AN HISTORICAL RESOURCE STUDY OF THE VALDEZ CREEK MINING DISTRICT, ALASKA – 1977

by

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Abstract

During the summer of 1977 David Harvey and Peter Dessauer, under contract to the Anchorage District Office of the Bureau of Land Management, conducted a historical resource study of the Valdez Creek mining district, an important gold mining center in south-central Alaska from 1903 to the 1940s. The center of the district was the settlement of Denali on Valdez Creek, a small tributary of the Susitna River. Though now largely abandoned, this settlement was the focal point of activities in the historic mining district, and was important in early socioeconomic interaction of whites and Natives in the region. Initial field inventory concentrated on Denali, but was interrupted when miners razed the old settlement. Subsequently, trails important in early transportation for the mining district were also inventoried and structures and sites along these routes as well as on Valdez Creek were documented to the extent possible. Through personal interviews, archival research, and published literature, the history of the mining district and of structures and features identified in the field were documented as completely as possible within the framework of the study. This report provides records of the location and condition of historic resources in the region, and makes recommendations for their preservation and interpretation, as well as for further study where documentation remains incomplete.

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Introduction

During the summer of 1977, we - David Harvey and Peter Dessauer, interns with the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, were contracted by the Anchorage District Office of the U. S. Bureau of Land Management to conduct a historical resource study of the Valdez Creek mining district, a small but important mining district from 1903 to World War II located on BLM land in the Denali Highway region. Focusing on the abandoned mining settlement of Denali (also called McKinley), the study also included trails and other features that were important in the mining history of the region.

WICHE's Resource Development Internship Program provides sponsoring government agencies like the BLM with students who have academic expertise that is needed by such agencies in carrying out research projects related to resource planning and development. At the same time the intern gains valuable practical experience, as well as an understanding of how resource agencies operate.

Such a research project challenged us as we began the inventory of the historical mining district. Besides historic properties on Valdez Creek, other features to be inventoried included the old sled and wagon trails that for decades were the lifelines of the isolated mining community. We photographed and documented cabins and other structures along these routes as well as on Valdez Creek. Through personal interviews, archival research and literature reviews, we made an assessment of their historical use, structural condition, and ownership status. Adding colorful folklore plus valuable information to these investigations were our field interviews with many old-timers. Their reminiscences of a bygone era are a precious source of living history.

From the data gathered, we hope that a determination can be made of the historic remains that warrant formal recognition, the stabilization/protection needs for these historic properties, and their interpretative potential for possible recreation development.

Prior to this report no comprehensive documentation of historic resources in the Denali Highway region had ever been undertaken. With most of the federal land in the Denali Highway region to remain under the Bureau's jurisdiction classified as D-1 land under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, (though the State of Alaska and Native corporations are not precluded from making selections from these lands), historical resource inventory was imperative. The BLM, a multiple-use agency, is required to inventory <u>all</u> resources on lands it administers to determine managerial options for the best land use. This requirement for inventory includes resources of a cultural nature, such as struc-

tures and sites of historical significance, and possible nomination of eligible properties identified to the National Register of Historic Places.

On occasion government documentation of historic sites for possible nomination to the National Register has been misinterpreted as a threat to the economic activities of private parties who have claims or leases on federal lands that include historic areas. Such a situation occurred in 1977 at the historic settlement of Denali. Two miners, Doug and Dave Clark of Talkeetna, felt that the our documentation of the old settlement of Denali, which is located on their unpatented mining claim, would subsequently lead to designation of a historic district and would restrict their mining activities. The BLM had no plans that would preclude mining operations, only for recording the historic remains located on federal land. Nevertheless, the Clarks felt threatened. After being there less than a week, we were told by the Clarks to leave. The Clarks apparently felt the best way to protect their claim was to tear the old buildings down.

In this situation Alaskans lost an irreplaceable heritage resource because of fear and ignorance. But the history of the Valdez Creek mining district cannot be erased. Though it was never a mining center of the magnitude of the Klondike, or of Fairbanks, it nevertheless played an important part in the opening up of the southcentral region of Alaska and is a good example of mining history in interior Alaskan districts. Development of large scale mining operations and growth of the settlement were greatly restricted by remoteness of the mining district and by primitive transportation facilities. It remained a small community of whites and Natives, never more than 150 people at any one time.

Although the "frontierism" of early Alaska occasionally conflicted with Native culture, many Natives were swept into the movement. Socioeconomic interaction of whites and Natives in the Denali region during the first part of the century resulted in nearly complete acculturation of the Natives to a new lifeway within the period of a single generation. Though the significance of the Valdez Creek mining district is obscured by the swift mainstream of Alaskan history, it was often the localized unheralded events that shaped the currents of that history.

PART I

THE SETTING

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

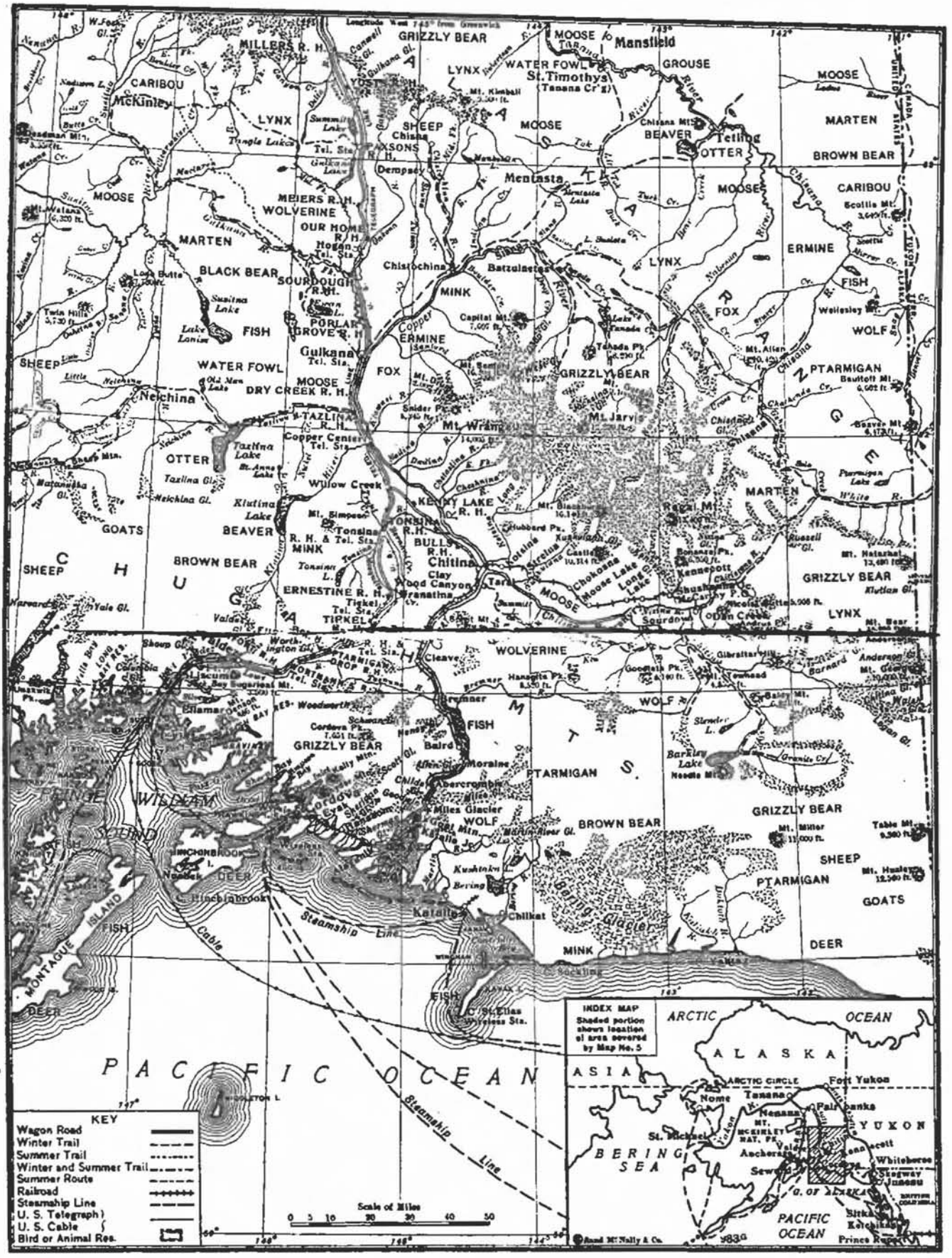
Natural Environment

The Valdez Creek mining district, located in Southcentral Alaska midway between Anchorage and Fairbanks (Map 1), is today reached by the Denali Highway, which extends 135 miles in an east-west direction between Paxson on the Richardson Highway and Cantwell on the Parks Highway (Map 2). Valdez Creek, the stream for which the mining district was named, orginates in the Clearwater Mountains, flowing in a southwesterly direction for approximately 14 miles before emptying into the Susitna River. The region bounding the Valdez Creek mining district is vast and rugged, comprising approximately 5,000 square miles of some of the most varied terrain accessible by road in Alaska. The snow-capped Alaska Range forms the northern border of the region, whose ice and snow supply scores of glaciers and give rise to the vast number of streams and lakes in the region. To the south is a parallel range, the Talkeetna Mountains, equally rugged, but whose glaciers and snowfields are inconspicuous when compared to those in the Alaska Range.

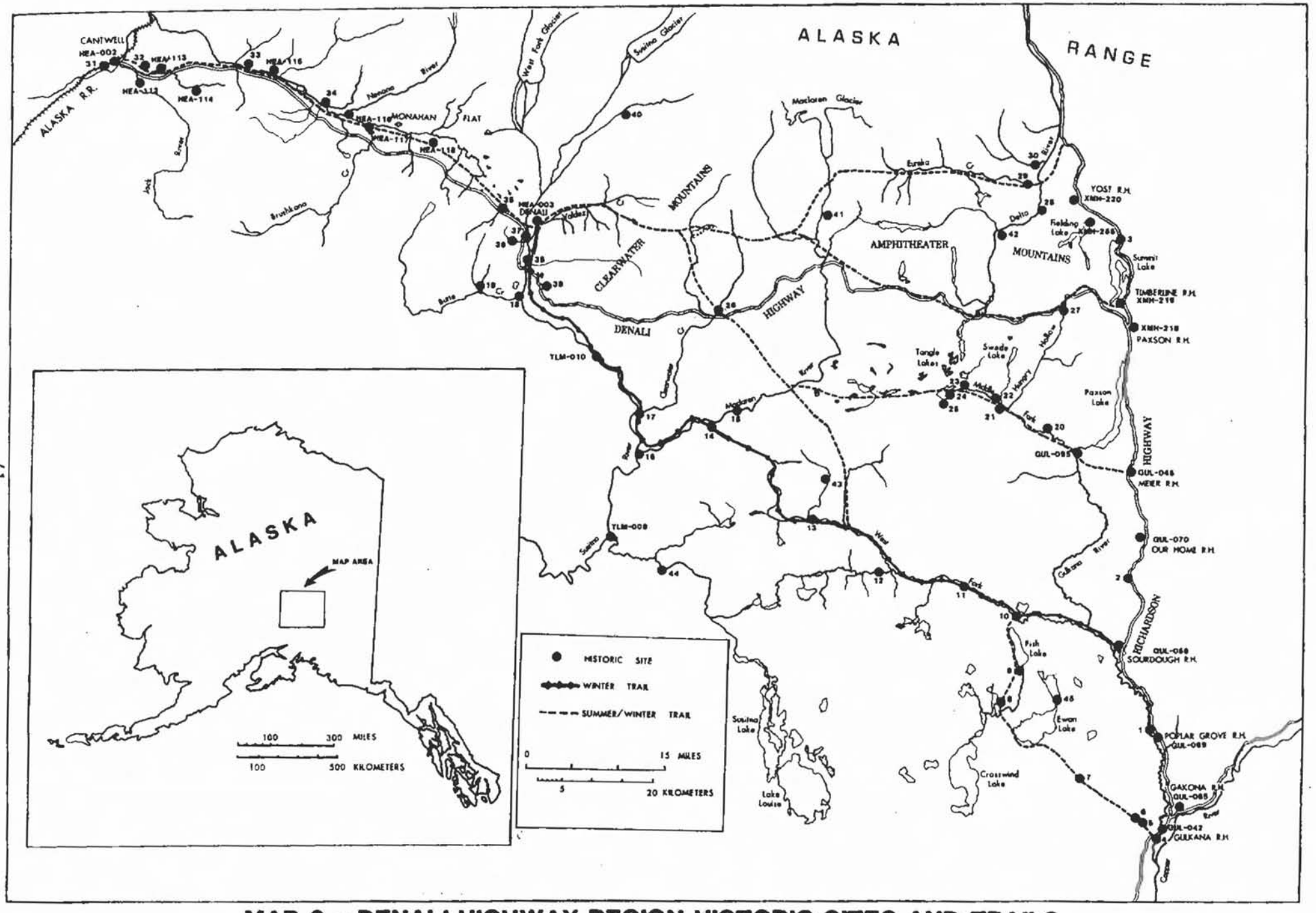
The region's diverse topography is strikingly evident in the great differences of elevation, varying from 13,782 feet high at Mt. Hayes in the Alaska Range to a low of 1,300 feet along the Gulkana River.

Glaciation and other geomorphological processes have had a significant impact upon the appearance of the entire region. During the Pleistocene ice age the southern third of Alaska was covered by glacial ice. As the ice subsided, the retreating glaciers left many deposits still visible in the Denali region. Evidence of intense and recent glacial activity is quite noticeable throughout the northern half of the region. The rugged mountain areas show U-shaped eroded valleys, and deposits of earth and gravel carried and finally deposited by glaciers rise alongside mountain slopes and on the tundra flats. Numerous eskers--long, narrow, snake-like mounds of sediment formed of rock, sand, and gravel deposits left by stream channels once formed in glacier ice--serve as the roadbed along certain lengths of the present Denali Highway. Also characteristic are the broad outwash plains of glacier gravel and braided streams - formed by excessive glacial loading due to lateral stream erosion - that emerge from existing glaciers such as the Maclaren, the Susitna, and the Nenana, and mark the predominating rivers in the region. Moffitt (1912:53) summed up, stating that "glaciation was the last of the great events that took place in the geologic history of the region, and it is still in progress."

According to USGS geologist Fred H. Moffit (1911a:119), the placer gold of Valdez Creek originated mainly in the slate areas



MAP 1 - COPPER RIVER REGION IN 1922
(RAND McNALLY 1922)



MAP 2 - DENALI HIGHWAY REGION HISTORIC SITES AND TRAILS

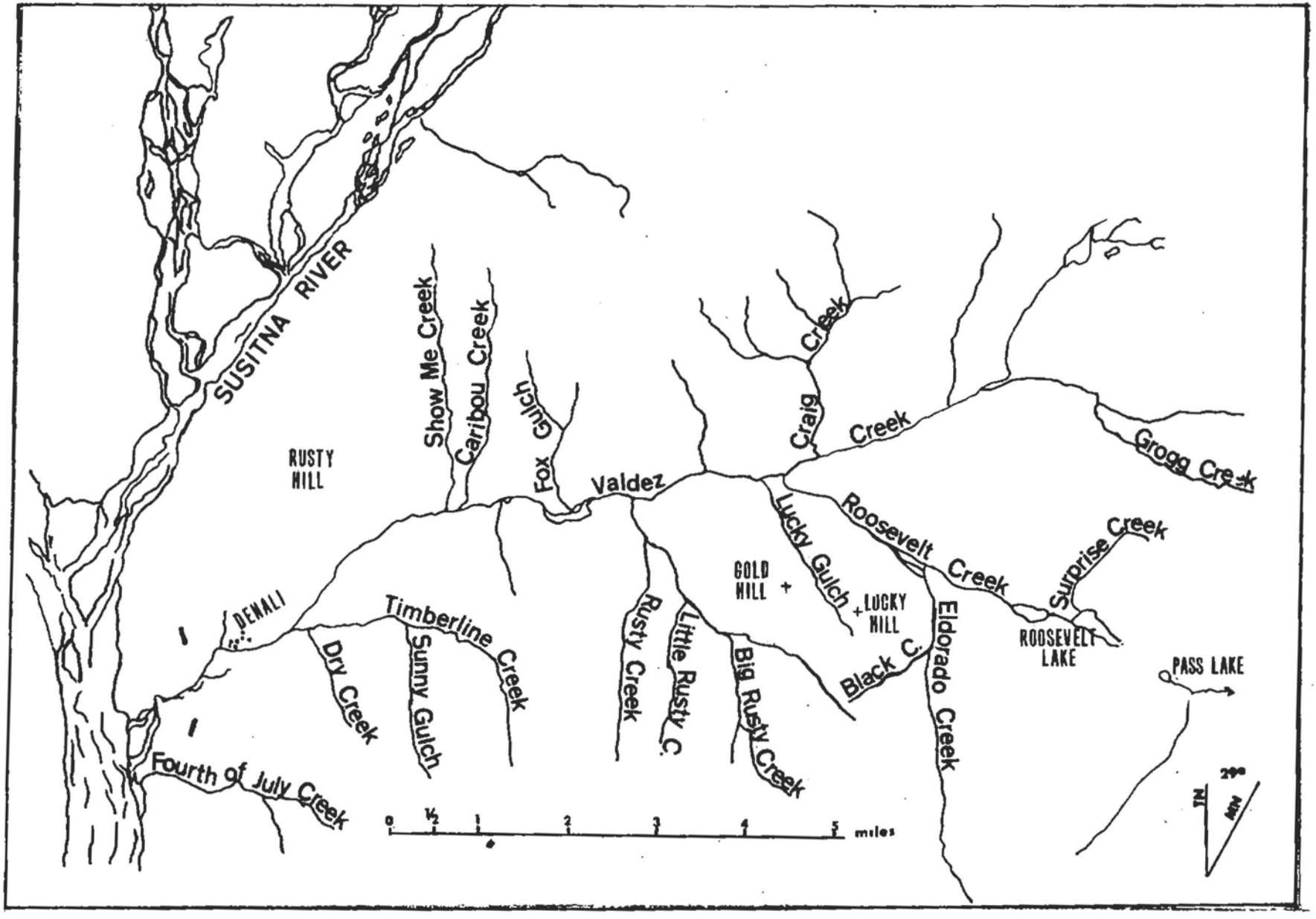
located in the tributaries which flow from the mountains to the south of Valdez Creek, principally Timberline Creek, White Creek, and Lucky Gulch (Map 3). Glaciation was partly responsible for the distribution of gravel deposits in the Valdez Creek area, for according to Moffit (1911a:118), the present stream channel was not the original one. Before the present canyon was developed the creek had cut an earlier but shallower canyon in the bedrock (Figure 1).

During the last major glacial period this was overridden by ice from the north and east and filled with gravel. When at last the ice disappeared and the creek established a new channel for itself, it followed a different course. The present canyon is cut into the slate 60 feet deeper than the old canyon at the place where they intersect on mining claim No. 2 Above (Figure 2). In cutting its present canyon below the intersection, Valdez Creek concentrated the gold from both the old and new channels (Moffit, 1912:68,69).

Farther south, the effects of glaciation are not as noticeable, except for the lakes which dot the land surface. Flat and rolling country predominates, from which rise flat-topped and terraced hills. These lowlands are characterized by poor drainage, forming a wet, marshy environment crossed by a few deep, sluggish streams. These streams have not yet entrenched themselves deep enough into the plains to drain away the surface water. The landscape contrasts greatly with the glacier-scarred upland region, where there are few lakes, and a well-developed stream system drains the terrain.

The dynamic interaction of geomorphic processes - drainage, erosion, and glaciation--along with climatic influences have resulted in a complex vegetation pattern in the region. Not only do the vegetation systems play a major role in determining the habitat distribution for different species of animals, but they also have a major visual impact by contributing scenic variety to the area. Seven of the nine vegetative ecosystems defined for Alaska are represented in the region. Five of the seven systems found in the region--alpine tundra, moist tundra, high brush, low brush-muskeg bog, and bottomland spruce-poplar forest--are dominant, occupying about 90 percent of the area. From Clearwater Creek west to Cantwell the region is dominated by these five ecosystems except for low brush, which appears sparsely. However, from Clearwater Creek east to Paxson and south to the Gulkana River, low brush dominates, with large patches of alpine tundra located in the mountains (Miller, Aukerman and Fletcher, 1976:10).

The Valdez Creek area is characterized by alpine tundra and barren ground along the Susitna River, with groves of upland spruce near the mouths of Valdez and Windy Creeks. Further upstream near Denali, high brush dominates, consisting of groves



MAP 3 - VALDEZ CREEK DRAINAGE

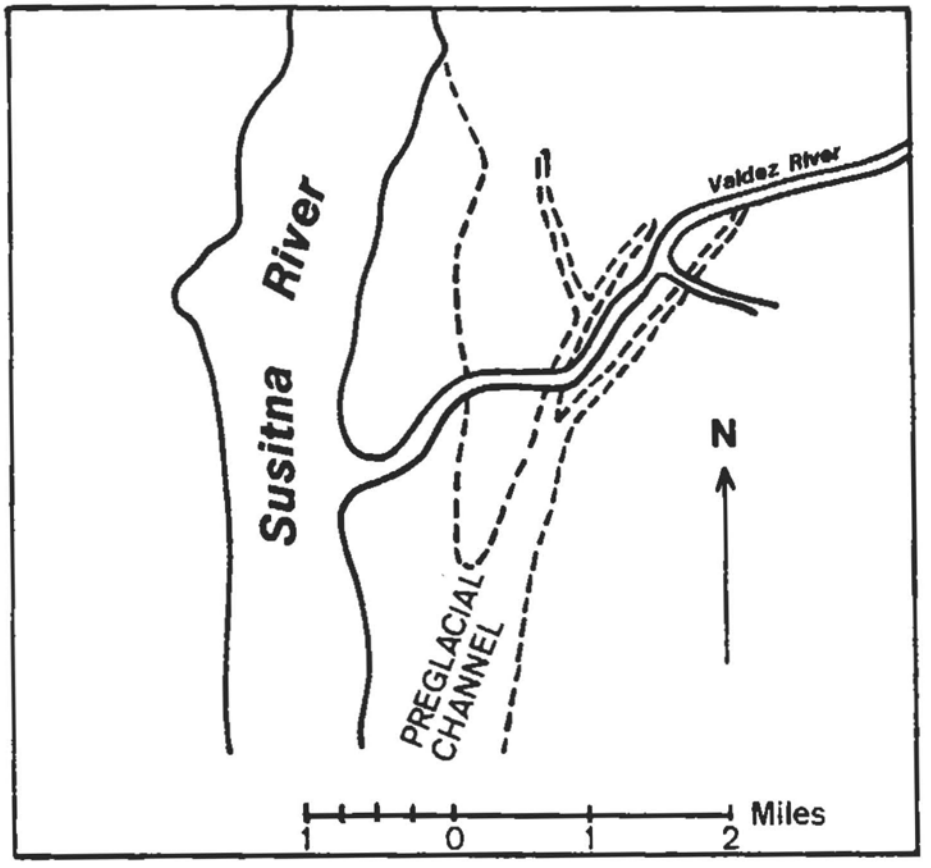


FIG. 1 - PROBABLE PREGLACIAL CHANNEL ON VALDEZ CREEK
(From Ross 1933:447, Fig. 53)

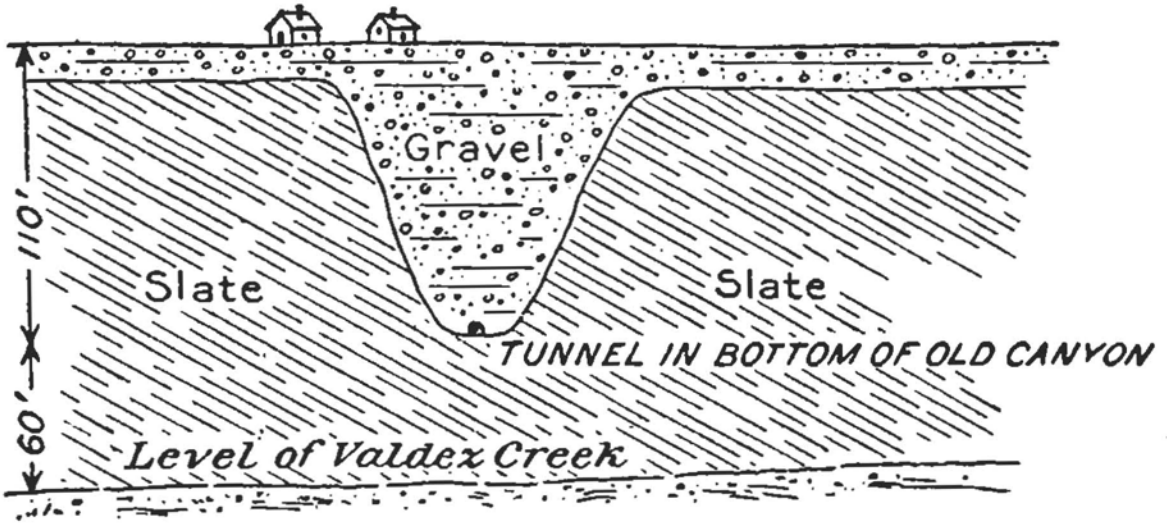


FIG. 2 - DIAGRAMMATIC SECTION OF PREGLACIAL CHANNEL
(From Moffit 1911:121, Fig. 17)

of dwarf birch, willows, and alders, and is especially dense around the old town site. This was not always the case, as early photos of Denali show a much more barren landscape. However, Alaska plant life can sometimes rejuvenate quickly due to the long summer days. In 1912, Moffit (1912:18) reported that grass for stock was plentiful and in some places as high as a man's shoulder where the brush had been burned off several years earlier. The spruce growing along lower Valdez Creek and along the Susitna south past Windy Creek at that time provided the miners with ample lumber and firewood. Three years later Moffit observed (1915:17) that "the best spruce timber seen in the region is on Butte Creek and is a source of supply for the miners of Valdez Creek." By 1933, most of the supply of suitable trees in the more convenient locations near Denali had been exhausted and the nearest source of timber was Butte Creek. The lack of suitable timber along upper Valdez Creek was felt to be a serious obstacle to mining operations in that period (Ross, 1933:42).

The Denali region's diverse vegetation provides habitat for an equally wide variety of wildlife and game, although the population has been declining in recent years. The Nelchina caribou herd of the region once numbered more than 70,000 individuals and until 15 years ago might take up to three days and nights to cross the Susitna River. Today the herd numbers only about 10,000, and can be seen crossing the Susitna River in small, scattered groups.

The Denali area is one of the few recreational hunting areas accessible by road, and offers opportunities for hunting, fishing, and sightseeing that are almost unequalled in the state. Depending on the season, wildlife can be seen throughout the region from the upland tundra to the mountains, and may include moose, Dall sheep, black bear, grizzly bear, and wolf. Many smaller mammals, such as lynx, wolverine, red fox, mink, marten, otter, muskrat and beaver are also found in the region. Numerous species of birds are also found in the region, and many waterfowl are found in summer and fall season on the large water bodies.

The region's numerous lakes, ponds, and streams can be deceiving to a newcomer expecting a hefty fish catch, as many of these bodies of water contain few or no fish. Many of the lakes are too shallow to support fish because they freeze to the bottom in winter, and the major rivers of the region, the Maclaren, Susitna, and Nenana, contain no fish during the summer months because they carry a heavy silt load from the glaciers at their headwaters. The salmon streams nearest to Valdez Creek are the headwater streams of the West Fork of the Gulkana River. Both king salmon and red salmon ascend the West Fork to its upper limits to spawn (Albin, 1977:46).

Although temperatures are not as extreme as in the northern interior, average minimum winter temperatures do range between 0

and 8 degrees F with 30 to 40 degrees F recordings commonplace. Summer temperatures frequently rise above 70 degrees F and occasionally reach 90 degrees F during the day, while night temperatures tend always to be on the cool side (Miller, Aukerman, Fletcher, 1976:34). Weather conditions can change rapidly, producing extreme summer and winter temperatures.

Precipitation seems to vary considerably from one locality to another, adding to the climatic unpredictability. According to the Colorado State University report, precipitation along the Denali Highway is actually light, averaging between 12 to 20 inches annually with about half of this total occurring in the summer months, mostly in the form of light rain. Snowfall averages about 20 inches annually along the highway, increasing at higher elevations to 80 or more inches in the Alaska Range (Miller, Aukerman, and Fletcher, 1976:33). The Alaska Range, and the Chugach and Talkeetna mountains to the south, serve as weather barriers for the region. Mountains to the south impede and precipitate warm, moist air from the Gulf of Alaska, and the mountains to the north block the flow of colder continental air from the deeper interior regions. Light surface winds averaging 3 to 10 miles per hour are normal, although extremes of 40 to 80 miles per hour are known to occur in the mountain passes and narrow valleys (Miller, Aukerman, Fletcher, 1976:34).

The usual recreational season (summer) along the Denali Highway spans 90 to 100 days. Many summer days are cool and overcast. However, this past summer was a particularly dry and warm one, while the late summer to early fall period, usually dry, experienced heavy rains and cool temperatures which hampered activity during the hunting season. From October 15 to May 15, the Denali Highway is closed to automobile traffic because of high snow drifts and rock slides. This greatly limits human use of the area in that season.

Present Land Use

The region traversed by the Denali Highway is heavily used for a wide range of outdoor recreation activities because of its relative accessibility to the State's major population centers. Commercial establishments on the Denali Highway include Paxson Lodge (Mile 0), Upton's Camp at Swede Lake, Tangle River Inn (Mile 20), Tangle Lodge (Mile 23), Maclaren River Lodge (Mile 42), Moore's Camp (Mile 51), Susitna Lodge (Mile 77), Gracious House (Mile 82), Adventures Unlimited (Mile 100), and cafe, bar, grocery, and garage services in Cantwell (Mile 135). There are also three Bureau of Land Management public campgrounds along the highway. Two are at Tangle Lakes (Mile 20), the other at Brushkana Creek (Mile 104). The commercial establishments rely upon the wildlife and game for a good part of their livelihood, however, according to a study by Colorado State University (Miller,

Aukerman and Fletcher, 1976:15), the wildlife population in recent years has been seriously depleted, especially the caribou and moose herds. Decline in caribou and moose population usually causes corresponding declines in predator species such as the wolf. Although man alone is not responsible for the decline, his hunting targets are usually the prime members of the herd, and the pressures of heavy hunting have taken their toll. Other factors such as range deterioration, natural predation and Alaska's long, cold, harsh winters have also contributed to the decline of animal populations. Further depletion of animal populations would seriously erode this economic base.

The water resources are a major asset to the region, providing habitat for fish and wildlife populations and also recreation opportunities. These conditions and activities are heavily influenced by the region's unpredictable weather and climate, as well as by accessibility. Most of the better fishing spots in the Denali Highway area are accessible only by foot, boat, tracked vehicles, or by air. All in all, the highway provides access to fair fishing, particularly for grayling and lake trout (Miller, Aukerman, Fletcher, 1976:27).

Although mining has picked up in recent years due to the rise in gold prices, the region has primarily become the province of the recreational public, especially since completion of the Denali Highway in 1957.

Trends

The Denali Highway was the only automobile route to Mount McKinley National Park until the opening of the Parks Highway in 1971 linked both Anchorage and Fairbanks to the park. If the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park becomes a reality, the Denali Highway will probably increase in importance, serving as a link between the two national parks. This is already indicated by the Ahtna Native Corporation's request that the federal government designate this route a national scenic highway (Anchorage Times, 11/29/78:1). If approved by Congress, a feasibility study will be made, and if it is designated, public land will be withdrawn from all entry for a mile on either side of the highway between Cantwell and Gakona.

Some local residents and entrepreneurs in the Denali region view further development with caution. Some believe that paving the entire Denali Highway would bring in too many people. Proposed hydroelectric dams on the Susitna River are also not enthusiastically received. Many of these same people take a negative view of the government's attempts to manage the area. They are afraid that government management will result in more regulations that will restrict their economic pursuits. Miners see State and Environmental Protection Agency water quality regulations as

unnecessary and expensive to comply with. Hunters and fishermen see Native claims in the region as excessive, closing off more lands from public use.

The incident that occurred this summer on Valdez Creek indicates the frustrations of a substantial minority in the region. Two miners, fearing that our historical survey of the area would lead to the establishment of a historic district and close off the area to mining, bulldozed almost all the standing buildings at the abandoned mining settlement of Denali. This type of hysterical reaction indicates a need for intense cooperative effort to arrive at land-use decisions acceptable to all concerned groups, specifically the Bureau of Land Management, the State of Alaska, Native groups, local residents and landowners, and recreationists.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Native Period

Prehistoric Era

Evidence of prehistoric use of the study area has only begun to surface in recent decades. Numerous archeological sites have been identified in the region bounding the highway, with the most significant concentration in the Tangle Lakes area. Since most of these sites are located on low hilltops and ridges, and consist primarily of chipped stone tools and chipping debris, it is believed that these elevated locations served as observation points from which aboriginal man watched and waited for game. It is also probable that the valleys and river basins of the region contain evidence of these ancient hunters.

Some of the first prehistoric sites identified in the region were found in 1953 in the Lake Susitna-Lake Louise area. Archeologist William Irving, working under contract with the National Park Service, discovered two flaking sites near the lakes (Skarland and Keim, 1958:79). No other sites were found until 1957 when Charles M. Ratekin, culvert inspector for the Bureau of Public Roads, made a discovery near mile 70 on the Denali Highway in a series of places ("blowouts") where wind had exposed chips and artifacts. Evidence seems to indicate that the locality was an observation point for game and a caribou hunting station. Skarland and Keim (1958:80) reasoned that "the large number of arrowheads suggest that it was a butchering ground where the caribou were funnelled into a narrow corridor created by the muskeg to the south and the steep foothills to the north." Although several time periods and culture phases were represented in the large number of specimens found, any attempt at chronology was difficult since blowouts lack stratification and cultural layers tend to be intermixed.

