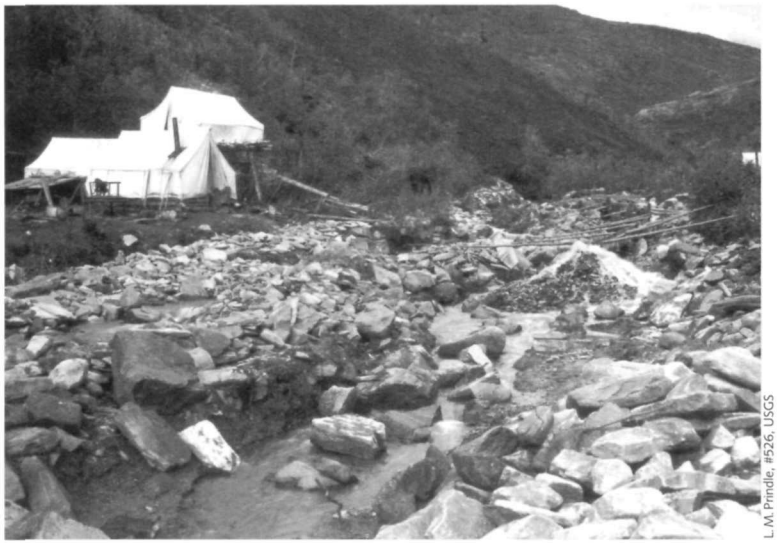
Kantishna

Continuing north, the road winds toward the historic Kantishna area, passing several private properties which became inholdings when the park expanded in 1980. These include the "Hawks Nest" cabins (the first two on the right) and the next two lodges, North Face Lodge and Camp Denali (on the ridge above Moose Creek). After crossing the Moose Creek bridge, the road parallels the creek, and in less than a mile, a cluster of buildings appears through the trees. This is the privately-operated Kantishna Roadhouse, the site of the former gold rush community of Eureka (later Kantishna) and the heart of the Kantishna mining district since 1905. When the park road first reached the Kantishna Hills in 1938, prospectors and miners had already been working in the district for over 30 years.

By the early twentieth century, prospectors had been searching for gold in Alaska for decades, moving from one gold strike to the next. In response to the mining activity, U.S. Geological Survey explorer-geologists were summoned to provide maps and information about Alaska's resources. One geological expedition was led by Alfred H. Brooks in 1902. Traveling north from Cook Inlet, he crossed the Alaska Range through Rainy Pass and explored northeastward along the front of the range, stopping near the north face of Mt. McKinley. His reports provided information about conditions and travel routes near the base of Mt. McKinley.

In 1903, Judge James Wickersham left the mining town

of Fairbanks on a quest to make the first climb of Mt. McKinley. His expedition did not reach the summit of the mountain, but it did accurately locate the Kantishna River (previously confused on maps), and expedition members learned the river's Athabaskan name from local elders. Wickersham's party prospected along their route and, in the gravels of Chitsia Creek at the northern end of the Kantishna Hills, found sufficient gold to file claims on their return trip home. Although Wickersham's claims were never as productive as he had hoped, his promotion of them attracted many experienced prospectors to the region.[1]



L.M. Prindle, #526, USGS

A miner's camp on Eureka Creek, 1906.

The Kantishna Gold Rush

Joe Quigley and his partner Jack Horn prospected on Glacier Creek on the west side of the Kantishna Hills in the spring of 1905. They found gold in paying quantities, staked their claims, and trekked back to Fairbanks to record them. While they were there, word spread quickly of their finds. By July 1905, a rush was on for the Kantishna Hills. Meanwhile, that same summer, Joe Dalton and his partner Joe Stiles staked discovery claims on Eureka and Friday creeks in the Kantishna Hills. Having heard nothing of the stampede that was taking place, they continued to prospect farther up Eureka Creek. They were surprised when they met a prospector who told them a stampede to the region was in progress. This news prompted Dalton and Stiles to immediately stake more claims on the creek.[2]

Hundreds of stampeders set out for the Kantishna Hills in the late summer of 1905. Many traveled by steamboat up the Kantishna River, then by smaller launches or poling



Stephen Foster Collection, 69-92-846, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

In the Kantishna district, prospectors often traveled on foot, using their sled dogs as pack animals in the summer.

Glacier City, at the mouth of Glacier Creek on the Bearpaw River, 1906.

L. M. Prindle, #531, USGS



boats up the Bearpaw River. At the mouths of Moose Creek and Glacier Creek, the boom towns of Diamond and Glacier City materialized along the Bearpaw River, places to offload and store supplies near the upper limits of river travel. Others continued on the Kantishna River another 40 miles beyond the mouth of the Bearpaw River to the boom town of Roosevelt. From Roosevelt it was about 31 miles overland to the gold-bearing creeks. After freeze-up in the fall, travel was by dog team or on foot.

By the end of September 1905, nearly every creek in the Kantishna Hills was staked from source to mouth, as well as the adjacent benches and intervening ridges. Prospectors worked their claims with picks, shovels, and gold pans or with simple sluicing equipment. Individually or with a partner, they pursued the easily recoverable placer gold: gold that had been eroded or weathered from parent rock, transported by water and deposited in stream gravels.



Charles Sheldon, *The Wilderness of Denali*

The boom town of Roosevelt on the Kantishna River, 1906.

Eureka Creek

Just past the Kantishna Roadhouse, the road crosses Eureka Creek, where gold mining was pursued for over 80 years. In the summer of 1905, Eureka Creek bustled with activity. Joe Dalton was working at the mouth of the creek, and it was said he was "taking out $1000 a day."[3] Nearby on Moose Creek was the new mining community of Eureka. It was the closest tent city to the

Tents in the boom town of Eureka are on the right (looking downstream on Moose Creek). Several tents on the hillside (middle background) are above the mouth of Eureka Creek, 1906.



L.M. Prindle, #524, USGS



Charles Sheldon, *The Wilderness of Denali*

The mining camp of Eureka in 1906 (looking up Moose Creek from the mouth of Eureka Creek).

important gold-producing creeks and a place where miners and prospectors could procure supplies and services. When Charles Sheldon traveled through the area in July 1906, he described Eureka:

[The town consisted] of about twenty tents and a few cabins situated [near] where Dalton had found gold the previous summer. At the time of our visit he employed about fifteen men.... These men were receiving fifteen dollars a day, besides their board.... In a region so remote and so difficult to reach, and in such a small camp, it was not strange that the saloon and the gambling establishment were missing. But... that more persisting complement of the saloon... flourished in a large tent occupied by a single individual.[4]

By midwinter 1905, it had become apparent that the rich, shallow diggings were restricted to a few short creeks, and an exodus began. The richest ground was mined vigorously during the summer of 1906, but by fall the population had dwindled to a total of 50 in the

Fannie and Joe Quigley (left), guest Ruth Wilson, and Joe Dalton appear in this November 1919 photograph taken on a moose hunt. Both Joe Quigley and Joe Dalton were discoverers of gold in the Kantishna Hills in 1905, and continued to mine in the district for several decades.



Stephen Foster Collection, 69-92-730, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

district; those remaining were the few who had staked paying claims or those who worked for them.[5] Eureka Creek was one of the richest gold-producing streams in the Kantishna district during 1905 and 1906. The best ground, located in the first half mile above the mouth of the creek, was mostly exhausted during 1906 when 50 or more miners were at work there. Wages during the busiest time, when shifts were working day and night, were $1.25 per hour. Estimates of the value of gold produced on the creek varied from $150,000 to $160,000.[6]



Wallace A. Cole Collection

Gold mining near the mouth of Eureka Creek, 1959.

During the winter of 1906-07, the towns of Roosevelt and Diamond were nearly deserted. Glacier City, closer to the creeks, was still used by some miners who preferred to winter there, sheltered by the timber which also provided their fuel supply. In 1916 there were 35 people in the district. More than half were men who had staked claims during the first stampede and who had worked them more or less continuously since that time. U.S. Geological Survey geologist Stephen R. Capps reported in 1919 that "since 1906 the population of the Kantishna district had remained nearly stationary, ranging from 30 to 50."[7]

By 1916, Eureka and Friday creeks were two of the streams still considered to be most important in terms of overall gold production in the district. By then miners were using "automatic dams," a more economical sluicing method that reduced the cost of mining and enabled a much wider strip of the floodplain to be mined profitably.

Mining activity in Kantishna declined during World War I, but picked up again after the end of the war. In 1920, nine men, including Joe Dalton, were placer mining on Eureka Creek, which was the second largest producer of placer gold in the district. During the early and mid-1930s, when fewer than a dozen people were engaged in placer mining or prospecting in Kantishna, most of the placer gold produced came from Eureka Creek. A significant increase in placer mining occurred in Kantishna during the late 1930s and again included work on Eureka Creek.

Long-time Kantishna miner Joe Dalton, about 70 years old, died in Kantishna on December 2, 1943. Dalton had been in the habit of going to the lower 48 states every winter, but because of wartime travel restrictions, he had remained in Kantishna. Dalton had been sick for a month and was found dead in his cabin in Kantishna by his neighbor Johnnie Busia. After the ground thawed the following spring, Busia buried him on Eureka Creek.[8]

Gold mining was shut down during World War II and did not resume until the late 1940s. D. G. "Dad" and Elmer Hosler reworked the discovery claim on Eureka Creek with a small hydraulic unit and bulldozer during the 1949 season. Later, mining with heavy equipment was conducted intermittently until 1985. Over the eight decades of mining on Eureka Creek, it had been severely disturbed, especially at its confluence with Moose Creek. In 1999, the NPS initiated cleanup of mining debris and restoration of ecologically disturbed lands on the lower section of Eureka Creek.



Fannie Quigley Collection, 80-46-244, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Joe Quigley and Fannie McKenzie at Glacier Creek, Kantishna district.

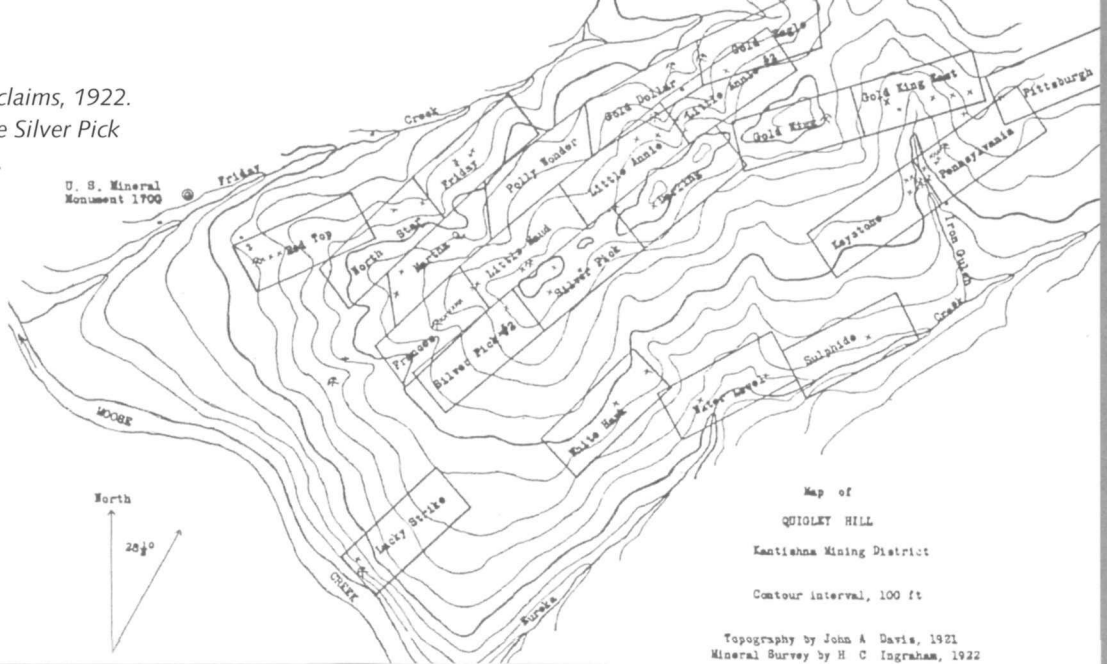
Quigley Ridge

Beyond Eureka Creek, the road passes Quigley Ridge, which rises east (right) of the park road between Eureka and Friday creeks. Originally called Mineral Ridge, it was renamed Quigley Ridge for mining pioneers Joe and Fannie Quigley.

Joe Quigley came to the north in 1891 when he was 22 years old, before the Klondike gold discovery. He was an experienced prospector by the time he began to work his placer gold claims on Glacier Creek in the fall of 1905. Fannie McKenzie joined Joe there in 1906. A veteran of the Klondike and other stampedes, she had made her way to Glacier City during the previous year. Fannie also filed mineral claims on Glacier Creek.

The search for lode deposits (metal-bearing veins in source rock) in the Kantishna district started early, when gold prospectors began finding lead ore (galena) with high silver content in their sluice boxes. Joe Quigley was one of the first to pursue lode mining in the district. He prospected high on Mineral (Quigley) Ridge, where he located and staked a number of claims containing lead, zinc, silver, gold, and copper-bearing veins.[9] By 1909 Joe and several partners had surveyed and patented six of these claims, the first lode claims patented in the Kantishna district.

Before the spring of 1913, Joe Quigley and Fannie McKenzie built a cabin on their Silver Pick lode claim. Fannie mentioned this to her friend Charles Sheldon in a letter dated May 2, 1913: "We have a cabin on the hill between Eureka and Friday [creeks]. Joe is working on some quartz. One can set in window and see Mt. McKinley and sheep hills. We live up there in the winter and down here in summer."[10] Lode prospecting increased after 1914, but the difficult access to this remote district significantly delayed the development of lode deposits. Most of the prospectors lacked the financial resources to undertake extensive underground mining or build milling plants.



Map of Quigley Ridge claims, 1922. Note the location of the Silver Pick and Little Annie claims.

John A. Davis, *The Kantishna Region*, U.S. Bureau of Mines, 1922



Stephen Foster Collection, 69-92-722, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

(Left) Two visitors chat with Fannie Quigley at the Quigley Ridge cabin, October 1919.



Henry P. Karstens Collection, Karstens Library

(Right) Joe and Fannie Quigley's cabin and workshop at the Silver Pick claim high on Quigley Ridge (no date). Upper Eureka Creek is seen on the far right of the photo.

Little Annie Claim

Continuing along the edge of Quigley Ridge, the road ascends a steep hill and approaches Skyline Lodge, a group of buildings on the left. This is a privately-operated accommodation and headquarters for Kantishna Air Taxi. On the right, a small spur road (Skyline Drive) angles up the north side of Quigley Ridge. The Little Annie mine, not visible from the park road, is located 1.3 miles up Skyline Drive, near the top of the ridge.

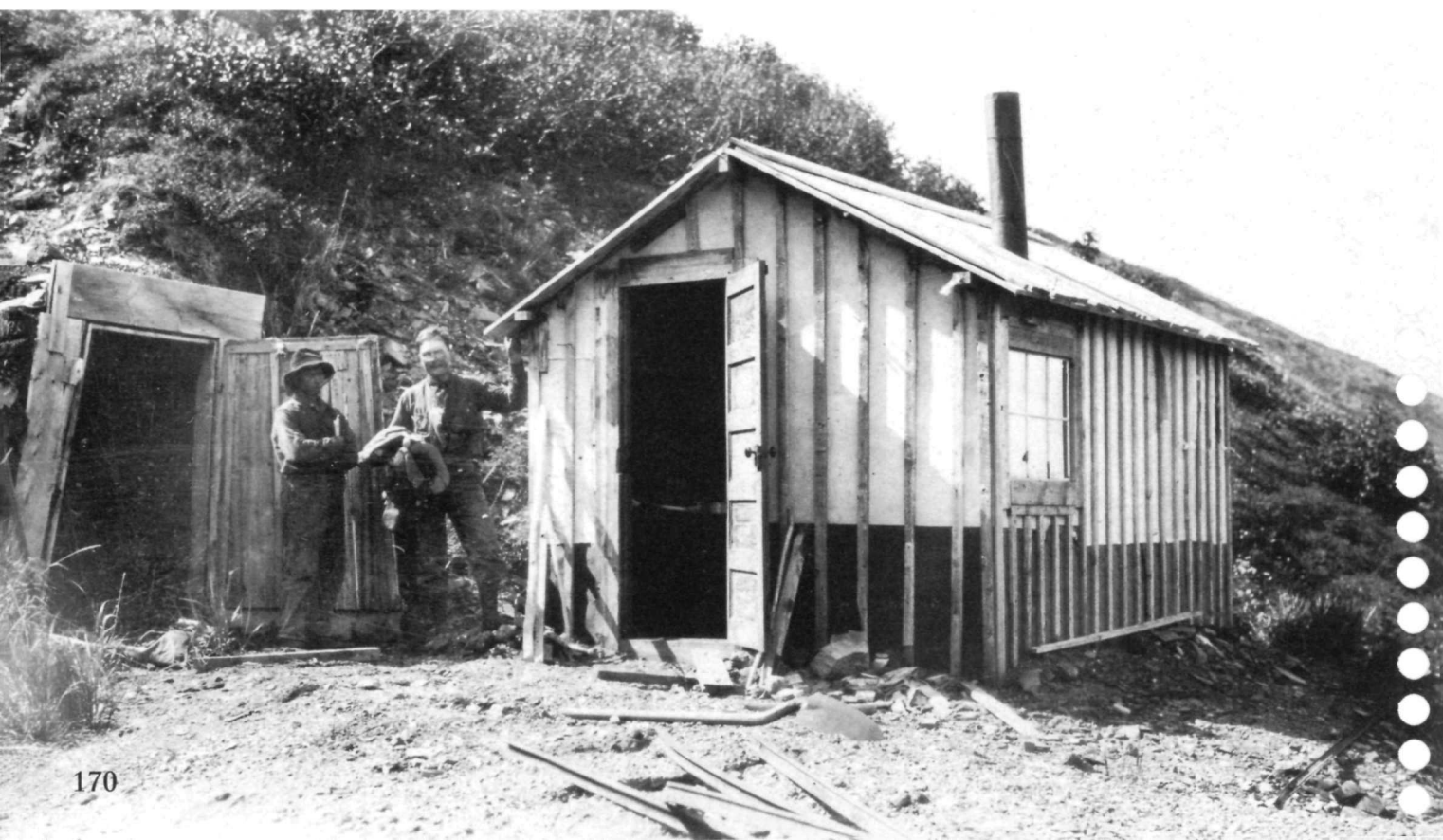
Joe Quigley and Fannie McKenzie were married at Glacier Creek on February 2, 1918.[11] They may have felt optimistic about the future of mining in the district, expecting that construction of the new government railroad between Seward and Fairbanks would ease the district's transportation difficulties. That same year Joe discovered a rich galena-bearing vein on the Little Annie claim, on the north side of Quigley Ridge.[12]

The next year Joe Quigley leased a group of claims on Quigley Ridge to Thomas P. Aitken, including the Little Annie claim. Aitken built a camp, and by the end of 1919, he had mined approximately 500 tons of high-grade silver- and gold-bearing ore, which he shipped to a smelter in California. This was the first ore produced in the Kantishna Hills and sent to a smelter in the lower 48 states.[13]

This first commercial recovery of ore looked very promising for the district, and it spurred the development of other lode prospects. About 1,100 tons of high-grade ore was shipped to a smelter in the San Francisco area in 1920 and 1921. The ore was hauled by sled during the winter and stockpiled for transport by boat in the summer. It took almost a year to receive returns from the smelter after the ore was mined. Due to the prohibitive cost of operation and the lack of adequate transportation to and from Kantishna, Aitken left the district in 1922.

Unidentified men at a tunnel of the Little Annie claim.

Fannie Quigley Collection, 80-46-109, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks



Red Top Claim

Just past Skyline Drive, Joe and Fannie Quigley's Red Top claim is visible midway up the hillside to the right of the park road, south of Friday Creek. A group of tall deciduous trees marks the site of the Quigleys' Friday Creek cabin and gardens. Joe began developing the Red Top claim in 1920, and in 1921 he mined and stacked sacks of silver-lead ore for shipment. By September, his development work included five open cuts and a 300-foot-long adit (tunnel).