A few days after the discovery of the Ratekin site, Dr. Neil W. Hosley reported a similar site in a blowout near Tangle Lakes on the Denali Highway. While the Ratekin site was a butchering ground, the Hosely Ridge site was apparently an old drive location where the caribou were driven into the lake to be disposed of by men in canoes. Both sites were evidently the scene of "ambush and drive" hunting by migratory peoples whose culture had little resemblance to that of the protohistoric and historic Athapaskan. No means of dating was found, but, on the basis of patination of flint specimens, it was assumed that the artifacts found at these sites were at least 2,000, perhaps 4,000 years old (Skarland and Keim, 1958:80-81).

Evidence at these sites indicates a long history of limited seasonal use in the Denali Highway region. The harsh winters,

the lack of substantial plant foods and the migratory nature of game animals probably precluded the establishment of permanent aboriginal settlements. The distribution of game animals largely determined the location of seasonal camps. In the Upper Susitna basin, because of the migratory pattern of the Nelchina caribou, the region's geographical isolation, and lack of salmon, the Natives' nomadic way of life, centering around hunting, prevailed well into the late nineteenth century.

Current evidence indicates that during the prehistoric period the most densely inhabited area in the Denali Highway region was the Tangle Lakes locality. Archeologist F. H. West, who has worked a number of years in the Tangle Lakes vicinity, writes that the area was deglaciated roughly 9,000 to 12,000 years ago, so theoretically, it was inhabitable at that time (West, 1975:78-79). Since the Hosley discovery, approximately 220 sites have been found in the Tangle Lakes area, making it one of the most concentrated occurrences of archeological sites in the North American subarctic region (Zinck and Zinck, 1976:7). The importance of such a significant concentration of sites was formally recognized when in 1971 Tangle Lakes became the first archeological district in Alaska to be placed on the National Register for Historic Places.

Ancient man is also known to have widely inhabited the Copper River basin located south-southeast of Tangle Lakes. Archeologists (Workman and West, 1970:14) speculate that man's entry into the basin was about as early as into the Tangle Lakes area. During the late Pleistocene, a large proglacial lake was formed in the basin due to the damming of the Copper River exit by glaciers that advanced from the surrounding mountains. While the lake was present, man was excluded from the lowlands. The glaciers retreated about 9,000 years ago, permitting the lake to drain and possibly allowing salmon to ascend the Copper River once the glacial obstruction had been removed. The salmon may have attracted aboriginal man to the river system at that time.

Protohistoric-Historic Native Culture

The earliest identifiable Native group utilizing the Denali region was the Ahtna, an Athapaskan group that inhabited the Copper River basin. The location and distribution of the numerous Ahtna clans in the basin determined the nature and extent of their cultural and physical ties to the Denali region, their contacts with neighboring tribes, and eventual relationships with the white man. Archeologist William Workman (1976:5) described the three major socio-cultural units among the Ahtna as the Lower Ahtna of the Chitina-Klutina area, the Middle and Western Ahtna occupying the Tazlina-Mendeltna and Gulkana drainages and the Upper Susitna, and the Upper Ahtna occupying the headwaters of the Copper River as far south as Chistochina. The numerous Ahtna

clans within these units were in contact with most neighboring peoples, either through trade, warfare, intermarriage, or other social relationships. Such peoples included the Tanaina of the Upper Cook Inlet, the Tanana, the Northern Tlingit of Yakutat Bay, the Eyak of the Copper River Delta, and the Chugach Eskimo from Prince William Sound (West and Workman, 1970:24, 26). The migratory nature of the Ahtna's annual living cycle led to contacts with neighboring tribes.

For most of the Ahtnas, the cycle revolved around the red and king salmon which ascend the Copper River and its major tributaries from late spring until early fall. The fish were caught, dried, and cached for the winter. In the late summer-early fall, after the runs ended, hunting parties were organized that headed north into the mountains where they spent the remainder of the season. Hunting and trapping along the way, the Ahtna returned to their winter villages around November. These villages, consisting of one to nine multifamily houses, were usually located near the summer fish camps where the dried salmon had been stored. Often the salmon catch was insufficient to last the winter, so caribou, moose, sheep, and other game were sought locally to supplement the diet. Even with their supplemental supplies, food stores were sometimes depleted by February, forcing the Ahtna to deploy hunting parties once again to the uplands. This was the low point in the annual cycle, as it was often a time of near-starvation until they returned to their fish camps in June anxiously awaiting the salmon run (Workman, 1976:5).

The low point in the seasonal cycle was more severe for the Ahtna of the Upper Susitna. As archeologist William Irving (1957:39) pointed out, "lacking salmon, the Middle Ahtna of the Susitna drainage adopted a more spartan strategy, putting a heavier emphasis on the hunting of caribou and moose." Current research indicates that the Middle Ahtna had at least two villages on the Tyone River and one as far north as Valdez Creek. One of the Tyone River villages was located at the confluence of the Tyone with the Susitna River, reportedly one of the largest inland Athapaskan villages prior to 1500 A.D. The other Tyone River village was located at the confluence of the Tyone River with Tyone Creek (Bacon, 1975). The Ahtna at these camps made seasonal trips to the Valdez Creek area, attracted by the herds of caribou, the plentiful moose, and the abundance of whitefish and grayling. Moffit (1915:20) indicated that before the arrival of white men, the Upper Susitna Ahtna had depended on the Valdez Creek area for most of their food and clothing. In fact the native name for Valdez Creek, "Galina" (anglicized version of Ahtna c'ilaanna') signifies "a place where game abounds" (Buck and Kari, 1975).

Unfortunately there is very little ethnographic information on the early Ahtna, although they were one of the most influential

tribal groups in the interior. They were well respected and often feared by their Eskimo and Indian neighbors (West and Workman, 1970:20). Information that has been obtained on the early Ahtna has been derived mainly through archeological work and ethnographic reconstruction. The early Russian dominance in Alaska has much to do with the lack of ethnohistoric information on the early Ahtna, since early Russian traders were more interested in obtaining furs than in recording information. They wrote very little about the Native inhabitants, especially those of the few southcentral interior areas they visited.

Geography and climate contributed to the white man's ignorance of the Ahtna, delaying direct contact between them until the late 19th century. Alaska's topography and climate were not suitable for the extensive grazing and farming that favored settlement of Indian lands elsewhere on the continent. Native hostility also acted as a deterrent, as Euro-American contact with the Native was not always a peaceful one, especially for the Russians. According to ethnographer James VanStone (1974:95) "the Russians, fresh from their subjugation of the inhabitants of the Aleutian Islands, reacted violently to resistance from coastal peoples like the Tlingit and Tanaina and from river groups such as the Koyukon and the Ahtna." So the hostility of the Ahtna, their geographic isolation, and the severe climate of interior Alaska combined to delay extensive contact between whites and the Middle and Upper River Ahtna.

It was not until Lieutenant Henry T. Allen's exploration of the Copper River in 1885 that a substantial, firsthand description of the river's inhabitants was written. A young lieutenant in the U. S. Army, Allen had been sent to Sitka as an aide to General Miles in 1884. The following spring he led an exploratory group on a 1,500 mile journey through the interior of Alaska. Allen and three other men traveled three hundred miles up the Copper River, crossed the Alaska Range, and headed west along the Tanana drainage. Along the Copper River, Allen came upon a group of starving Ahtna. Their winter supply of dried fish had run out, and it was still too early for the salmon run. Even Allen's party had to subsist on a lean diet of rabbit meat. Allen (1900:472) described the Ahtna settlement as a small group of rather substantial structures, mainly winter houses, with cache pits and graves nearby. The winter houses were 18 feet square, constructed of spruce poles covered with bark slabs and sometimes moss. Walls under the eaves stood about four feet high. Inside there was a central fireplace and smoke hole. A small auxiliary room, almost entirely underground and four to five feet deep was utilized as a steam bath.

The Ahtna also had outlying hunting and fishing camps with less substantial structures. Such camps existed in highland hunting areas like Valdez Creek (where the Upper Susitna Ahtna had a seasonal village). Lieutenant J. C. Castner, attached to Captain

Glenn's 1898 military expedition, observed an Ahtna seasonal hunting camp in 1898 at Lake Tazlina that consisted of small tents of hide or drill (Castner, 1900:704). Captain Edwin F. Glenn (1899:70-71) and U. S. Geological Survey geologist Walter C. Mendenhall (1900:338,340) saw similar tent camps on the Upper Delta River in 1898 (Plate 1). However, Allen (1889:261; 1900: 472) described the Ahtnas' temporary shelter as a double lean-to, a rectangular structure of poles and boughs with both ends open and a passage left through the center. Informants Bud Carlson and Maggie Oliver (pers. comm.) confirm that early Native dwellings on Valdez Creek were similar to Castner's and Mendenhall's descriptions of Ahtna dwellings, consisting of one room A-frame structures (with adjacent sweathouses) made of connecting caribou skins with the usual smoke opening in the ceiling. Traditional double lean-to structures may have been giving way to tent-like structures in the years following Allen's 1885 trip.

Several former Native inhabitants of Valdez Creek remembered the traditional dwellings but recalled that log structures became more prevalent once mining began.

Intense competition for the choice hunting and fishing areas among the various Ahtna clans and neighboring tribes was part of their traditional lifeway. The vagaries of game animals and salmon runs intensified competition between the tribes for productive territories. In his reconnaissance of the Copper River Valley in 1898, Captain Abercrombie (1900:578) observed that the Natives divided territory among the clans either by conquest or consent. He further indicated that "boundaries were pretty much respected, as it was not uncommon for Indians on one side of the river to go hungry even if the salmon were running on the opposite side of the river on territory of a neighboring clan."

Choice hunting areas like Valdez Creek and the headwaters of the Upper Susitna became tension areas when numerous clans and tribes converged annually on the area. From our interviews with Henry Peters in Cantwell, it appears that there were as many as ten to fifteen different Ahtna clans in the Denali region alone. Battle skirmishes were frequent, occurring as late as the end of the nineteenth century. Many such conflicts took place near Valdez Creek, presumably where Susitna Lodge is located today. Intergroup warfare also occurred occasionally between the Valdez Creek Ahtna and the Nenana Tanana. The vicinity of today's Mt. McKinley National Park boundary was the recognized dividing line between the two groups, but it was often violated by both sides. According to several people (Henry Peters, Maggie Oliver, and Bud Carlson, pers. comm.) one such battle occurred on the mountain above Valdez Creek which is called nai'na'dEɬi "where the migrating ducks hit," (Laguna, n.d:40).

James VanStone (1974:50) believes that these hostilities were more of a feuding nature and not really comparable to the conven-

tional notions of warfare. Revenge for past injuries inflicted upon kinsmen led to chronic antagonism between certain groups and clans. Warfare was usually retaliatory in nature, "an eye for an eye," at least in theory. Major warfare was not a dominant element in the Ahtna lifeway, nor among most interior Alaskan Native groups. Frank Hobson (pers. comm.) of Tazlina maintains that the Ahtna clans of Paxson (Gulkana) Lake, called tax'at's bEnE' "clearwater or cold water lake" (Laguna, n.d.:34), seemed to coexist well enough. Further evidence of peaceful relations in this area came from informants interviewed by Frederica de Laguna (n.d.:34) indicating that Paxson Lake was originally the domain of the Wudjicyu clan, who willingly gave up the northern half of the lake to the neighboring Naltsina clan.

However, there was a notable absence of all-out conflict in the Valdez Creek area between the Ahtna and the white man. VanStone (1974:40) points out that "a significant factor in the history of white contact with the Native throughout the western subarctic is that the inhabitants, except in a few limited instances, did not wage war with the European intruders, nor were they forcibly removed from their lands." The geographical and climatic factors put a damper on colonization and settlement, hence any danger to the physical domain of the Native (especially the Ahtna) was slight. Likewise, the priorities of the dominant foreign power, Russia, were centered on the lucrative fur trade. After numerous adverse confrontations with various tribes, the Russians learned that the fur pelt could be obtained more efficiently by trading with the aboriginal inhabitants of an area. The few whites settling permanently in the interior usually did so as trappers and traders, sharing the Native way of life (VanStone 1974:91). The trapper and trader were not regarded as threatening competitors, but as bearers of highly desirable trade goods to exchange for furs.

The Russian Period

After Vitus Bering led a sailing expedition to Alaska in 1741, the Russian fur trade expanded rapidly into the North Pacific. In the latter part of the eighteenth century, competition between various Russian trade companies centered in the Cook Inlet region, with the Russian American Company achieving dominance by securing a trade monopoly in 1799. During the same period British explorers were also active, visiting and trading with the coastal Tanaina (VanStone, 1974:94). In May of 1778, Captain James Cook entered the inlet that today bears his name, thinking it might lead him to the elusive Northwest Passage.

The Russians' initial interest in the Copper River centered around their wish to learn more about reported copper deposits up the river. But the Russian desire for furs overshadowed their interest in other natural resources. Direct Russian contact with

the Copper River Ahtna was stymied by geographical isolation and Native hostility. VanStone (1955:15) summarizes that although the mouth of the Copper River was discovered by the Russian Nagaief in 1781, it was not until 1819 that the Middle Copper River country was penetrated. Between those years four expeditions were attempted but failed due to the hostility of Natives and the swift, treacherous currents of the Copper River that made navigation extremely difficult. The Russian Klimovsky and his party made the first successful trek in 1819, but little is known of his expedition except that it was probably the first group of white men to visit the historic Ahtna settlement at Taral, on the Copper River below the mouth of the Chitina River. At Taral the party reportedly established a trading post or "odinochka", for the Russian American Company. According to S. Federova (1973: 146) the post was established in 1858 to counter English trading activities on the upper Yukon River. It was apparently maintained until about 1866. In 1844 a Russian expedition up the Copper River led by Gregorieff was forced to turn back because of Native hostilities. During his 1885 explorations of the Copper River, Allen reported seeing remnants of an odinochka at Taral.

The last Russian explorations of the Copper River occurred in 1847-48. Led by Rufus Serebrenikoff, a party reportedly traveled as far as Tazlina Lake. The Russian party gained notoriety because of their cruelty toward their Native packers, who eventually rebelled and murdered the Russians. The incident discouraged further Russian exploration in Alaska. Losing a war with England in Crimea had made the Czar and his ministers fearful that they might not be able to hold the American colony. Also, the profits of the Russian American Company were declining. It seemed preferable to have a friendly neighbor such as the United States in control of Alaska rather than the English. The United States, suspicious of England's expansionist movements in North America and its sympathies with the Southern cause, courted Imperial Russia. This culminated in the Treaty of Cession in 1867 that transferred sovereignty over Alaska to the United States.

Native contact with the Russians continued after the 1867 purchase, especially with Russian traders and with priests of the Orthodox Church. Henry Peters (pers. comm.) maintains that the Valdez Creek Natives had contact with the Russians and other whites on annual trading trips to the Upper Cook Inlet, in particular at a trading post near present-day Eklutna Village.

The effect of the church in the acculturation of the Ahtna can only be estimated. Moffit (1915:22) mentioned that even "before discovery of gold on Valdez Creek, the Tyone River (or Valdez Creek) Natives made yearly trading expeditions to Cook Inlet and carried their contributions to the Russian Church and took their children to be christened by its priests...."

Russian priests reportedly made annual visits to Ahtna settlements like Cantwell as late as the 1950s. Maggie Oliver (pers. comm.) was baptized there by a Russian priest, and as a child during the mid-fifties she remembers seeing an Orthodox priest at Cantwell. Clothed in a black robe and swinging his smoking incense container, he would go from door to door. One of the Native houses would be used to hold religious services and give instruction in the Orthodox religion. Though many Ahtna today have other religious affiliations, some Orthodox traditions are still adhered to, such as use of the Orthodox cross grave marker enclosed by a picket fence.

The American Period

The acquisition of Alaska by the United States in 1867 did not immediately stimulate exploration of "Seward's Icebox." The military expedition into the Copper River region in 1885, led by Lieutenant Henry T. Allen, was one of a few exploration trips which were undertaken in Alaska strictly for geographic and scientific observation prior to 1898. This changed however, after gold was discovered on the Klondike River in Canada in 1896-97. News of George Carmack's good fortune started a stampede that brought thousands of men first to Canada, then west into the interior of Alaska in search of gold. The gold rush of 1897-98 prompted Congress to appropriate money to provide, among other things, the development of land routes to interior Alaska. Military expeditions were organized in 1898 to discover access routes in Alaska to the interior gold fields, partly because Americans objected to having to go through Canada to reach the American gold fields on the middle Yukon. Canada required gold rushers entering Canada to have a full year's supplies, and Canadian customs stations were set up where existing trails entered Canada to check the immigrants. Duty was charged on goods that originated in the United States, and the duty as well as the delay exasperated the gold rushers (Hulley, 1958:258-259). It was also extremely difficult to transport the bulky supplies over the rugged mountain passes and few rushers had the money to buy supplies, pay professional packers or buy horses, feed and sleds, and pay duties too.

Rumors of an ancient fur trade trail to the interior from the southcentral coast of Alaska brought a number of eager prospectors to Port Valdez in 1897-98. Primarily searching for an "all-American" route to the gold fields they also were looking for gold and copper in the Copper River region. They found a route over the Valdez Glacier that was occasionally utilized by the Natives, but nothing in the way of an established trail. When the unusually severe winter of 1898-99 hit, many miners and prospectors who were still in the interior were caught unprepared. Scores of desperate men poured out of the interior, many attempting passage across the Valdez Glacier route during mid-

winter. Fortunately the U. S. Army had sent three expeditions to Alaska that same year under the command of Captain Edwin F. Glenn, to find overland routes to the American gold fields and to explore and map the territory. One expedition party, under Captain William R. Abercrombie, had established a camp on Port Valdez, while the other two expedition parties had started from Port Wells on the west side of Prince William Sound and from Tyonek on the west side of Cook Inlet. From the expedition camp set up on Port Valdez, the Army assisted with emergency relief, but even so, about two thirds of the stranded gold rushers died (U. S. Army, 1972:41; Janson, 1975).

The explorations of the three expeditions succeeded remarkably well though, and provided substantial reports, published collectively in 1899 as Reports of Explorations in the Territory of Alaska. In his report, Captain Abercrombie (1899) recommended a trail route from Port Valdez through Thompson Pass and Mentasta Pass to Eagle City on the Yukon, which was then the center of mining activity in the Forty Mile district. In 1899 Abercrombie was again ordered to Alaska to establish the trail from Port Valdez to Eagle City.

Prior to the Klondike Gold Rush, the Upper Susitna River region was virtually unexplored. In 1897 a party of prospectors led by W. G. Jack became the first white men to reach the headwaters of the Susitna River. Mary Barry, in her History of Mining on the Kenai Peninsula, writes (1973:65) "Somewhat disappointed with their summer's (1896) prospecting around Sunrise on the Kenai, they decided to try their luck north of Cook Inlet and up the Susitna." They panned for gold as they went but found nothing much until they reached what today is known as Valdez Creek. "Their eyes were so swollen from mosquito bites that they named it Swollen Creek" (Bayou, 1946:41). Jack and his party made good finds but lacked the capital and equipment for serious excavation. Thinking they might return the following year, they headed down the Nenana River for the Tanana drainage, but a dwindling food supply forced them to return to Cook Inlet and Turnagain Arm. There the word spread about their strike on Swollen Creek. It was not until 1903, though, that another party succeeded in relocating Swollen Creek and filed on the discovery. This fortunate group of prospectors was from Valdez, and renamed the stream Valdez Creek.

In 1898 W. G. Jack again ascended the Susitna River acting as a guide for USGS geologist George Eldridge to the Broad Pass country (Eldridge, 1900). Practically following at Eldridge's heels was Sergeant William Yanert of Captain Glenn's expedition, who landed at Tyonek on the west side of Cook Inlet, with a party heading north from Ladd's Station toward the Tanana River (Yanert, 1899). Yanert and his party headed up Indian River to the Nenana River, a tributary of the Tanana and Yukon drainages. Both of these parties, due to lack of provisions and the lateness

of the season, were forced to abandon hope of reaching the Tanana and had to retrace their steps to the lower Susitna. In later years other parties took essentially the same route up the Susitna and Chulitna River valleys through Broad Pass and down the Nenana River.

By the turn of the century, the upper Susitna River country was beginning to open up. In ascending the Susitna, Yanert (1899: 697) had met prospectors camped at the mouth of Indian Creek (Indian River). There had been gold strikes in the region west of the Susitna, and by 1906 a trading post was being established on the Susitna River at the mouth of Indian River.

By about 1903 the trail from Port Valdez to Eagle City, subsequently known as the Trans-Alaskan Military Road, was completed, along with a telegraph line paralleling the trail and connecting Eagle City with Fort Liscum as part of the Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System (WAMCATS). But in the next few years Fairbanks eclipsed Eagle City as the center of mining activity in the interior. News of Felix Pedro's discovery of gold in the Tanana Valley in 1902 resulted in a stampede of miners to the new diggings, and Fairbanks, which was established quite fortuitously as a trading post the preceding year, soon became the hub of mining activity in the district.

Acting upon the recommendations of a Senate Subcommittee which visited Alaska in 1903, Congress passed legislation for further development of transportation routes in Alaska, especially a Valdez-Fairbanks trail to extend north from the Trans-Alaskan Military Road at Gulkana through Isabel Pass to the Tanana River and Fairbanks. When the Alaska Road Commission was established by the Act of 1905, its first president, Major Wilds P. Richardson, devoted most of the Commission's funds to the improvement of the Valdez-Fairbanks Military and Telegraph Road. Road Commission allocations were meager, restricting construction and maintenance to trails for wintertime use on which mail, freight, and passengers could be safely transported by dog team and single horse sled (Gruening, 1954:105).

The gold strike made on Valdez Creek in 1903 by Peter Monahan and his party marked the end of isolation for the Upper Susitna region. Though the discovery party had mushed into the region over the Valdez Glacier route, prospecting along the eastern flanks of the Talkeetna Mountains enroute, soon trails were established to Valdez Creek from the military road to the east as extended mining operations requiring men, equipment, and supplies were set up. When the mining center became established, many Ahtna moved to Valdez Creek, leaving their villages on the Susitna and Copper River drainages. Their seasonal subsistence cycle became less important as over time they adopted the economic system of the white man. The destiny of the Ahtna mingled with that of the miners, some Natives becoming claim owners and miners themselves.

PART II

HISTORY OF THE VALDEZ CREEK MINING DISTRICT

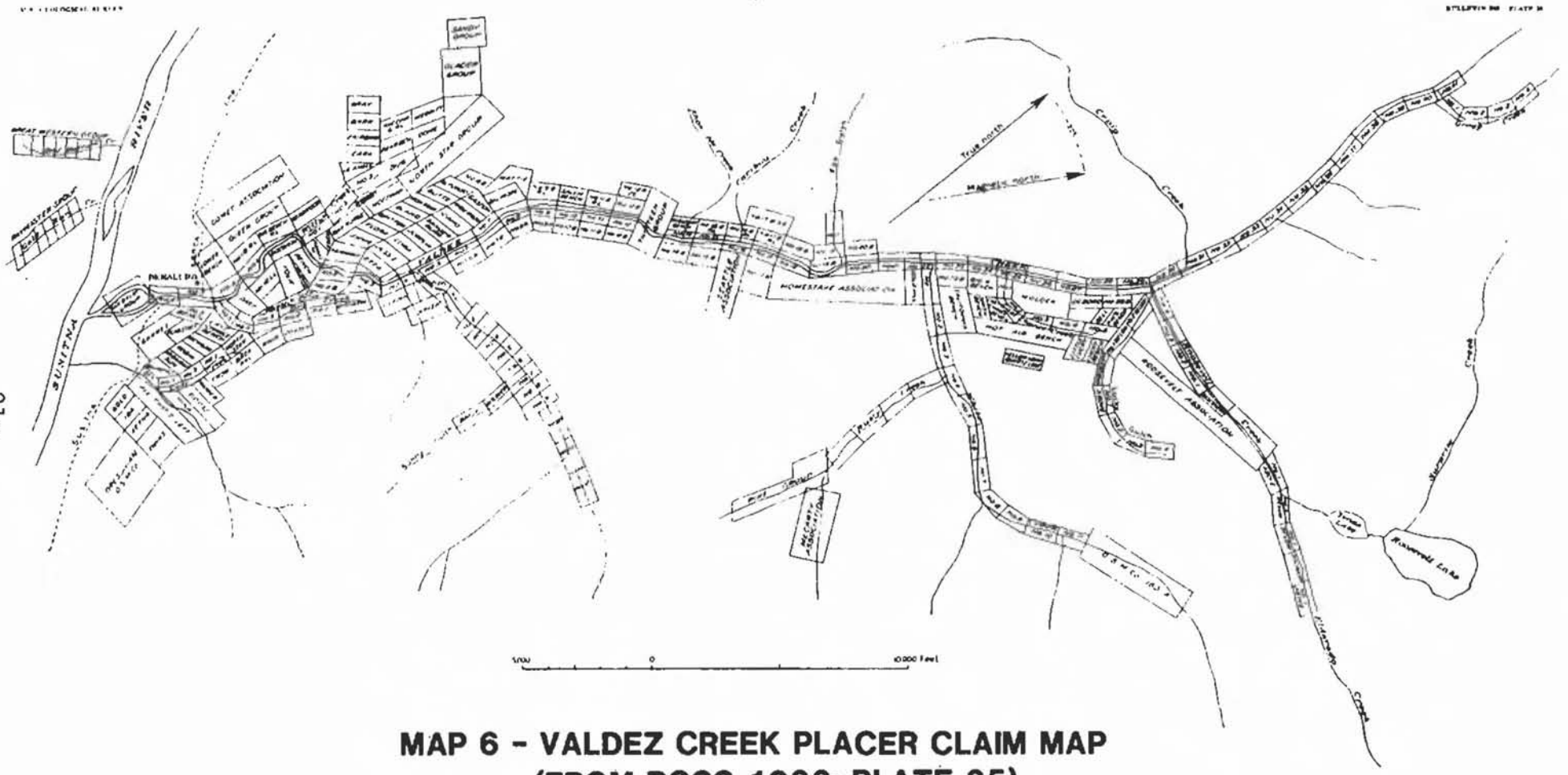
THE MINING DISTRICT FROM 1903 TO WORLD WAR II

The 1903 Strike and the First Five Years

The first widely publicized gold strike on Valdez Creek was made during the summer of 1903 by a group of four miners: Peter Monahan, J. C. Clarkson, John M. Johnson, and James S. Smith. All of the men in this "discovery party" were experienced prospectors. Peter Monahan (Plate 2) was a veteran of the Yukon gold rush in 1898 and the Nome rush in 1900. In 1902, he had prospected in the territory west of Mt. McKinley (Alaska-Yukon Magazine, April 1909:76). The possibility of finding a rich pay strike in the virgin territory east of Mt. McKinley induced Monahan to lead an expedition to the Upper Susitna River in 1903. Setting out from Valdez in February, Monahan's party mushed northward toward the headwaters of the Upper Susitna. Their course took them across the Valdez Glacier to the Klutina River, up the St. Anne River to St. Anne Lake, then over Tazlina Lake, Lake Louise, Susitna Lake and Tyone Lake to Tyone River, which they followed to its junction with the Susitna River. There they set up a base camp at a "stick house" Indian village which probably consisted of pole and bark dwellings similar to those on the Copper River described by Lieutenant Allen in this period. The miners prospected the creek's tributary to the Susitna below the Tyone River, finding traces of gold on the Oshetna River, then called Goose Creek. In search of more productive grounds, the expedition decided to leave the Tyone area and move on northward.

Not far above the mouth of the Tyone, the Susitna forked into two large streams. The party decided to split into two groups, one led by Maclaren prospecting up the east fork of the river, and the second, led by Monahan, following the west fork. The Maclaren party was apparently unsuccessful in finding gold, though their fate is obscure. On Coal, Butte, Gold, White, Wickersham, and many other creeks the Monahan party found color; but it was on a creek called "Galina," an anglicized version of the Athapaskan name, that the miners made the big strike (Moffitt, 1912:54).

On August 15, 1903, Monahan, Johnson, Clarkson, and Smith discovered gold just below the mouth of a narrow rock wall canyon of the Galina, in gravel only four feet down. Working 15 days, they panned and sluiced 100 ounces of gold dust worth $1,100. To commemorate their bonanza, the four named their claim on the bedrock "Discovery" and named the stream Valdez Creek in honor of their hometown. Returning to Valdez after the first freeze in September, Monahan and his partners cashed in $1,800 worth of coarse gold taken out during the summer (Daily Alaska Dispatch, 10/21/03; Alaska Prospector, 10/22/03; Cordova Daily Alaskan, 11/10/08).



MAP 6 - VALDEZ CREEK PLACER CLAIM MAP
(FROM ROSS 1933: PLATE 35)

The next year 1904, the discovery party returned to Valdez Creek by the same route over Valdez Glacier, this time with Bill Grogg, a new partner (Moffit, 1910:70). They were soon followed by scores of other miners eager to share the prospects. During this rush in 1904, claims were staked all up and down Valdez Creek and its tributaries (see Map 6). But the best placer deposits extended from just below the 20-foot falls (see Plate 6) which was later covered by millions of yards of hydraulic tailings, to 1,000 feet above the falls. On this part of the creek, where the Monahan party staked claims at No. 1 Below, Discovery, No. 2 Below, No. 2 Above, and Tammany, the gravels proved to be productive (Coffield, letter, 08/11/77). By summer's end most of the other miners were disappointed. In some places the overburden was too deep, in some areas water was insufficient for mining, and on claims on the north side of the creek no gold was found. However, Monahan and his partners took out $30,000 worth of gold that season. In the fall of 1904, trying to learn why the gold in the creek bed declined at a particular point, as they worked upstream, Monahan and his partners found that the filled cut of an earlier canyon on the right limit of No. 2 Above, cut transversely by the present creek canyon and contributing a high concentration of gold to the creek below that source (see Figures 1 and 2).

With a Native as guide, most of the miners left Valdez Creek in the autumn and returned to Valdez by way of the Gulkana River, following part of an old Indian trail (which stretched from Broad Pass to the Copper River) to its junction with the Valdez-Eagle Military Trail. After this trip, they abandoned the difficult Valdez Glacier route in favor of the Gulkana River trail route to Valdez Creek (Moffit, 1912:54). Of the discovery party, only Monahan and Smith remained at Valdez Creek until the winter, continuing work on the Tammany bench claim at the right limit of No. 2 Above. Monahan named his claim after Tammany Hall in New York City as a tribute to the Democratic Party. That fall after they found one particularly good pay streak, Monahan and Smith in one five-day period extracted 118 ounces of gold worth $2,000 (Alaska Prospector, 02/01/05).

For the next three mining seasons (1905 to 1907) many miners returned to Valdez Creek, but most were destined to leave the country discouraged, as only the "Discovery claims" continued to produce pay dirt (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 11/10/08). With the exception of a minor setback in 1905 when a flood washed out a dam costing $5,000, profits for the Monahan party increased annually. As gold production from the gravel beds on the claims below discovery began to diminish, Monahan and his partners concentrated their efforts on the benches above, specifically the No. 2 Above and Tammany claims, which yielded $10,000 in 1906. Tunneling on Tammany began in earnest during the 1907 season. In one month $15,000 was taken out, all from coarse gold assaying at $17.60 per ounce in the Seattle land office (Valdez News, 03/02/06; Cordova Daily Alaskan, 11/10/08).

Valdez Creek District; 1908-1913

Vivid descriptions of conditions in Valdez Creek mining district between 1908 and 1910 are provided by J. C. Murphy's "Pen Pictures of Susitna Valley and Valdez Creek," a series of articles published in the November 1908 and October 1909 issues of the Cordova Daily Alaskan, and by F. H. Moffit's field notes and publications for the U. S. Geological Survey. Murphy wrote down his personal impressions from journeys made during the summers of 1908 and 1909 from Cordova through the Susitna country, commenting on the trails, flora and fauna, river navigation, forestry, mining, agriculture, and development potential. Moffit made studies of the mining operations in the Kotsina-Chitina, Chistochina, and Valdez Creek mining districts during the 1908, 1910, and 1913 seasons. Of special importance are the maps, sketches, and photographs made of Valdez Creek to illustrate his field notes and reports. Both of these early sources provide detailed descriptions of the various sled and packhorse trails leading to Valdez Creek and of the living conditions in the camp, as well as the annual production from specific claims, and the logistical problems affecting the development of the mines.

Transportation Routes to Valdez Creek Before 1917

From 1905 until the completion of the Alaska Railroad from Seward to Cantwell in 1919 the principal routes for communication, transportation, and freighting to the Valdez Creek district ran north from the town of Valdez, extended northward on the Valdez-Fairbanks military trail, then turned west from one of several roadhouses: Gulkana, Meier's, Paxson's, or Yost's (see Map 1). The main route followed the Gulkana, Maclaren, and Susitna rivers from Gulkana Roadhouse at Mile 130 on the military trail.

Murphy described two variations of this route, one a summer trail and the other a winter trail (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 11/09/08). The summer trail extended up Bear Creek below Gulkana onto flat country, then northwesterly for 135 miles to Valdez Creek. The winter trail on the river ice followed the West Fork of the Gulkana River northwesterly from Sourdough Roadhouse, then up Keg Creek and down Portage Creek to the Maclaren River (named by Monahan for the leader of the party that ascended the river in 1903). There the trail ran down the Maclaren to the Susitna River and up the Susitna to Valdez Creek. Moffit (1911a:116) recommended this Gulkana-Maclaren River route, especially for hauling in supplies during the winter, when the smooth ice of the rivers provided an excellent avenue for sledding. However, he advised that the Gulkana-Maclaren River trail was difficult in summer because of the terrain, which was largely wet and boggy muskeg. Moffitt also indicated that prior to 1910 a few supplies were brought in each year from Fairbanks by way of the Nenana River and Broad Pass.

In 1908 a shorter trail from the Military Trail to Valdez Creek was established from Paxson's Roadhouse (Moffit, 1909:157,158; 1912:20). This 65-mile overland route followed the foothills of the Alaska Range past Coal Creek and across the Maclaren River at its source just below the glacier. By 1913 the Paxson Trail had replaced the Bear Creek-Gulkana route as the main summer trail to Valdez Creek, and the latter was practically abandoned (Moffit, 1914:308). The shortest and easiest summer trail in use by 1910 was from Yost's Roadhouse (see Map 2) by way of Eureka Creek, across the Maclaren River and from there by Roosevelt Lake to Valdez Creek (Moffit, 1911a:116 and Plate VII; 1912:20).

After the Alaska Commercial Company established trading posts about 1907 at the present site of Talkeetna and at the mouth of Indian River, they secured contracts to ship in supplies via the Susitna River route, from Susitna Station to the limit of navigation near Indian River. Because it proved too time consuming this route was not used after 1909. The Alaska Commercial Company subsequently abandoned its trading posts in the headwaters of Susitna River (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 07/09/09:3).

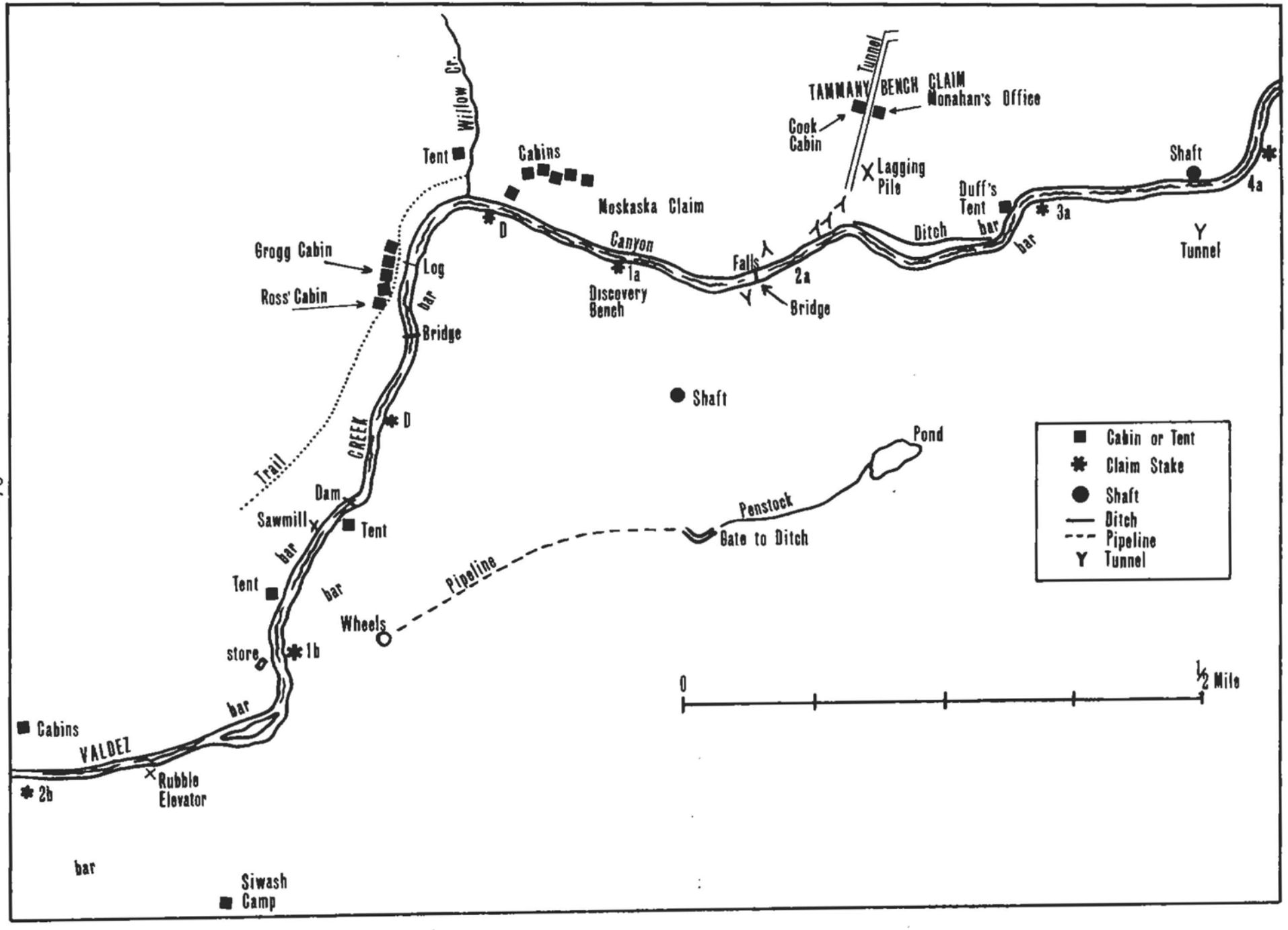
Moffit (1911b:167) states that:

> "In 1908 a new route from the direction of the Cook Inlet was established. A steamer paddled as far as Indian River (when the water was high enough), and from that point a ninety mile trail reached east to Valdez Creek. From the steamer landing the trip took eleven days with horses. This route was not popular because by the time the supplies arrived at the mining site, much of the short season had passed."

Coffield (letter, 08/11/77) recalls attempts to use this route some time circa 1917, when small riverboats used in constructing the Alaska Railroad plied the Susitna River:

> One year they tried bringing in freight from Knik on Cook Inlet, up the Susitna River on shallow draft river boats, the BB1 and BB2 that supplied the Cache Creek Mining Company (about 70 miles west of present Talkeetna). They got the freight to the head of navigation, about where the present railroad crosses the Susitna, but the overland route from there was too difficult and was abandoned.

A 39-mile cut-off route to Chitina from the military road near Willow Creek, 10 miles below Copper Center was established in 1910. During the same year, the Copper River and Northwestern Railway between Cordova and Chitina was completed (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 11/19/10). Consequently, a new route to Valdez Creek was established: by rail from Cordova to Chitina, then by road to Gulkana, and from there up existing trails on the Gulkana-



MAP 4 - VALDEZ CREEK IN 1910
(Drawn from fieldnote maps, moffit 1910: 62-63)

Maclaren rivers, a journey requiring eight to nine days (Chitina Leader, 12/10/10; Moffit, 1912:19; Valdez Daily Prospector, 10/30/13:4). Taking advantage of the quicker railroad transportation to Chitina, mining operators on Valdez Creek began using Cordova as a supply base. However, this did not eclipse the status of Valdez, which continued to compete with Cordova in supplying miners' needs because the Valdez route did not require an added cash outlay for railroad freight charges.

A sled and packhorse trail from Meier's Roadhouse to Valdez Creek was used by Moffit's party in 1913 in making a field reconnaissance of the Valdez Creek mining claims. Starting from the end of the railroad at Chitina, Moffit and his crew followed the cut-off route and the government road 124 miles north to Meier's Roadhouse, where they turned westward. Crossing the Gulkana River below Gulkana (Paxson) Lake, they ascended the Middle Fork of the Gulkana, crossed the Tangle Lakes area, then followed the usual route across the Maclaren River, down Coal Creek, and past Roosevelt Lake to Valdez Creek (Moffit, 1915:11). The trail from Meier's Roadhouse and another from Sourdough Roadhouse were the primary routes for freighting in supplies and mushing out along the Gulkana and Maclaren rivers. Over these trails the Valdez Creek miners brought such things as mail, perishable groceries, tools, and considerable bourbon (Coffield, letter, 08/11/77).

Valdez Creek Mining Settlement

The development of claims on Valdez Creek and its tributaries in 1904 established the first mining settlement in the district. During its first decade, this settlement consisted of tents scattered in seemingly haphazard clusters around various claims and sluicing operations (see Map 4). One of the most popular types of shelter was the tent-house of canvas stretched over a skeleton frame of two by four studs and gable roof rafters. This could easily be assembled or disassembled and when placed on skids could be sledded in and out with supplies inside (see Plate 30). Valdez Creek was a placer mining camp where gold was washed from gravel deposits in the creek bed and from benches or terraces above the creek. The methods used were the most primitive--panning, digging, sluicing and damming, all done with hand tools and requiring hard labor and many man-hours of work. The placer mining season was on the average only 90 days long. With the coming of the first freeze most of the miners left Valdez Creek to go to the coast, or "outside to the states." However, a few of the miners, especially those owning productive claims and interests with the discoverers, often remained at Valdez Creek during the winter. Wintering over necessitated the construction of some log cabins. There were no large buildings, or large-scale mining operations at Valdez Creek on a permanent basis until 1913. The Crary-Henderson collection of photographs at the Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum (Plates 3-13)

gives vivid documentation of placer operations during the first decade of mining on Valdez Creek.

Working the placer claims on Valdez Creek in 1908, were as many as 120 men, of whom some 20, who were permanent residents, were expected to remain during the winter (Moffit, 1909:160). Murphy reported 72 men working at Valdez Creek in 1909, plus four women--Mrs. John Gage, Mrs. Horace Wickersham, Mrs. Dolph Smith, and Mrs. W. H. Merrit--who were assisting their husbands (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 10/15/09). According to Moffit (1912:18) 20 to 25 whites were mining on Valdez Creek in 1910 and the same number in 1913 (1914:308). This decrease in the annual mining population between 1909 and 1913 reflected the concentration of mining efforts on a few productive claims, especially the No. 2 Above and Tammany claims.

Normal work season for the miners extended from late May through early October, and they worked every day the weather permitted. The only holiday was the Fourth of July. Miners working for wages earned $1.00 per hour, or $10.00 per day. This was three times the normal wage for a day's labor in Seattle at that time (Coffield, letter, 08/11/77). Board was reportedly excellent. Garden vegetables were raised in the camp, and fish and game were plentiful. Monahan paid about $3.00 a day just to feed each of his workers. The high costs of labor, materials, and freight (50 cents to a dollar a pound), plus the remoteness of Valdez Creek made it necessary for each mining operator to bring in with him supplies for a full season. Horses were preferred to dogs for transportation (see Plates 30 and 31) and apparently were more economical. During the work season horses grazed on the creek delta and river bank (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 11/09/08; Moffit, 1915:19). With the first freeze on Valdez Creek the grasses became worthless as feed, so in the fall the horses were taken to Copper Center for the winter, where there were abundant supplies of hay (Coffield, letter, 08/11/77).

The Native Village on Valdez Creek

The reports written on the Valdez Creek mining district in this period mention almost nothing about the Native village on the south side of Valdez Creek, although a more or less permanent village was established there soon after intensive mining activity began. According to Fred Moffit (1912:18) there was only one Indian family with a permanent residence on Valdez Creek in 1911, while others from Gulkana, Copper Center, and the Nenana River area came in to "Galina" to set up their tents, hunt, and fish during the summer. Clyde Ross mentions a "small Native settlement" in his 1931 field trip report (1933:428), but gives no names or descriptive details. From interviews with Henry Peters, Ole Nickolai, Jake Tansy, Alice Norton, Tammany Nickolai, Bud Carson, and Maggie Oliver in Cantwell, much information was

obtained about life at the Native village and the Natives' participation in mining activities. These people once lived at Denali or are descendents of past Native residents. According to these informants, there was a permanent Native settlement of about 50 inhabitants and probably a dozen log cabins at Valdez Creek during the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s (see Plates 22-27).

The Native settlement was located on the south side of Valdez Creek nearly a mile away from the main mining settlement, which was on the north side above the canyon bluff (Map 4). The Natives supplied the white miners with game, fish, and labor. Fish dried by the Natives, including salmon, were probably a main source of food for sled dogs during winter months, although the nearest salmon streams to Valdez Creek were at the headwaters of the Gulkana's West Fork. In a pocket notebook, L. S. Wickersham noted (circa, 1916-1917) fish traps on the West Fork between Keg Creek and the next downstream tributary from the west. These traps may have supplied salmon used by the miners on Valdez Creek, but probably weren't operated by the Valdez Creek Ahtna.

Dependent on game for fresh meat, the miners in the early years traded tea, sugar, flour, tobacco, and clothing for moose, caribou, and sheep meat (Moffit, 1912:67). Moffit (1911a:113) also indicates that an Indian was employed by miners on Valdez Creek to bring in their mail from Gulkana during the mining season. Eventually, the Natives did some prospecting and mining on their own (see Plate 8). Laurence Coffield of Tacoma, Washington, a veteran miner from Valdez Creek, between 1928 and 1967, verifies this description of the Native community. Coffield writes, (letter, 08/11/77) the following about the Indians coming into Valdez Creek when the mining settlement was established:

> Then the Indians started moving into Valdez Creek from Gulkana and Copper Center. There had been no Indians near Denali. They brought their sleds and dog teams and settled near the mouth of Valdez Creek where there was plenty of timber for cabins and fuel. Some of the Indians worked in the mines, but largely they hunted moose and caribou. The women fished the backwaters of the Susitna for white fish, mainly Valdez Creek for grayling, and Roosevelt Lake for lake trout. All meat and fish was 35 cents per pound at the mines. They packed their dogs; an average malemute could carry 35 or 40 pounds. There were no game laws that anyone knew of; game and fish were plentiful and very important to the mining economy at that time.

Concerning social interaction between Indians and miners, Coffield (letter, 08/17/77) mentioned the important role played by Jennie Peters.

> Some of the Natives that had moved into Denali spoke English with some difficulty, but Jennie, who had a cabin fairly close to the miners, was relatively well educated and was sort of a liaison person. If they at the mine wanted a Native to work, they'd ask Jennie, or for more meat or fish. If one of the Natives was sick or perhaps an accident, they'd send Jennie up for help. Clark Duff, when he was there, was good at that; he kept a good supply of drugs and first aid on hand. Jennie had two children; her son, Henry Peters, who in his late teens got a small but good enough placer mine working in lower Valdez Creek close to their home, and a daughter, Alice Norton [born October 13, 1914]. Buck Norton, who was the cook at the mine, was her father, and Alice sometimes went to Buck's cabin for dinner, and he'd give her things to take home. Now, Henry Peters once told me he'd never seen his father, but he heard he was a good man.

Stickwan, Tyone, Nickolai, Peters, Tansy, Secondchief, Sinyon, and Ewan were all family names among the Native community at Valdez Creek. Early photographs of the village show groups of Natives posing in front of cabins, often on special occasions such as the Fourth of July, or potlatches (see Plate 23). Although the Native and white communities were separated by Valdez Creek, liaisons between certain Indian women and white men developed. As already mentioned, Jennie Peters (see Plate 24) had two children by miners. Her daughter, Alice Norton, when she grew up, lived with John Carlson for eight years. Bud and Eric Carlson were born from this bond. Alice later had a daughter, Maggie, by Paddy McCafferty, a worker on the Alaska Railroad (see Plate 49). Another Native girl, Annie Tyone, lived with Peter Monahan. They had a daughter, Tammany (born in 1908), whom Monahan named for Tammany Hall in New York, in honor of his Democratic Party affiliations. Tammany grew up on Valdez Creek and subsequently married Dan Nickolai (see Plate 28).

Productive Claims: 1908-1913

From the time of discovery in 1903 until 1908 the Valdez Creek placers produced $175,000; by 1910, this total rose to $275,000; and by January 1913, it reached $300,000 (Moffit, 1912:54; Valdez Weekly Miner, 06/01/13). Only a few of the claims staked had contributed substantially to the total output. Many claims that were staked were never developed. The main producers were five creek claims - Discovery, No. 1 Below, No. 2 Below, No. 2 Above, and No. 3 Above, and two bench claims - Tammany bench and the claim on the left limit of No. 1 Below (Moffit, 1912:58). No. 1 Below and No. 2 Above were the richest creek claims. The No. 2 Above claim alone yielded $30,000 in 1908. From 1903 to 1910 more than one third of the total gold production of Valdez

Creek came from the creek claims; consequently, much of the gravel on these creek claims was exhausted within a few years, and their yield was declining in 1909 and 1910 (Moffit, 1912:60). The owners of these productive claims are listed in Fred Moffit's field notes for 1910 (page 65). Discovery, No. 1 Below, No. 2 Below, and No. 2 Above claims belonged to the "Discovery Boys"--Peter Monahan, John Johnson, James S. Smith, and J. C. Clarkson--with Dan Kain, William Grogg, and R. P. Ferguson owning part interest. No. 3 Above belonged to J. Clark Duff, and Tammany bench claim to Monahan, Smith, and Johnson.

The Tammany bench claim on the buried channel became the richest single claim on Valdez Creek. Monahan concentrated work on a tunnel that traversed the bottom of the channel, taking out $60,000 in 1908 and $35,000 in 1909. Refusing an offer of $150,000 for Tammany bench claim and several adjoining claims, Monahan continued to excavate the tunnel, reaching a length of 700 feet by August 1910 (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 11/10/08, 10/15/09; Moffit, 1912:60). The general course of the tunnel was N. 15 degrees E., beginning on the north side of claim No. 2 Above at an elevation 60 feet above the creek bed and 110 feet below the bench surface (see Plate 15, Map 4).

The tunnel followed the bottom of the old preglacial canyon, the lower 5 to 6 feet of gravel being the richest. Unlike placer gold deposits that were deeply frozen in areas farther north, the deep placer gravels at Valdez Creek were unfrozen, even during winter months. This enabled tunneling work to proceed during the winter, but also made it more costly, as it was necessary to use pumps in the shafts and to use thick post and beam timbers to support the tunnel and transverse drifts (Moffit, 1912:61). Light steel rails and mining cars were used to bring the gravel out to sluice boxes which were partially fed by water issuing from the tunnel (Coffield, letter, 08/11/77). During the winter of 1910-1911 the "Discovery Boys," with Bill Smith and Charley Claussen, remained at Valdez Creek to guard their property and to drive tunnels in an effort to trace the pay channel, which had changed direction (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 11/21/10; Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 10/19/10). By the end of the 1912 season the tunnel was excavated to a length of 1,200 feet. It averaged 25 feet in width and 7 feet in height (Chitina Leader, 07/14/14). From 1903 to 1912, Monahan and associates grossed an estimated $160,000 from the Tammany tunnel, and approximately $140,000 had been taken from the other claims (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 11/25/13; 07/25/15).

In January 1913, the tunnel was abandoned and replaced by a large hydraulic mining operation in the same area (Moffit, 1914:307). Prior to the installation of this hydraulic operation at Tammany bench claim, all profitable gold mining on Valdez Creek had been done by hand methods - panning, pickaxe, shovel, and wheelbarrow to sluice boxes flooded by wing dams and ditches from the creek.

The large boulders in the gravels of the creek claims made the work particularly difficult (Plates 4 and 5). Even so, by 1911, most of the rich gravel in the original creek claims had been worked out.

The first hydraulic mining machinery was introduced to Valdez Creek in 1908 on a trial basis. Dan Kain and associates of the Oregon and Susitna Mining Company installed a hydraulic set-up on No. 1 and No. 2 Below which included a rubble elevator for disposing of cobbles and boulders (Moffit, 1910:64) and two giants fed by water brought through ditches and pipes from Timberline Creek, one and a half miles above (Moffit, 1909:116; 1910:64). A giant, or hydraulic monitor, is a swivel-mounted nozzle attached to a stand and counterweighted so that one worker can direct the vertical and lateral movements of the nozzle. E. Gagnon and Louie Gorman were employed to operate the giants (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 08/24/09). The hydraulic operation did not prove to be profitable on this claim and was discontinued after 1909 (Moffit, 1912:60). Dan Kain also brought in a 26-horsepower sawmill, assembled on site at No. 1 Below by William Widstrom (see Map 4). A dam (Plate 7) was built to divert water to the mill through a ditch on the north side of Valdez Creek. A Ferguson drill, owned by the Wickersham brothers, was operating at the creek in 1908 and 1909 (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 10/15/09). Because of transportation problems--the long distances, time, and tremendous expense--heavy equipment was slow in coming to Valdez Creek.

Concurrent with the mining activity on lower Valdez Creek were operations on its south side tributaries, Lucky Gulch and Rusty Creek (Map 3). Through 1910 very little prospecting was done on Roosevelt, White, and Timberline creeks; however, the efforts and results on Lucky Gulch and Rusty Creek were highly rewarding for the small parties of men working there (Moffit, 1912:56).

John E. Carlson of Cordova discovered gold on Lucky Gulch in 1904. By the end of the 1908 season he is said to have taken approximately $40,000 from his claim (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 11/10/08). Located some 6 miles east of the main mining camp at Tammany bench claim, Lucky Gulch was a narrow stream too steep and deep for the accumulation of a large body of gravel. But it was free of the large diorite boulders, a situation favorable to "booming," or mining by means of controlled flooding regulated by a dam with a gate, or "boomer" (Plate 14), that opened automatically when the water level behind the dam reached a predetermined height (Moffit, 1912:64). By damming water to boom the narrow gulch and flush away overlying deposits, it was easy to expose the gold bearing gravels just above bedrock. Carlson extracted many large coarse nuggets from the stream bed. In 1907, Carlson and his partner Tom Neely found a 52-ounce nugget and in 1909 another worth $900. In 1910 the Gray brothers found a nugget weighing 32 ounces which was worth $500. During the 1908 season Bill Smith, a miner working for Carlson and Neely,

discovered at the head of Lucky Gulch a quartz ledge measuring 10 feet across the face (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 12/04/08). According to Moffit's 1910 field notes (p. 65), Lucky Gulch that year belonged to John E. Carlson in equal partnership with Dan Kain, owner of the Alaska Central Hydraulic Company. Working for Carlson and Kain in the gulch were John Gray, James Gray, and Dean Officer. During 1912 Dan Kain sold his Lucky Gulch claims to the Valdez Creek Placer Mines Company (Valdez Weekly Miner, 01/14/12).

Around 1907, Warren H. Merrit set up camp at the mouth of Rusty Creek and began booming operations there. A tributary of White Creek, which flowed into Valdez Creek some 4½ miles east of the main camp, Rusty Creek (Map 3) presented much the same problems as Lucky Gulch, both being narrow ravines with deeply embedded channels. From 1908 to 1910 inclusive, Merrit directed work on a cut several hundred feet long and in some places 25 feet deep in the channel just above the mouth of the creek. In 1909, J. C. Murphy (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 10/15/09) reported that Merrit with Fred Hayness and other associates were striking gold using a boom dam in the channel. Moffit (1910:65) mentions the names Frank Swanson, James Wiley, Oberdorfer, and Knapp as miners working for Merrit on Rusty Creek.

The 1909 Gold Robbery

The newspaper (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 09/15/09 and 09/18/09) reported a robbery which occurred on Valdez Creek on August 20, 1909. During the night $8,000 worth of gold was stolen from Dan Kain's tent cabin, headquarters of the Oregon and Susitna Mining Company. There was a general meeting of all the miners on Valdez Creek - 73 in total attended. By popular consent, J. C. Clarkson became chairman of a six-man committee appointed to search every miner's quarters and belongings and carry out an investigation. However, the newspaper never published a conclusion to the incident, and according to Alice Norton (pers. comm.) the gold was never found and no one was ever charged with the crime.

Decline of Gold Production: 1911-1913

From 1911 to 1913, with the exception of the Tammany tunnel, gold production on Valdez Creek declined markedly. Many of the creek gravels were depleted, and claims yielded less gold with each succeeding season.

Some of the higher bench claims still contained sizeable amounts of gold, but manual labor for working them came at a high cost and absorbed most of the returns from those operations. Environmental conditions had also changed. Large game had all but disappeared from the area (Moffit, 1915:20), and hunters sup-

plying meat to the miners had to range into more distant hunting grounds. Most of the useable timber in the immediate vicinity had been cut for sluice boxes, tunnel "square set" supports, flumes, log dams, buildings, and firewood. Timber had to be transported from stands south of Valdez Creek that were a considerable distance away, again increasing the operating costs. Consequently, the annual influx of miners to the district decreased until by 1911 only a score of dedicated miners and claim owners were working at Valdez Creek (Moffit, 1912:66-68).

In his 1912 report (p. 66) Moffit suggested that future productive mining on Valdez Creek would be best realized by hydraulic operations on the Tammany bench. He pointed out that hydraulic mining could succeed at low cost by making use of the creek water to move the gravels and by dumping tailings into the creek channel. Although Monahan and a few other miners were profiting from their claims, the annual reinvestment necessary for supplies, transportation, and seasonal workers denied them the accumulation of capital to purchase sophisticated equipment for hydraulic mining and to hire the personnel for its installation and operation. Valdez Creek's remote location discouraged many speculators from investing their money in the installation of expensive equipment for large scale operations, although in 1909 Captain E. T. Barnette, a mining promoter and Fairbanks banker, showed an interest in promoting large scale mining development on Valdez Creek. He visualized an encouraging future if only Major W. P. Richardson, then head of the Alaska Road Commission, would build a road from Gulkana to Valdez Creek (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 11/03/09). J. C. Murphy also did not foresee the possibility of any real mining development at Valdez Creek, or any place on the entire Upper Susitna drainage, until fast and direct supply routes were established from either Gulkana or Susitna station (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 10/15/09).

Valdez Creek Placer Mines Company: 1913-1919

Outside interests were investing money in Valdez Creek claims as early as 1906, when speculators from Seattle and St. Paul began dealing in shares and claim assessments. In 1907 George Sias of Boston purchased claims on Rusty Creek. In 1910 he formed an association, the George W. Sias Syndicate of Boston, which pooled the assets of several northeastern capitalists owning Alaskan mining property. Representing the other investors, Sias made a trip to Alaska in 1911. Accompanied by Mr. Forbes Rickard, a mining expert from Denver, Colorado, Sias visited Valdez Creek where he and Rickard inspected the Monahan tunnel on the Tammany bench claim. Rickard estimated that the remaining gravels in the Tammany claim were worth $.94 per cubic yard, which persuaded Sias to invest large amounts of capital in the development of hydraulic mining operations at Valdez Creek. Although there were no direct roads to Valdez Creek and freighting costs were high,

George Sias decided to risk the investment of money for the hydraulicking project on the gamble that the rich gravels of the Tammany bench would yield profits of bonanza proportions. A merger was made of the Boston claims, the Kain property on Lucky Gulch and lower Valdez Creek, Tammany bench, and all the other claims belonging to Monahan and his partners. This new organization was called the Valdez Creek Placer Mines Company. It was an express trust domiciled in Boston. George Sias was president of the company, and he along with five other New England investors were the trustees (Valdez Weekly Miner, 06/01/13:4).

Unable or unwilling to pool their financial resources for future development, and choosing to save their profits rather than reinvest in hydraulic operations, the claim-owning miners in the company decided to sell their shares to the Boston trustees. From January 1912 to January 1913 the Boston capitalists paid Monahan and his partners, Dan Kain, and their Valdez investors (Valdez Consolidated Mining Co.) some $150,000 in several installments for their Valdez Creek claims and improvements (Valdez Weekly Miner, 01/14/12). During the next four years the trustess continued to buy claims and property on Valdez Creek; by 1916 they had acquired 5,000 acres of mining claims (Chitina Leader, 02/24/16).

During 1912 and 1913 the Valdez Creek Placer Mines Company freighted in tons of supplies and equipment to Valdez Creek (Valdez Weekly Miner, 02/23/12:1; 06/10/13:1) to set up a hydraulic operation. Many claims formerly worked were left idle during this period pending the launching of the large-scale operation (Moffit 1914:44). William Soule, an Alaskan who represented the Boston company at Valdez Creek, began excavating a ditch for hydraulic operations in April 1912 (Valdez Weekly Miner, 04/14/12). During the 1913 season the ditch was completed. It was 1¾ miles long, and used 2,800 feet of pipe to feed water to a hydraulic giant. With this facility, enough gravel was removed from the Tammany channel to expose bare rock in the preglacial canyon (Moffit, 1914: 308). Company assessment work was done on Lucky Gulch in 1913, netting some $3,000. In November of 1913, George Sias reported to The Cordova Daily Alaskan (11/25/13) that clean-up of gravels during the summer averaged $1.59 per cubic yard, and stated that his company's present operations were only preparations for a larger development the following year.

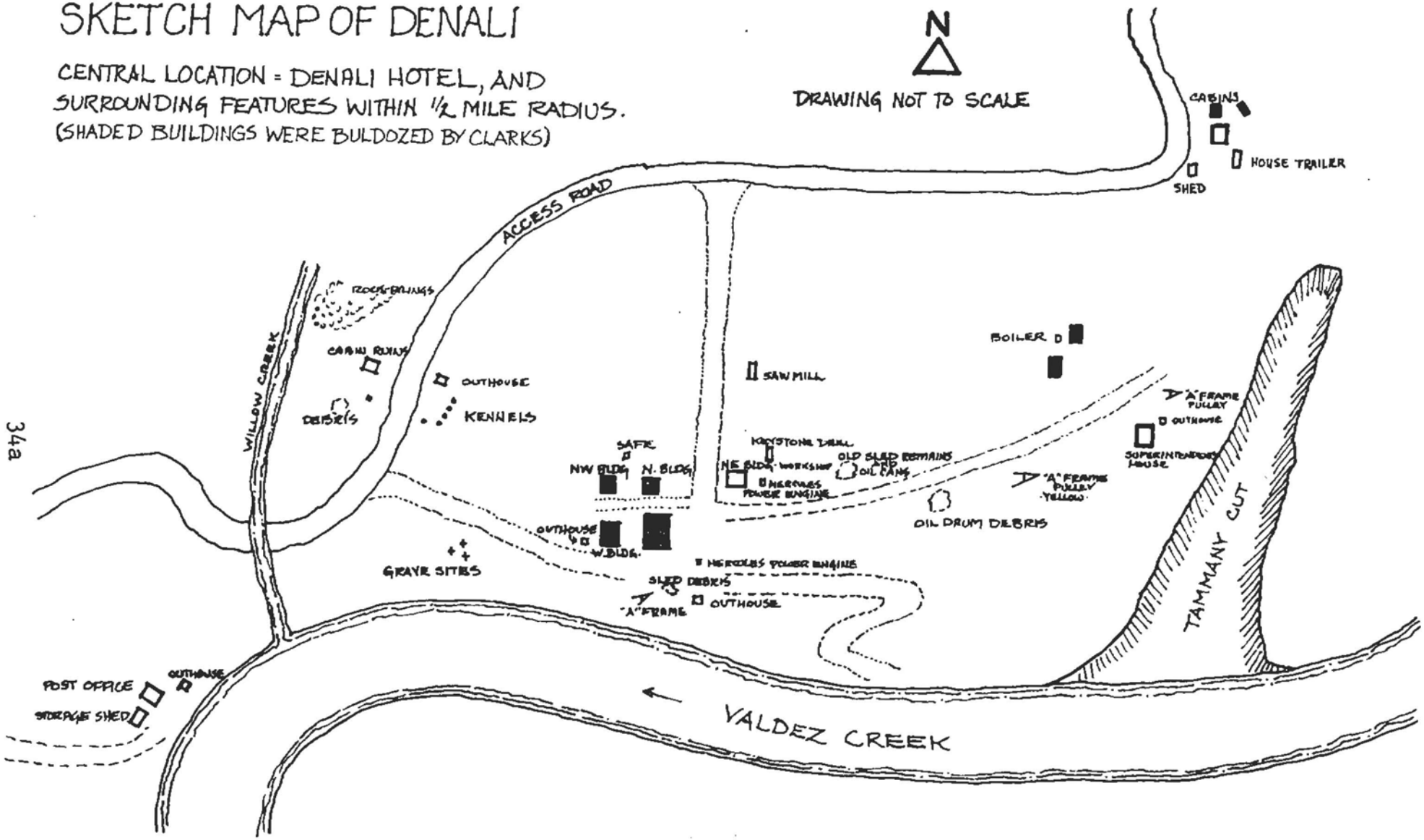
The Valdez Creek Pipeline: 1914-1916

During the winter of 1914 the Valdez Creek Placer Mines Company freighted 250 tons of building materials (including 100 tons of sheet iron for pipe) from Cordova to Valdez Creek to build a new pipeline. William Soule, now transportation manager for the company, accompanied the shipment, all the way from Seattle to Cordova by boat, to Chitina by rail, and to Valdez Creek via the

Gulkana-Maclaren rivers by horse drawn sleds. Fifty horses were required for the sled train (Valdez Weekly Miner, 01/18/14, 05/23/15; Cordova Daily Alaskan, 01/22/14). On May 7th the last of the supplies arrived, and George Sias directed 54 men in building a 200-foot flume, a large penstock, and beginning the construction of the new pipeline. Alfred H. Bryant, a hydraulic mining expert who had come to Alaska in 1898 from New England and had acquired 16 years of experience setting up hydraulic mining operations on the Kenai Peninsula, was hired to supervise the digging of a ditch 4 feet deep and 6,200 feet long and to design and lay 4,000 feet of pipe. When it was completed, the pipeline consisted of hand-rolled riveted segments of sheet metal pipe that began with an intake 5 feet wide, and continued in 100-foot lengths of 36, 30, 24, and 22 inch diameter pipe. Its function was to bring water from upper Valdez Creek to a point above the preglacial channel on Tammany claim. From there three branches of 13-inch diameter pipe stretched to three points for positioning the giants (Chitina Leader, 07/14/14). The pipeline was put into operation on August 27th, and when the water was turned on, three 6-inch nozzles projected a 350-foot head of water against the gravels of the Tammany cut. By the end of the year the company had spent a total of $288,045 for the purchase of bench claims, labor, and equipment (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 01/30/15; Chitina Leader, 02/02/15).

The following January 1915, the company brought in even more sophisticated mining equipment. George Sias purchased and sent to Alaska a Keystone drill and a complete Ingersoll-Rand air compressor and drilling outfit. The steam-powered, self-propelled Keystone drill was used for locating the old channel and testing the ground of the Tammany channel beyond the farthest point reached by Monahan's tunnel. This was relatively easy, because on either side of the channel, bedrock lay written a few feet of the bench surface (Moffit, 1911:121). The air compressor, driven by 58-horsepower Pelton water wheels, operated the Ingersoll-Rand jack hammer and three other drills used to break up and dispose of boulders (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 01/30/15; Chitina Leader, 02/02/15). When hydraulic operations recommenced in May that year, the miners worked in day and night shifts to take advantage of the almost total daylight of the Alaskan summer and to profit as much as possible during a hydraulicking work season only 100 to 150 days long (Valdez Weekly Miner, 05/23/15). William T. Soule and his wife; George Sias and his brother N. P. Sias; A. H. Bryant; and Thorvald J. Anderson, the Keystone drill expert, were all on site during the season (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 02/06/15, 02/17/15, 05/29/15).