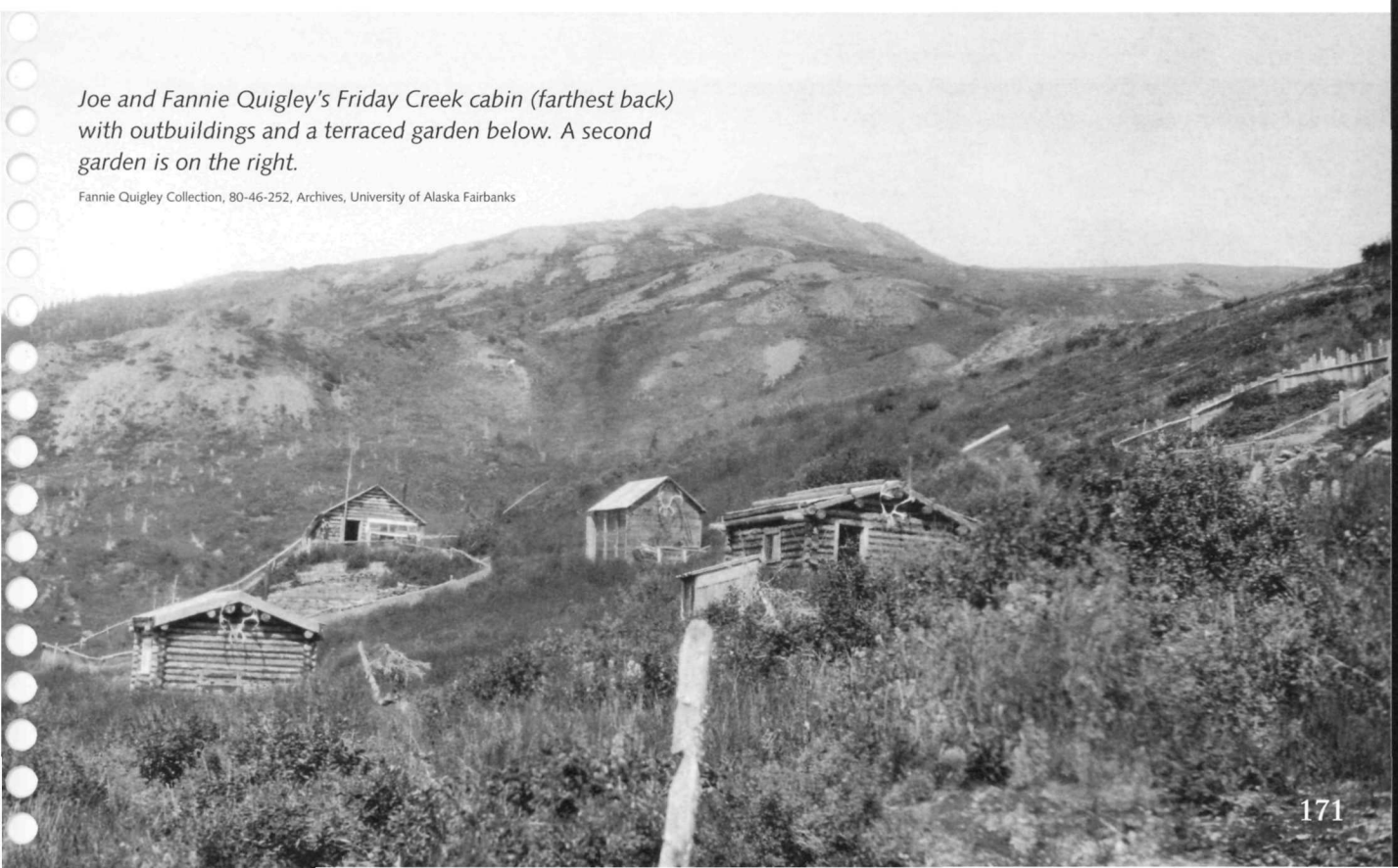
In September 1921, Joe leased the Red Top claim to Hawley Sterling of Fairbanks, who mined approximately 50 tons of ore. The ore was mined in the winter and hauled to the Alaska Railroad by dog team, shipped by rail to Seward, and then by boat to a smelter in Tacoma, Washington. During 1922, the Quigleys' Red Top claim was one of only two galena deposits mined in Alaska.

Sterling worked the claim in 1923 and then, because the easily extracted ore had been exhausted, operations were ended. When Sterling and Aitken left Kantishna, early lode mining activities in the district came to a close. Prospectors realized that although the Kantishna silver-lead ores were of high grade, the expense of mining, transporting, and processing the ore consumed nearly all of the profits. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, most of the unpatented lode claims in Kantishna lapsed.

The site of the Red Top claim saw some activity again in 1973 when the Craig family of Juneau leased lode claims on the west end of Quigley Ridge. To extract the valuable minerals from the ore, they built a small mill at the Red Top claim. They mined silver ore from the Gold Dollar claim and processed it at the mill, but the operation was discontinued after only one season. In 1991, the NPS purchased the claim and removed most of the mill. By 1997 adjacent claims were either abandoned or purchased by the NPS, clearing the way for final reclamation of the mine and mill sites.

Joe and Fannie Quigley's Friday Creek cabin (farthest back) with outbuildings and a terraced garden below. A second garden is on the right.

Fannie Quigley Collection, 80-46-252, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks





John M. Brooks Collection, 68-32-325, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

This photograph, dated 1923, shows a well-established camp at the Quigleys' Red Top claim, including Joe and Fannie's Friday Creek cabin (far right), outbuildings, and sacks of ore stacked near the mine entrance. The two fenced areas are garden sites. The Friday Creek drainage is in the center of the photo.



NPS Photo, DNP&P

Looking southeast toward Quigley Ridge, remains of the small mill operated in 1973 can be seen at the center of this 1993 photograph. The Quigleys' Friday Creek cabin site is left of the mill location.

Banjo Claim

Joe Quigley continued to prospect on Quigley Ridge, and patented 23 lode claims in 1926 and 1927. In 1929 he located the Banjo lode gold claim at the east end of Quigley Ridge, in a location that cannot be seen from the park road. On May 21, 1930, Joe was driving a tunnel about 60 feet underground when he was seriously injured by rockfall. Fannie found him and went to get help. Friends carried Joe on a stretcher about 4 miles to Moose Creek, where an airplane picked him up. When he arrived at the hospital in Fairbanks on June 2, he finally received treatment for a broken femur and badly injured shoulder.[14] It was September 24 before he returned to Kantishna, still recovering and unable to resume his normal activities. His career as an underground miner was effectively ended by this accident.



DENA 3509, DNP&P Museum Collection

Neighbors prepare to transport an injured Joe Quigley from the Banjo claim to Moose Creek.

While Joe was hospitalized in Fairbanks, Fannie took care of all the chores and prepared for the coming winter by herself. After Joe returned home, Fannie wrote to her friend Mary Lee Davis about his condition: "They got his leg set three inches too long, and he can't put his arm up to his head. I have to rub his arm and leg an hour every night and morning, and do all work now, for he can't even cut wood. So everything is up to me. Joe is getting along very good. He walks about eight miles every day."[15]

Still bothered by his injuries, Joe began making trips outside Alaska and started visiting Fairbanks for longer periods. In 1937, Joe and Fannie split their income from the sale of their claims and officially divorced. Fannie stayed in Kantishna. Joe moved to Seattle and married the nurse he had met while recuperating from his injuries. Joe died there on November 23, 1958, at age 89.



Fannie Quigley Collection, 80-46-220, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

An endless round of domestic chores required Fannie's attention to keep herself and Joe supplied with the basic necessities at their Friday Creek cabin.

Friday Creek

A short distance beyond Skyline Drive, the road crosses Friday Creek. The cabin on the right, just before the creek, was built in 1982 on the site of a historic cabin ruin. This is the Gallop cabin, named for its previous owner, Louise Gallop, who purchased the discovery claim on Friday Creek in 1967. The NPS now owns the claim, and the cabin is used in the summer to house researchers and rangers. The clearing upstream was last mined with heavy equipment in 1983, and is now the site of several NPS seasonal housing units.

Joe Dalton and Joe Stiles staked discovery claims on Friday Creek in July 1905, and shortly after, the entire length of the creek was staked. Six men worked on Friday Creek in 1906. Between 1907 and the early 1920s, most of the gold produced from this stream was obtained by pick and shovel from creek gravels. The gold had a rough, unworn character, indicating that it had traveled only a short distance from its source.

When mining restrictions were lifted at the end of World War II, intermittent placer mining resumed on Friday Creek. In the early 1960s, Henry Dyer and Slim Plackman used a small bulldozer to move gravel into sluice boxes. Between the mid-1960s and 1982, placer mining increased and an estimated 300 ounces of gold were taken from Friday Creek. An intensive mining effort in 1982 and 1983 produced an estimated 4,000 ounces of gold.[16]



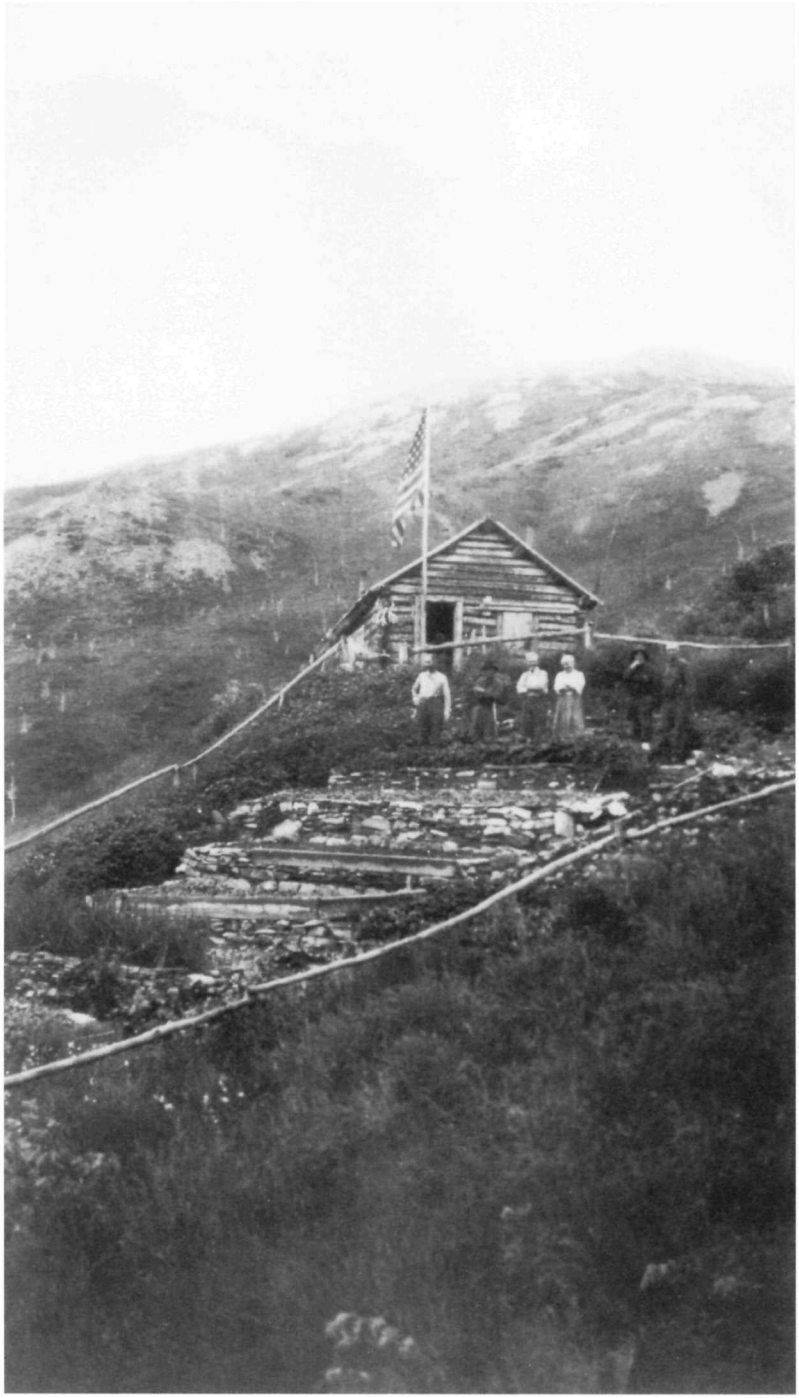
Prospectors' camps on upper Friday Creek, 1906.

L. M. Prindle, #527, USGS



Fannie Quigley Collection, 80-46-247, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Looking up Friday Creek, Quigley Ridge is on the right. The Red Top claim and the Quigley's Friday Creek cabin are at the center of the photograph to the right of the creek, c. mid-1920s.



Fannie Quigley Collection, 80-46-281, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Fannie Quigley's terraced garden below the Friday Creek cabin.

Living in Kantishna

By the early 1920s Joe and Fannie Quigley were living at their cabin above Friday Creek. Their well-documented lives tell us much about the hardworking people who lived in the Kantishna district. In addition to the mining activities that sometimes provided an income, there was the endless work to provide the basics of life in such a remote location.

Daily logistics included hauling water, cutting and hauling firewood, heating and cooking with wood fires, and other chores such as repairing equipment. Kantishna pioneers built their own cabins as well as the interior furnishings, using local spruce trees for logs and for sawing into

When Grant Pearson first met Fannie Quigley in 1926, she was 55 years old and had been mining and living in the Kantishna Hills for 21 years. He described her as "up and at 'em. She was a dog musher, prospector, trapper, hunter, woodcutter, gardener, and one of the best sourdough cooks I have ever run across. At a Christmas dinner once, Fannie served black bear roast, gravy, mashed potatoes, fresh cabbage, hot rolls, currant jelly, cranberry sauce, and fresh blueberry shortcake. Only the flour and sugar had been freighted in. The rest was from the country."[17]

planks. They maintained dog teams for transportation and freighting supplies.

Since first settling in the Kantishna area, Fannie maintained a large vegetable garden. At Friday Creek, Fannie built terraced beds for her garden on the hillside below the cabin. Both Fannie and Joe hunted moose, caribou and Dall sheep for their meat. Nearby prospect tunnels were handy for cold storage of produce and meat. Fannie became famous for her blueberry pies, made with the berries she picked each summer. Shooting an occasional black bear provided the lard necessary for pie crusts. Many of the prospectors, including Fannie and Joe, pursued trapping during the winter as a way to generate some cash.



Fannie Quigley Collection, 80-46-220a, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Fannie cutting firewood.



DENA 3511, DNP&P Museum Collection

Joe Quigley freighting supplies with his dog team. Note that the dog team is harnessed in single file, and Joe is steering the sled with a gee pole (the pole attached at the front of the sled on Joe's right).



Johnnie Busia collage, DNP&P Museum Collection

Fannie Quigley (third from left) at her yellow frame house on Friday Creek.

Fannie Quigley's Yellow House

Just beyond Friday Creek is the yellow frame house where Fannie Quigley lived for a few years. Although there is little documentation, it is believed that Fannie moved from her Friday Creek cabin to this house in 1939 or shortly after. She lived alone here and maintained a garden nearby.

During World War II, Fannie Quigley and Johnnie Busia were the only year-round residents in Kantishna. On August 22, 1944, at age 73, Fannie died quietly in her house. Johnnie found her. She was buried at the Birch Hill Cemetery in Fairbanks. Reporting on her funeral, the Fairbanks newspaper published this memorial: "And thus she was given up to immortal legend, for so long as there is an Alaska, stories will be told and retold with gusto and admiration for the lively mite of a woman whose famed personality, salty vigor and great kindness are heart and sinew of the last frontier."[18]



Luella Rumohr Collection, Courtesy of Ree Nancarrow

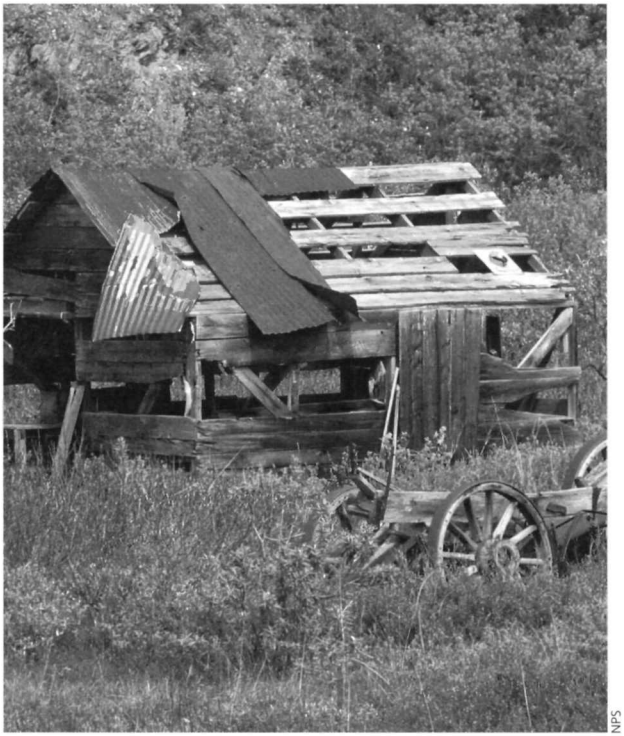
Some accounts refer to Fannie's embroidery, which she displays in this photograph taken at her yellow house, early 1940s.



NPS

Please help protect our cultural heritage

Artifacts and other archeological resources are part of our heritage and are protected under strict federal laws, including the National Historic Preservation Act. It is NPS policy to leave historic and archeological resources in place, in order to preserve these features in their historic setting. Moving an object destroys its historic integrity, thereby losing much of its story. Leaving historic objects in place allows the next visitor the opportunity to experience a sense of discovery. If you think a find is important, photograph it in place, mark its location on a map or with a GPS unit, and notify NPS staff.



NPS



P.S. Smith, #1404, USGS

This 1922 photograph shows the settlement of Kantishna on the left (east) side of Moose Creek. The Kantishna Hydraulic Mining Company camp is to the right of Moose Creek. Note the hydraulic giant (nozzle with squirting water) washing bench gravels near the creek in the foreground.

Hydraulic Mining on Moose Creek

In order to obtain a good view of some sites, this roadside history tour will turn around at the end of the park road, the Kantishna airstrip, and retrace the route to the top of the hill between Friday and Eureka creeks. From there, the Busia cabin and the former location of the Kantishna Hydraulic Mining Company (KHMC) camp can be seen.



J. Arthur Sutherland Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

Kantishna Hydraulic Mining Company supplies being freighted from Fairbanks to Roosevelt, 1920.

Since the early days of the gold rush, mining claims on Moose Creek were worked on a small scale using pick and shovel. By 1916 most of the rich shallow placers had been played out, leaving the deeper gravel deposits that could not be worked profitably by hand methods. As early as 1915, investigations were made to determine if it was feasible to use large placer mining plants on Moose Creek, where extensive deposits of bench gravels could be mined. A group of Fairbanks investors, including Dr. James Arthur "Doc" Sutherland, organized the Kantishna Hydraulic Mining Company and began preparations in 1919 to conduct large-scale hydraulic mining on Moose Creek. The company acquired approximately 890 acres of placer ground, including 45 claims, starting just above the mouth of Eureka Creek and extending downstream.



J. Arthur Sutherland Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

Supplies and equipment at Roosevelt, 1920.

In 1920, the KHMC began hauling supplies and equipment by boat up the Kantishna River to Roosevelt and then overland using horse-drawn wagons or sleds. In June 1920 Doc Sutherland wrote in a letter, "We expect to leave for the Kantishna in about four days. We have about ten tons of supplies, four horses and seven men.... We are taking a small steamer and two barges, my launch and a canoe.... We have secured a good man cook, so it should be a perfect (?) holiday for Nora [Sutherland's wife who went along]. However, as we have seven miles of swamp to haul our stuff over and the mosquito crop is good this year, the perfection may be somewhat impaired."[19]

Between 1921 and 1924, the Alaska Road Commission upgraded 34 miles of trail to a wagon road between Roosevelt and Kantishna, in order to support the transportation needs of the KHMC, as well as Thomas Aitken on Quigley Ridge and the Mount McKinley Gold Placers Company, which had started a large-scale hydraulic operation on Caribou Creek.

Hydraulic mining involved channeling large amounts of water through a series of increasingly smaller pipes to create water pressure. The water was directed through a



J. Arthur Sutherland Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

A Kantishna Hydraulic Mining Company crew putting pipe together near Kantishna, 1922.

"hydraulic giant" (nozzle) to blast away the sides of stream beds to get at the gold in bench deposits. With a crew of twelve men, the KHMC constructed a five foot dam in 1921 at the outlet of Wonder Lake, so that water could be moved by ditch to Moose Creek. On August 16, 1921, Sutherland wrote, "We built 12,000 feet of ditch, 6 feet wide on the bottom and 10 feet on top, and 4 feet deep. Two dams and six waste gates, one trestle 32 feet high and 68 feet long, put in deadmen to hold our pipe and cleared the ground for our buildings as well as building stables for the horses. . . . I worked 18 pounds of fat off my bones and the work done me good." A total of 5,300 feet of hydraulic pipe was transported as far as Roosevelt that summer.

During the 1922 season, the KHMC crew of 29 men completed the installation of the hydraulic plant on Moose Creek near the mouth of Eureka Creek. They constructed three buildings in their camp: a mess hall, a bunkhouse, and a cabin for the Sutherlands. Once hydraulic mining started on July 10, the crew worked in three 8-hour shifts for about 35 days.[20]

Although a large amount of gravel was processed, gold recovery was not as good as expected and operational costs were high. The KHMC suffered a severe financial setback and never returned. Others tried operating the hydraulic plant in 1923 and 1924, but the results were not profitable, and the entire operation was abandoned around 1928. Today the remains of hydraulic mining include dam remnants at the outlet of Wonder Lake, the ditch line above Moose Creek, scattered pieces of pipeline, and the company bunkhouse (Busia cabin). Considered together, these features make up one of the more significant historic sites in the Kantishna district and contribute to its status on the National Register of Historic Places.



J. Arthur Sutherland Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

Doc Sutherland's caption for this photo reads: "View of our home camp looking down Moose Creek. You can see the pipe line partly finished running down the hill, also ten tents and four buildings, June 1922."

Doc Sutherland

A native of Toronto, Canada, Dr. James Arthur "Doc" Sutherland completed his medical training at the University of Toronto in 1896, and settled in Dawson City in 1898 where he met his wife Nora. They moved to Fairbanks in 1904, and he practiced medicine there for more than 40 years, often traveling to remote locations by dog team and airplane to assist patients. One long-time Fairbanks resident commented, "Oh, Doc Sutherland saved everybody in Fairbanks at least once!" Doc Sutherland pursued mining as a side interest. In the Kantishna district, he was involved with developing prospects on Glen Creek as early as 1910 and later shifted his attention to hydraulic mining on Moose Creek. He died of a heart attack at age 78 while on vacation in Hawaii in 1952.



J. Arthur Sutherland Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

Dr. J. Arthur "Doc" Sutherland (left) and his wife Nora are pictured here on a Wonder Lake fishing trip. They are at John and Paula Anderson's cabin at the north end of the lake. (John Anderson is second from right.)