The next season Pierre Bourey, a hydraulic mining expert from La Grange, California, came to supervise construction and installation of the operational system (Valdez Weekly Miner, 05/19/17). From January through May 1916, another 400 tons of supplies were



MAP 5 – DENALI SETTLEMENT IN 1977

shipped to Valdez Creek at an expense of $125,000 (Chitina Leader, 02/24/16). From June through August, Bourey, directing a force of 55 men, accomplished the following:

1. Constructed a reservoir 77 feet below the pipeline penstock, where water could be stored and turned out to wash away the dump when necessary.
2. Replaced the 13-inch pipe with 18-inch and 15-inch pipe to feed three newly installed No. 6 double-jointed, ball-bearing giants.
3. Laid 3,000 pieces of 5-foot-long iron rail for riffles in the flume.
4. Erected a 5-ton capacity guy derrick with a 70-foot mast and an 85-foot boom for moving boulders.
5. Installed a hydroelectric generating plant that furnished power for lighting and running the sawmill.
6. Devised an operational system of two sluices for a double attack on the cut bank of the Tammany channel - the derrick and air drill clearing boulders from one side while the water played on the other.

The season's construction efforts were reported in The Chitina Leader (02/24/16); The Cordova Daily Times (09/25/16, 05/28/18); and The Valdez Weekly Miner, (05/19/17).

After months of construction "dead work" the last 22 days of the season were spent in hydraulicking. The clean-up netted only $23,000 (Valdez Weekly Miner, 05/19/17).

The Company Mining Settlement: 1917-1918

"Best machine shops on the Alaska mainland at that time
(Coffield, letter, 08/11/77)

Although it was isolated hundreds of miles from civilization, Valdez Creek now took on the appearance of a self-sufficient mining community, complete with modern conveniences. By 1917 the physical facilities had been expanded to include a two-story company bunkhouse with beds for 24 men and a dining hall to seat 35, an "engineer's house" for the superintendent, a general store, a cookhouse, and supervisor's quarters. There were numerous workhops, barns, storage sheds, and also cabins that served as individual dwellings. The hydroelectric generating plant, located on the south side of Valdez Creek, furnished electricity to the installations on the north side.

Photographs obtained from A. B. Smith of Delta Junction, Alaska, show the Valdez Creek mining community as it appeared about 1917-1918 (Plates 16-20). The main plan of the settlement roughly followed the course of Valdez Creek (see Maps 4 and 5), beginning with the post office, which was also Leburn S. Wickersham's cabin and extending east or upstream along a trail on the north side of

the creek for nearly 1½ miles. Approximately three-fourths of a mile east of the post office was the main concentration of company buildings centering around the two-story bunkhouse and divided by an avenue leading east one-half mile to the superintendent's house. Several informants, including Henry Peters, identified the functions of these buildings. The bunkhouse, or hotel, served as living quarters and mess hall for the miners. West of the bunkhouse were two more buildings, a cookhouse and the office of T. J. Anderson, the Keystone drill expert. On the north side of the bunkhouse, across the street, was a store, and just west of this another building used as a carpentry shop and at times as a morgue. Northeast of the bunkhouse and store was the sawmill. Continuing east from the bunkhouse, the main avenue led past various sheds and workshops where the company's mining machinery and pipe were assembled and repaired.

The superintendent's house was probably the eastern limit of the company's building complex, although there were other cabins beyond this in the vicinity of the Tammany claim and farther up the creek. The town complex was purposely located on the Moskaska claim, which encompassed the high bluff underlain by bedrock at a shallow depth. Keystone drilling there had indicated negligible gold content (Pettyjohn, pers. comm.). Ramjet pumps from the creek brought water to the company dwellings, and electric wires suspended on tripod poles ran from the generating plant across the creek to the north side and supplied the community with lighting and a local telephone system. Tripods consisting of 3 poles tied together at their tops were used because they could not blow over or fall even if they rotted at the base. Considering the isolation of the community, it was an outstanding accomplishment for the Valdez Creek Placer Mines Company to build such a facility. Their large investment showed their hope for a prolonged operation on Valdez Creek, based on the gamble that the Tammany channel would yield millions.

Expansion of the hydraulic operation continued in 1917. During that winter 150 tons of materials representing an investment of $108,000 were freighted to Valdez Creek. Thirty men were employed during the summer to construct some 2,000 feet of flume, 5 feet wide, with 40-pound iron rails laid in to act as riffles; to complete a 10-acre reservoir 6 feet deep; to install a 58-horsepower compressor, and to cut 5,000 feet of wood per day. Hydraulicking operations that year grossed $130,000 (Cordova Daily Times, 05/28/18, 08/05/18; Valdez Weekly Miner, 05/19/17).

By 1918 the newspapers were quoting George Sias to the effect that the Valdez Creek Placer Mines Company had expended over $1,000,000 on development work (Cordova Daily Times, 07/26/18). When hydraulicking resumed on June 1 of that year, there were six giants in action - three No. 6 giants with 7 to 8 inch nozzles and three No. 4 giants. Fourteen men were hired for cleanup operations. Reports stated that the rich lower five inches of

gravel in the Tammany channel yielded $21.00 per cubic yard. Geological experts predicted that the Tammany channel would be productive for the next 20 years. After spending six years freighting in enormous amounts of equipment at considerable cost and after building one of the most sophisticated hydraulic mining operations in Alaska, the company expected returns at an average of at least $175,000 per year to offset past expenses and to realize profits.

Decline of the Company: 1919-1921

Annual newspaper reports about the progress of the Valdez Creek Placer Mines Company cease after 1918. In 1921, a new company is mentioned, the McKinley Gold Placer Company, which took possession of the claims on Valdez Creek (Cordova Daily Times, 09/09/21). The reasons why the Valdez Creek Placer Mines Company sold their property were never published, but can be surmised as follows.

The dreams for a bonanza of profits from hydraulicking the Tammany channel were apparently not realized soon enough for the Boston trustees and other backers of the Valdez Creek Placer Mines Company. Newspaper reports and company releases predicting great returns could not alter the fact that the company was not actually making large profits. The total gold production from 1913 through 1918 on Valdez Creek was only a fraction of the total amount invested, and capital for annual resupply and labor was not coming from seasonal earnings, but from private sources and investors. George Sias and his associates had invested well over $500,000 in mining development and construction on Valdez Creek. After the initial construction period, 1913 to 1918, the investors were expecting profits. When these were not forthcoming, their willingness to continue funding the operations at Valdez Creek ceased. From 1914 to 1920 there was a general decline of gold production in Alaska. Many miners entered the military service or returned to the states, where wages were high; thus the labor pool declined. Wartime inflation also had a serious impact on wages, and on costs of supplies and machinery. Some supplies and machinery were simply not available, as factories were devoted to war products. However, the war demand for copper made mining this ore more profitable. The fiscal climate during the war years 1917 and 1918 did not encourage financiers in the states to risk their fortunes on mining ventures in the remote interior of the Territory of Alaska. At the end of the war the demand for ores dropped suddenly, and there was a mining depression in Alaska (Cordova Daily Times, 06/16/23). Lacking the finances to continue operations, the Valdez Creek Placer Mines Company relinquished its holdings to a new group of capitalists over the three year period from 1919 to 1921.

McKinley Gold Placer Company: 1919-1926

The McKinley Gold Placer Company was formed in 1919 after a party of New York mining men sent a representative to Valdez Creek. The New York company quietly bought some 200 claims, taking over the claims, improvements, equipment, and operations of the Valdez Creek Placer Mines Company (Cordova Daily Times, 09/09/21, 10/17/21). Undoubtedly, the New York capitalists were encouraged to invest in the Valdez Creek venture by the knowledge that the Alaska Railroad was being built through Broad Pass, 54 miles west of the creek, and would offer a much better embarkation point for freighting materials to Valdez Creek (Cordova Daily Times, 05/28/18). In 1919, John E. Carlson, a miner from Lucky Gulch and local homesteader, and his friend, Jack West, built a store and roadhouse at Cantwell, a whistle stop at mile 320 on the railroad (see Plate 38). This was an excellent location for supplying Valdez Creek, and the Carlson-West enterprise became quite profitable. They sold provisions to miners, Natives, and prospectors in the Valdez Creek district. Completion of the Alaska Railroad in 1922 firmly established Cantwell as the supply base for the McKinley Gold Placer Company. Equipment from outside was shipped to Seward, carried by rail to Cantwell, and then by trail 65 miles to Valdez Creek--a much quicker and more economical route than that from Cordova to Chitina and overland 250 miles by sled on the Gulkana, Maclaren, and Susitna rivers. Carlson's store supplied the company at Valdez Creek throughout the year--by pack horse in summer (see Plate 39) and by horse sled or dog sled in winter (Cordova Daily Times, 09/09/21).

There were no hydraulicking operations on the Tammany channel in 1921 because the company was unable to bring in supplies due to the poor condition of the packhorse trail from Cantwell to the mines (Cordova Daily Times, 08/15/21).

In January 1922, a 400-ton freight-sled train pulled by 18 horses departed Cantwell for Valdez Creek carrying explosives, feed, and provisions. The company immediately began preparations for summer operations and put men to work cutting and hauling logs for the sawmill (Cordova Daily Times, 01/14/22, 03/08/22). The McKinley Gold Placers Company, which also for a time carried the name McKinley Placer Mines Company, continued hydraulic operations on the Tammany channel until the spring of 1924, employing a maximum of 50 men per season (Ross 1933:428).

Return of the Veterans

The advent of the railroad and its connection to Cantwell and the mines rekindled interest in Valdez Creek. Many old-timers, who had originally sold their claims to the Valdez Creek Placer Mines Company, returned to Valdez Creek from "outside" where they had spent most of their fortunes--probably in gambling, drinking, and

wasteful living (Coffield, letter, 08/17/77). In 1921, Peter Monahan was on Valdez Creek doing assessment work for the McKinley Gold Placer Company (Cordova Daily Times, 09/09/21). In 1922, Monahan and Buck Norton brought in enough supplies to Valdez Creek for a whole year of independent mining on the south tributaries (Cordova Daily Times, 01/04/22, 03/08/22). Henry Peters of Cantwell told us that when he was a boy he knew Peter Monahan, and described him as a good miner, sometimes quick tempered, especially after a bout with moonshine which he loved so much. Monahan's daughter, Tammany, and her husband, Dan Nickolai, lived out on the Susitna flats at the time. Peter occasionally visited them and brought supplies from Cantwell (Coffield, letter, 08/17/77).

Newcomers to the mines and to Cantwell who became prominent names in the area's history were two former teamsters who had worked on the Richardson Road, Lorne Campbell and J. M. Olsen, the latter nicknamed "Laughing Ole." Both of these men brought their sleds and dog teams to Cantwell, where they were given a contract by John Carlson and the McKinley Placer Mines Company to freight supplies and mail to Valdez Creek. Lorne Campbell also did some independent prospecting on the bars above the Tammany channel and had a trapline, kennel, and cabin on Willow Creek (Coffield, letter, 08/17/77; Jack Herman, Henry Peters, pers. comm.).

The Denali Post Office

Leburn S. Wickersham was appointed postmaster for the post office established at Valdez Creek on April 8, 1915. This post office, housed in Wickersham's cabin (Plate 20) on the west bank of the bend of lower Valdez Creek, was first called "McKinley," probably because of its proximity to the great mountain. On August 4, 1922, it was renamed "Denali," derived from the Athapaskan name for Mt. McKinley (see Plate 21). An earlier post office named "McKinley" had also existed briefly at Valdez Creek in 1908 to 1909 (Ricks, 1965:16,40). Between 1903 and 1913 there was no official U. S. Government mail service between Gulkana, at that time the last post office south of the Alaska Range on the Government road, and Valdez Creek. During the summer of 1910 miners received mail from Gulkana by an Indian messenger who was paid by private subscription (Moffit, 1911:113; 1912:67). Mail was also handled through delivery points such as Paxson's and Yost's roadhouses on the military trail. A special mail route between Paxson's Roadhouse and Valdez Creek was informally established in 1913 by the Valdez Creek Placer Mines Company. However, this route did not receive recognition, subsidy, and use by the U. S. Postal Service until 1915 (Valdez Daily Prospector, 07/08/14). Prior to 1918-1919 mail destined for Valdez Creek from outside the territory was shipped to Valdez, then taken to Gulkana or Paxson's on the first and fifteenth of the month, and from there by sled or packhorse to "McKinley" post office. In

the late 1910s, the main post route became the Alaska Railroad from Seward to Cantwell, and from Carlson's Roadhouse there to Valdez Creek.

Denali Postmaster L. S. Wickersham, nicknamed "Wick" by his fellow miners on Valdez Creek, had his own placer claims and camp at the west end of Gold Hill, which lies between lower White Creek and Black Creek (Coffield, letter, 08/22/77). He also mined west of the Susitna on the creek that bears his name and had a couple of cabins there. L. S. Wickersham, Lorne Campbell, Buck Norton, and Peter Monahan were year-around residents at Denali, staying the winters at Valdez Creek with their dog teams and occasionally sledding into Cantwell for supplies. The Denali post office continued until 1942 when Cantwell became the nearest post office (Ricks, 1965:16).

Litigation of the McKinley Gold Placer Company: 1924-1926

According to various reports the Valdez Creek placers had produced around $500,000 worth of gold from 1903 to 1925, some $350,000 to $400,000 of it coming from the Tammany channel. However, only a small fraction taken from the Tammany claim was produced by the McKinley Gold Placer Company, which during the seasons 1922 through 1924 did not realize profits large enough to defray costs. Infighting between two company engineers in charge of hydraulicking operations hindered proper management. Labor costs were high, and too much time and effort was required to move the large diorite boulders which impeded processing of the gold bearing gravels in the channel. Failing to make the operation pay, the McKinley Gold Placer Company, like its predecessor, went broke and stopped operations in the spring of 1924 (Coffield, letter, 08/17/77).

During the period from 1924 to 1926 the holdings of the company were in litigation. The company's central office had failed to meet the payroll. The miners reacted by putting liens on the claims and taking over operations on Valdez Creek. Records of the Talkeetna Recording District (Book 11:118-136) list 13 miners who filed liens in 1924 against the McKinley Gold Placer Company claims for back wages. These included:

C. W. Norton	Ben Thompson	August Wicklund L. S. Wickersham
E. Munson	W. Watson	
John Dark	Peter Boline	Sidney Black
J. C. Crook	Dan Ohman	Wallace Fairfield
J. M. Olsen		

In this period individual miners began working separate claims obtained by lien and/or auction of the company holdings. Small groups of miners also went together to form associations. Ac-

cording to Laurence Coffield (letter, 08/17/77), four miners - John Carlson of Lucky Gulch, and lien holders John Johnson, Wallace Fairfield (originally from Spokane, Washington), and Dan Ohman (Washington), organized their own company and started to tunnel on the Tammany channel. Later, these four set up a hydraulic operation on the south side of Valdez Creek and worked the high bench gravels opposite the Tammany cut. Working together in their own interests, these men remained the most successful claim holders on Valdez Creek until World War II began. Their efforts made the operations on the Tammany claim and the south benches pay well.

The Carlson Era: 1926-1949

The years from 1926 through 1949 inclusive can be called "The Carlson Era" of Valdez Creek history. During this time John Carlson acquired, owned, sold, leased, and traded numerous claims and mining interests on Valdez Creek and its tributaries. By 1927 he owned the largest part of the former McKinley Gold Placer Company claims and eventually all of its buildings and equipment. His mining enterprises in association with Wallace Fairfield, Dan Ohman, John M. Johnson, Peter Bolene, and W. S. Horning made record gold productions for the district in 1933, 1937, and 1938.

John Carlson was born in Sweden in 1886 and died in Seattle, Washington in 1949. In 1904, he discovered gold on Lucky Gulch and owned claims there until his death. He began to build a supply center at Cantwell in 1919 when he knew the Alaska Railroad would go through Broad Pass, 50 miles west of Valdez Creek. His outpost included a roadhouse which stood where the Cantwell Cafe is today (Plate 38). Although involved in mining on Valdez Creek, Carlson preferred the roles of claim proprietor and merchant to the role of miner (Plate 50). He was able to obtain numerous claims on Valdez Creek from miners who were indebted to him for supplies from his store in Cantwell. During the years of the McKinley Gold Placer Company litigation he acquired many of the company's shares and also took over liens that others held against the company in trade for cancellation of debts and obligations owed him (Jack Herman, Ed Smith, pers. comm.). Carlson's acquistions were recorded in the Talkeetna Recording District, examples of which are as follows:

> September 17, 1926: By auction sale John E. Carlson acquired the following claims formerly owned by the McKinley Gold Placer Company: Discovery, No. 1 Above, No. 2 Above, No. 1 Below, No. 2 Below; bench claims - Folk, Golden Rule, No. 2 Cleopatra, Skylark; and creek claims No. 3 and No. 4 Below (Book 12:181).
>
> December 29, 1926: John Dark assigned his interest in attached claims to John E. Carlson: No. 1 and No. 2

Below Discovery, Discovery, No. 1, No. 2, No. 11 Above Discovery, and bench claims - Joplin, Tammany, Jennie, Cora, Bay Horse, Moskaska, Swedenburg, Montana, Bland, Ingersoll, No. 11 Bench Claim (Book 12:254).

July 2, 1927: Sale by U. S. Marshall H. P. Sullivan to John E. Carlson of claims formerly owned by McKinley Gold Placer Company: bench claims - Jessie, Flora, Idaho, Britton, Dellamar, No. 8 Bench Claim and creek claim No. 12 Above Discovery (Book 12:256-257).

October 27, 1927: Agreement by Peter Bolene to assign his interest in attached claims to John E. Carlson (Book 12:280-281).

October 17, 1934: Quitclaim deed on lien attaching claims by W. S. Horning to John E. Carlson - (liens originally held by J. C. Crook and Sidney Black against McKinley Gold Placers Inc.) (Book 14:199).

The 1925 Rush

Concurrent with the litigation involving the McKinley Gold Placer Company holdings, there was a lode strike and a small rush to Valdez Creek when in July of 1925 Laughing Ole found a pay streak of lode gold in the rimrock of Timberline Creek at its junction with Valdez Creek (Cordova Daily Times, 07/27/25). Word of the strike and rumor of a subterranean gold-bearing quartz vein on the bench limits bordering the south side of Valdez Creek brought a small rush of 40 to 50 miners to the tributaries, primarily Timberline, White, Rusty, Lucky Gulch, Roosevelt, Eldorado, and Surprise creeks. Reports of the miners and of claims involved in the rush appeared in the Cordova Daily Times (09/17/25, 08/01/25, 06/08/26, 11/01/27). Monahan, Colligrossi, and Laughing Ole were at the right limit of the Timberline benches in 1925 and 1926. In 1927 Monahan worked claim No. 4 Above and Laughing Ole was tunneling on No. 6 Above. In 1925, Stewart, Tronstadt, and Stinnes worked the right limit benches of White Creek. John Rumohr and the Wickersham brothers, Leburn and Horace, sluiced the upper end of Lucky Gulch in 1925 and 1927. Bruno Agostino and associates worked at Eldorado Creek in 1925 and on the Lucky bench claim in 1926 and 1927 at the mouth of Roosevelt Creek, leased from John Carlson. In 1925 B. B. Mozee, who was in charge of the Bureau of Education reindeer project in the district, staked five claims for himself. Lou Powless, World War I veteran and former Chief of the Anchorage Police Department, made deep cuts on his lode veins above Timberline and sent samples of the ore to Anchorage for inspection by the businessmen who were supporting his prospects (Coffield, letter, 08/29/77).

While the rushers flocked to the south tributaries to mine the gold quartz lodes, a combination of lien holders continued to work the placers on lower Valdez Creek. John Carlson and his associates continued to mine the Tammany channel by tunneling and hydraulicking. According to the Cordova Daily Times (06/08/26, 10/01/27), the names of some of the lien holders working the channel with Carlson were as follows: in 1926 - Peter Bolene, Sidney Black, Tom Maher, and John M. Johnson; in 1927 - Bolene, Black, Maher, Sam Langland, and Dan Ohman. In 1926 they dug a ditch to bring water to the bench claims near the mouth of Valdez Creek. During the following season (1927) a party of Indians working Carlson's Folk bench claim on the south side of the creek discovered good gold deposits there. Consequently, the hydraulic equipment was moved to the south benches in 1928, and hydrualic operations commenced.

After three summers of concentrated efforts on the tributary lodes, the energy and enthusiasm which the lode discovery engendered had died out. By 1928 there were only 12 men engaged in productive mining work on Valdez Creek, including the few who had realized any profits during the period between 1925 and 1927. The Wickersham brothers on White Creek netted some $10,000 (Ross, 1933:453). Previous to their bonanza was the strike made there in 1917 by C. W. Norton (Cordova Daily Times, 05/28/18). Laughing Ole's claim at Timberline did well. He continued to work the tunnel at that location until 1928 when he, Clark Duff, and Laurence Coffield took over Powless' claims. The largest amount of gold was produced by Carlson and his associates who continued to work the placer claims of the former McKinley Gold Placer Company. Although dozens of rushers had found gold in quartz viens, they returned empty-handed, unable to secure the financial support needed to undertake drilling operations on lode claims. The story of Lou Powless epitomizes the hard luck and sense of failure that struck some miners in the Valdez Creek quartz lode rush. After finding out that his gold samples assayed out at a value considerably lower than what he had represented to his financial supporters, he walked to the front of a funeral home in Anchorage, pointed a revolver at his head, and committed suicide (Coffield, letter, 08/29/77; Jake Tansy, pers. comm.).

In this period the one who profited above all others was John Carlson. He did considerable business with all the miners on Valdez Creek, selling them supplies from his store at Denali and packing or freighting in materials for them from Cantwell. In 1929 summer travel between Cantwell and Valdez Creek was still limited to a pack trail, but using a D-7 tractor to pull loaded sleds over a winter trail (Plate 43), Carlson made trips to Valdez Creek twice a month to sell supplies and to inspect his claims. The miners paid him in gold for supplies and services and he bought gold from them for cash. The gold he acquired was sent to an Anchorage bank, which in turn sent it to the U. S. Assay Office in Seattle (Coffield, letters, 08/29/77, 09/08/77).

In this manner Carlson ended up with an enormous share of the returns from the gold mined on Valdez Creek, which he saved or reinvested in his own enterprises.

The Cantwell-Denali Trail

When Carlson and several lien holders combined to develop their claims on Valdez Creek, they petitioned the Alaska Road Commission to maintain the trail between Cantwell and Valdez Creek, to build a proper all-season road connecting the railroad and the mines, and to construct shelter cabins along the way as stopover points for travelers. In March of 1926, Harry I. Staser, John Carlson's mining associate, informed R. J. Sommers, the Territorial Highway Engineer, and Governor George A. Parks that shelter cabins were essential for the development of Valdez Creek (Cordova Daily Times, 03/16/26:3). The Alaska Railroad had worked on the trail from Carlson's Roadhouse to Denali when the McKinley Gold Placer Company first began sledding supplies from the railroad. However, the condition of the trail was far from satisfactory. The 55 mile journey from Cantwell to Denali took three days, and stopover points for the night - usually abandoned cabins left by old-timers from years past - were not adequate for sheltering teamsters, perishable supplies, horses, or dogs. During the summer the pack trail extending from the railroad to Valdez Creek went through bogs, and passage over the Susitna was dependent on ferries, sometimes at prohibitive costs charged by the ferry operators (Cordova Daily Times, 08/01/25, 09/06/29). In order to facilitate the freighting in of supplies to their claims on Valdez Creek the miners requested Engineer Spach of the Alaska Road Commission to plan a road to Denali from the railroad (Cordova Daily Times, 09/06/29).

Between 1927 and 1929 the Alaska Road Commission built at least three shelter cabins along the trail from Cantwell to Denali at points 20 miles, 30 miles (Brushkana Creek), and 43 miles from Cantwell. These were log cabins built during the winter when materials and labor could be sledded to the sites. According to Jack Herman and Henry Peters, construction was supervised by Ben Clary of the Alaska Road Commission who employed local workers. Each cabin was built on the same plan, with 12 by 14 feet interior dimensions, and each was furnished with bunks, an iron stove, a saw, and an axe. It was required that every user replenish the supply of firewood he had used (Coffield, letter, 08/17/77), Next to each cabin was built a log barn, 16 by 20 feet inside, for accommodating dogs or horses. The trail passed right by the cabins, their location indicating the sled and packhorse route used to freight supplies. From Cantwell the trail led straight east along the south bank of the Nenana River past the 20-mile cabin and parallel to the present Denali Highway. At the point where the Nenana turns northeast the trail continued east along the south bank of Brushkana Creek past the

30-mile cabin, crossing Brushkana Creek where it turns south, and then extended due east to Valdez Creek across the muskeg of Monahan Flat on which was located the 40-mile cabin (Map 2). During the winter, dog sleds mushed on the smooth ice of the Nenana River and Brushkana Creek before heading out over the snow on the flats to Denali.

A brief description of the Cantwell-Denali packhorse trail is given in field notes taken in 1931 by Clyde Ross, a geologist with the USGS. Ross' field party made the packhorse journey in three days (June 1914), spending the first night at Brushkana cabin (mile 30). The party spent almost all of the third day getting the pack train across the Susitna River. Evidently, except for the shelter cabins, by 1931 no real improvements had been made on the trail. A paragraph from Ross' 1933 report (p. 29) attests to the continuing need for a road to Valdez Creek.

> "The district is rather remote and inaccessible except by way of the pack trail that leads from the Alaska Railroad at Cantwell, so that many efforts have been made to induce the Alaska Road Commission to construct a suitable road into the district. Such a road would doubtless be of service in opening up the country, because at present the charges for freighting into the district are almost prohibitive for all but the richer deposits."

During the early 1930s, the Alaska Road Commission made plans for the road and, as a first step to its realization, built a bridge across Brushkana Creek. Sources in Cantwell - Henry Peters, Alice Norton, Jack Herman, and Bud Carlson - agree that the Brushkana Creek bridge was erected between 1933 and 1935. The Alaska Road Commission engineer on the project was Tom McCrae, and crew boss Ben Clary was in charge of directing construction. However, about the time the Brushkana Creek bridge was completed, the road was rerouted on higher ground south of the Nenana River to cross Brushkana Creek about three miles farther up its course. Thus, the bridge was never used, but was abandoned upon completion with no road ever leading to or from it (Plate 81). The new route surveyed did not become a road until construction of the present Denali Highway was undertaken between 1951 and 1957.

Deaths of Monahan and Johnson

In 1929 and 1933 two of the original "discovery boys" met tragic ends. Peter Monahan froze to death on the Susitna Flats in March 1929 (old city of Anchorage burial files, No. 183; researched by Janet Nelson, Anchorage Engineering and Mapping Department). According to popular story, Monahan was not feeling well and tried to follow on foot behind Lorne Campbell, who was sledding from Denali to Cantwell. Nine miles out on the flats, Monahan

collapsed. When Campbell reached the 40-mile shelter cabin (about 12 miles west of Denali), he realized that Monahan was not following. He backtracked and found the frozen body. Monahan was an old man when he died, perhaps in his seventies. After his death, the flats of the Upper Susitna were named after him. Because of Monahan's prominence as the discoverer of gold on Valdez Creek, a fraternal organization arranged to have his body shipped to Anchorage for proper burial (Coffield, letter, 08/29/77; Ole Nickolai, Henry Peters, pers. comm.). The U. S. Commissioner at Talkeetna asked Clark Duff to dispose of Monahan's personal possessions, and Duff gave most of them to Tammany. Dan and Tammany took what they wanted from Monahan's cabin on Timberline Creek. Laurence Coffield appropriated Monahan's gold rocker. Later, after returning from a trip outside to his hometown of Baxter Springs in Kansas, Clark Duff occupied the Monahan cabin (Coffield, letter, 08/29/77).

John M. Johnson, who had an interest with Carlson's company in the Big Placer Mine on the Folk claim, died October 26, 1933, in a hospital in Seward as a result of a mining accident at Denali in which he was struck in the back by a rock (Coffield, letter, 09/27/77). Johnson was born in Solna, Sweden, November 11, 1871, and came to Alaska in 1898, perhaps to join the Yukon gold rush. Although records show that he joined the Seattle Elks Lodge in 1911 and transferred his lodge membership to Anchorage in 1924, his place of burial is unknown, though he was not buried on the Elk's plot in Anchorage (Jim Rudolph, Anchorage Elks Lodge, pers. comm.).

Other Miners on Valdez Creek

Some of the most informative sources for a social history of Valdez Creek are the twelve letters written by Laurence H. Coffield to the authors between August 8 and October 31, 1977. From Tacoma, Washington, where he is retired, Laurence Coffield related by letter his memories and experiences as a miner on Valdez Creek from 1928 to 1942 and from 1946 to 1967. Laurence Coffield prospected and mined on Timberline and Black creeks during the Carlson era. After World War II he mined in partnership with the Bott brothers. His stories provide a detailed description of mining activity in the Valdez Creek district, the methods and machinery used, the people he knew, and the prevailing conditions there in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. His son, Truman Coffield lives in Anchorage, Alaska. It was through Truman's assistance that correspondence was established with his father.

Laurence Coffield came to Valdez Creek in 1928 from Talkeetna where he had been mining. He went to work for John Carlson that winter helping Laughing Ole freight supplies by dog sled between Cantwell and Denali. Coffield and Laughing Ole spent two months sledding tons of supplies and taking special care to protect the

perishables such as potatoes and eggs from freezing. The two freighters would unload the perishable food and take them into the shelter cabins each night, cover them with blankets, and set them near the stove. Coffield (letter, 08/29/77) even related his favorite recipe for working-dog mush, which he and Ole mixed in a huge square kettle to feed their freight teams.

> Working-Dog Mush = corn meal from Argentina + beef tallow from Canada + broken rice from California + hard smoked salmon from Native fish wheels at the Nenana.

After Lou Powless' death sometime during the first half of 1928 (Jake Tansy, pers. comm.), his claims on Timberline Creek were open to refiling the following July. John Carlson informed Coffield, Clark Duff, and Laughing Ole that the Anchorage businessmen who had sponsored Powless were no longer interested in Timberline Creek. Heeding Carlson's advice, the three miners relocated the claims. Coffield moved into Powless' tent house and Clark Duff moved into Peter Monahan's cabin on Timberline Creek. They began mining the gold quartz lodes on the Little Caribou and Big Caribou veins which followed the contours of shallow undulating ridges on a hill above Timberline. The three mined the "Timberline Prospects," as their claims were called, by digging a series of 10 feet deep pits to the quartz veins. According to Coffield, some of these quartz veins were two feet wide. After visiting Timberline Creek in 1931, Geologist Clyde Ross (1933:461) commented on their work by stating that "this development constitutes the greatest amount of underground work on lode deposits anywhere in the area."

Coffield used only simple hand tools to mine the quartz lodes. Mining in shallow permafrost, Coffield broke the quartz with pick and bar and used a tablespoon to collect the loose and rough gold. With a two gallon cast iron mortar and using a seven foot thawing point as a pestle, he ground the gravel, ran it through a screen into pails, and carried it to the nearest sluice box to let water run through it. By this method he took out about one ounce of gold each day (Coffield, letter, 09/08/77).

John Carlson bought the gold from Coffield, Laughing Ole, and Clark Duff and paid them the standard price since they did not know its assay value (Coffield, letter, 09/08/77). In addition to his lode prospects on Timberline, Coffield also had claims with the Wickersham brothers (Leburn and Horace) on Gold Hill, and with Clark Duff on Rusty Hill. Located some two miles north of Denali, the Rusty Hill lode claim was staked by Coffield and J. Clark Duff on July 2, 1930. The hill was named for the rusty-reddish color of its quartz, caused by oxidized iron sulphide discoloration (Ross, 1931; 1933:461-464).

The Denali Airfield

During the summer of 1929, an Alaska Road Commission engineer named Spach visited the Valdez Creek District for the purpose of laying out an airfield at Denali (Cordova Daily Times, 09/06/29:5). According to Coffield (letter, 08/29/77), the Federal Aviation Administration office in Anchorage was talking with John Carlson at this time about constructing a landing strip near the mines. They sent Carlson instructions and a windsock. Using nitroglycerine explosive to remove rock outcroppings, Carlson and Coffield leveled an area on the north side of Valdez Creek approximately one mile northwest of the post office (see Map 3). With a plow and a team of horses, Carlson driving and Coffield holding, they turned and leveled the earth to create a dirt runway. With the help of two other men, Carlson and Coffield erected a "crate-like shelter" at the side of the landing strip for freight and people in case of rain or snow. Lastly, the windsock went up and the Denali airfield was complete. The 1931 USGS report on the Valdez Creek district describes its location as "125 miles north of Anchorage" and "40 miles airline east of the Alaska Railroad."

The airfield brought Denali closer to Cantwell, to other parts of Alaska, and to contact with potential investors in the mining enterprises. John Carlson made good use of the Denali airfield. According to Nome Stickwan (pers. comm.) every mining season Carlson made his trips to Denali by airplane, flown by Cantwell pilot Haakon Christiansen (Plate 46). By 1933 mail and supplies from Cantwell were transported directly to Denali by air - weather permitting (Swisher, letter, 07/06/33). The Alaska Exploration and Mining Company which bought Coffield's claims on Timberline Creek (circa 1932 or 1933) used a freight-carrier airplane to bring in supplies for their operations in 1934. The Alaska Exploration and Mining Company's manager, Fern Wagner, supervised company operations on both Cache Creek and Valdez Creek by airplane travel between the two sites (Coffield, letter, 09/08/77). Accessibility of Valdez Creek by air made communications and supply much faster. This was an important factor in the record mining production there in 1932, 1933, 1937, and 1938.

Valdez Creek in the 1930s

The U. S. Geological Survey, in a reconnaissance of mineral resources in the region bordering the Alaska Railroad sent a field party to Valdez Creek during the summer of 1931. The purpose of the USGS expedition was to reevaluate the mining potential of the Valdez Creek mining district in relation to the development potential provided by the Alaska Railroad. Headed by Geologist Clyde P. Ross, the party left Cantwell on June 11, 1931, made the three-day pack train trip overland from Cantwell to Valdez Creek, and stayed at Valdez Creek until July 17. Ross

took notes on the condition of the placer mines, their recent production, and future potentials. His observations were published in a report on the Valdez Creek mining district in 1933. Ross noted that timber in the area had been depleted by cutting for mining operations over the previous 28 years and that the trees had been replaced by an abundance of willows. Timber had to be taken from the creeks south of Valdez Creek, largely from Butte Creek on the west side of the Susitna. Coffield (letter, 09/27/77), mentioned that there was a log cabin at the mouth of Butte Creek for the loggers who cut timber during the winter and dragged logs by horse over the river ice to Valdez Creek. Fifteen placer miners were at work on Valdez Creek that summer - two working on the Tammany tunnel, two on White Creek, and three on Lucky Gulch, while between eight and ten men were engaged in hydraulic operations on the benches (Ross, 1933:428; Smith, P. S., 1933:29). Ross also mentioned that "a small Native settlement" was located on Valdez Creek but gave no descriptive details.

No new discoveries had been made in Valdez Creek since 1925. With the exception of some prospects on lode claims of the rush years, work between 1925 and 1931 was basically a continuation of mining on a few productive placer claims. The largest amount of gold came from placer claims mined by John E. Carlson and his associates - the Tammany claim and the Folk bench claim (Smith, P. S., 1933:29-30; Cordova Daily Times, 09/06/29). According to Ross' 1931 field notes, Carlson's associates included Peter Bolene, Wallace Fairfield, Dan Ohman, John M. Johnson, and W. M. Horning. Laborers employed by the association included: Harold Johnson, Christopher Norheim, C. M. Norton, and Stickwan Tyone. At the time of the survey, the Tammany tunnel, started again in 1924 when the McKinley Gold Placer Company ceased hydraulicking operations, had reached a length of 350 feet. Lateral extensions, or "stopes," had been excavated along the tunnel, and the gold yield in 1928 and 1930 equaled $4,168 (Ross, 1933:451). In 1928 hydraulic mining started on the Folk bench claim, a short distance below the Tammany cut on the south side of Valdez Creek. By July 31, 1931, approximately 100,000 cubic yards of earth had been removed using the hydrualic equipment salvaged from the defunct company. From 1928 to 1930 production on the Folk claim totaled $57,000, averaging $.70 per cubic yard (Ross, 1933:451).

In concluding his report, Ross stated that the future of the Valdez Creek district depended upon the development of the placers. Total production on the Valdez Creek claims from 1903 to 1930 was approximately $560,000, and there were large placer areas which had not yet been tested. Ross suggested that a systematic plan be implemented to test ground by sinking shafts to bedrock. This would be the best method to find worthwhile deposits and encourage capital investment. From 1931 until the mines were closed in 1942 because of World War II, there were no new discoveries or "strikes" of consequence on Valdez Creek.

This accounts for the lack of reports about the district in the newspapers during that time. However, the USGS bulletins published during those years gave a summary of each mining season and estimates of production. Only four to five placer operations were productive in that period and these were located on the richest claims worked in the previous decades.

The largest amounts of gold were taken out by Carlson, Fairfield, Ohman, and associates from the Folk bench claims and the Tammany channel; the latter leased by Carlson to Fred Bucke and Gus Sjoberg. Placer mining continued in a small way on Lucky Gulch, White Creek, and Timberline Creek. Two new mining companies entered the picture for a short period - the Tunnel Mining Company, consisting of Carlson, Fairfield and associates, on the Joplin bench claim during 1939-40; and the Alaska Exploration and Mining Company on Timberline Creek. Ole Nickolai and several Native associates mined and sluiced along the lower south side of Valdez Creek.

By no means did gold production diminish at Valdez Creek in the 1930s. In 1933 it was apparent that "the quantity of gold recovered was even more than recovered in 1932, which was the largest amount that had been mined in the camp during any of the preceding 10 years" (Smith, P. S., 1934:32).

Four years later, it was reported that:

> "Both hydraulic and drift placer mining was carried on at the different camps, and the output of gold from the camp in 1937 was considerably more that it has been in any of the recent preceding years, in fact, the value of the placer production in 1937 appears to have been greater than in any other year since the camp was discovered in 1908 and was only a few thousand dollars less than that of that boom year." (Smith, P. S., 1939a:42).

The production of gold in 1938 was somewhat more than in 1937 (Smith, P. S., 1939b:40). However, the output in 1939 and 1940 was somewhat less due to the lack of water during unusually dry seasons (Smith, P. S., 1941:36; 1942:36).

The Folk Bench Claim: 1932-1942

In the 1930s the association of John E. Carlson, Wallace Fairfield, and Dan Ohman continued hydraulicking operations on the Folk bench claim which had been started in 1928. Located on the south side of the creek, some 3,000 feet downstream from the Tammany channel, the bench claim was found to contain fairly rich deposits in 1927 when a group of Indians, who had leased the claim from Carlson, opened the placer beds. Believing this to be

the downstream continuation of the preglacial Tammany channel, Carlson and his associates built a pipeline incorporating an inverted siphon across Valdez Creek to the claim and began hydraulicking operations. Some six to eight men were hired each season to work the machinery and to hoist, or drill and blast boulders out of the way. By 1936 a large hydraulic cut had been created (see Plate 93), the face of which was by then, about 400 feet away from the bank of Valdez Creek (Tuck, 1938:127).

The preglacial channel on the north side of Valdez Creek was traced considerably north beyond the Tammany claim. Drift mining on the Cora and Joplin bench claims commenced in 1938 (see Map 6). During the winter of 1938-1939, Fairfield and his associates, known as the Tunnel Mining Company, completed a 180 feet deep vertical shaft through the overlying channel fill to reach the pay gravels (Smith, P. S., 1941:36). During the seasons of 1940, 1941, and 1942, hydraulicking on the Folk bench and drifting on the Joplin bench were continued (Smith, P. S., 1942:36).

Fred Bucke and the Tammany Channel Shafts

John Carlson and his associates leased the Tammany channel claims to Fred Bucke and Gus Sjoberg, who were reported working there in Ross' 1931 field notes. This five year lease, dated 1931, and a two year renewal in 1936, is recorded in the Talkeetna Mining Records as follows:

> 1931 - Five year mining lease of Moskaska and Tammany claims owned by Carlson, Fairfield, Horning, Ohman, Johnson, and Mahers to Fred Bucke and Gus Sjoberg (Book 14, p. 225).
>
> 1936 - Two year mining lease of Moskaska and Tammany claims by Carlson, Fairfield, Horning, Ohman, and Johnson to Fred Bucke (Book 15, p. 80).

Bucke and his partner Gus Sjoberg, who was later killed by a cave-in (Coffield, letter, 08/29/77), started sinking shafts at intervals along the projected route of the buried channel but did not stope too far laterally due to the difficulty of holding up 130 feet of gravel overhead. By the end of 1934, Bucke, Sjoberg, and a half dozen miners had completed a shaft 140 feet deep from which they had done considerable drifting and sluicing (Smith, P. S., 1936:34). Using a water wheel tapped to a hydraulic pipeline for power, they hoisted gravel from the shaft and then sluiced it on the surface (Coffield, letter, 09/09/77). USGS geologist, Ralph Tuck (1938:125-126) gives an excellent description of the Bucke tunnel operations:

> "A vertical shaft 145 feet deep reaches the face of the old underground workings at the bottom of the channel.

From the bottom of this shaft a drift has been driven as near as possible to and along the middle of the channel. Short crosscuts are made at right angles to the drift, for the channel has an average width of only about 25 feet. All the ground to a height of six feet above the slate bedrock is mined and is carefully timbered with square sets."

"The mined gravel is trammed to the shaft and hoisted to the surface, where it is dumped directly into sluice boxes, which are built at a considerable elevation above the surface so as to provide room for the discharge of the tailings. Hoisting is done by means of a water wheel, and water for both hoisting and sluicing is obtained by a pipeline and ditch which has its intake in Valdez Creek above the canyon. The old drift down the channel from the bottom of the shaft to the face of the open hydraulic cut is kept open for drainage, ventilation, and as a safety exit. Ventilation from the shaft up the channel to the underground working face is maintained by a water-driven blower fan."

Laurence Coffield worked in Fred Bucke's operation for two months. His descriptions of the shaft and drifts concur with that given by Tuck. Fred Bucke died of a stroke while on vacation with his wife at Long Beach, California. This was probably during the winter of 1938, since the USGS articles on Valdez Creek do not mention him after 1937. Mrs. Bucke returned to Alaska, disposed of their belongings, then left Alaska (Coffield, letter, 09/08/77).

Lucky Gulch in the 1930s

At the same time that Fred Bucke began drifting on the Tammany channel, John Carlson leased Lucky Gulch to three experienced miners - the McDonald brothers, Patrick and Bill, and a Latvian immigrant, John Babel (Ross, 1931; Smith, P. S., 1939a:42; Coffield, letter, 08/29/77). The three built a stone house with walls two feet thick for winter quarters and operated a shallow placer operation with a "boomer," or automatic headgate, on the Discovery claim at Lucky Gulch. In addition to their booming they began digging tunnels and shafts at the confluence of Lucky Gulch and Valdez Creek. During winter drifting operations a cave-in killed Pat McDonald (1873-1935). The accident occurred because of weak timbers used as square sets in the drift (Jack Herman, 07/09/77), perhaps a result of the scarcity of good timber in the vicinity at this time. Babel and the remaining McDonald brother, Bill, buried their partner in the Denali Cemetery above the post office. They continued prospecting on Lucky Gulch until 1942, when the mines closed, and then both men

moved to southern California. According to Jack Herman, a veteran miner from Valdez Creek who now resides in Cantwell, the last he heard John Babel was still alive living in Riverside, California, and was about 94 years old.

The Alaska Exploration and Mining Company

Continuing his trading and speculation in mining claims, John Carlson bought the interests of Clark Duff and Laughing Ole on Timberline Creek in 1932 or 1933. Carlson then combined his holdings with those of Coffield - 1/3 for Carlson and 2/3 for Coffield. Fern Wagner of the Alaska Exploration and Mining Company bought some Timberline ore samples from Coffield. Encouraged by the assay value, Fern Wagner offered Coffield $35,000 in payments over a number of years for his share of Timberline Creek. Coffield had been told at the Alaska Road Commission Office in Anchorage that if lode mining operations became established at Valdez Creek, they expected to build a road from Cantwell to Denali with a bridge across the Susitna River. Anxious to see the Commission's promises fulfilled and transportation improved to Valdez Creek, Coffield decided to accept Fern Wagner's offer and allow the company to begin intensive prospecting for lodes on Timberline as soon as possible. Carlson, thinking Coffield had sold too cheaply, decided to lease his share to the company for a third of the annual net profits.

The Alaska Exploration and Mining Company was a stock company formed by businessmen from Pullman, Washington, and Lewiston, Idaho, who already had a rich placer operation in the Cache Creek mining district. It paid its crew half their monthly wages in cash and half in company stock. Coffield signed up to work for the company during the first season to assist in the transportation of supplies and in construction of a permanent base camp. The exploits of the company during that year (1933 or 1934) are well documented in Laurence Coffield's letters. Before breakup, the Alaska Exploration and Mining Company brought several mine cars and tons of camp equipment from Cantwell to Valdez Creek with Coffield acting as guide for the supply train. On the way, a bulldozer was lost through the ice of the Nenana River. Borrowing another dozer from McKinley Park, they pulled it out and found it still serviceable. To avoid further vehicle mishaps, the company acquired a Cletrac dozer from Anchorage with 32-inch wide treads, designed principally for travelling over snow and ice. With it they were able to get the last of the freight across the frozen surface of the Susitna River just before spring breakup. The crew set up temporary camp on Fourth of July Creek in snow five feet deep and so soft and wet that snowshoes were of little use. That year a bridge was built across Valdez Creek to connect the airfield on the north side with Timberline Creek, but it was destroyed by an ice jam sometime during World War II. After the spring thaw, a permanent camp was established on Timberline

Creek. During the summer, the company airplane, a passenger and freight carrier piloted by Ray Dickinson of Lewiston, Idaho, made 285 trips between Cantwell and Denali, bringing in 60 tons of supplies which included gasoline in 10-gallon wooden cases, and dynamite (Cordova Daily Times, 08/28/34; Coffield, letters, 09/08/77, 09/13/77).

With the commencement of mining work, the Alaska Exploration and Mining Company employed 18 men who used water-line drills to tunnel into the side of the hill above Timberline to tap the Big Caribou and Little Caribou veins. The tunnel reached a length of 60 feet and a depth of 250 feet before they found a gold-bearing quartz vein five feet wide. Under the direction of Frederickson, the mining engineer, a 15-ton Marcy ball mill was installed to process the ore (Cordova Daily Times 08/28/34:4), which did not assay out at any greater value than what Coffield had found earlier while prospecting on his own. Building a crude road by hand labor (there were no bulldozers in Valdez Creek at that time) up to Coffield's old pits, they began to mine the vein at that point and earned money. Coffield prospected Timberline with Frederickson for two weeks, finding, parallel to the vein being worked by the company, a gold-bearing vein which assayed at $35 per ton. The company never took their advice to excavate this lode. Prospecting Black Creek for the company, Coffield set up his own lode claim, tent, and sluice box. The quartz vein along Black Creek yielded nuggets worth $20. Fern Wagner, the company manager, caught pneumonia while visiting the company placer mine west of Talkeetna and died in this period. Dr. McCoy, who was acting as secretary and treasurer of the company, a professor from Pullman, Washington, took his place and managed affairs at Valdez Creek (Coffield, letter, 09/13/77).

The 1937 USGS Summary (Smith, P. S., 1939a:42) reports that the Alaska Exploration and Mining Company had recovered placer gold on White Creek. The 1938 and 1939 USGS Summaries (Smith, P. S., 1939b:40; 1941:36) state that there was no lode mining those years, although there was activity by "one outfit" on White Creek. One may assume then that the company moved operations from Timberline to White Creek and changed from lode (quartz vein) to placer mining. The 1940 USGS Summary (Smith, 1942:36) reports the following:

> "Toward the end of the season it was announced that arrangements had been made to lease an extensive tract on White Creek to one of the successful miners in the Fairview area of the Yentna district, who planned to mine it intensively during 1941."

Since the Alaska Exploration and Mining Company owned placer mines at Cache Creek, 18 miles northeast of Fairview Mountain and 35 miles northwest of Talkeetna, one can conjecture that this statement described the company's plans to expand operations on White Creek.

Native Mining at Valdez Creek

As was the case in all areas of Alaska during the gold rush era, the Natives in the Valdez Creek district were drawn increasingly into the activities revolving around mining and to a limited extent into the gold mining itself. However, the material written about Valdez Creek provides little information about their involvement in mining, possibly because the Natives were never in a position to organize and finance large-scale mining operations that would have received attention. It is also apparent that the Natives did not labor for the accumulation of wealth as an end in itself. Whether working for wages, or mining on their own, it was simply another means of subsistence to them - along with hunting, fishing, and trapping. The money obtained served to buy necessary supplies in Cantwell (Nome Stickwan, pers. comm.). Their attitude was undoubtedly exasperating to the white miners on occasion, as is evident in Moffit's 1915 report on the mining district (p. 22):

> "Some of the younger men (Indians) are employed by the miners on Valdez Creek for different kinds of work and are found to do fairly well except in the matter of attendance. It often happens that they are absent when most needed, even after they have promised faithfully to be on hand. Experience has taught the miners that Indians will not work contentedly unless they are given occasional opportunities to spend a day or two in hunting or fishing. Some of the younger men are inclined to gamble away their wages or to avoid work in the hunting season, feeling that inasmuch as most of the money they earn goes into the general family fund rather than into their own pockets, they receive no particular benefit from it. The older men are less disposed to work, a thing they have never been trained to do, but are more careful with the money they receive. They have been allowed to take what gold they can get by panning on certain of the Valdez Creek claims and obtain a considerable amount of the white man's supplies with the proceeds."

The Natives quickly learned mining techniques while working for the white miners. They were hired to work in all aspects of the mining, including placering, tunneling and hydraulicking. It is evident, however, that few Natives ever owned mining claims on Valdez Creek. Most of the creek was probably already staked by white miners before the Indians learned enough about gold mining to understand that aspect of private ownership. Leasing claims, or working them on a share basis were probably the only alternatives remaining beside working for wages. In 1927, the Natives who had worked in the mining were sufficiently capable of mining independently to lease the Folk bench claim from John Carlson. Though they discovered the rich gravel there that was a continua-

tion of the preglacial channel found on the Tammany claim, white miners took over operations on the Folk claim the following year and the Indian discoverers benefitted little from their strike.

For whatever reasons, the Natives continued to play fairly much the same role in the mining on Valdez Creek. The Cordova Daily Times (09/06/29:5) mentions a group of Natives mining on the creek in 1929:

> "There also has been some work done this summer by Indians, a small group of them having taken out enough gold to meet their requirements after which they suspended work and moved over to the railroad. They will resume their mining when they find themselves in need of more money."

In his 1931 field notes Ross lists Stickwan Tyone as a paid laborer working for the Valdez Creek shareholders, and several other Natives as helping with the horses - Dan Nickolai (foreman), Pete Tyone, Frank Thompson, Henry Peters, and Bill Nickolai. USGS Summaries (Smith, 1936:34; 1934:37) mention Ole Nickolai and four associates mining on lower Valdez Creek by hand methods. In 1936 there were two Native groups working independently during the summer: one near the Tammany channel next to Lorne Campbell's claim, and another party of three working the south side of the Folk claim while Dan Ohman, Wallace Fairfield, and six others did hydraulicking on the north side (Tuck, 1938: 125). In 1939 USGS (Smith, 1941:36) reported:

> "It may be of interest to note that mining on one of the claims in this district was carried on successfully by several Native Indians, who have shown a real aptitude for the work and have made a good living through their efforts in recovering placer gold."

Three Natives who mined on Valdez Creek during the 1920s and 1930s now reside in Cantwell. Henry Peters, born April 6, 1912, at Valdez Creek, said he was paid $1.00 per hour when he worked the mines in 1935 (pers. comm.). Later, Peters had his own claim on Dry Creek but gave that up to go to work for the Alaska Railroad. According to Peters, the price of gold in the 1930s was between $15.00 and $20.00 per ounce. Jake Tansy, born in 1906 at Valdez Creek, worked at the mines from 1935 to 1941 (pers. comm.). Ole Nickolai, born at Valdez Creek in 1898, started mining there in 1921, working 12 hours per day at $.60 per hour. With several Native associates, Ole often did independent placer mining along Valdez Creek (Plate 8). Ole worked on hydraulicking operations with Joe Polken in the 1920s and was a witness to the mining accident which took Polken's life (pers. comm.).

Although the Natives appeared never to have gotten "gold fever" from the white miners who worked Valdez Crek, they contributed much to the mining operations in the district in the era before World War II. Continuing to live as a community of their own in the area of the "Siwash Camp" (see Map 4), the Ahtna who came to Valdez Creek performed much of the hard day-to-day labor in the mining operations. In this period they learned a great deal about the white man's ways and became increasingly dependent on the new economic system. Within 30 years, approximately a single generation, many had abandoned much of a traditional lifeway to which they would never return. They had changed, and the region had changed as well. Large game animal herds had been decimated; a road, a railroad, and numerous trails had been built, criss-crossing the region; permanent settlements had sprung up and air transportation had brought the outside world even closer.

OTHER ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION

Mining in the Valdez Creek district undoubtedly stimulated certain other activites in the region beside those related to gold mining. Transportation development in the region clearly received a significant impetus from mining, and the development of access trails, the Richardson Road, and the Alaska Railroad, were noteworthy occurrences. But besides trade and commerce connected with mining, few new enterprises were stimulated in the region during the historic period.

The Valdez-Fairbanks Military Trail

By 1908, the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail, already an established winter post route, was adequately improved for four-horse sleds, and in some stretches, for wagons. The Orr Stage Line and the Dan T. Kennedy Stage Service were already established businesses, running sleds in the winter and wagons in the summer on the road. Stages usually covered the 364 miles between Valdez and Fairbanks in eight days. Further improvements to upgrade the route to wagon road standard began in 1909, but engineering problems and lack of funding prevented completion of the project until 1917. Although automobiles were in use on the Valdez-Fairbanks Road in 1913, it was not until 1921 that the road, renamed the Richardson Road in honor of Major W. P. Richardson, first president of the Alaska Road Commission, was suitable for automobile traffic (Smith, M. E., 1974:19).

The Valdez-Fairbanks Trail completely eclipsed the Susitna-Broad Pass route to the interior until completion of the Alaska Railroad in 1923. Along with the Chitina Branch, which connected with the Copper River and Northwestern Railway.

Roadhouses and Routes to Valdez Creek

Life along the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail and branch trails to Valdez Creek reflects much of interior Alaska's transportation history. Roadhouses mushroomed in the wilderness along the route, with as many as 40 once providing services to travelers. A roadhouse, as defined in the publication Alaska's Historic Roadhouses (Smith, M. E., 1974:5) is "...a building or group of buildings in which the owner or employee actively provided food and shelter for travelers along Alaska's transportation routes for a charge." Former roadhouse operator Nelson McCrary (1965:23) added that roadhouses were individually owned, and usually operated by married couples. If affordable, dishwashers, cooks, and stable hands were employed. The roadhouses and their operators were at

the mercy of Alaska's historic cycles of boom and bust, as traffic ebbed and flowed in correlation to the economic health of the times. This was reflected in the short life span of numerous roadhouses along the Valdez to Fairbanks route. Nevertheless, they played a crucial role in providing essentials to the travelers on the major access route to Alaska's rugged interior. Most travel to the interior and to mining camps like Valdez Creek was done during the winter, often under severe hardships. A roadhouse was a welcome, often life-saving sight. Yost's Roadhouse at Mile 208 on the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail was a good example. Winter storms were so frequent and fierce in the area that some people died within sight of the roadhouse. According to McCrary (1965:45), a small cemetery grew up not far from the place. The Alaska Road Commission built a strong wire fence across the river there to prevent travelers on the frozen river from accidently bypassing the roadhouse during storms. At times snow drifts completely covered the roadhouse (Plate 37).

Along with providing accommodations for travelers, the roadhouses offered traditional homespun Alaskan hospitality. "Most proprietors were aware of their important function and were usually generous, open-hearted people. Whether this was the result of business necessity, their individual personalities, or the frontier spirit is left to historical debate" (Smith, M. E., 1974:6). One personable proprietor was the owner of Poplar Grove Roadhouse at Mile 140 on the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail. He never advertised his home as a roadhouse, but gladly accommodated travelers for the night (Smith, M. E., 1974:20). J. C. Murphy (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 11/05/08) on a trip to Valdez Creek in 1908 described the Blix Roadhouse in Copper Center as "equal to many a more pretentious hotel in the states," and spoke of the hospitality at Gulkana Roadhouse as "the most sincere." If the present proprietor of the Sourdough Roadhouse at Mile 148 on the Richardson Highway (the only original roadhouse still in operation on the Richardson) is any indication of the early roadhouse operators, then they were a sincere and personable lot. Bud Laueson, congenial owner of Sourdough Roadhouse, has perpetuated much of the roadhouse's original features and old-time flavor. Sourdough pancakes and frontier hospitality are trademarks of this historic establishment.

As basic and down-home as their frontier hospitality was the decor of the early roadhouses: "Early roadhouses were of log construction, chinked with moss or mud. Some had log roofs with sod on top, others whip-sawed lumber roofs and sometimes a wooden floor, but often not. Most were small, the only rooms being a large living-dining-sleeping room with an adjoining small kitchen. Larger roadhouses had additional rooms and amenities like separate sleeping quarters for women. If such quarters were not provided the proprietor would simply partition the sleeping area with blankets. Beds were usually bunks built of spruce poles in tiers of two to four" (Smith, M. E., 1974:5-6).

Blix Roadhouse. The Blix Roadhouse in Copper Center was a strategic roadhouse on the freighting route between Valdez and Valdez Creek. It was well known, as Copper Center was a major outfitting point for prospectors heading to the interior. According to Mendenhall (1905:117), Blix was also a prospector and was credited with discovering gold on Rainy Creek in July 1900.

Noted as the first white town in the interior, Copper Center in 1898 boasted seventy-five tents, several log cabins, a few caches, the roadhouse, and a post office. That winter 300 prospectors made Copper Center their home (Colby, 1939:247). Peter Monahan of Valdez Creek probably wintered in Copper Center on occasion, as Jim McKinley recalls having seen Monahan in the area (pers. comm.).

Gulkana Roadhouse. Equally important as Blix's Roadhouse and just as heavily used by travelers to the interior was Gulkana Roadhouse located near the junction of the Valdez-Fairbanks and Valdez-Eagle Military Trails (Map 1). Gulkana began in 1903 when the U. S. Army Signal Corps established there one of its numerous telegraph stations along the Valdez-Eagle Trail. Old-timer Jim McKinley of Copper Center recalls (pers. comm.) that the first Gulkana Roadhouse (built circa 1903-04), the small unpretentious one-story structure shown in Plate 32, was torn down in the twenties to make way for a three-story establishment that was, at that time, one of the largest and best-equipped roadhouses on the Valdez Trail (Plate 42). It included a post office and a general store, and served as an outlet for trappers in the region to ship out their furs. The earliest established trail used by the miners for travel to Valdez Creek left the Valdez-Eagle Military Trail just below Gulkana at Bear Creek (see Map 1). This was formerly an Indian trail leading from an important village near the mouth of the Gulkana River.

As mining intensified on Valdez Creek, more and more supplies and heavy equipment destined for the mining camp came across the trail (Moffit, 1912). From the community of Gulkana this trail originally departed northwestward to the West Fork, headed northwest upstream to the Maclaren, then on the Maclaren downstream 7 miles to the Susitna and from there followed the Susitna upstream to Valdez Creek. With completion of the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail and its increasing use, Sourdough Roadhouse was utilized as a take-off point for this favorable winter trail.

Sourdough Roadhouse. Sourdough Roadhouse was originally a trapper's cabin. (That cabin today still stands attached to the rear of the present roadhouse.) Over the years other structures were added, and in 1903 John Hart opened the roadhouse for business. Between 1908 and 1922, Mrs. Nellie Yaeger was owner of

Sourdough and established its reputation for fine cooking and hospitality. According to an undated description of the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail the "floors were carefully carpeted, sofas and rocking chairs cushioned, and white curtains at the windows; excellent beds in private apartments...." Plate 33 shows the roadhouse in this period. In 1922, Nellie Yaeger sold Sourdough Roadhouse to her niece, Mrs. Hazel Waechter, who was a resident of Nenana (Nenana News, 04/18/22:1). Mrs. Yaeger purchased the Commercial Hotel in Chitina (Cordova Daily Times, 08/04/22:6). Present owner, Bud Laueson in 1977 pointed out to us an old cast iron tub stored in the roadhouse. He said that the tub was ordered from Pittsburgh in 1903 and did not arrive until 1905. Reportedly, Sourdough Roadhouse was the only place in the region to obtain a bath (in a tub) at that time.

Meier's Roadhouse. Located near Mile 170 on the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail (Mile 123 from Chitina), Meier's Roadhouse was typical of the early roadhouses. Built by Charlie J. Meier around 1907, it was a crude, long, low, log structure with sleeping quarters arranged barracks style and could accommodate 30 people comfortably. Improvements in later years included a separate dining room and a living room, as well as various out-buildings (see Plate 34). The roadhouse was operated by Meier and his wife until it burned to the ground in 1925 (Cordova Daily Times, 09/15/25:8). Apparently the roadhouse was later rebuilt on the same site. Harold Thompson, former miner on Valdez Creek, recalls (pers. comm.) from a visit to Meier's in the mid-fifties that a sizeable number of permanent residents were lodged on the premises and that the roadhouse furnishings included many antiques. Apparently this building also burned in the late 1950s. Today only the old log barn located at the site appears to remain from the earlier buildings (see Plate 71).

Meier's Roadhouse figured prominently in the history of Valdez Creek, as it became a major turn-off point for freighters, miners, and others heading up the Middle Fork of the Gulkana River to Valdez Creek (Map 2). Two USGS reconnaissance parties, led by Fred Moffit and J. W. Bagley, traveled from Meier's Roadhouse to the Broad Pass region in 1913 via the Middle Fork trail to Valdez Creek (Moffit, 1915). Trappers like Ben French would pick up yearly supplies at Meier's and ship out their furs. Like French, L. L. "Doc" Hufman of Paxson Lake ran his trap lines up the Middle Fork from Meier's, utilizing cabins on Gulkana River, Dickey Lake, and Maclaren River. Freighters like Tom Neeley (great uncle of Sy Neeley of Glennallen), who also ran a commissary on Valdez Creek in the 1910s, ran supply sleds between Valdez and Valdez Creek via the Middle Fork. Al Norwood, owner of Meier's during the late 1920s, reportedly utilized the roadhouse in another way - as an advantageous location for his moonshine operations.

Paxson's Roadhouse. The next roadhouse north of Meier's on the Valdez-Fairbanks trail was Paxson's. Alvin Paxson built the first roadhouse in 1907, a log building 30 feet by 80 feet and two stories high (Plate 36). The following year a barn was constructed and the roadhouse enlarged (Smith, M. E., 1974:21). Stan Brown, owner of present day Paxson Lodge, added that around 1904 there was also a telegraph station built about 100 feet north of the roadhouse, which stood until destroyed by fire in 1961 (pers. comm.). Earlier, in about 1906, Paxson had operated a smaller establishment a mile or so farther north (see Plate 35). Called Timberline Roadhouse, it reportedly had a small cabin for a kitchen and two tents for sleeping quarters (Smith, M. E., 1974:21).

Responding to the need of Valdez Creek miners for a summer mail outlet, the versatile Paxson opened a post office at the roadhouse in January 1912. He served as postmaster until June 27, 1914, when Fred Nichols assumed the duties until mail service was discontinued to Paxson in December 1916.

Paxson's was more than just a roadhouse with a post office. A guide to the Valdez-Faribanks Trail described it as having "numerous prospectors and hunter's cabins.....a little town." The guide predicted that Paxson would "...within a short time make quite a mining community."

According to Slim Moore of Anchorage, one time trapper, guide, and freighter in the Paxson region, the roadhouse burned down during the early twenties, possibly related to the "friction fires" of that period (pers. comm.). Moore contends that with the completion of the Alaska Railroad in 1922, the Richardson Road lost some of its commercial traffic (like freighting to Valdez Creek), consequently hurting the business of many roadhouse operators. "Numerous roadhouse fires occurred in this period," said Moore, "caused by the friction of insurance policies and mortgages rubbing together."

Although such observations may be somewhat exaggerated, it does point to the fact that the railroad provided a more economical alternative for freighting mining supplies to interior mining camps. If any one thing hindered development of mining settlements like Valdez Creek, it was inadequate transportation facilities. Freight rates from Valdez to Valdez Creek averaged $.25 to $.30 per pound, and sometimes were as high as $.50 per pound during the 1900s. Miners looked to the proposed Alaska Railroad for relief, hoping transportation charges would be substantially reduced, as the distance from Broad Pass (on the Alaska Railroad) to Valdez Creek was a third of the distance from Valdez Creek to Gulkana (Cordova Daily Times, 05/28/18).

Yet many roadhouses along the Richardson Highway survived during the 1920s and 1930s when automobile travel was ascendant. During

the summer of 1928, Slim Moore assisted Dan Whiteford, then owner of Paxson Roadhouse, in rebuilding some of the lodge (pers. comm.). According to Stan Brown, stables or "drying rooms" that had been built about 1919 were converted into bedrooms and baths (pers. comm.). A lobby (south wing) and a north wing were also added. Today, only the dilapidated remains of the north wing are evident about 350 yards north of the present Paxson Lodge (Plate 75). Lawrence Coffield (letter, 10/25/77) recalls that in his time, Paxson's Roadhouse "was a place with comfortable rooms and a long dining table where everyone sat down to all you could eat of good homestyle food...."

Yost's Roadhouse. While Paxson's is one of the better known roadhouses in connection with Valdez Creek, less is known of the equally important Yost's Roadhouse (Plate 37). The exact location of Yost's Roadhouse is even in question. One source (Smith, M. E., 1974:22) states that Yost's was just beyond Summit Lake on the Delta River. Stan Brown and Doc Hufman contend otherwise, citing the location approximately where Phelan and McCallum Creeks join just west of the present highway (pers. comm.). There is no physical evidence of a roadhouse at this location today, and the site appears to lie in the streambed of Phelan Creek.

Former roadhouse operator Nelson McCrary (1965:45-46) recalled that Yost's was built about 1906 by Charlie Yost. It was constructed with one room behind the other - lobby, dining room, kitchen, and woodshed. It even had a well located inside in the corner of the kitchen. Yost dispensed hotcakes and beans to the traveler at $2.00 a meal for a few years, and then apparently moved on, as many of the old-timers were inclined to do. According to McCrary, Yost's was located on a point that extended out into the stream channel and even in the early days was troubled by ice glaciering over the point during the winter and subsequent flooding in the spring.