Busia Cabin

The KHMC bunkhouse was constructed of hand-hewn, saddle-notched spruce logs. The single room measured 21 ½ ft. by 19 ½ ft. with a window in each wall. After the KHMC left Kantishna, Johnnie Busia moved into the bunkhouse and lived there year-round for the rest of his life. After his death in 1957, local miners continued to use the cabin. In 2006 the NPS acquired ownership of the deteriorating structure. An NPS crew restored the cabin in 2008, preserving it as an example of the early history of the Kantishna Historic Mining District.



Victor Kallit Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

The Busia cabin and cache as they appeared in 1955, two years before Johnnie Busia's death.

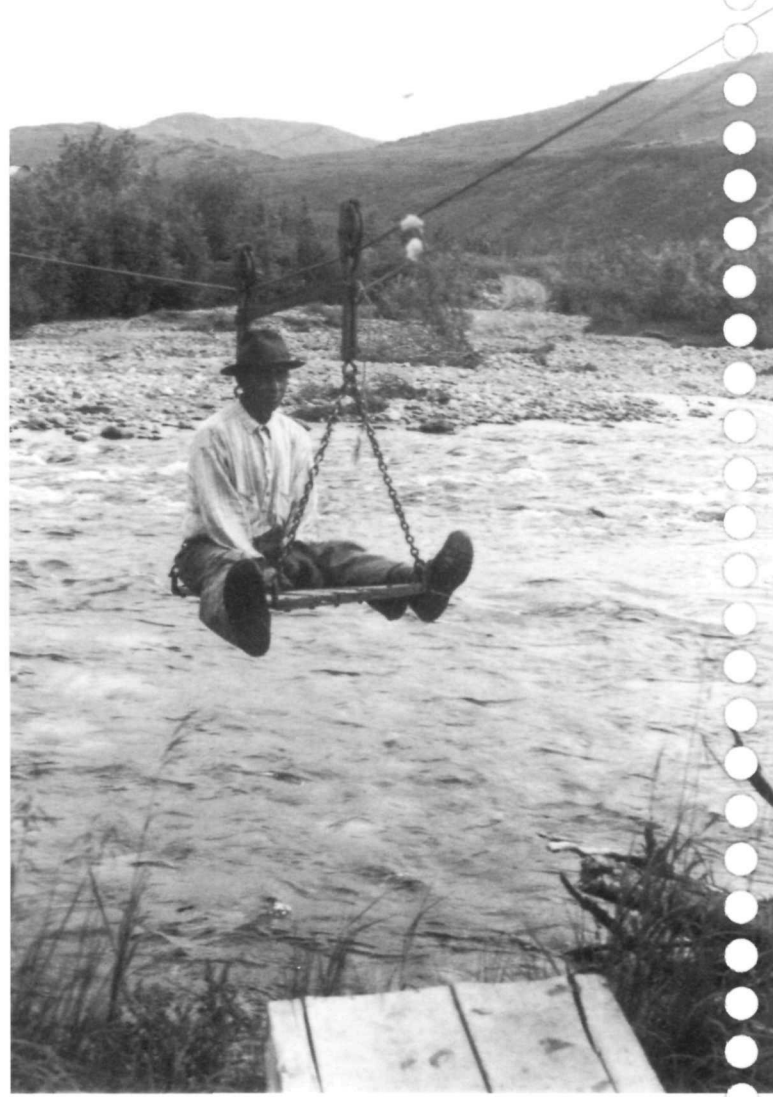
"Little Johnnie" Busia — Last of the Kantishna Old-timers

After emigrating from Croatia in 1911, Johnnie Busia, known as "Little Johnnie," arrived in the Kantishna mining district in 1918, where he joined his father, Marko, who had been in the district since the early days. Johnnie stayed and made Kantishna his home. He prospected and mined, and during the winter months he ran a trapline. Long-time friend Grant Pearson quoted Little Johnnie as saying: "They comes and they goes, but Little Johnnie likes it here and he stays. If I want to work, I work. If not, I stay in cabin. My grubstake is in that gravel bank."[21]

He was handy with tools, as Grant Pearson related: "One of the later prospectors left a broken-down gasoline-operated shovel, telling Johnnie he could use it if he could make it run. After a couple of weeks of tinkering and fixing, Johnnie had it running. He had never seen it operated, and had no manual for it."[22]

Johnnie's log cabin was built as a bunkhouse by the Kantishna Hydraulic Mining Company in 1922. Under his cabin was a hole in the ground with a trap door opening inside the cabin. This "root cellar" was Johnnie's refrigerated storage for his famous homebrew, known far and wide as "Kantishna champagne." Visitors were

U.S.G.S. geologist John C. Reed, Jr., who first met Johnnie in 1949, wrote: "Little Johnnie lived in a small one-room cabin that was reached via a rickety hand-operated cableway across Moose Creek from the end of the road. I remember that Johnnie's cabin had the characteristic smell of most prospectors' cabins of that era — a mixture of wood smoke, kerosene, sourdough bread, and sweat. In his later years Johnnie became quite a popular tourist attraction for park visitors, who got quite a thrill taking the cable ride to his doorstep."[23]



Johnnie Busia crossing Moose Creek on his homemade cable tram.

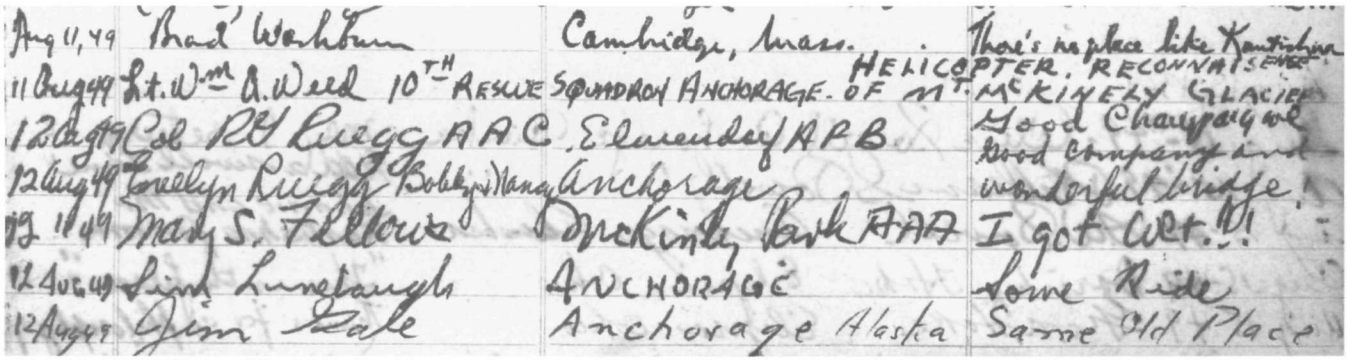
Oscar Dick Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

(Opposite page) Johnnie Busia (left) and Grant Pearson share some of Johnnie's brew, 1950s.

W. H. Kilham Photo, Courtesy of Wallace A. Cole

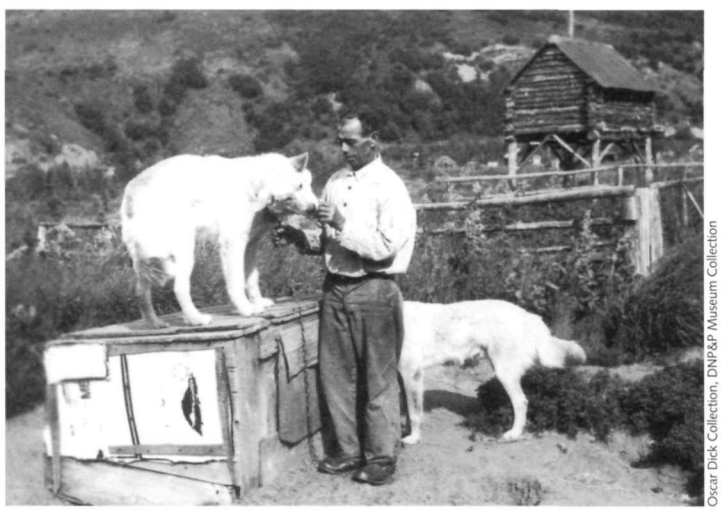


Kantishna ~ Historic Mining District



DENA 1496, DNP&P Museum Collection

Johnnie kept a guest book for his visitors to sign, documenting where they were from and their comments. The excerpt above, from August 1949, illustrates how much visitors enjoyed his "Kantishna champagne," and their experiences crossing Moose Creek.


Oscar Dick Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

Johnnie Busia and his companions, Kantishna, 1947.


Thomas Stewart Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

Johnnie Busia (left) with his Kantishna cabin in the background, 1953.

invariably welcomed with a helping of champagne and all of the stories that the isolated miner had been waiting to share with someone. There was a regular supply of visitors and local miners in the summer, but winter was a much quieter time. After Fannie Quigley passed away in 1944, he was the only year-round resident. During his later years, the NPS supplied Johnnie with a radio, and he would call park headquarters with a report on weather conditions and notable happenings.

On August 20, 1957, Johnnie passed away quietly in his cabin at the age of 66 and was buried by friends among the graves of his beloved sled dogs. Camp Denali's newsletter commented on his passing: "Johnnie was a simple, unschooled man, but he was wise, honest, and generous. Hundreds had signed his guest book, sipped his beer, and enjoyed his warm hospitality. With his death an era comes to an end, for a little bit of Alaska dies with each old-timer."[24]

To honor this last old-timer, Grant Pearson proposed the name "Busia Mountain" for the mountain south of Johnnie's cabin. The U.S. Board of Geographic Names formalized that name on January 1, 1958.

Eureka Townsite

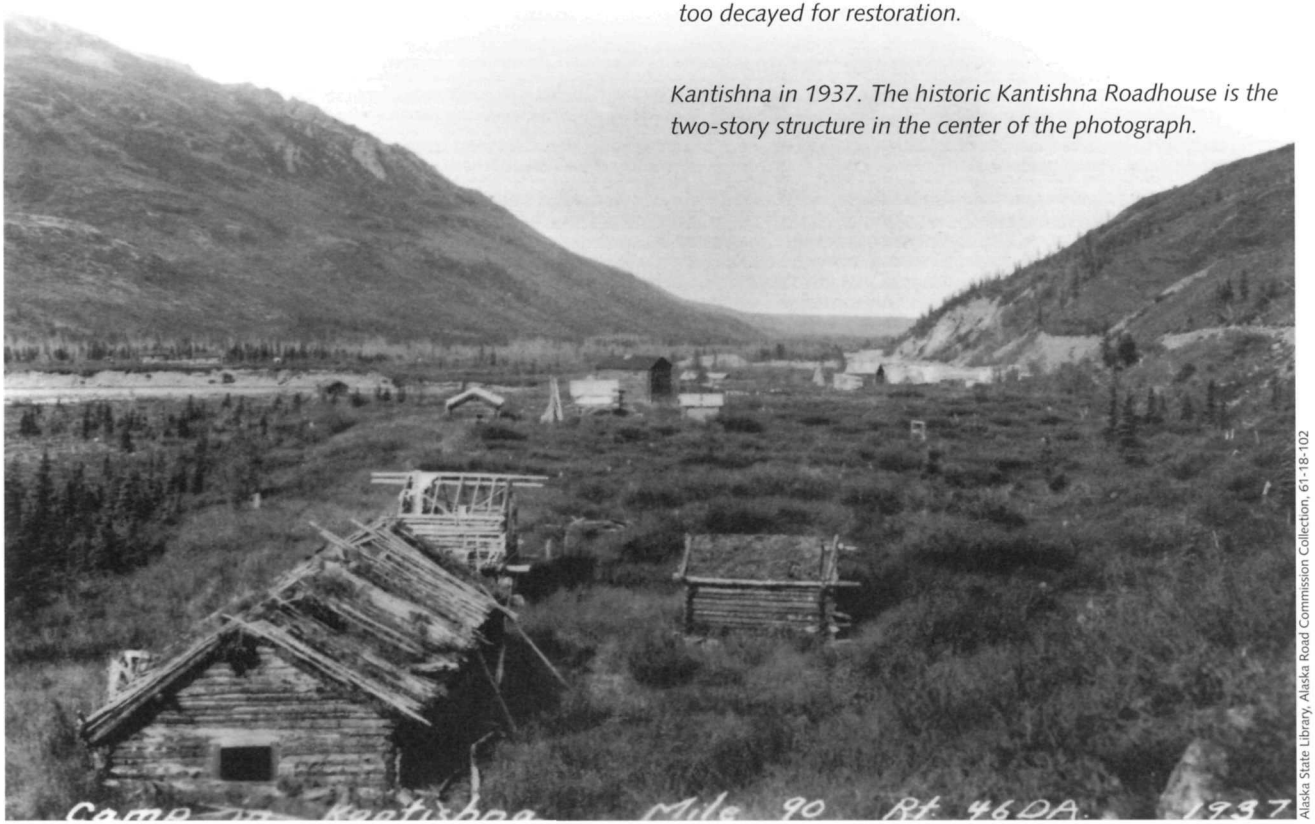
Continuing down the hill to Eureka Creek, the Kantishna Roadhouse buildings are ahead, located on privately-owned property overlaying the original Eureka townsite. Beginning as a cluster of tents during the early months of the gold rush, more permanent log cabins were built over time. In 1919, C. Herbert Wilson was appointed U.S. Commissioner for the Kantishna District, based at Glen Creek. That winter he constructed a two-story log cabin in Eureka as a residence for his family, which he used as an unofficial office. Wilson served as commissioner until 1921, when Edgar Brooker replaced him, relocating from Glen Creek to Friday Creek. The Wilson residence became known as the Kantishna Roadhouse. Its later use as a post office, community meeting space, and informal overnight accommodation for travelers likely contributed to its "roadhouse" designation.[25]



NPS Photo, DNP&P

The historic Kantishna Roadhouse, 1988. An NPS evaluation in 1989 concluded that the log walls were too decayed for restoration.

Kantishna in 1937. The historic Kantishna Roadhouse is the two-story structure in the center of the photograph.



Alaska State Library, Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-18-102

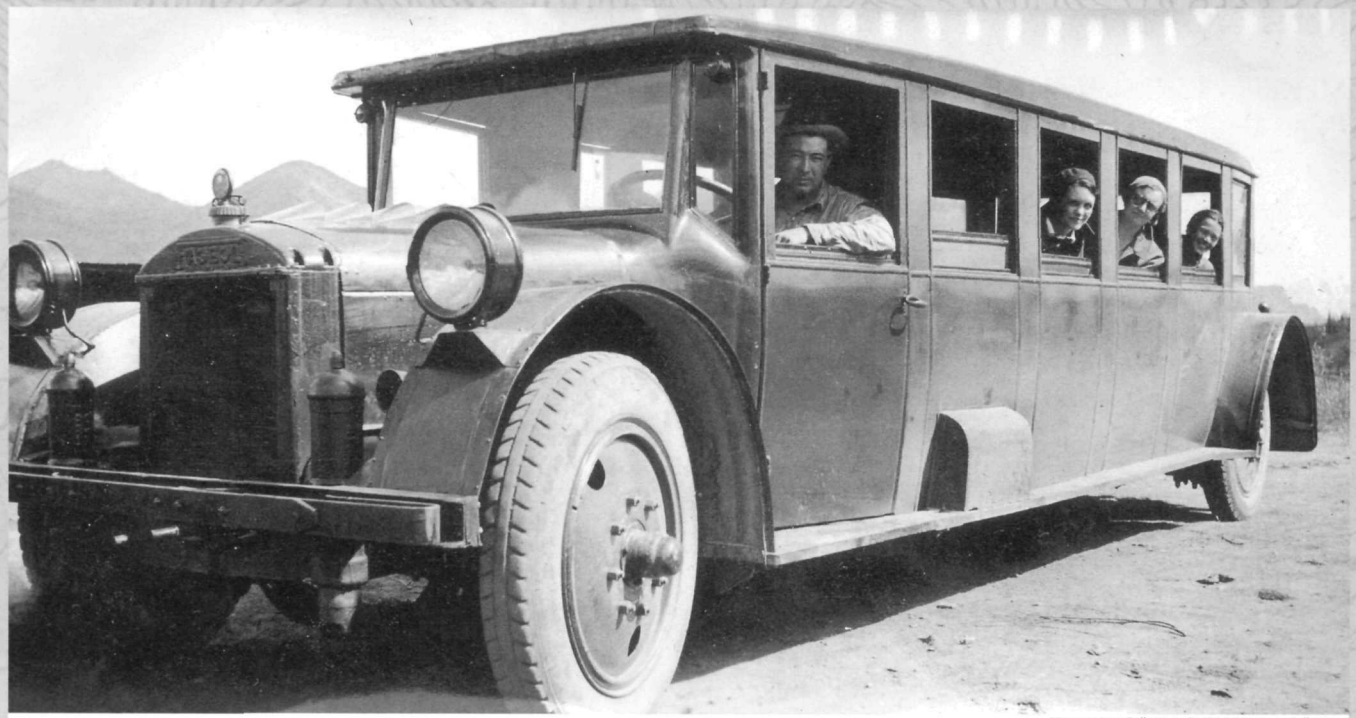
The Eureka/Kantishna Historic Mining District has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, significant for its representation of an important way of life based on prospecting and mining during the 1904-1942 period. Fannie Quigley's yellow house, the historic Kantishna Roadhouse, the Busia cabin, and the Kantishna Hydraulic Mining Company's dam and ditch are all contributing features of this national historic district.

The Kantishna mining district includes the entire Kantishna Hills region, and general trends illustrated by sites along the park road hold true for the greater district. Prospecting and mining have gone through boom-and-bust cycles over the course of the last century, the fortunes of the district influenced by both local and national events. Still, mining persisted, carried on by the self-reliant old-timers and colorful individuals who seemed to subsist on placer gold, moose meat and hope, possibly fortified with a helping of Kantishna champagne.



Charles Ott Photo, DNP&P Museum Collection

Kantishna, 1956.



Norma Hoyt Collection, DNP&P Museum Collection

The Journey Continues

This trip through park history is now at an end, but the stories continue through time. Just as the road corridor reveals only a segment of the park, this collection of selected stories illustrates only a portion of the rich tapestry of park history. The events and people in this book have shaped the current park, as today's events are shaping the park of the future. At Denali National Park and Preserve, the National Park Service continues striving to "preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations."[26]

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Index

( ) = photographs bold = key pages

Abbey, Woodbury – 67, 142
Acres, of Park – 4, 156, 157
Aitken, Thomas P. – 124, 170, 171, 181
Alaska Engineering Commission – 5, 16, 20, 31; (5)
Alaska Geographic – 112
Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act 1980 (ANILCA) – 5, 156, 157
Alaska Natural History Association – 112. *See* Alaska Geographic
Alaska Road Commission (ARC) – 13, 22, 25, **36–39**, 41, 43, 44, 48, 49, 52, 54–56, 61, 65, 71, 72, 74, 75, 78, 86, 89, 96, 98, 100, 103, 105, 106, 128, 130, 136, 137, 143, 146, 156, 162, 181; (iii, 13, 37–39, 50, 52, 54, 56, 72, 76, 77, 97, 103–107, 136, 137, 144); map – 35, 95
  Cabins/Camps – 38. *See individual sites:* McKinley Park Station, Savage River ARC Cabin, Sanctuary Cabin, Igloo Creek Cabin, East Fork Cabin, Toklat River Cabin, Stony Creek ARC Camps, Little Stony ARC Camp, Mile 66, Mile 72
Alaska Railroad – 4–9, 11, 14, 16, 20, 22, 23, 37, 38, 85, 96, 97, 109, 110, 124–126, 151, 170, 171; (4, 5, 16); map – viii, 3
Albright, Horace – 75, 143
Anderson, John – 154–156; (156, 183)
Anderson Pass – 124, 154
Anderson, Paula "Polly" – 154–156; (154, 156)
Anderson, Pete – 154
Anderson Roadhouse and Fox Farm – **154–156**; (154, 155, 157, 183); map – 120
Anderson, Wallace – (150)
ANILCA – *see* Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act 1980.
Arch, Gateway –14; (1, 15); map – 3
Archeological excavations – *see* Teklanika Archeological District
Athabaskan – 60, 163

Banjo Claim –**173**; (173); map – 160
Beach, William – 155
Bearpaw River – 164, 165
Been, Frank – 49, 143, 146, 147, 156
Benson, Harvey – 144
Bergh, Knute – 101, 102
Bergh Lake – **101, 102**; (101, 102); map – 95
Bevier, George – 51
Bigelow (miner) – 122
Big Timber – 133, 138, 139, 142; (138, 142); map – 120
Birch Hill Cemetery – 22, 178
Blanchard, C.J. – (99)
Boone and Crockett Club – 85, 86
Bootleggers – 6, 9
Boundary Changes – 5, 9, 14, **36**, 52, 54, 69, 84, 85,108, 138, 140, **142**, 143, 146, **156**, **157**, 162; (36, 53, 139, 142); maps – viii, 2, 34–36, 120, 121, 142, 157
Boundary Creek – 123
Brooker, Edgar – 187
Brooks, Alfred H. – 82, 137, 162
Brown, William E. (quoted) – 18
Bureau of Public Roads – 86
Busia Cabin – 180, 182, **183**, 184, 186 188; (162, 183, 186); map – 160
Busia, Johnnie – 167, 178, 183, **184–186**; (184–186)
Busia, Marko – 184
Busia Mountain, place name – 186; map - 160