While Copper Center, Gulkana, and Sourdough all played important roles in providing for the needs of prospectors, freighters, and other travelers bound for the interior, it was the two south-central Alaskan ports of Valdez and Cordova that initially attracted and outfitted the interior-bound travelers. These two communities competed for the lucrative freighting and mining traffic, especially after the Copper River and Northwestern Railway was completed from Cordova to Chitina in 1910 and a sled trail linked Chitina to the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail. Each town's newspaper carried numerous testimonials promoting or boosting the civic and economic virtues of its respective community. Boosting had long been a tactic used by the boom towns of the American west to persuade railroad and stage lines to pass through their communities, and to attract business and settlers. Considering the motives behind such tactics, testimonials about the trails of that time must be taken with a grain of salt.

One such promotional article appeared in The Cordova Daily Alaskan (11/19/10), reporting that the new government cut-off trail that connected Chitina with the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail was preferable, reducing traveling time and doing away with the dangerous crossing at Thompson Pass that one had to contend with if traveling north from Valdez. A few days later (11/21/10) the newspaper reported that "C. P. Tolson and Billy Grogg, both of Valdez Creek, were arrivals in town on Saturday night's train, and are enthusiastic over the transportation facilities to the coast as provided by the Copper River and Northwestern Railway, preferable over the route from Valdez."

However, The Valdez Daily Prospector reported in October of 1913 that:

> "The cost of taking freight from Valdez into the interior is much less that via Cordova and Chitina as the cost of transportation for horses, feed, freight, and living expenses from the coast to the interior, when the outfits are shipped via the railroad, makes the Valdez route preferable. The uncertainity of delivery of freight at Chitina, which has been experienced every year by the interior freighters because of the tie-ups on the railroad, has forced all of them to the conclusion that the Valdez government road is the best route and the cheapest and most certain to take."

Branch Trails to Valdez Creek. Cordova and Valdez both thrived economically as mining in areas like Valdez Creek intensified and more and more supplies and men poured through the two south-central ports. No longer was freighting restricted to favorable winter conditions, and mining settlements like Valdez Creek now required year-round supplies and labor; especially during the long working days of summer. In the early years a summer pack trail route was soon charted which followed the usual Gulkana-Maclaren rivers winter route, except that after reaching the West Fork (Map 1) the trail kept to the higher ground until reaching the Maclaren River where it continued east of the round-topped mountain between the Maclaren River and Clearwater Creek and headed towards Valdez Creek via Roosevelt Lake Pass (Moffit, 1912:20). But much of this trail ran over wet ground, making summer travel very difficult for horses as well as humans. Shorter and dryer routes from the Valdez-Fairbank Trail at Paxson's and Yost's roadhouses became preferable, with the Bear Creek trail being pretty much abandoned by 1913.

Moffit states (1912:20) that the Paxson trail was established in 1908. From Paxson's Roadhouse on the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail it extended west like the present-day Denali Highway until it reached the Maclaren River where the most suitable crossing was near the glacier, and then along Coal Creek to Roosevelt Lake Pass (see Map 1). A shorter and easier trail to Valdez Creek

from farther north on the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail at Yost's Roadhouse was in use by 1910, heading west along Eureka Creek, across the Maclaren River to Roosevelt Lake and thence Valdez Creek (see Map 2). The Yost's trail crossed fewer ridges than the Paxson trail but had the disadvantage of increasing the total mileage between Gulkana and Valdez Creek. Both trails were used mainly in summer since the routes were primarily above timberline and firewood was limited to scattered willows.

Although these trails were largely used before his time, Lawrence Coffield described (letter, 08/15/77) the early freighting days on the trail from Paxson:

> "They first came in from Valdez with horses, which had snow shoes when needed, with good oak and hickory double-ender freight sleds from Wisconsin. Now after they established semipermanent camps with tents and log cabins, and were going good, a summer packhorse route was established almost straight east of Paxson. They brought in mail, perishable groceries, badly needed tools and, I was told, considerable bourbon."

The branch trails from the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail to the isolated Valdez Creek mining camp were no more that footpaths blazed through the wilderness. They did not offer the conveniences of roadhouses found on main trails like the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail. However, Lawrence Coffield (letter, 08/15/77) recalls that southwest from Valdez Creek "shelter cabins were built on the trail to the Copper Center-Gulkana area, and any one that knew the route could get shelter at night."

These shelter cabins were not like roadhouses. They were small, usually one-room structures to provide overnight shelter for men out in the country. In most cases they were trapper's cabins but, in accordance with traditional Alaskan hospitality, were not locked and could be used by travelers in need of shelter. Unfortunately, this tradition is slowly fading from the Alaskan scene because of vandalism and thievery, or other abuses of this courtesy.

L. S. Wickersham's cabin (the "Post Office"), on Valdez Creek is a case in point. Coffield (letter, 09/17/77) was at Wickersham's "death-bed" when "Wick" smiled and whispered to Coffield: "My winter home, the Post Office, is for you boys (i.e., the miners) when you're coming in or going out of the creek or using the airstrip." Not much later he died. Years later ownership of the cabin went to Harold Thompson, who respected this tradition. Unfortunately, the cabin was vandalized once too often. For this and other reasons, Thompson gave up his claims on Valdez Creek in 1966. For the past several years the cabin has been occupied by miner Doug Clark and is no longer open to the "boys" like Wick wanted.

Travel on the Trails

One of the many travelers along the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail and branch trails to Valdez Creek was Leburn S. Wickersham, who made many freighting treks from Chitina to Valdez Creek via the West Fork-Gulkana Trail. Known as "Wick," L. S. Wickersham mined for a number of years with his brother Horace (see Plate 48) on White Creek (a tributary of Valdez Creek) and on the creek south of Valdez Creek and west of the Susitna River that today bears his name. "Wick" also was appointed postmaster of Valdez Creek post office, when it was re-established as McKinley post office on April 8, 1915 (renamed Denali post office on August 4, 1922). He continued at the post office until its closing on April 30, 1942.

During that time, it was not unusual for a man living in the backcountry like Wickersham, to be a miner, a postmaster, a freighter, a trapper, and a hunter. Wickersham was a jack-of-all-trades and his many skills made him self-reliant in the isolated district. The authors had the good fortune of gaining access to one of Wickersham's pocket notebooks in which he made notes on his 1916 and 1917 freighting activities. It was mainly notes on the tonnage he hauled, of caches along the trail he replenished, supplies he brought in for other people, furs he shipped out, expenses he incurred, and so forth. The quantity of goods Wickersham hauled on his freight sleds seems astounding: "...first cache at North Fork - 3,000 lbs...; at portage on Moose Creek cached 2,000 lbs, all out; cached 2,000 at French's cache..." This referred to feed (hay and grain) for horses (see Plate 40) cached along the trail.

Two types of freighting sleds were used over the trails--bobsleds and double-enders. Double-enders had stationary runners attached beneath the load platform and could be pulled from either end. The big freight bobsleds, with decks pivoting on two sets of runners (see Plates 30 and 31), seem to have been more commonly used for hauling in the Valdez Creek. Most of the sleds were made in the states by firms such as the Paulson Implement Company and the Studebaker Company.

Such sleds were about ten to twelve feet long and about four feet wide. They were constructed of hardwood for heavy duty hauling, and had heavy wooden runners (probably hickory) that were shod with flat iron. They carried loads varying from a thousand to fifteen hundred pounds each, with a single horse pulling one to three sleds, depending on the terrain (Redhead, 1963:42; McCary, 1965:46). The horses were shod with ice calks for traction on river ice and icy hills. Going up steep grades the drivers applied the rough locks--spring loaded prongs that dragged as the sled moved forward, but dug into the ice if it slipped backwards. The driver could stop the team to rest it and the rough locks would hold the weight of the sled. Going down steep slopes the drivers sometimes wrapped a chain around one runner to increase

the drag and keep the sled from running into the horse (Redhead, 1963:42-43).

Most of the freight was hauled early in the winter before snow had accumulated and drifted into deep drifts (Moffit, 1912:16). Even so, snowplows were sometimes used to break the trail ahead of the sleds (Moffit, 1912:20).

On relatively even terrain without deep snow the sleds could make fairly good time. The 65 mile long trail from Paxson's crossed terrain ranging from 500 to 1,000 feet above the valley bottoms (Moffit, 1911:116). The trip from Gulkana over the West Fork trail was about 125 miles and crossed only one pass about 500 feet in height.

Horses were usually taken out from Valdez Creek by September 10 so that they could reach lower elevations before the grass lost its food value after the frosts started. Sled travel, by horse or dog team, was practicable after freezeup in November (Moffit, 1912:15,18). According to the following trail log kept by Wickersham, the 110 mile trek by horse sled over the West Fork trail from Valdez Creek to Sourdough sometimes took up to 24 days.

Started for Chitina the 15 of Nov. 1917
15 - First camp Butte Creek - 7 miles, 2 above zero.
16 - Second camp lower Susitna flat - 8½ miles, 15 below.
17 - Third camp at Portage Creek in the narrows - 6 miles, 18 - 4th camp at Clearwater Creek - 5 miles, warm.
19 - 5th camp out on big flat on portage - 5 miles.
20 - 6th camp on Maclaren River - 5 miles
21 - 7th camp on Portage Creek - 4 miles
22 - 8th camp on Portage Creek near the head - 5 miles
23 - 9th camp on the head of Portage Creek - 3 miles, 2 below zero.
24 - 10th camp at the upper Gulkana Lake - 3 miles, 18 above.
25 - 11th camp at the portage below the lakes - 3 miles.
26 - 12th camp on the Gulkana near Mud Lake on the portage - 3 miles.
27 - 13th camp on Moose Creek - 6 miles, 12 below.
28 - 14th camp at short portage on the Gulkana - 3 miles, 25 below.
29 - 15th camp one mile below Keg Creek - 4 miles, 36 below.
30 - 16th camp at Point Barrow across portage - 2 miles, 60 below.
1 - 17th camp two miles above fish traps - 5 miles, 60 below.

2 - 18th camp one mile below fish traps; made a portage - 4 miles, 40 below.
3 - 19th camp one mile below West Fork - 6 miles.
4 - 20th camp three miles above French's Cache; bad ice - 5 miles, 80 below.
5 - 21st camp near the big slough - 6 miles, 5 below.
6 - 22nd camp two miles above Lake Creek - 12 miles.
7 - 23rd camp at French's camp 4 miles above North Fork - 9 miles, snowing.
8 - 24th stop at Sourdough.

On another return trip to Valdez Creek from Sourdough that Wickersham started on December 24, 1916, 22 days were spent in getting to Valdez Creek and, starting back the same day he arrived, 19 days returning to Sourdough where he arrived on February 2.

Over the trail Wickersham transported to Valdez Creek such things as machinery and animal feed, building materials and hardware, pipe and canvas hose, food and clothing, plus mail and other miscellaneous supplies. He also recruited and brought in workers for the mining company. The following list in his notebook was for "men to get to go into Valdez Creek."

Blacksmith	1
Electrician	1
Ditch men	2
Cook	1
All around men	4

On another occasion he listed:

Ditch men	2
Day shift pickers	3
Flume tenders	2
Drillers	5
Night shift pickers	2
Flume tenders	2
Carpenters	4
Teamster	1
Sawmill men	3
Cook and flunkey	2
Store and time keeper	1
Mail carrier	1
Total	28
Superintendent	1
	29

Dog sledding was also used to bring in astoundingly heavy loads of materials to Valdez Creek in the earlier years. The large freight sleds, pulled by 10 to 20 dogs, could easily haul 1,000 to 1,500 pounds over good terrain. Most of the materials freighted into Valdez Creek in the early years were transported by dogsled. On occasion, dogs were also used to pack in supplies during the summer (see Plate 39). Each dog could carry about 40 pounds strapped upon its back.

On return trips, people, gold, mail, and considerable furs were hauled out by freighters like Wickersham. From his notes it is obvious that he was commissioned to carry out all kinds of errands, including selling furs, sending telegrams, wiring money, and purchasing all manner of odds and ends or special items. In his notebook there is an obscure note he must have made around 1916: "Received $20.00 from W. M. Smith for neckless chain to be got at Cordova (18 inches long), also $2.50 for smooth plain ring for Jennie."

Though tractors eventually replaced horses on the winter freighting treks, until air transportation was established to Valdez Creek summer transport into the district was probably limited pretty much to mail, badly needed supplies, and people; whatever could be carried on a pack horse, a pack dog, or one's own back. We found no evidence that boats were used to transport goods up the Gulkana, or up the Susitna beyond Indian River. Only one mention was found of using boats to descend the rivers on trips out of Valdez Creek during the open water season (Alaska Prospector, 10/27/04).

Considering the adverse climatic and other physical conditions, the early freighting activities seem even more awesome. Large hauls in the winter were not unusual though, as the frozen rivers and streams provided better avenues for travel than the boggy tundra of summer. During the winter of 1913-1914, the Valdez Creek Mining Company freighted in over 200 tons of supplies from Chitina (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 01/22/14).

Freighters like Wickersham were the lifeline of isolated camps like Valdez Creek, as well as for the roadhouses like Sourdough that dotted the trail between Valdez and Fairbanks. As the country opened up, and the roadhouses flourished and the mining camps prospered, other personalities followed closely behind the early freighters, trappers, and prospectors. One such personality is old-timer Lawrence Coffield, presently of Tacoma, Washington, who mined claims on Valdez Creek from the thirties to the sixties (Plate 44). He has a lot of affection for the country and its people, and for landmarks like Sourdough Roadhouse. He recalled (letter, 10/25/77) "a young woman got a summer's job at Sourdough and later married my youngest son. They live here in Pierce County, Washington, and just last spring she told me she'd like to put in another summer at Sourdough. There's a rustling river there that can lull you to sleep."

Folklore and Tales of Life Along the Trails

Many of the figures in the history of Valdez Creek came across these wilderness trails. The trails and shelter cabins in the Gulkana River drainage saw their share of characters who contributed to Alaska's folklore. Sy Neeley (pers. comm.) recalls that old-time characters like his great uncle Tom Neeley were "mostly shy, generous men - some were so withdrawn that they wouldn't even let you take their picture." One generous, but far from shy, old-timer, L. L. "Doc" Hufman of Paxson Lake ("stop by whenever you're in the neighborhood," he told us), traveled the old Gulkana trails on his hunting and trapping trips, utilizing the trail shelters as far as Dickey Lake and the Maclaren River. Doc, like many of the nonminers in the region, was not directly connected with life on Valdez Creek. However, the quest for gold also opened up the interior for professionals like Hufman who came in close on the heels of the early prospectors. Doc set up a dental practice in Fairbanks and has been in the Paxson Lake region since 1929 (permanently since 1940). He occasionally occupied the cabin (Plate 72) located on the Main Fork of the Gulkana just south of its confluence with the Middle Fork (Map 2). This cabin was built by Barney Dawson and Al Norwood during the mid-twenties. As mentioned, Norwood ran Meier's Lodge at that time, which proved to be not as secluded as his Gulkana cabin for his moonshining activities.

Hufman, besides having a home on the east side of Paxson Lake, has a cabin near the exit of the lake. This was the site of an earlier cabin (Plate 45) built by Charlie Meier and was the scene of a shoot-out in the late 1920s. Although versions differ on the participants and their motives, one can safely conclude that around 1928 a local trapper named Bob Smith was involved in a trapping feud with Norwood and Dawson, along with being accused of stealing from a local mining camp. Accusations led to a confrontation with Smith at the cabin and his being shot and killed (Doc Hufman, Frank Hobson, pers. comm.). An interesting epilog to this incident occurred a year or so later along the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail. A local game warden named Cadwallader and his musher "Laughin Ole" (J. M. Olsen) were making their way from Valdez Creek to Valdez via the Middle Fork trail. They stopped at Meier's Roadhouse where they surprised owner Al Norwood in his illicit moonshining. According to Frank Hobson (pers. comm.), Cadwallader arrested Norwood, and with "Laughin Ole" (who thought catching Norwood redhanded was quite hilarious) proceeded towards Valdez, making a stop at Gulkana Roadhouse. The roadhouse at that time was operated by Hans Ditman. After the Smith incident, Ditman was supposed to have reported the killing to the proper authorities, but because he felt that Smith had met a just end, he had chosen to not report it. Anyway, someone at the roadhouse brought up the incident and accused Norwood of killing Smith. Incensed, Norwood told Cadwallader to question

Ditman, who knew who had actually killed Smith. Although Ditman cleared Norwood, nothing ever came of his revelations. It seems that frontier justice prevailed in this instance. This was apparently not unusual in remote areas at this time when law enforcement agencies were far away. Often men in the Alaska wilderness had to combat human injustices the same way they confronted the harsh elements of nature.

In confrontations with nature, however, men in the wilderness sometimes lost. Hufman recalls (pers. comm.) that Ben French, a solitary trapper and prospector in the region during the early years, lost in his struggle against the elements in the end. Hufman occasioanlly stayed at French's old cabin on the Maclaren River below Round Mountain (Map 2), and also used a small cabin (Plate 41) that French built on the Middle Fork four miles above its confluence with the Main Fork.

Ben French's trapping and prospecting took him along the Middle Fork, past Dickey Lake, and into the headwaters of the Maclaren. Some people (Vern Wickham, F. S. Pettyjohn, pers. comm.) believe that there is a "Lost Ben French Mine" somewhere in the Maclaren's headwaters, along with a cabin full of valuable books that French reportedly collected over the years. "Lost gold mines" are part of American folklore, inspiring the imagination of prospectors as much as new strikes. The mystery that surrounds French's mine also shrouds the main character of the legend. Sources say that with his seasonal fishing done and salmon dried for the winter, French would proceed to Meier's and Gulkana to sell his furs and lay in yearly supplies. Hufman recalls (pers. comm.) that French "always brought out a little gold...but never revealed where he obtained it." In 1928 Ben French made his last trip to Meier's. On his return trip to the Maclaren he was caught in a severe snowstorm and apparently perished in the snowdrifts somewhere around Dickey Lake. A search party consisting of Slim Moore, Al Norwood, Barney Dawson, and Harry Hobson, later found French's sled there but never located his body.

Like many old-timers in the vast Alaska wilderness, French passed into oblivion. Too often their stories and the richness of their experiences also passed with them - untold and unrecorded. This was partly the result of their nomadic ways. As one source put it, "They had roller-skates on their feet. If one valley didn't look good - they would move on to another" (Sy Neeley, pers. comm.).

Prospecting and Mining

The early Alaskan prospectors were especially nomadic. Many prospectors had visited the upper Susitna region briefly between 1898 and 1910 "...coming into it for short periods and going

away without leaving permanent record of their presence (Moffit, 1915:10)." However, some record does remain of their discoveries.

Placer gold had been found on the headwaters of the Delta River (at Rainy Creek) in 1900, and possibly as early as 1898. Prospectors who found gold there in 1900 returned to the "Eureka district," as they named it, the following year along with 200 to 250 other hopefuls. But after sluicing showed poor returns, the area was all but abandoned (Mendenhall, 1905:117).

Placer claims were also staked to the east on Slate Creek at the head of the Chisna River around 1900. Although Eureka Creek, Slate Creek, and Valdez Creek districts were all characterized by gold-bearing slates, the slate-diorite association in the region appeared to show little promise to early prospectors. Elsewhere in Alaska gold had been found in association with mica schist formations and prospectors for years "fought shy of the Susitna country; on account of the absence of mica schist in the formation" (Priestley 1909:415). Interest in prospecting the region was undoubtedly renewed after Monahan's strike on Valdez Creek but did not result in comparable discoveries. In 1910, USGS geologist Fred Moffit (1911:114) observed: "Nearly all the streams heading in the Alaska Range between Slate Creek and Valdez Creek have shown the presence of gold in their gravels, but in most places the amount has not proved sufficient to make mining profitable."

The Valdez-Fairbanks Trail passed within a few miles of the Eureka district, and the trail as well as the rich strike which had been made on Valdez Creek were probably responsible for continued prospecting on Eureka and Rainy creeks through the 1910s. Moffit (1911:114) reported that in 1910 five men were prospecting on Rainy Creek and two on Eureka Creek, but were barely making wages. A cabin was in existence above Eureka Creek at the mouth of Garrett Creek at this time (Moffit, 1912:65), apparently built by one of the prospectors working in the area. Recent and historic features both are evident in the area today. Remnants of what appeared from the air to be a sled and debris from a probable campsite were seen on the lower part of Eureka Creek. Only a dam, probably for present-day mining, was seen on Rainy Creek.

In 1910, a few men were also prospecting in the Alphabet Hills west of Paxson Lake on the headwater streams of the western tributaries of the Gulkana River. Though they found color, no mineable concentrations were discovered (Moffit, 1912:66). However, sometime before 1930 a mining camp was established on the Middle Fork of the Gulkana River near Canyon Creek which drains Swede Lake. After the camp was abandoned in the mid-1930s, much of the equipment there was moved to Eureka and Rainy Creeks. Slim Moore (pers. comm.) recalls that Don Whiteford

lost his mortgage on Paxson Roadhouse in 1930 and went to the Rainy-Eureka creek area to prospect. Moore helped Whiteford haul pipe from the Middle Fork over Swede and Tangle lakes to Whiteford's camp on Rainy Creek. The old mining camp on the Middle Fork was reportedly located about one-fourth mile north of the river, just west of Canyon Creek. Some buildings and an old water wheel were still evident at the site as late as 1941 (Doc Hufman, Sy Neeley, pers. comm.).

Gold was found to be present in much of the region that the Monahan party prospected in 1903. They found color in most of the streams along the east side of the Talkeetna Mountains and in the area above the West Fork of the Susitna. However, none of the gold they found was concentrated enough to warrant mining, except at Valdez Creek. Further placer work was done on Wickersham Creek, a tributary of Butte Creek, by L. S. Wickersham in the 1910s. Wickersham reportedly built a cabin there, but found the placers unprofitable (Moffit, 1915:76).

As early as 1897 and 1898, prospectors were evidently investigating the Susitna drainage where it cuts though the Talkeetna Mountains. One of the exploration parties that ascended the river reported meeting prospectors camped at Portage Creek (Bayou, 1946:12). Though no concentrations of gold were ever found along this part of the Susitna drainage and the area saw little in the way of prolonged encampments, there is today a rock face near the mouth of Portage Creek which bears the names of a party that passed that way in 1897: "M. E. Decker, L. F. Judson, W. A. Dickey, H. J. Kennaston, July 2, 1897."

In 1914, there were rumors that valuable deposits of low grade metallic ores had been discovered somewhere in the Broad Pass area (Moffit, 1915:76), but it is not known if the location and value of the discovery were ever confirmed. In 1922, a ruby/silver prospect was found three miles up Portage Creek from Devil's Canyon. A cabin was built and a foot trail was cut from the mine to Chulitna Station on the Alaska Railroad. In 1928, the foot trail was upgraded to a 12-foot wide sled road by the Alaska Road Commission (Bacon, 1975).

The Cantwell Reindeer Project

The completion of the railroad to the Broad Pass area did encourage an enterprise in the region that was unrelated to mining. Between 1921 and 1928 there was an attempt to establish a commercial reindeer herd in the vicinity of Cantwell. The brief history of the experiment is documented in an article written by Jack Luick (1973), director of the present-day Reindeer Research Laboratory at Cantwell. The idea of establishing a reindeer herd at Cantwell was conceived by William T. Lopp, then Superintendent of Education for Natives in Alaska for the Bureau of Education.

Lopp chose the Broad Pass area as the best site for founding a profitable reindeer industry for the Natives in Central Alaska. Cantwell offered facilities for a base of operations, and the railraod insured the expedient shipment of meat and hides to the coast for local sale or export. In 1921, Lopp arranged for Ben B. Mozee, Superintendent of the Bureau of Education's Central District, to lead a drive of 1,437 reindeer from Goodnews Bay on the Bering Sea, eastward and across the Alaska Range, to Cantwell. The trek was made in 280 days, travelling across approximately 1,200 map miles. For six years the reindeer ranged the broad valley of the Nenana River as far east as the Susitna (Monahan) Flats. In 1923 President Harding stopped in Cantwell to see the operation when he was on his way north to dedicate the opening of the Alaska Railroad at Nenana. That same year Norman O. Dawn used the reindeer herd in the production of his motion picture "Lure of the Yukon," which was filmed on location at Cantwell.

Native herders managed the reindeer, operating from cabins used as base camps and overnight shelters on the range circuit. One of these cabins was located one mile south of Cantwell on a ridge west of the railroad. It had formerly been a railroad construction camp, but was used by the herders as winter headquarters. In 1970, it burned to the ground, and today only an outline of the structure is visible. Three other "reindeer cabins," as they were called locally, were built during the early 1920s and are still standing. They are located (see Map 2) at the Jack River ("4 mile cabin"), at Fish Creek ("7 mile cabin"), and at the foot of the Caribou Mountains south of Twin Lakes ("10 mile cabin"). The industry was troubled by several problems which brought about its eventual failure. Salaries were not high enough to encourage herders to stay on for more than one season. Predation by wolf packs and desertion of reindeer to join roaming bands of caribou thinned the reindeer herd. The project also suffered from lack of consistent direction, as there was a rapid turnover of project supervisors. In 1928, the government stopped funding the reindeer project and the herd was left to join the wandering caribou.

Railroad-Related Development

Though the availability of coal deposits for fuel had been an important factor in routing the railroad through Broad Pass, there was no resultant development of coal deposits in the Valdez Creek district. Monahan and party had found coal on a creek (which they named Coal Creek) on the west side of the Susitna above the Maclaren in 1903 when they first entered the region (Moffit, 1915:76). Coal beds were also found on a small tributary of Clearwater Creek where the trail from Paxson's and Yost's crossed Clearwater Creek. Small amounts of the coal from this locality were mined for use in the blacksmith forges at Valdez Creek. Though the coal was of good quality, it was not mined for

other than the limited use in forges (Ross, 1933:465), probably because wood was available closer at hand for fuel and the railroad was too far away for commercial mining. The coal deposits were viewed as a possible major asset to the dredging operation planned by Coffield and his associates on Eldorado Creek in the late 1940s. They planned to develop the coal deposits east of Valdez Creek and install a coal burning electrical plant to power the dredge and to work the quartz mine on Black Creek (Coffield, letter, 10/05/77).

Primitive overland transporation from the Alaska Railroad at Cantwell to Valdez Creek continued to hamper mining enterprises in the district. Ironically the Alaska Road Commission's annual report for 1930 (1931: 47-48) contains the following statement about the Southwestern District.

> "The Alaska Railroad, the Yentna River, Cook Inlet and other arms of the Gulf of Alaska provide through transportation for this region so that only short roads are required. A very excellent system of roads serving the farms and mines of that vicinity is centered about Wasilla while a good, though less extensive system centers about Anchorage.
>
> An especial effort has been made within this district to furnish adequate roads, sled roads or trails to all points of development in order that traffic may be developed for the Alaska Railroad."

The mining settlement at Valdez Creek remained the center of activity in the Denali region through the decades before World War II in spite of poor transporation and marked flucuations in mining interest. With the exception of Cantwell, other centers of activity were inconsequential. However, after the United States entry into World War II, the Valdez Creek district was practically abandoned.

THE VALDEZ CREEK MINING DISTRICT AFTER WORLD WAR II

World War II and the Exodus from Valdez Creek

On October 9, 1942, the U. S. War Production Board ordered a shut-down of 200-300 of the nation's largest gold mines in order to free enough manpower to work in mines producing copper, coal, and other vital war materials (Cordova Daily Times, 10/09/42:1). According to the government order, gold mines not producing other needed minerals were to cease production within seven days and had to terminate all operations within 60 days, except minimum activity necessary to maintain buildings, equipment, and mines in a safe condition. Twenty-one Senators protested President Roosevelt's action to close the gold mines, stating that this would ruin many communities whose livelihood depended upon gold production. However, the Alaska Commissioner of Mines, B. D. Stewart, defended the President's decision and ordered all gold mines in the territory to close (Cordova Daily Times, 10/14/42). On October 16, 1942, mine operators in the interior of Alaska observed strictly the order to stop production (Cordova Daily Times, 10/16/42:4).

Mining operations at Valdez Creek were closed for the duration of the war. Since it was no longer possible to earn a living at Denali, the mining settlement and the Native community were deserted. The white miners moved to the larger towns in Alaska or went "outside" to fill jobs in war production. Laurence Coffield returned to Bellingham, Washington, where he had a family and worked as a contract coal miner (Coffield, letter, 09/13/77). For the duration of the war, the requirement for annual assessment work on mining claims was deferred.

Other economic signs predicted decline for Denali. Concurrent with the War Production Board (WPB) order, fur prices dropped. With no mining and with trapping unprofitable, the Native population was forced to leave Valdez Creek. In 1942, many of the Native families at Valdez Creek moved to Cantwell. Others left for Gulkana and Mendeltna.

Cantwell's railroad station, airfield, and businesses provided a livelihood for many Natives during the war. Jake Tansy, John Nickolai, Pete Tyone, Ole Nickolai, and Henry Peters went to work on the railroad section crew. A copy of a newspaper article titled "The Women Gandy Dancers of Cantwell" given to us by Maggie Oliver shows an interesting facet of Cantwell's railroad crew. In the spring of 1945 when the 714th Railway Operating Battalion left Cantwell, there was an acute shortage of men. Hugh Jones, the railroad foreman, persuaded Joe McNavish, the roadmaster, to hire women laborers. Consequently, Alice Norton, Lucille Tyone, and Yaddy and Mary Stickwan joined the section crew in the summer of 1945. During the next two years Grace

Secondchief, Olga and Valdez Tyone, and Jane Tansy also complemented the female contingent working to maintain the railroad. The "Women Gandy Dancers" of Cantwell (Plate 51) proved themselves capable of the heavy work, especially Grace Secondchief, who could drive spikes with a spike maul as well as any man. Working for the railroad became a steady livelihood for many of the Natives and enabled them to settle permanently at Cantwell.

The Post-War Period at Valdez Creek

Around 1946, when the miners began to return to their claims on Valdez Creek after the war, they found everything in a deteriorated condition. Wallace Fairfield came back to Alaska from Spokane and with the assistance of John Carlson tried to resume hydraulic operations on their claims. They hired two or three Natives to work for them, but the machinery was rusty and unworkable and operations could not be resumed. Failing in this effort, the former association of Carlson and partners did not ever regroup to mine actively. The Alaska Exploration and Mining Company also sent a man to their claims on Valdez Creek to inspect their property. He found the equipment dilapidated, the 10-gallon cans of gasoline full of rust or missing, the explosive powder ruined by water leakage, and the camp facilities and tents torn down.

The postwar economic situation did not encourage the resumption of mining. Prices for mining equipment were rising, the U. S. Government was holding down the price of gold, and new government regulations and paperwork confused the miners and frustrated their mining efforts. The privilege of cutting timber for mining purposes was no longer free. Timber taken from federal property other than a mining claim had to be bought or taken only be government permit (Coffield, letter, 09/13/77).

In spite of these circumstances, a few dedicated veterans returned and remained to mine on Valdez Creek. Laurence Coffield came back with the Skagit Alaska Mining Company which prospected the lodes on Timberline. Lorne Campbell continued to sled supplies from Cantwell to Denali for miners working claims leased from John Carlson. During one such trip in the winter of 1949 Lorne Campbell failed to return to Cantwell. Later, his body was found in the Nickolai cabin at the confluence of Brushkana Creek and the Nenana River, roughly 26 miles east of Cantwell. Jack Herman and Ole Nickolai of Cantwell and the District Commissioner from Talkeetna identified the remains. Lorne Campbell and his sled team had frozen to death, though the circumstances of his death were never known. The only survivor was Campbell's favorite sled dog, which they found in the cabin beside the body of his master (Jack Herman, None Stickwan, pers. comm.).

Return of Laurence Coffield

With the termination of the war the lure of Alaska and the possiblity of a bonanza on Valdez Creek brought Laurence Coffield back to relocate his claims. On his own initiative he made a special trip to Alaska around 1946 (letter, 09/13/77).

> "After World War II, I came to Valdez from Bellingham on the S. S. Aleutian, caught the bus to Paxson (the old Paxson), and started hiking on the old summer trail to Denali. I waded through the Maclaren River at the foot of the glacier, the only place you can wade it, built a fire of dry willows and dried out, and got to Black Creek. My tent was in good shape; the weather and bears had treated me O.K. There was even useable food in oil barrels with the top cut off and covered. I relocated Black Creek, repeated my traveling performance. At Valdez I mailed the mining claims for recording at Talkeetna, took the next boat back to Seattle-Bellingham."

From 1946 through the mid 1960s Laurence Coffield continued intermittently to prospect the lodes on Timberline and the placers on Black Creek. His adventures and misadventures with the Skagit Mining Company, in partnership with the Bott brothers, and as an independent miner until his retirement are here summarized from his letters.

The Skagit Alaska Mining Company

In 1947 or 1948 Laurence Coffield joined with three other men to form the Skagit Alaska Mining Company. Coffield's partners were the financiers of the company, including the company lawyer, Tipp Conn, a garage owner; and a Mr. Clausen of Seattle who owned the Everett Lime Products Company near Bellingham and was an agent in the Pacific Northwest for the Texas Gulf Sulphur Company. The Texas Gulf Sulphur company hired Pete Robbins, a mining engineer, to prospect on their behalf in Alaska. Pete Robbins had a brother, James who was the largest mine operator in the Nome district on the Seward Peninsula. James Robbins was involved in dredge mining and was looking for new dredging property. Laurence Coffield recommended the Valdez Creek district to Pete Robbins - for its quartz lode potential and dredging prospects on the tributaries such as Eldorado Creek.

The Skagit Alaska Mining Company decided to send Coffield and Robbins to Valdez Creek to prospect the quartz lodes and also evaluate the possibilities for dredge mining. A two-ton (capacity per day), portable, Gibson stamp mill and engine were bought for crushing ore from the lode claims. Coffield and Robbins took this and other equipment with them by boat from

Seattle to Seward, then by railroad to Anchorage, and there chartered three hydroplanes (McGee Airways) to fly them and the equipment to Roosevelt Lake. Natives fishing at the lake were hired to help transport the equipment to Black Creek (Coffield, letter, 09/13/77). During the summer Coffield and Pete Robbins drove a tunnel 150 feet deep, set up the Gibson stamp mill for testing, and drilled 18 test pits 30-40 feet deep along Roosevelt Creek between Black Creek and the mouth of Lucky Gulch. There were no bonanzas, but the gold ore taken from the pits assayed at a high value. Pete Robbins flew to Fairbanks to arrange plans with his brother James to dismantle a dredge at Nome, fly the machinery to Roosevelt Lake, and rebuild it on a new hull at the mouth of Lucky Gulch. However, their enterprise was cut short by the outbreak of the Korean War. Once again gold mining in Alaska was interrupted by a war. Hiring "Smitty" (Edwin Smith) to watch their claims and do the necessary assessment work, Coffield and Robbins left Alaska.

The Skagit Alaska Mining Company did not survive their first year of operations. Drafted into the Army Corps of Engineers for combat duty in Korea, Pete Robbins was killed overseas in the first year of the war. James Robbins terminated his mining interests at Nome, left Alaska, and returned to his home in Oak Park, Illinois. That winter (circa 1949 or 1950) Clausen was killed by an accidental explosion in one of his lime quarries. This ironic set of events eliminated the financiers and leaders of the company, which subsequently dissolved. Coffield resumed contract coal mining in Bellingham, Washington (letter, 10/05/77).

In Partnership with the Bott Brothers

In the early 1950s the coal mine in Bellingham where Coffield worked shut down. He returned to Alaska to work at the Healy coal mines. There he met the Bott brothers, who had previously worked for years on their placer mine on the Koyukuk River near Wiseman. Later Coffield and the Bott brothers, Earl and Lyle, decided to form a mining partnership and stake claims together on Valdez Creek. Chartering an airplane from Fairbanks, the three flew to Valdez Creek, landed at the old airfield, and located claims on Timberline and Black Creek. While waiting for their return flight to Fairbanks they met two men doing assessment work on Carlson's claims. From them they learned of John Carlson's death several years earlier. As executor of Carlson's estate, Jack West (Plate 49) had taken over Carlson's claims, his business at Cantwell and just about everything Carlson had owned. Carlson's children, Alice Norton and Bud Carlson, and the nephew Elmer Carlson had apparently received little or nothing of his estate. Jack West was not a miner, but was a trapper by profession and had little interest in mining. He never went out to Valdez Creek and lost the claims and improvements at Denali to relocators Thompson, Waldron, and Saxton in 1955 (Talkeetna Records: Book 20:134-137, 190-191).

Early in the spring after their trip to Valdez Creek, Coffield and the Botts prepared to start mining operations. From Fort Wainwright surplus they purchased a D-6 dozer with hydraulic blade, a 6 by 6 Army truck (3 driving wheels on each side), a compressor, jackhammers, lumber and tools, and a Dodge power wagon, all at a fraction of the regular price. They hired a low-boy trailer to transport the D-6 Cat and drove to Paxson. Felling spruce trees near the old Paxson Roadhouse, they used the logs for skids and on them built a wanigan, insulated with moss in the floor and walls and provided with a cast iron range and three bunks. Following along behind the snow clearing crew on the Denali Highway, which was under the construction (1951-57), they crossed the ice of the Maclaren River, passed by the little cabin built by "Tex," a veteran trapper, on Little Clearwater Creek, and survived two snow avalanches triggered by the dozer while plowing their way through Roosevelt Pass. When they had reached Valdez Creek, they opted to begin placering on Rusty Creek (Coffield, letter, 10/25/77).

Placing a large boomer across Rusty Creek, Coffield and the Bott brothers cut the creek bed down more than 20 feet. The gold content was satisfactory, but they still had not reached bedrock. Moving operations up to Black Creek, the partners set up their wanigan. Laurence and Earl started placer mining, using the dozer blade to push gravel into sluice boxes, while Lyle operated the Gibson stamp mill to crush the highest grade ore. At the end of the work season Earl Bott took the cleanup and went to Fairbanks while Laurence and Lyle remained on the claim site and did some tunneling during the winter. From Fairbanks Earl chartered planes to fly groceries and supplies to his partners who "tramped out" a landing strip in the snow at the mouth of Black Creek. With the spring thaw Earl rejoined his brother and Laurence Coffield on Black Creek. They worked together another season and then all returned to Fairbanks in the fall. That winter an avalanche tore their wanigan to bits (letter, 10/31/77).

At the end of that season the three decided to terminate their partnership. The Bott brothers took the claims on Timber line Creek while Coffield kept the claims on Black Creek. The mining equipment was to be shared between them. Several years later Earl Bott caught pneumonia while struggling through a blizzard on Timberline Creek and died. His wife, Iris, who used to operate the liquor store next to the Lacy Street Hotel in Fairbanks, and Lyle Bott both moved to Anchorage. Lyle died of a heart attack in 1977. Iris still resides in Anchorage with her nephew, James Smith, who maintains the family's interest in the claims on Timberline Creek.

Final Years on Valdez Creek

After the dissolution of his partnership with the Botts, Laurence Coffield continued to mine periodically on Black Creek on his own. He used the dozer the first year and built a ditch from the head of White Creek to the head of Black Creek. The Bott's did not work their claims on Timberline that year. Since the evacuation of Denali during World War II, certain species of game had returned to the area in larger number than before. Coffield was able to occasionally kill moose to supplement the tedium of his usual camper's diet (letter, 10/31/77). After two full seasons on Black Creek, Coffield spent a summer at the U. S. Mining and Smelting Company at Hogatza as night foreman for stripping operations. The following two years he worked on construction of the BMEWS (Ballistic Missile Early Warning System) installation at Clear.

He continued to do assessment work at Black Creek during the early 1960s and freighted a two-speed winch, a 5-horsepower air-cooled engine, and cable (to remove boulders) by truck to the airstrip just east of the Susitna River Bridge. From there he chartered a helicopter, for $600-700 to take his supplies and equipment to Black Creek. Much of his equipment was later stolen and taken out by snowmobile and sled at a time when there was a wave of vandalism on the Denali Highway. During the winter months, the cabins, roadhouses, and mining buildings were looted and vandalized. Coffield lost two jackhammers, a blacksmithing outfit, guns, gold scales, and other equipment necessary for his mining. Since it was no longer safe to keep expensive mining equipment on Valdez Creek, and costs were increasing in a period when the advent of the Vietnam War was not economically favorable for gold mining, Coffield gave up trying to mine on Valdez Creek. Getting along in years, he moved to Tacoma, Washington, where he retired. Coffield gave half of his Black Creek claims to his son Truman who resides in Anchorage. Not a miner, Truman leases the Black Creek claims to H. L. Lightfoot of Mercer Island, Washington.

Laurence Coffield finished his narrative of Valdez Creek with the following:

> "I'll conclude by saying my time in Alaska was a great experience, though I didn't get rich" (letter, 10/31/77).

We are indebted to Laurence Coffield for his cooperation. His letters are an invaluable documentation of the history of the Valdez Creek Mining District from 1928 to the 1960s.

Other Recollections

We are also indebted to Ed Smith, who visited our camp at Denali the evening of July 7. Accompanied by his partner, Julio Ferrerez, Ed Smith took us on a tour of the Denali settlement buildings, explaining the use of each, identifying machinery, and relating some anecdotes about life at Denali. Ed Smith, a veteran miner from Grogg Creek, lived at the Denali bunkhouse from 1935 to 1936 with eight other miners. Ed's bunk was in room #2, left of the front door, coming through the north entrance. He said that the Denali buildings - the "bunkhouse" as he called it, (sometimes referred to as the "Denali Hotel"), the surrounding buildings, the workshops, and the superintendent's house - were all built around the beginning of World War I. Smith recalled that once $5,000 worth of gold dust fell on the floor on the mess hall. According to Smith most of it was recovered, but some remained in the cracks of the floor boards. For the miners, every day, except for the Fourth of July, was a work day, with life at Denali revolving around work shifts, eating, and sleeping, and little or no free time to do anything else. There were times, however, when "the boys got ahold of some liquor or moonshine." The strong spirits were reportedly kept in the "West" building safe along with the gold and money.

Jack Herman, resident of Cantwell, Alaska, lived in the Denali bunkhouse during 1936 and 1937 while working for John Carlson. Jack put in 12 hours a day at the hyraulic operations. Later, he switched to underground tunneling because this meant only eight hours a day with the same pay - $6.00 per diem. In 1910, a law had been enacted in Alaska limiting the work day to 8 hours for underground miners. Jack Herman had a friend named James I. Brown who worked at the mines circa 1936-1940 as a hoist operator. Brown was an ex-mariner from Boston who came to Valdez Creek to try his luck at gold mining. He wintered at Lost Indian Creek, where he had a claim, built a cabin, and dug shafts prospecting in the creek bed. These shafts still exist (Vernon and Shirley Wickham, pers. comm.). Henry Peters (pers. comm.) attributes the construction of a cabin still in evidence near the mouth of Windy Creek to James I. Brown, who used it as a hunting and trapping cabin. Brown rejoined the merchant marine at the outbreak of World War II and was reported lost at sea in the Pacific (Jack Herman, pers. comm.).

In July of 1977, we found a letter postmarked "Denali, July 6, 1933" (see Plate 21) among boxes of old correspondence from the John Rumohr estate. The letter, unsigned, is addressed to a Lee Swisher at McKinley Park, Alaska. The author, a miner working the tunnels at Denali, writes about his daily routine, describes life in the bunkhouse, and gives a description of his job. He worked seven days a week, eight hours a day, at $1.00 per hour, earning $6.00 per day, since $2.00 was withdrawn for daily board. Mrs. Bucke was the cook at the bunkhouse, and the food was good.

Fred Bucke and his partner Gus Sjoberg, were the miner's bosses. During May and early June they had finished a shaft 112 feet deep to bedrock; hitting unfrozen gravel at 55 feet. When the letter was written, on July 4, the crew was in the process of cutting timber and sawing lagging for the horizontal tunnel which they would extend to connect with the shaft. The author terminated his letter with a request to Lee Swisher to send him an air mattress, obviously to make his hard board bunk in the old hotel a little more comfortable.

From various sources comes information about the people at Denali. The Cordova Daily Times (08/15/21) mentions a "Gossie Smith" in charge of the commissary of the McKinley Gold Placer Company. C. W. Norton was a cook at the bunkhouse during the 1910s and 1920s (Coffield, letter, 08/17/77). Ed Smith pointed out the east side addition to the bunkhouse as Norton's quarters. Alice Norton (pers. comm.) also identified two other Denali cooks in addition to her father. These were Helga Ohman (Dan Ohman's sister) and Charlie Borgner who was the best cook of all. Borgner is shown with Elmer Bohman, Elmer Carlson, Slim Gagnon, and Bud Carlson in a photo (Plate 47) taken on the south porch of the Denali bunkhouse around 1941. Mrs. Bucke was probably the cook from 1931 to 1937, the years when her husband had the lease from Carlson to tunnel the Tammany channel (Coffield, letter, 09/08/77; Swisher, letter, 07/6/33).

Recognition as a Historic Area

In the years following the boom period at Valdez Creek, little formal attention was given the historical value of the early mining center until the 1970s. One of the first sites entered on the Alaska Heritage Resource Survey (started by the BLM, Anchorage District Office in 1973 and now maintained by the Alaska Department of Parks, Office of History and Archeology) in the Healy quadrangle was the old settlement of Denali on Valdez Creek. In 1974 the site (HEA-003) was listed as an important Alaskan historical location.

In 1975 the Alaska Department of Parks compiled a report entitled "Heritage Resources along the Upper Susitna River," for the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (Bacon, 1975). Their report included a cursory description and evaluation of historic resources in the Valdez Creek district. However, their report pointed out the need for identification and documentation of historic resources in the region, many of "which are significant in local, state, and national terms."

In 1975 and 1976, Holly Reckord, anthropologist, coordinating Ahtna, Inc.'s selection of Native cemeteries and historic places provided for in section 14(h)(1) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, prepared a nine page statement on the historical

significance of Valdez Creek in Ahtna history. This selection resulted in most of lower Valdez Creek being temporarily withdrawn from other uses and appropriations in January 1977, subject to prior valid existing rights.

In June 1976, Ahtna, Inc. regional corporation wrote BLM a letter expressing their concern that mining might destroy Ahtna graves and historical sites on Valdez Creek and requested that BLM investigate the area and take necessary steps to protect those historic resources from disturbance.

In January 1977, an article on Denali prepared by F. S. Pettyjohn appeared in a special edition of Ruralite devoted to ghost towns of the western states. According to the article, Pettyjohn first visited Denali during the winter of 1958-59 and many relics from bygone years were still left by the miners, including the Pelton wheel and the powerhouse. His article expressed regret at the loss of these relics in the 18 years intervening, "taken as loot by visitors as a reward for having bravely ventured a mile from the road."

Like in so many other cases, by the time the historical value of Denali was recognized, almost everything that could be removed had been carried off by relic seekers.

Destruction of Denali

The need for BLM to conduct a historical resource study of the Valdez Creek district was recognized as early as 1974. After the addition of a cultural resource specialist knowledgeable about historical inventory procedures to the BLM, Anchorage District Office staff in 1976, plans were made and funding requested to undertake the study in 1977. Through WICHE, the BLM requested two graduate students pursuing professional careers in history and historical architecture to provide the needed expertise in those disciplines. The project was originally scheduled to commence in the winter of 1976-77 with historic background research and then shift to field survey in the 1977 field season, spanning nearly six months from start to finish. When students with the skills needed were found to be unavailable at midpoint in the school year, the project was rescheduled to begin in June 1977 with only preliminary historical background research before the field survey began, and to extend through November 1977.

On June 30, 1977, we flew to Valdez Creek to reconnoiter the mining area, see if the creek was fordable (no bridges exist on Valdez Creek), and contact Leroy "Shorty" Kercher, who is apparently the only year-round resident at Valdez Creek. We landed on the south airstrip and were met by Kercher, who seemed interested and cooperative when we explained that we were doing a study of the history of the mining area. We returned to Anchorage that same day and made plans to go to Valdez Creek and begin documenting the old buildings and other features remaining.

When we arrived back at Valdez Creek on July 4, 1977, and met the Clark brothers and their partner, Clarence "Rocky" Miller, their first reaction was that we must be working for the Ahtna Native Corporation. Ahtna's land selection in that area, based on historical Native use, overlies mining claims on lower Valdez Creek near Denali.

The Clarks echoed the feeling of many of the miners on Valdez Creek that the Native historical claim in the area was excessively large and posed a threat to their mining claims. We tried to convince them that we were working for the BLM, not the Native corporation. Our arrival had understandably taken the Clarks by surprise. (Though they were starting work on the creek near the end of June, Kercher said that they had gone out the morning of the 30th when we flew to Valdez Creek). They made repeated references to their rights as miners and referred to the old Denali site as "their" land. Although one of our first tasks was to locate and map active claim boundaries and document ownership status, we were surprised and confused that unpatented mining claims on public lands were considered private property.

However, the Clark's seemed interested in the history of the area and appeared cooperative. Doug Clark showed us his cabin at the bend on lower Valdez Creek. It had originally been the old Denali (McKinley) post office and he seemed proud of its historical significance and his maintenance of the old structure. The Clarks gave the impression that they were concerned about depredation at Denali and wanted the old buildings around to be preserved. They had blocked the two trails from the access road to the Denali townsite with earth berms to prevent motorized access to the area by tourists and souvenir hunters and hopefully stop further vandalism of the old buildings.

Later that evening, with the Clarks' permission, we proceeded to the old townsite and began to set up camp near the old hotel or bunkhouses as it was also called. This appeared to be the best base of operations for recording the historic buildings and other features on the north side of Valdez Creek and was also near the best preserved and largest group of buildings to be recorded.

Doug Clark paid us a visit the following afternoon (July 5) voicing more concern about his rights to mine his claim and making repeated reference to "his" buildings. He said that someday he just might want to put a "cut" right through the townsite itself and a historic district might prevent that. We tried to convince him that the BLM had no intentions of interfering with his mining activities. We were there to inventory, describe, and photograph the old structures and other features and document the history of the area. We told him that even if the buildings were put on the National Register, it would have no effect on private ownership. But Clark did not seem convinced. He was still suspicious of our connection with BLM, our status as

WICHE interns and so forth. We told him he could contact the BLM Anchorage District Office and talk to John Beck or Lou Waller in the Division of Resources to substantiate the reasons for our being at Denali and obtain further information on the BLM's objectives for the study. Clark said he had worked for BLM and knew how they operated - "they say one thing but then turn around and take your land away for a pittance." His suspicions seemed to be quieted however, and he went on to say that in a couple of weeks he would be moving one of the smaller buildings (the "NE" building on Map 3) to his mining operations upstream on Valdez Creek to be used as a workshop. At the end of our conversation we still had the impression that the Clarks did not object to our being in that area. As Clark left to go back to work, he told us to stop by his cabin anytime for tea or coffee.

The next day (Wednesday, July 6) we completed setting up camp and photographed the interior and exterior of the Denali bunkhouse. That evening we went down to Doug Clark's place, but he was not at home. We went to Dave Clark's trailer nearby and talked to him briefly. Later that evening one of us visited the third Clark brother, Dennis, at a cabin along the access road above the Tammany cut. He and his son, Steve, occupied one of the three old cabins on that site. They were also renovating the structure to make it more liveable. He voiced the most concern of all the brothers about our presence in Denali. He said that it was nothing personal, we were just doing our job, but the miners were jumpy about further "encroachments" upon their rights by government. They were not big money corporations, just "little guys trying to make a half decent living." But like the homesteader and small farmer they were being forced out of business by high taxes and stringent laws and regulations, formulated by out-of-staters and environmentalists. He thought a historic district would be detrimental to his brothers' mining interests and indicated that his brothers might be forced to ask us to leave to protect their claim. Even after reassuring him that we didn't want to see any miner lose his claim, Clark didn't seem convinced. However, after further lamenting the demise of the "little guy," we parted on good terms. The following day we made a sketch map of structures and features of the old Denali townsite and talked with Ed Smith and his partner who mined on Grogg Creek.

On Friday (July 8) we proceeded to Cantwell to interview several old-timers who had once been residents of Denali. On the way out we met Leroy "Shorty" Kercher, who voiced the miner's mounting concern by comically warning us that "a lot of miners are going to end up in the pen if the BLM makes this place into a historic area."

After meeting Kercher, we proceeded along the access road to the Denali Highway. We stopped at the nearby Susitna Lodge and found that Lou Waller, Chief of the Branch of Biological Resources for

the BLM Anchorage District Office was there on other business. We told him about the miners' reactions and their suspicions about our presence at Denali. We suggested that he and John Beck, (cultural resource specialist, Anchorage District Office) talk to the miners soon to explain BLM's reasons for doing the historic inventory in the Denali region.

Arriving in Cantwell later that afternoon, we called John Beck, our immediate supervisor and director of the historic study project, in Anchorage. He said that Doug Clark had telephoned him that afternoon from Talkeetna to inquire about BLM's intentions at Denali. Clark had said that he had a lot of money invested in mining operations at Valdez Creek and was apprehensive that any official recognition of the historic area might result in restrictions upon his mining. He indicated that he had talked to someone "on the inside" at the BLM State Office and was concerned about what BLM might be planning for the area. Beck explained that the Anchorage District Office had no immediate plans except to record the historic remains and evaluate them for possible inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places until decisions about their historical significance and BLM's responsibilities had been made. Beck pointed out that being on the Register does not limit a private owner of a Register property. No restrictions are placed on a private owner of a Register property unless the owner applies for and is awarded a grant in aid for rehabilitation of the property, then a covenant could be required in the deed committing the owner to maintaining and protecting the historic integrity of the property. Beck also explained that the owner of a property listed on the Register could qualify for certain tax benefits stemming from the Tax Reform Act of 1976.

Beck had also asked Clark if he had any objection to our being on his claim and Clark expressed a concern about being liable if we were hurt on the premises. Beck assured him that we were there on government business and not at Clark's request, so he would not be liable in any way. Clark expressed a genuine interest in the history of the mining on Valdez Creek and said that he is a charter member of the Talkeetna Historical Society. He told Beck he had several old mining journals from as far back as 1912, that these included many old photographs and that he had other old photographs taken on Valdez Creek during the 1940s. He agreed that these could be valuable sources of information for the historic study, but had reservations about releasing information they contained on gold production from certain areas. Beck said that the study was more concerned with people and happenings than gold production figures. Clark also mentioned that the old Pelton wheel from the Denali powerhouse is in Talkeetna. Beck told Clark that he would be at Denali and talk to him more in about 10 days. By the end of their nearly hour long conversation, Beck felt that Clark had been reassured and so did we.

On Sunday (July 10) we left Cantwell to return to Valdez Creek, stopping along the way at Adventures Unlimited Lodge. Owner Jim Grimes said that our presence in Denali had many of the miners "shook up." We assured him that the miners had nothing to fear from the historic study, but he still seemed concerned.

The following afternoon (Monday, July 11) Doug and Dave Clark, with their wives, stopped by our camp and told us to vacate the premises. After attending a miners' association meeting that past weekend they had reached a decision to demolish the buildings at Denali. To say we were shocked and bewildered is putting it mildly. Doug Clark wasted no time in giving us his reasons. He said it was nothing personal, but that we were simply forerunners of "more things to come" - more government control coming to the area, threatening the rights of miners. With the buildings gone, the BLM would have no reason for establishing a historic district. Once again Clark expressed his conviction that our study would somehow result in restriction of his mining. He said his telephone call to John Beck the previous Friday (July 8) had not answered his questions satisfactorily and that he had talked to "others" (unnamed) in the BLM who warned him of future government actions in the area that would restrict his mining operations.

Clark also said that if anyone hurt themselves in "his" old buildings he could be held liable. We asked if we vacated the old hotel (which we were using for work and storage space) if it would be all right for us to remain, but Clark replied, "No." We asked him if he might postpone demolition a day to allow us to measure the buildings, to which Clark again said no. He was convinced that our project had ulterior motives.

Doug insisted that we vacate "his" property by that evening. He said he was going to put "No Trespassing" signs around the property. He would salvage any good pieces of lumber for personal use. He also said that he didn't want us taking pictures while they demolished the buildings. Thoroughly intimidated by the Clarks' assertion of ownership and the pistol Doug Clark was wearing, we dared not protest too strongly.

While we were talking, Dave Clark bulldozed down the "North" building (Map 3). Then Doug Clark said they would get out of our hair and let us pack and come back later to finish the demolition.

Angered, confused, and not knowing the legality of the situation, we cleared out our materials from the hotel, packed our camp gear, and left the townsite by early evening. We noticed they had left their bulldozer by the "Northeast" building.

Depressed, we arrived a little later at Susitna Lodge and related the day's events to an equally stunned Lou Waller. It was decided we would all meet together with John Beck Wednesday

morning (July 13) at the Anchorage District Office to discuss the situation and formulate future action. On Tuesday (July 12) we left Susitna Lodge for Anchorage via Cantwell. Driving west on the Denali Highway, just west of the Susitna, we looked north toward Valdez Creek and could see that the old hotel was no longer standing.

Deciding to continue with the study, another decision arrived at during Wednesday's meeting was to make an air reconnaissance of the Denali townsite to survey the extent of damage done by the Clarks. We flew to Valdez Creek July 15 and the worst of our fears were substantiated. The buildings had all been demolished except the NW building and the two cabins the Clark's were living in (compare Plates 88-92). Any cohesive design to the remnants of the once thriving mining community was lost - out of fear, ignorance, and greed. All of the best preserved buildings (see Map 3) were reduced to kindling. The old superintendent's house, already partially collapsed, escaped the dozer.

Word of the destruction of Denali did not reach the newspapers until the end of August. The BLM did not bring it to the attention of the press earlier as they wanted first to investigate and answer certain questions that had arisen. Although the Clarks do not deny committing the reprehensible act, their publicized reasons for doing so differed widely from what we were told.

The Clark's gave their story to columnist Slim Randles, who lives in Talkeetna, and articles appeared in the August 26, 1977, editions of The Anchorage Daily News and The Anchorage Times. Doug Clark told Randles that one day in early July he walked into the Denali Hotel when no one was there and found that we had moved in and had set up plywood sheets for drawing plans of the buildings and maps of the area and saw plans for locking up the village into a historic site. Clark then supposedly drove to Anchorage and found that the federal government had already allocated $35,000 for road signs leading to the town and was planning a visitor's center on his claim. Eight more people were waiting at a nearby lodge to come up and begin work on the restoration of the town.

"If they had come straight to us," Clark said, "and told us their plans, it might have been different. I think the old town would have made a fine historical monument, and I wouldn't have minded doing some of the carpentry myself. Besides, we have all the equipment they would need to put in a road to it. We would have had to be compensated for the mining ground we would lose, but it would have been okay with us. But with the way they were sneaking around, I knew we, and probably all the neighboring miners around here, would've found ourselves kicked out of our homes to make room for tourists."

Subsequent to the bulldozing, BLM reviewed mining records in the recorder's office in Palmer and found no records indicating that the Clarks owned patented or unpatented claims on Valdez Creek. On December 9, 1976, Doug Clark had been given a power of attorney by James Barbeau of Central Point, Oregon, "to sign, seal, and deliver any application for survey of mining claims for purposes of proceeding to patent, and application for patent, or other documents that may be necessary or proper to carry into effect the patenting of those certain mining claims within the Valdez Creek mining district...." Clarence "Rocky" Miller, who works for the Army Corps of Engineers in Anchorage, and Barbeau each owned half interest in the claims (relocated by them in 1973) on which the buildings were located. Although Barbeau could not be reached in Oregon, a call to Clarence Miller on July 18, 1977, revealed that he had no knowledge that the Clark's intended to bulldoze the buildings, and it is doubtful that Barbeau knew of their intention either. Miller said that he left Denali on the July 5, went to Fairbanks, and arrived in Anchorage on July 7 or 8. He had talked with Doug Clark before he left and said that he would go to the BLM Alaska State Office and find out what the historical study was about when he returned to Anchorage. He recalled meeting us on our way into Denali on July 4. Miller said that he was sorry to hear that the Clark's had wrecked the buildings and that he knew Clark had no intention of mining the area where the buildings were located.

Although mining laws and regulations are undoubtedly becoming increasingly complex and difficult for the average miner to keep up with, two well-known mining laws delineate the miner's rights to prior improvements and surface resources on unpatented mining claims located after 1955. These are the General Mining Law of 1872 (17 Stat. 91), or Act of May 10, 1872, and the Act of 1955 (Public Law 167). The Act of May 10, 1872, gives a mining claim locator only the right to mine, remove, and sell the valuable mineral deposits within his claim boundaries. It does not give the locator proprietary rights to existing previous improvements made by other claim owners. This overlaps into property laws regarding abandoned property that are generally well known by miners. In the mid 1950s, after relocating on the claims that had the old buildings at Denali on them, locators Waldron, Thompson, and Saxton went through the procedures required to legally take possession of those improvements. Ellsworth "Al" Saxton, now 78 years old, retired from mining and is living in Sequim, Washington. He was still the "legal" owner of the buildings at Denali in 1977. When he was contacted by telephone on July 22, 1977, he said that as far as he knew none of the subsequent relocators on the claims had ever gone through the steps necessary to acquire legal right to the buildings and other improvements. Needless to say he was disturbed by the news that the buildings had been bulldozed.

The Act of 1955 specified in Section 4 that "rights under any mining claim hereafter located under the mining laws of the United States shall be subject, prior to issuance of patent therefore, to the right of the United States to manage and dispose of the vegetative sources thereof and to manage other surface resources thereof (except mineral deposits subject to location under mining laws of the United States). Any such mining claim shall also be subject, prior to issuance of patent therefore, to the right of the United States, its permittees, and licensees, to use of such of the surface thereof as may be necessary for such purposes or for access to adjacent lands" (43 CFR 3712.1(a)). The Act of 1955 further states that "the locator of an unpatented mining claim subject to the act may not interfere with the right of the United States to manage the vegetative and other surface resources of the land...." 43 CFR 3712.1(b).

Proposed regulations to bring the management of surface resources of unpatented mining claims on public lands up to the same level of management for other public lands were published in the Federal Register on December 6, 1976 (41 F.R. 53428). The proposed regulations promulgated under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of October 21, 1976 (P. L. 94-597), would require a cultural resources inventory on unpatented mining claims prior to approval of a mining plan in order to protect cultural resources which might be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. It is unfortunate that it has taken over 20 years to carry out the intent of the Act of 1955.

Still, BLM puzzled over Clark's story. There have never been any plans for signs or for a visitors center near Denali, nor had any money been appropriated for these purposes. Visitor centers proposed by a Colorado State University study on recreational possibilities on Federal land along the Denali Highway were recommended at either end of the highway, at Mile 0 and Mile 135, not anywhere near Denali at Mile 79 (Miller, Aukerman, and Fletcher, 1976). The only plans we had drawn at Denali were preliminary sketches of the old hotel and of the location of the buildings in that area. Even those were incomplete.

PART III

INVENTORY OF HISTORIC RESOURCES

VALDEZ CREEK AND DENALI SETTLEMENT (HEA-003)

Because of our eviction from Denali and the demolition of the major buildings by the Clarks, the total area of Valdez Creek was not examined and only incomplete records were obtained on those areas examined. There is yet to be made a complete inventory of the remaining features on Valdez Creek. Observations at the old settlement of Denali were limited to a single day of on-site documentation. Thus, the presentable record of Denali as it last stood is very piecemeal and superficial. The description of the Denali features as they appeared in 1977 is supplemented with information obtained from various people interviewed during the course of 1977 summer field work.

Maggie Oliver (pers. comm.) recalls that the bunkhouse was still in excellent condition in the 1950s when as a child she visited Denali during the summers. The kitchen and rooms were well furnished, left exactly as they were since the 1942 shutdown. Maggie remembers her mother showing her an underground cellar located southwest of the bunkhouse, probably on the side of the bluff descending to Valdez Creek. Here were stored eggs, potatoes, and other perishables so they wouldn't freeze during the winter. The existence of such a subterranean cache is substantiated by Alice Norton (pers. comm.). However, our survey on July 7, 1977, did not find this feature, and we were not allowed to return to Denali to verify its existence after the demolition by the Clarks.

Another feature of importance, as yet undocumented at Valdez Creek, is the site and remains of the generating plant located on top of the bench on the south side of the creek directly across from the Denali settlement (Henry Peters, pers. comm.). All sources indicate that this was the only generating plant for the community. It was operated by two Pelton wheels and provided power for indoor lighting, heating, telephones, and even external lighting by two tremendous bulbs to illuminate the landscape during the nocturnal hours when the night shift was at work (Jack Herman, pers. comm.). The plant was located at the end of the pipeline crossing Valdez Creek. The pipeline supplied the Pelton wheels with the water necessary to generate electricity. One of these Pelton wheels is now at Talkeetna. The other is reportedly in the possession of Mike Proudie at Valdez Creek (Vernon Wickham, pers. comm.). Of the plant building itself, little is said to remain since it caught fire and burned down in the 1960s (Harold Thompson, pers. comm.). The generating plant was one of Denali's most ambitious and ingenious accomplishments, harnessing hydroelectric power in the remote vastness of Alaska for a tiny community isolated from civilization.

The Denali Post Office, Leburn S. Wickersham's cabin, is in excellent condition. It is located on Valdez Creek's west bank, where the creek course takes a sharp bend to the south. The post

office closed in 1942, never to reopen after Wickersham's death and was used during the 1950s and 1960s as an overnight cabin for miners on Valdez Creek (Coffield, letter, 09/19/77). The cabin is a single room dwelling composed of horizontal courses of logs. The gable roof is a double layer of lumber covered by sheet metal. Above the front door, on the east side, still hangs the post office sign (see Plate 63). Near the log cabin are two auxiliary structures - an outhouse just north of it towards the creek and a double room storage shed a few feet south. The cabin fabric shows some obvious signs of repair and maintenance, evidently performed by Doug Clark, who makes the old post office his private living quarters during the mining season.

East and up the creek from the post office is Willow Creek. The vehicle access road from the mouth of Valdez Creek crosses at this point and continues up a hill where it forks in two directions - one way leading uphill to the Denali settlement and the main route veering northward to circumvent the settlement and continue eastward upstream. Near the fork on the east side of the road stands the skeletal remains of an outhouse and five dog kennels. Across the road are the scant remains of a cabin and one kennel (see Map 5). According to Jack Herman (pers. comm.) this was Lorne Campbell's place where he lived year round and kept his sled dogs.

Up the hill, halfway to the townsite, is the cemetery which has only three graves. One of these is for Joe Polken, who was killed in a hydraulic accident in 1922; one is for Pat MacDonald; and the third for a Coffield child (1964-65). The MacDonald grave is surrounded by a picket fence.

There are several graves of Indians on the south side of Valdez Creek, apparently not grouped together but scattered around the area of the former Native settlement there. Little remains of the Native settlement except for the log cabin occupied by Shorty Kercher. According to Shorty most of the other cabins were bulldozed down years ago, possibly to be used for firewood. Scattered bits of porcelain, glass, and bone may be seen in the area occupied by these former buildings.

Farther up the creek are many buildings and other features which may be of historical significance. A short aerial reconnaissance of the upper drainage in June of 1977 showed old buildings, machinery, ditches, dams, and many other items of interest. As there was no subsequent on-the-ground examination of the upper creek in 1977, nothing more can be said about what remains there that may be of historical significance.