C–Camp – 18, 23. *See* also Civilian Conservation Corps
Cammerer, Arno – 105
Camp Denali – 102, 143, 162, 186
Camp Eielson – 108–111; (108–111)
Campgrounds – 143. *See individual locations:* Savage River, Sanctuary River, Teklanika River, Toklat, Wonder Lake
Cantwell –151, 153; map – viii
Capps, Stephen R. – 167
Caribou Creek – 181
Cathedral Mountain – 67; map – 59
Chapman, Robert – 102
Chitsia Creek – 163
Chulitna River – 124, 154
Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) – **17**, **18**, 28, 61, 62, 97, 146; (17–19, 27, 61, 146); map – 2. See also C–Camp, Teklanika River Campground, Wonder Lake Campground
Civilian Conservation Corps Kitchen and Mess Hall – 18; (18)
Clearwater Creek – 142
Coal – 22, 71, 72, 123, 147. *See also* East Fork Coal Mine,
Coal Creek – 71, 72; (71)
Coffman, Sam – 63
Colorado Station – 124
Copper Mountain – 118, 122–125, 127, 130–132; (122). *See also* Eielson, Mount
Copper Mountain Bar – 118, 127, 130, 132, 133; (122, 124); map – 125

Copper Mountain Mining Camp –123; (123, 126, 128)
Copper Mountain Mining District – 106, 108, 118, **122–129**, 143, 155; map – 125
Copper Mountain MMT&T Co. Camp – 43, 108, 133, 134; (133)
Copper Mountain Patrol Cabin – 96, 106, 108, **130–134**, 137; (122, 130, 132–135); map – 121, 125
Corbley, Lou – (26, 127, 139)
Corbley, Mrs. – (139)
Courtnay, Ralph, Sr. – 75, 76
Craig Family – 171
Cross, Donald – 183

Dalton, Joe – 163, 165–167, 174; (166)
Davidson, Ernest A. – 143, 156
Davis, John A. – 123
Davis, Mary Lee – 173
Denali Highway – 5, 62, 110, 143, 144
Denali Visitor Center – 5, 14, 16; (15)
Depot – 5, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 36, 41, 55, 96; (8, 5, 15, 30, 90); map – 3
Diamond City – 165, 167
Divide Mountain – 82, 83; (83); map – 80
Dixon, Joseph – 156
Dog Kennels – 18, **28**, 127; (28, 29)
Donnelley, Jack – 6
Dunkle, Wesley Earl – **124**
Dyer, Henry – 174

East Fork Toklat River – 39, 72, 74, 75, 82, 83, 143; map – 58, 81
East Fork Bridge – 72, **74**; (74); map – 58
East Fork Cabin/Camp – 69, **71, 72**; (72, 73); map – 58
East Fork Coal Mine – **71, 72**, 147; (71); map – 58
Edmunds, M.C. – 136, 156
Eielson Bluffs – 134, **136, 137**; (136, 137); map – 121
Eielson Camp – *see* Camp Eielson
Eielson, Carl Ben – **118**, 125; (118)
Eielson, Mount – 39, 43, 91, 96, 106, 108, 118, 122, 127–129, 132; (122); map – 121
Eielson Visitor Center, 106, 122, 130, 132, 136; (107); map – 94, 121
  original – **110–112**, 116; (111–113)
  new – **116**; (116, 117)
Eldridge, George – 137
Eldridge Glacier, place name – 137

Eureka Creek – 163, **165–167**, 168, 180, 182, 187; (163, 165–167, 169); map – 160
Eureka, Town of – 162, 165, 166, **187**, 188; (165, 166, 187, 188); map – 160. *See also* Kantishna, Town of
Expansion of the Park – *see* Boundary Changes

Fairbanks, City of – 5, 11, 12, 20– 22, 31, 40, 46, 47, 83, 123, 125, 128, 143, 151, 156, 163, 170, 171, 173, 178, 183
Fairbanks Daily News-Miner – 40, 118, 178
Fairburn, Mrs. – 12
Fannie Quigley' Yellow House – **178**, 188; (178); map – 160
Fire, structural – 9, 11, 14, 26, 28, 45, 140, 156
Fish Culvert –106; map – 95
Foster, Stephen – 154
Friday Creek – 163, 167, 168, 171, **174**, 176, 178, 180, 187; (172, 174, 175); map – 160
Friday Creek Cabin – *see* Quigleys' Friday Creek Cabin
Funds expended for Road construction – 39

Gaerisch, Frieda Louise – 21, 31. *See* Karstens, Frieda Louise
Galen, James – 40, 46, 47
Gallop Cabin – 174
Gallop, Louise – 174
Garage and Machine shop – 18, 28; (27)
Gardner, Arthur – (38)
George Parks Highway – 55, 112, 144; map – viii, 3
Ghiglione Bridge – 71
Gillette, Louise – 68. *See also* Murie, Louise
Glacier City – 165, 167, 168; (164)
Glacier Creek – 163–165, 168, 170; map – 121
Glen Creek – 154, 183, 187
Goebel, Ted – 62
Gold Dollar Claim – 171
Golden Zone Mine – 124
Gorge Creek – (122)
Government Draw – 134
Government Hill – **16**, 17; (16); map – 3
Grant, Owen M. "Red" – 123, 124, 127; (127)
Grant Cabin – 123, 128, 129; (123, 128, 129); map – 125
Grassy Pass – 137, 138
Gruening, Ernest – 143
Gudgel–Holmes, Dianne – 60
Gus (cook) – (127)

Hamlin, Tom – (25)
Hankins, Joe – 112, **115**; (69, 114, 115)
Harper, Walter – 20, 21
Hartzog, George – 144
Hawks Nest Cabins – 162
Haydon, Jack – 83, (83)
Headquarters, Park – 18, 22, **23–28**, 31, 36, 40, 69, 89, 91, 96, 134, 139, 153, 186; (19, 23–27, 150); map – 2, 35
Move – 7, 22, 23, 31
Original – **7**, 22, 23, 31, 36; (9, 22); map – 3
Herning, Beatrice – 128
Herning Cabin – 122, 123, 128, 129, (129); map – 121
Herning, Harold – 127, 128
Highway Pass – **96**, 98; (97); map–95
Hines Creek – 5, 6, 7; map – 2, 3, 35
Hotel sites, possible – 69, 108, 142, 143, 144. *See also* Wonder Lake Hotel; McKinley Park Hotel
Hogan Creek – 54, 55; (33); map – 34
Horn, Jack – 163
Hosler, D.G. "Dad" – 167
Hosler, Elmer – 167
Hosler, Maude – 153
Howard, Johnny – 41; (47)
Howard, Lena – 45, 91
Hoyt, Harry – (1)
Hoyt, Norma – 11, 41, 77
Hunter, Celia – 143
Hydraulic Mining – 40, 167, **180–182**, 183; (159)

Igloo Creek, place name – **67**; (67); map – 59
Igloo Creek Bridge – 65, 67
Igloo Creek Cabin – **65**, 69, 115; (iv, 65, 66); map – 59
Igloo Creek Camp/Campground – 43, 65, 115; (65, 66)
Igloo Forest – 62
Igloo Mountain – 67; map – 59
Inspiration Point – *see* Primrose Overlook

Jenny Creek – 41; map – 35
Jern, Ed – (124)
Jette, Julius – 60
Jiles, Frank B. – 123, 124, 129
Johnson's ARC crew – (77)

Kantishna Air Taxi – 170
Kantishna Airstrip – 180; map – 160
Kantishna Champagne – 184, 186, 188
Kantishna Gold Rush – **163**, **165**, 187
Kantishna Hills – 82, 162, 163, 165, 166, 170, 176, 188
Kantishna Hydraulic Mining Company (KHMC) – 180–184, 188; (180, 181)
Kantishna Hydraulic Mining Company Bunkhouse – 182–184. *See* Busia Cabin
Kantishna Hydraulic Mining Company Dam and Ditch, 188. *See* Wonder Lake Dam; Moose Creek Ditch.
Kantishna Mining District – 8, 13, 20, 37, 51, 82, 89, 122, 138, 142, 149, 154, 155, 162, 167, 168, 170, 171, 173, 176, 181, 182, 183, 184, 187, 188; (182)
Kantishna Ranger Station – 130, **138–140**; (139–141); map – 120. *See also* McKinley Bar Cabin
Kantishna Roadhouse – 162, 165, 187, 188; (162, 187, 188); map – 160
Kantishna River – 83, 163,165, 181; (165)
Kantishna, Town of – 38, 108, 123, 133, 139, 146, 156, 162, 178, 180, 181, 186, 187; (180, 187, 188); map – viii, 157. *See also* Eureka, Town of
Karstens, Eugene – 21, 31, 96; (31)
Karstens, Frieda Louise – 21, **31**; (30, 31)
Karstens, Henry P. "Harry" – 7, 12, **20–23**, 25, 28, 31, 36, 40, 83–86, 89, 99, 122, 123, 138, 139, 142, 155; (9, 20–22, 25, 29–31, 45, 83, 85)
Karstens Ridge, place name – 21
Kennecott Copper Corporation – 124
Kennedy, Dan – 41
Kennels – *see* Dog Kennels
Kesselring, Luella – 153. *See* Rumohr, Luella
KHMC – *see* Kantishna Hydraulic Mining Company
King, Pat – (25)
King, Samuel – 144
Klondike Gold Rush – 20, 46, 51, 137, 168

Liebau, Paula – 154. *See* Anderson, Paula
Liek, Harry – 75, 91; (90)
Lindley, Alfred – 91; (91)
Little Annie Claim – **170**; (170); map – 160, 169
Little Stony Creek – 106; map - 95
Little Stony Creek ARC Camp – 106; (105, 106)
Livingston, Helen – (31)
Lynch, Pat – 6

MacCrimmon, Alex – (25)
Machine shop and Garage – 18, 28; (27)
Mather, Stephen – 85, (31, 85)
Maurice Creek – 5. *See* Hines Creek
McGonagall Pass – 138; (153)
McIntyre, Raymond – 147
McKeen, Scotty – (45)
McKenzie, Fannie – 168–170. *See* Quigley, Fannie
McKinley Bar Cabin – 140. *See also* Kantishna Ranger Station
McKinley Bar Trail – 138
McKinley, Mount– 21, 40, 41, 45, 50, 52, 85, 91, 103, 111, 112, 115, 122, 137, 138, 146, 157, 162, 168; (42, 53, 93, 105, 119, 122, 131, 135, 136, 143, 145, 158); map – viii
  climbs – 20, 21, 91, 138, 163; (21, 90)
McKinley Park Hotel – **14**, 43, 45, 108, 109, 143; (14, 15); map – 3
McKinley Park School – **12** (12)
McKinley Park Station – 4, **5–7**, 9, 13, 31, 36, 37, 47, 61, 108, 109, 124, 133, 143, 153, 156; (4, 8, 13, 91)
McKinley Park Station ARC Base Camp – 13, 37; (13)
McKinley River – 130, 133, 138, 139, 140, 143; map – 120
McKinley River Bar – 137
Middle River – 60. *See* Teklanika River
Mining Claims, Copper Mountain – 122–129, 155
Mining Claims, Kantishna – 154, 163, 165, 167, 168, 170, 171, 173, 174, 180
Mining in the Parks Act – 128
Mile 66 (ARC camp/crew) – **106**, 108, 109, 111, 125, 128, 136, 137, 143; (107). See also Eielson Visitor Center; Camp Eielson
Mile 72 (ARC camp/crew) – 136, 137
Mineral Ridge – 168. *See* Quigley Ridge
Mission 66 – **61**, 69, 110, 111, 116
Moffit, Fred – 143
Moose Creek –162, 165, 167, 173, 180, 182 – 184, 186; (159, 162, 165, 166, 180, 182, 184); map – 120, 121, 160, 161
Moose Creek Bridge – 162
Moose Creek Ditch – 182, 188; (182)
Moose Creek Patrol Cabin – 153
Morino, Maurice – 5–7, 9, **11**–13, 47; (7, 10)
  first roadhouse – 5, 11; (6, 7); map – 3
  second roadhouse – 6, 7, 9, 11; (6, 10, 11); map – 3
Mount McKinley Gold Placers Company – 181
Mt. McKinley Tourist and Transportation Company (MMT&T Co.) – 40, 41, 43–47, 65, 77, 78, 106, 108, 109, 134; (41, 44, 52, 66, 78, 108, 109, 133, 149)
Muldrow Glacier – 91, 112, 124, 133, 134, 137, 142, 162; (122, 132); map–121
Muldrow, Robert – 137
Murie, Adolph – 65, **68**, **69**, 85, 148, 153; (68, 69, 70, 73)
Murie, Gail – (69)
Murie, Jan – (69)
Murie, Louise – 68, 69; (69, 73)
Murie, Margaret – 68
Murie, Olaus – 61, 68
Murray, Jessie – (45)

Name Change of Park – 4, 5, 157
Nancarrow, William – 151
National Register of Historic Places – 16, 28, 64, 65, 89, 116, 149, 182, 188
Nenana Daily News – 7, 11, 12
Nenana River – 9, 36, 60, 137
Nenana, Town of – 12, 21, 31, 51, 91
North Face Lodge – 162
Nyberg, Fritz – 5, 51, 89, 130, 133, 139; (131, 132)

"Paddy" (ARC worker) – (49)
Park Boundary – *see* Boundary Changes
Park Gate Roadhouse – 7, 11. *See* Morino, Maurice: First Roadhouse
Parker–Browne Party (Mt. McKinley climbers) – 21
Parks Highway – *see* George Parks Highway
Pearson Cabin – ii, 83, **88**, **89**, 130; (88, 89, 92); map – 80
Pearson, Grant – ii, 55, 56, 89, **91**, 130, 132, 133, 139, 140, 152, 153, 176, 184, 186; (26, 88, 90, 91, 127, 139, 150, 152, 185)
Pearson, Margaret – 91
Perry (miner) – 122
Peters Glacier – 83
Pilgrim, Earl – 125, 126
Plackman, Slim – 174
Plane Crashes – 91, 101, 102, 118
Polly's Roadhouse – *see* Anderson Roadhouse and Fox Farm
Polychrome Pass – 39, 72, **75–77**; (75–77); map – 58, 81
Potter, Ben A. – 63
Primrose Overlook – 52; (53); map – 34

Quake Lake – 102; (101). *See also* Bergh Lake
Quigley Claims at Copper Mountain – 122
Quigley Red Top Claim – *see* Red Top Claim
Quigley, Fannie – 122 168, 170–173, 176–178, 186; (166, 168, 169, 173, 177, 178)
Quigley, Joe – 122, 163, 168, 170–173, 176, 177; (166, 168, 177)
Quigley Ridge – **168–169**, 170, 171, 173, 181; (169, 172, 175); map – 160, 169
Quigley Ridge Cabin – 168; (169); map – 160. *See also* Silver Pick Claim
Quigley Yellow House – *see* Fannie Quigley' Yellow House
Quigley's Friday Creek Cabin – 171, 176–178; (171–173, 175, 176); map – 160. *See also* Red Top Claim

Railroad – *see* Alaska Railroad
Railroad Depot – *see* Depot
Ranger Club – **26**, 127; (26, 27, 152)
Red Top Claim – **171**; (172, 175); map – 160
Reed, John C. – 126, 127
Reed, John C. Jr. – 184
Richardson Highway – 46, 62
Riley Creek – 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 22, 23, 31; (9); map – 3
Riley Creek Railroad Bridge – 6, 7, 16; (5, 16)
Road Construction – *see* Alaska Road Commission (ARC)
Rock Creek Bridge – 23; (19)
Roosevelt, Franklin D. – 17
Roosevelt, Town of – 83, 165, 167, 180, 181, 182; (165, 181)
Rumohr, John C. – 147, **151–153**; (26, 150–153)
Rumohr, Luella – 153; (152)

Sable Pass – 39, 52, 71, 97; map – 59
Sanctuary River – 39, 54, 60, 89, 96; (57); map – 34, 59
Sanctuary River Bridge – 55, 56, 60; map – 34, 59
Sanctuary River Cabin/Camp – 54, **55**, **56**; (55, 56); map – 34, 58, 59
Sanctuary River Campground – 54, 56; (map – 59)
Savage Camp – 14, 22, 31, 40, **41–45**, 52, 96, 108, 109; (41–45); map – 34
Savage River – 31, 39, 40, 41, 43, 44, 48, 51, 52, 61, 96; map – 34
Savage River Bridge – **52**; (52); map – 34
Savage River ARC Cabin/Camp – **48**, **49**, 65, (48–50); map – 34
Savage River Campground – 48
Savage, Tom – 51. *See* Strand, Tom
Scott, Lt. Gordon D. – 101, 102
Scott Peak, place name – 102
70–mile Gravel Pit – 134, 137
Seward, city of – 5, 170, 171
Shallit, Abe – (126, 127)
Sheldon, Robert "Bobby" – 41, **46**, **47**; (46, 47, 148)
Sheldon, Charles – 20–22, **82–86**, 106, 166, 168; (82, 84)
Shelter Tents, ARC – 37, 89, 98, 130, 140; (37, 98, 99)
Sierra Club – 144
Silver Pick Claim – 168; (169); map – 160, 169. *See also* Quigley Ridge Cabin
Sisley, Arch – (127)
Sisley, Slim – (127)
Skyline Drive – 170, 171, 174
Skyline Lodge – 170
Slippery Creek – 124
Smith, Soapy – 46
Snowdrift claim – 123
S.S. Denali, Steamship – 105
Stampede Mine – 125
Steele Fork River – 60. *See* Teklanika River
Steele, Tom – 60
Steese, James G. – 103
Sterling, Hawley – 171
Stiles, Joe – 163, 174
Stoner, S.N. – 126; (126, 127)
Stony Creek – 98, 100, 101; (100); map – 95
Stony Creek Bridge – 100–102; (98, 100); map – 95
Stony Creek ARC Camps (upper & lower) – **100**; (100, 103); map – 95
Stony Creek ARC Shelter Tent – **98**; (98, 99)
Stony Dome – 105; (104); map – 95
Stony Hill – **103–106**; (93, 100, 103–106); map – 95
Strand, Tom "Savage" – 51; (51)
Strom, Erling – 91; (90)
Stubbs, Duke & Elizabeth – 6
Stubbs Fox Farm – 6; (6); map – 3
Stuck, Hudson – 20, 21; (21)
Superintendents – *See individuals:* Henry Karstens, Grant Pearson, Frank Been, Harry Liek, Samuel King
Susitna River – 137
Sutherland, James Arthur "Doc" – 180–**183**; (183)
Sutherland, Nora – 181–183; (183)
Swisher, Lee – 89; (150)

Tanana River – 83
Tatum, Robert – 20, 21
Teeland, Walter – 75, 76
Teklanika Archeological District – **62–64**; (62–64)
Teklanika Flats – 61; (60); map – 59
Teklanika River – **60**–62; (21); map – 34, 59
Teklanika River Bridge – (iii); map – 59
Teklanika River CCC Campground – **61, 62**; (61); map – 59
Telephone Line – 18, 96, 97; (96, 97, 109); map – 125
Thompson, Mary – 6
Thorofare Cabin – **134**, 137; (135); map – 121
Thorofare Gorge – 133, 134, 137
Thorofare Pass – 106; (104); map – 94
Thorofare River – 105, 112, 128, 130, 132, 134, 137; (122, 134); map – 94, 121, 125
Tige (sled dog) – 152; (152)
Tobin, Jack – 118
Toklat Ranger Cabin – 88. *See* Pearson Cabin
Toklat Ranger Station – 86. *See* Toklat River ARC Cabin
Toklat Rest Stop – 86; (map– 80)
Toklat River – 20, 39, 75, 78, 82–86, 89, 96, 134, 147, 152; (86); map – 58, 80, 95
Toklat River Bridge – 78, 86; (79, 86); map – 58, 80, 95
Toklat River East Fork Bridge – 74; (74). *See* East Fork Bridge
Toklat River Cabin/Camp – **86**, 88, 89, 153; (78, 86, 87); map – 80
Toklat River Campground – 43, 86; (87)
Toklat Road Camp – 86; map – 80
Treganza, Adan – 62

U.S. Biological Survey – 68, 82
U.S. Bureau of Mines – 123
U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey – 101
U.S. Geological Survey – 82, 102, 126, 137, 143, 162, 167; (126, 133)
U.S. War Department – 36
University of Alaska – 62, 63
University of Alaska Museum of the North – 47

Valdez – 46, 151
Valdez Creek – 151
Viereck, Les – 134; (97)
Vint, Thomas – 75, 108, 143
Visitation, Park – 39, 110, 112, 116, 142, 144
Visitor activities – 14, 22, 24, 28, 40, 41, 43, 45, 49, 65, 106, 108, 109, 112, 134, 143, 184; (iv, 4, 24, 28, 33, 43–45, 52, 66, 75, 145)

Warehouse – **24**, **25**; (25, 26)
Washburn, Bradford – 102,
Wayburn, Edgar – 144
West, Frederick Hadleigh – 62
West Fork Glacier – 124
Wickersham, Judge James – 162, 163
Wilder, Dan – 25, 26
Wilderness Access Center – 5; map – 3
Wilderness Society – 144
Wilson, C. Herbert – 187
Wilson, Ruth – (166)
Wolfe, Margaret – 91. *See* Pearson, Margaret
Wonder Lake – 108, 110, 134, 138, **142–144**, 146, 152–156, 182, 183; (151, 152, 154, 156, 157); map – viii, 120, 144, 157
Wonder Lake Campground – 142–144; (145); map – 120
Wonder Lake Dam – 182, 188
Wonder Lake Hotel – 108, 142–144, 146; (144); map – 144
Wonder Lake Ranger Station – 18, 72, 140, **146–149**, 151, 153, 154; (146, 147, 149); map – 120
Wood Frogs (*Rana sylvatica*), discovery – 15
Wood, Morton – 143
Wood, Ginny Hill – 143
World War I – 122, 151, 167
World War II – 45, 109, 143, 153, 167, 174, 178

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