In July 1977, the Denali settlement was covered and obscured by tall grasses, willows, and alders (some 10 to 15 feet high), whereas at the time of construction in 1915-1917, the site was barren of timber and vegetation (see Plates 16-19). Many of the old mining shafts and cabin remnants around Denali are hidden by

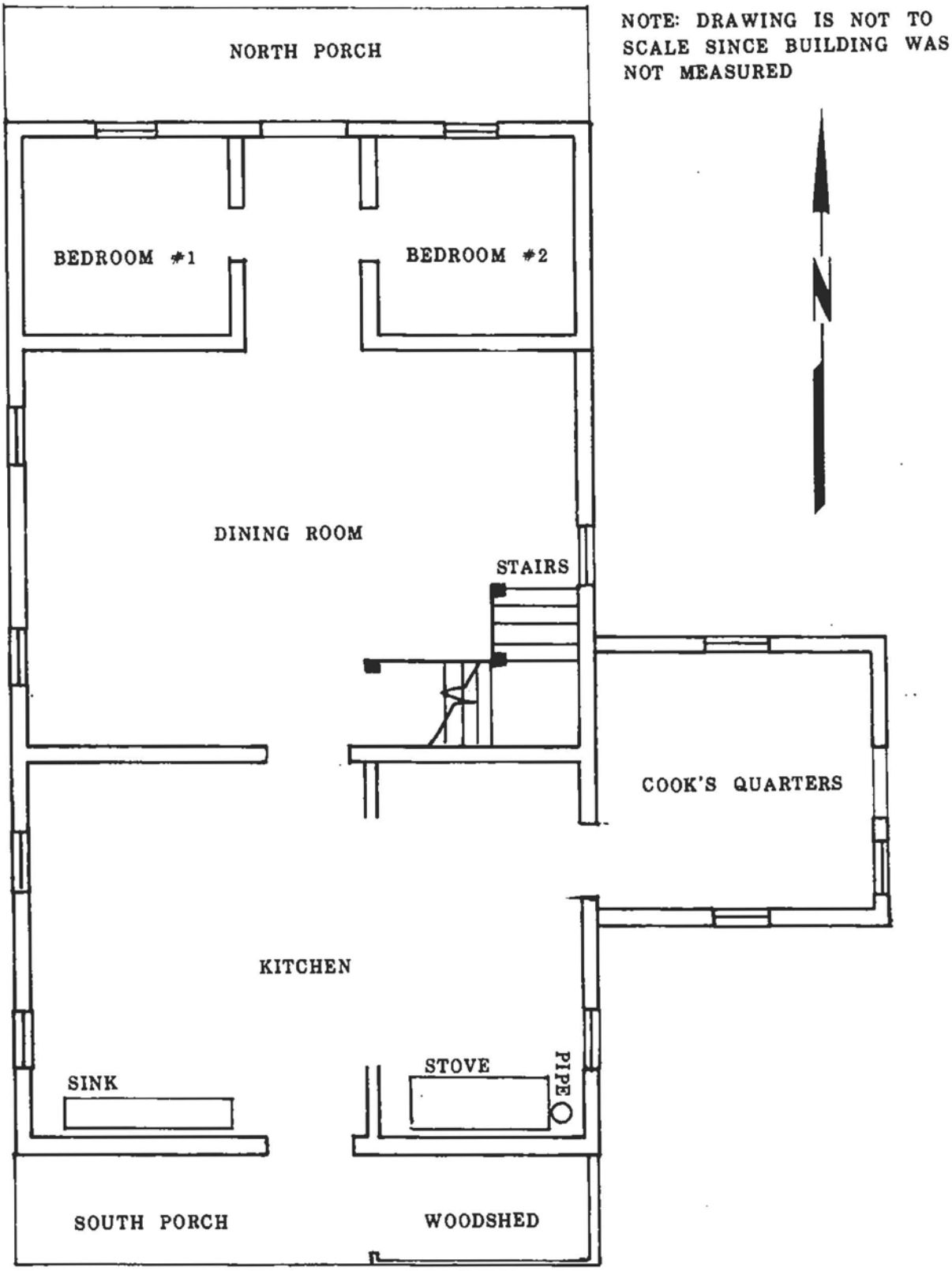


FIG.3 - DENALI HOTEL - FIRST FLOOR PLAN

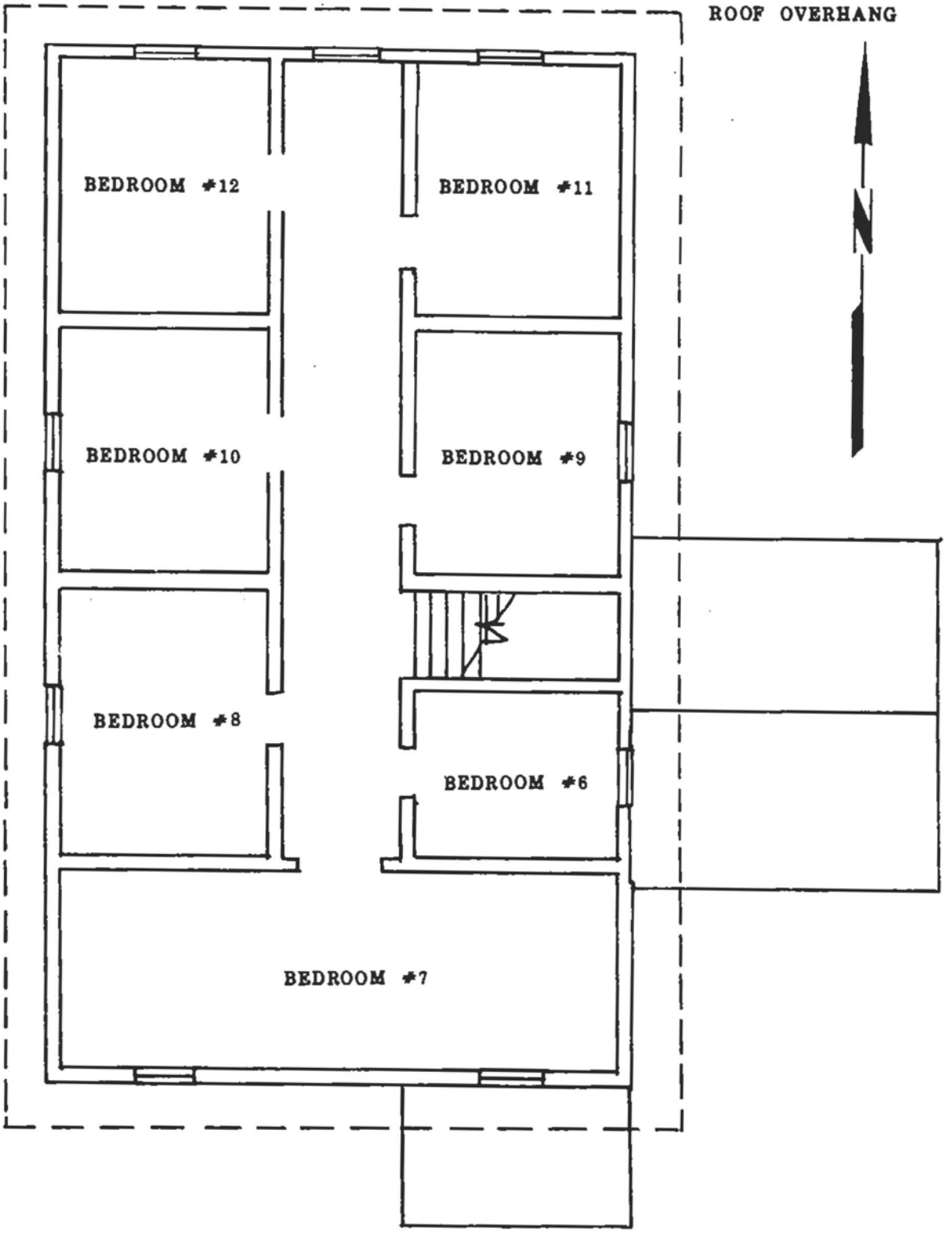


FIG.4 DENALI HOTEL - SECOND FLOOR PLAN

dense vegetation. Old mining machinery, piles of debris, and other remains are entangled in the overgrowth, probably standing exactly where they were left in 1942. The buildings were not reoccupied after the World War II exodus, but stood abandoned and apparently completely furnished until the late 1950s when the Denali Highway was built and visitors and others began to loot the premises and also destroyed some of the cabins (Harold Thompson, pers. comm.). The bunkhouse, the three satellite buildings, the three workshops, and the superintendant's house had not been substantially disturbed until July 11, 1977. Architectural descriptions of these buildings as they appeared just before demolition are given below.

Denali Bunkhouse. Often referred to as the "Denali Hotel," the bunkhouse was the largest and most significant building erected by the Valdez Creek Placer Mine Company (see Plates 52-55). Two stories high, the bunkhouse was a balloon frame structure approximately 20 feet wide by 50 feet long, oriented north-south with entrances and porches at the ends. The exterior siding was shiplapped 1 by 6 inch horizontal mill-sawed lumber, which also covered the interior wall surface. The roof of the bunkhouse was a low-pitch gable resting on 2 by 4 inch rafters and consisted of sheet metal over 1 by 6 inch boards. On the first floor was the kitchen, the dining or mess hall, and two bunk rooms. The upstairs had seven bunkrooms (see Figures 3 and 4). The kitchen was divided into two functional areas: a cooking area with a cast iron wood-burning stove located in the southeast corner, and a preparation area with a wooden sink, three tables, and wall shelves. Outside the kitchen on the south stoop was the frame of what obviously was a firewood shed. On the east side of the bunkhouse was an addition, a 10 by 10 foot single story room with a shed roof and vertical spruce slab siding, used as a cook's quarters (Plate 54).

The structural framework of the bunkhouse seemed to be in fairly good condition, although when seen from a distance it appeared to lean slightly to the west. However, the fact that this simple wood frame building had endured some fifty winters with snow loads several feet deep attests to its structural integrity. The external fabric was well worn, a deep gray color with a definite aged texture. The south and north stoops were disintegrating, their floor boards rotted and in shambles. Most of the windows, commercially designed frames with six glass panes, were still intact, though some panes were broken. There were no doors on the entrances and only a few remained in the interior. These were either hanging askew on one hinge, or had fallen on the floor.

The door, windows, and flooring were all missing from the addition used for the cook's quarters; however, the remainder of the frame structure was in good condition. Inside the bunkhouse there were signs of moisture damage, but no serious dry rot. In some spots the floor boards on the lower level were rotten, warped, and slightly buckled from deterioration of foundation

joists. The wall surfaces showed some gray moisture stains. Some areas were perfectly dry, still retaining the yellowish tones of fresh cut lumber. Of architectural importance to the building's interior were the simple molded door heads over the entrances and the balustrade on the stairway to the second floor. The bunkhouse had no fancy furnishings, only simple bunk frames in the sleeping rooms, and the kitchen stove, sink, tables, and shelves. What appeared to be a shelf on the wall in the mess hall has been identified as a record rack (Pettyjohn, pers. comm.). There were no functioning plumbing or electrical features in the bunkhouse or any of the other buildings.

The west side of the bunkhouse was well shaded by tall willows, while there was a wide clearing to its east and south. An outhouse building was located south of the bunkhouse on the edge of the bluff overlooking Valdez Creek. There were also piles of debris at the edge of the bluff - old cans and discarded clothing - and an "A-frame" which probably was once a tripod support for electric wires strung across the creek to bring electricity from the generating plant to the settlement. The other buildings close to the bunkhouse were arbitrarily named for inventory purposes according to their direction from the bunkhouse: the West, Northwest, North and Northeast buildings (see Map 5). The town avenue, running east-west between the bunkhouse and north buildings, had overgrown with tall grasses. To an observer on the ground the buildings, with the exception of the bunkhouse north elevation, were obscured from view by dense willows. In order to photograph the buildings we cut away much of the overgrowth with machetes and cleared paths to each of the entrances. The brush-choked conditions indicated that the buildings had probably not been used in years and no evidence was seen that would indicate otherwise.

The West Building. Standing no more than 30 feet west of the bunkhouse and shielded by a wall of thick intertwined willows, the West building was in poor condition in 1977 (see Plate 58). The roof and ceiling were caved in, the windows broken, and the interior fabric rotting. Measuring approximately 15 feet wide by 30 feet long, the building was oriented north-south, with entrances at both ends. Exterior siding was of 1 by 6 inch shiplapped boards. The inside was partitioned into two rooms, one of which contained a bed and a closet. The roof was gabled and the sheet metal covering was gone, exposing the tar papered lumber. Some of the shiplapped siding had also been recently removed from the outside of the building. Photographs taken by BLM personnel in 1976 indicated that it was done prior to that year. At the southwest corner of the building was an outhouse, in good condition, made of rough spruce slabs oriented vertically. According to Henry Peters (pers. comm.) the West building was the company superintendent's office. A safe in which gold and cash were kept was located there for paying the miner's wages. Henry Peters, Jake Tansy, and Tammany Nickolai of Cantwell (pers. comm.) identified the West building as having originally

been a cook house. It is quite possible that this building had various functions during its existence.

Northwest, North, and Northeast Buildings. Directly north of the West building, 50 feet straight across what was the main avenue of the settlement, was the Northwest building. Having the appearance of a domicile (see Plate 57), this structure was identified as a married man's quarters (F. S. Pettyjohn, pers. comm.). The fabric was in excellent condition in 1977. The building measured approximately 12 by 20 feet with one entrance on the south side. The exterior surface was of neatly sawed shiplapped 1 by 6 inch lumber. The gable roof consisted of wood slabs and tar paper shingles. The interior was partitioned into three rooms - the front room with bed frame and desk, and a back room with the kitchen on the side. Informants in Cantwell identified the Northwest building as a carpenter shop when shown the early photos of the Denali townsite we obtained from A. B. Smith. It is quite possible that it served that purpose before later being converted to living quarters.

The North building (Plate 56) was located to the north and directly across the street from the bunkhouse. A very simple edifice - a single room constructed of vertical spruce slab siding on stud framing - this was the Denali store, which at one time burned down but was evidently rebuilt. In back of, and between, the North and Northwest buildings lay a rusted-out safe measuring about 2 feet square. Ed Smith identified this as the safe from the west building, or superintendent's office.

Northeast of the bunkhouse on the other side of the street and east of a road entering from the north were a workshop, a Keystone drill, and the remains of the sawmill that are barely visible under mounds of decayed sawdust (see Map 4). The Northeast building, which was used as a workshop for making sluice boxes and fabricating metal pipe (Henry Peters, pers. comm.), contained among other things, boxes and barrels containing nails and bolts, a wheelbarrow, a boiler, and a long wooden table holding scrap iron and spare parts. The shop, a simple stud frame building with spruce slab siding was in good condition above ground (see Plate 60). However, the floor had buckled and showed signs of rot. Just outside the shop door (east side) there was an old Hercules engine. Some 50 feet north of the shop, hidden in the willows, was a machine identified by Ed Smith as the company's Keystone drill, probably the drill that T. J. Anderson used to prospect the north end of the Tammany cut (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 05/29/15).

East of the workshop on either side of the avenue were piles of debris and abandoned equipment hidden in the willows and alders. We found the remains of an old horse drawn sled, a collection of rusted fuel drums, and a heavy wooden pole frame with a hoist which Ed Smith identified as a device for lifting dozer engines.

Repair Shop and Harness Shed. About 1,200 feet northeast of the bunkhouse, and north of the street leading to the superintendent's house, were two more shops. Ed Smith indicated that one was used for repairing dozers back in the 1930s. The other, located north of that repair shop, he called the harness shed because the horse tackle was stored there. Lying on the dirt floor in the repair shop was a long, thick rope which Ed Smith said came from the Keystone drill. The back room of the repair shop appeared to have been a supply room full of barrels and boxes with spikes, bolts, nails, pins, piping, and iron debris, which seemed to substantiate Harold Thompson's conjecture that the building was a blacksmith shop. At an earlier date the back room of this shop was used as an ice house, and was identified as such by Henry Peters, Jake Tansy, and Tammany Nickolai (pers. comm.) in the photo we obtained from A. B. Smith which shows it covered with canvas (Plate 19).

The repair shop was a log cabin with saddle notched corner joints (Plate 61). On the south end was a double swinging door, opening to a large work room which could certainly have accommodated a dozer or other vehicles needing repair. The roof was in good condition but missing shingles to cover the lumber. The rear room was of a different construction from the workshop and seemed to have been a tacked-on addition under an extension of the same roof.

The harness shed was a small log cabin with saddle notched corner joints, a high pitched gable roof, a single room with ceiling barely six feet high, and a loft above (Plate 62). The log walls of the shed were in good condition, but some roof rafters were missing and the remainder of the roof was rotting away. The interior walls were criss-crossed by boards running diagonally. The shed contained various materials in wooden barrels, a shelf screened by chicken wire, and two bowl-shaped pieces which were parts of a furnace used to smelt gold (Ed Smith, Harold Thompson, pers. comm.). Outside and west of the shed was a large rusted boiler. There is nothing to indicate what the loft was used for. It was only accessible through a small opening in the south gable.

The Superintendent's House. Situated about one-half mile or more east of the Denali bunkhouse and only a few hundred feet from the west edge of the Tammany channel, the superintendent's house had an excellent location between the center of the settlement and the mining activity. The quality of the materials and the method of construction used in this building show that it was not a residence of mean or stark appearance as were the other buildings. This was a house to accommodate the company bosses and their wives and perhaps prospective investors and other visitors. No furniture or fixtures remain in the ruins but the interior cedar facing and the wall covering suggest that at one time it was relatively well appointed. Henry Peters says that the McKinley Placer Mines Company called it the "Whitehouse."

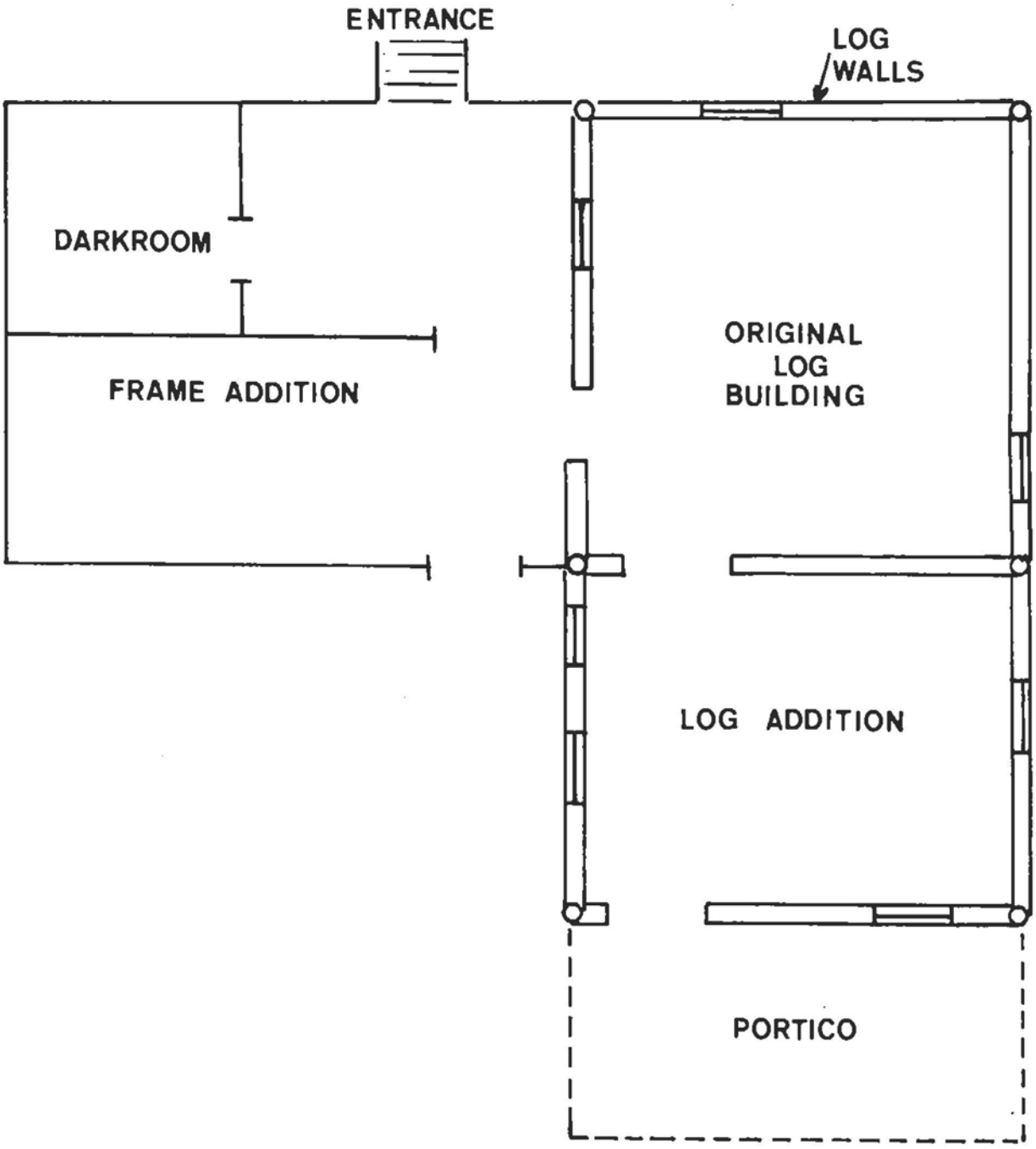


FIG.5 - SUPERINTENDENT'S HOUSE - FLOOR PLAN

(not to scale)

Henry Peters also recalls several of the people who lived there - T. J. Anderson, Mark Flato, George and Newell Sias, and Pete Bovery. Ed Smith remembers a man named Carter who lived there in the late 1930s. Carter was supposedly a newspaper man associated with The Alaska Weekly, published in Seattle. According to Ole Nickolai (pers. comm.) Pete Monahan helped build the superintendent's house; however, research has not substantiated that Monahan was in Valdez Creek at the time of its construction.

The superintendent's house was a log dwelling constructed in two stages. The gables of one stage and the roofs of both were constructed of milled lumber (Plate 59). To this was later added an addition of frame construction (see Figure 5). The porch addition ran north-south the length of what appears to have been the original log building on its west side. A small room at the northwest corner of the porch was, according to Ed Smith, a photography dark room. The main entrance to the house was on the north side with steps leading up to the porch which was elevated on pilings about 3 feet above the ground. A back door was located in the south end of the log building, covered by a portico supported by the extended ridge pole and purlins of the house. Wall logs of the house were not notched, but supported by tenons fitted into mortised corner posts. The addition of frame construction was faced with milled boards and probably painted white. In 1977, much of the fabric of the log building was in an advanced state of deterioration. Roof and floors were largely rotted and caved in, though the walls were in place and enough remained to define the design of the house. The frame additions were in nearly complete ruins, probably collapsed by age and heavy snows.

Recommendations

Although there is little doubt that, because of its regional significance, Denali would have met criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, any cohesive design to the remnants of the settlement was lost when the buildings were bulldozed by the Clarks. Although this seriously impairs its eligibility for the National Register, it would not preclude surviving buildings, features, or objects, or even a district, from being listed on the Register. Any actions with potential to affect the historic resources should, therefore, comply with procedures in 36 CFR 800 to protect historic properties which may be eligible for the National Register. A formal determination of eligibility for historic resources remaining should be obtained as soon as possible to ensure that important remnants of the once thriving mining settlement are not allowed to deteriorate from neglect.

Detailed plans were not obtained for any of the structures at Denali. Nearly all the structures were photographed to some extent however, and the building plans included in this report are drawn from memory with the aid of photographs. Since the

photographs were made before trees and brush were cleared from around the buildings, they provided only limited help in reconstructing the plans of the buildings.

The Northeast building (a workshop) and the superintendent's house were apparently the only buildings at Denali not razed by the Clarks. Detailed plans and photographs should be made of these remaining buildings at the earliest possible opportunity to provide complete descriptions of at least those structures. The post office (Wickersham's cabin) and the cabin above Tammany cut occupied by Dennis Clark also should have detailed plans and photographs made of them, with the Clarks' cooperation.

Much additional work could be done to accurately map and describe the various features remaining at Denali settlement, as well as on Valdez Creek drainage in general. Locating and documenting important features in the mining area are necessary for fully understanding the history of the mining district and would contribute much to what is already known. Additional efforts to locate early photographs of Valdez Creek mining operations and of Denali and the other buildings and features might also be productive. In spite of BLM's advertisement in Alaska magazine (09/77:71) and the contacts and archival research we performed, relatively few photographs depicting the operations and constructions in various periods were obtained in 1977. There are probably other old-timers like Laurence Coffield who could supply much information from their personal recollections, as well as photographs and other documentary material. Coffield at one time had much material relating to Valdez Creek, but it was destroyed when a flood at Fairbanks inundated the basement of the old Lacy Street Hotel where it was stored. The archives at the Alaska State Museum should also be searched for documentary material and the USGS photo library in Denver may also be able to provide early photographs that did not appear in the reports USGS published.

A special effort should be made to document more fully the early socioeconomic interaction between the white miners and the Ahtna in the Valdez Creek area. The singular role of the mining in the acculturation of the Upper Susitna Ahtna makes Valdez Creek an important source of ethnohistoric information relevant to the entire region. An ethnohistoric study by an anthropologist knowledgeable about the Ahtna would contribute much to reconstruction of pre-contact Ahtna history, as well as balance the somewhat lopsided history of the post contact period.

Finally, from the history of people removing historical objects from the Valdez Creek area, BLM should take steps to protect historic objects remaining in the area from further depredation. This could include removing those likely to be taken and placing them in a museum or similarly protected location, or signing of larger objects such as the old Keystone drill (Plate 64).

OTHER HISTORIC FEATURES IN THE REGION

Our field reconnaissance in other areas of the region, especially along the old branch trails to Valdez Creek, was limited by accessibility. Aerial reconnaissance with fixed wing aircraft was carried out along all the trails and on the lower Tyone River. Because of the many large wildland fires burning in the interior in the summer of 1977, a helicopter could not be obtained for access to features identified in remote areas of the region. Our on-the-ground examinations were limited to areas accessible by foot from the nearest highway. Plans, sketch maps, and photographs were made of sites and structures examined on the ground. Though aerial photographs were taken of those seen only from the air, these photographs and observations provided little detail for our inventory.

Where documentation showed a feature to be of historic significance in the region and locations were determinable, sites were listed on the Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRS). The AHRS numbers assigned to evaluated sites are shown in the inventory. Sites not fully evaluated or accurately located are described to the extent of the information available and are numbered consecutively in the inventory and on Map 2.

Sled and Pack Trails

Air reconnaissance on the branch trails to Valdez Creek indicates that these trail routes are identifiable and have potentially significant management value as historic trails (see Map 2). These include:

1. The Valdez-Fairbanks Military Trail from Gulkana Junction to Yost's Roadhouse site.
2. The Bear Creek trail from Gulkana to Valdez Creek via the West Fork of the Gulkana River and Maclaren and Susitna rivers.
3. The West Fork trail from Sourdough to Valdez Creek via Clearwater Creek.
4. The Middle Fork trail from Meier's to Valdez Creek via Clearwater Creek.
5. The trail from Paxson's to the Maclaren crossing.
6. The trail from Yost's to Valdez Creek via Eureka Creek.
7. The Cantwell to Valdez Creek Trail via Monahan Flat.

References for Trails

ARC, 1931:48-49.
Rand McNally, 1922:88-89.
Smith, M. E., 1974:19-26.

Moffit, 1909:157-158; 1911:113, Plate VII; 1912:19-21; 1915: 14-15.
Cordova Daily Alaskan, 11/09/08.

Recommendations

Historic trail routes identified should be evaluated for inclusion in the National Trails System. The National Trails program offers recognition for trails that exhibit scenic, historical, natural, or cultural qualities. Several major gold rush trails in Alaska were evaluated for the system (Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, 1977), but minor trails like the summer pack trail that extended from Yost's Roadhouse to Valdez Creek might also be worthy of inclusion.

Wherever possible, historic trails in the region should be interpreted to the public and developed for recreation use. The outdoor recreation occurring in the region would be greatly enhanced by focusing future recreation development on historic themes and features such as the trails. Trailheads at Gulkana, Sourdough, Meier's, Yost's, and the Denali Highway could be marked and brochures with route maps provided to the public. This would provide trails of varying lengths to fit a variety of recreational uses. An interpretive marker would be especially appropriate at Gakona Junction for the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail which later became the Richardson Highway. There is presently a commemorative marker on the highway near Summit Lake that is in need of repair. Because of its remote location the marker is subject to vandalism that would not occur if it were located in a more populated area like Gakona Junction.

Some trail sections are still the old narrow dog sled widths. Large ORVs might be restricted from these trails to retain their historical appearance. Some trail sections also show damage from uncontrolled ORV use. ORV use could result in considerable degeneration of the trails if allowed to continue unmanaged.

Features on the Richardson Highway

Crossing a multiplicity of land ownerships, the Richardson Highway presents certain problems for management of historical features along its route.

GULKANA ROADHOUSE SITE (GUL-042)

Description:	Site of former roadhouse constructed circa 1903.
Location:	Between Mile 128-129, Richardson Highway, just west of where the highway crosses the Gulkana River on the north side of the river.
Present Owner:	Privately owned.
Present Use:	Area overgrown by high brush; scattered debris and litter; no visible evidence left of roadhouse. Used as a campground for fishing.
References:	Sy Neeley of Glennallen; Frank Hobson of Tazlina; Smith, M. E., 1974:16.
Recommendations:	Further historical investigation to determine its exact location and potential for archeological research. State of Alaska or Gulkana Village should take responsiblity in cleaning up area and erecting a historical marker to convey the significance of the roadhouse in the region's history.

POPLAR GROVE CABINS (GUL-069)

Description:	Two log cabins built circa 1904-1906 (Plates 68 and 69).
Location:	West of milepost 137.9, Richardson Highway.
Present Owner:	BLM; Native selected; probably on the highway right-of-way.
Present Occupant:	None.
Present Use:	No evidence of recent occupation.
Architectural Character:	Two single room log cabins: south cabin, 14 by 14 feet; north cabin, 13½ by 19 feet.

Condition of Fabric: South cabin - exterior in good shape; interior damp, ceiling sagging slightly, signs of dry rot. North cabin - exterior in good condition; dry rot on interior ceiling.

Construction: North cabin - horizontal log courses, cradle corner notches, diagonal bracing; high pitch gable roof ten feet high, three roof beams, spruce timber rafters, and sod. South cabin - similar construction; saddle notch corner joints, low pitch gable roof 6½ feet high.

Site Considerations: Two cabins spaced 70 feet apart, some 60 feet off the road, accessible by dirt road into clearing between the cabins. Southwest of the south cabin is the privy and a foundation feature depression. Cabins presently unsafe.

References: Frank Hobson of Tazlina, Oscar Ewan of Gulkana, and Slim Moore of Anchorage; Smith, M. E., 1974: 79-80; BLM notes and photos made in 1977.

Recommendations: Erection of historic marker to convey significance of Poplar Grove Roadhouse in the region's history. Renovation of cabins for visitor information center or similar function.

TOM NEELEY CABIN (1)

Description: Log cabin built in 1943 to replace earlier cabins built on site in 1926 (Plate 67).

Location: On Gulkana River, accessible by trail off an abandoned section of the old Richardson Highway between milepost 140 and 141.

Present Owner: Ben Neeley of Gulkana; Alaska claims the cabin.

Present Occupant: Seasonal hunting occupation.

Present Use: Hunting cabin.

Architectural Character: Large and spacious single room log cabin, 19½ by 19½ feet, saddle notch corner joints.

Condition of Fabric:	Good; however, cabin is leaning slightly to one side, posing stabilization problems.
Construction:	Horizontal courses of log timbers; gable roof 10 feet high, three roof beams, spruce timber rafters, sod and earth roof covering with sheet metal strips.
Site Considerations:	Cabin fits well into the surroundings, however, in the vicinity of the cabin are a small overturned log structure, two overturned caches, a grave, a shed, two privys, a sled, and cache pilings. Site located 100 feet east of Gulkana River and highly visible from the river.
References:	Ben Neeley of Gulkana, Alaska; BLM notes and photos made in 1977.
Recommendations:	Maintenance by the owner.

HOGAN HILL CABIN (2)

Description:	Log cabin built circa 1927 by Ike Hobson (Plate 70).
Location:	Located at milepost 157.3 on the Richardson Highway, 135 feet west of the road.
Present Owner:	Jack Tyone, Anchorage, was last owner of cabin.
Present Occupant:	None.
Present Use:	Abandoned.
Architectural Character:	Single room log cabin 20 by 12 feet with enclosed entry and wood storage space.
Condition of Fabric:	Wall fabric in good condition; roof showing signs of material decay.
Construction:	Horizontal courses of log timbers, cradle corner notches. Gable roof on double ridge beam, narrow spruce timbers as rafters, earth sod, rusty pieces of sheet metal for covering.

Site Considerations: The cabin is hidden from view from the road by trees, its location is indicated by a dirt road sloping down from the highway to a clearing 20 feet in radius where the cabin stands. Just west of the cabin is a cache measuring 8 by 7 feet, five feet high. No sign of privy or any other auxiliary structures. Cabin in unsafe condition.

References: Frank Hobson, Tazlina, Alaska; BLM notes and photos made in 1977.

Recommendations: If the cabin is abandoned, the landowning agency should assume maintenance and restore the cabin to serve some useful function, as a rest stop and visitor information center.

MEIER'S ROADHOUSE BARN (GUL-045)

Description: Log barn or similar outbuilding probably built circa 1906-1908 (Plate 71).

Location: At the site of the former Meier's Roadhouse, milepost 170, Richardson Highway.

Present Owner: BLM; utility corridor; State selected; probably on the highway right-of-way.

Present Occupant: None.

Present Use: Abandoned.

Architectural Character: Log barn, 18 by 22 feet, cradle notch corner joints, once used as a workshop; interior compartmentalized by vertical structural posts.

Condition of Fabric: Fair. Signs of dry rot on exterior and interior log fabric. Parts of roof construction dilapidated, unsafe condition.

Construction: Horizontal courses of log timbers, walls six feet high. Gable roof 10 feet high, three log roof beams, spruce timber rafters covered by sheet metal.

Site Considerations: On the site of the Meier's Roadhouse complex, some 60 to 70 feet north of the spot where the roadhouse once stood (now a bulldozed depression).

References: Doc Hufman, Paxson, Alaska; Smith, M. E., 1974:21; BLM notes and photos made in 1977.

Recommendations: Erection of historic marker to identify the original site of the roadhouse. Preservation and maintenance of the barn by the landowning agency. Potential for future archeological research into sites of the outbuildings.

PAXSON ROADHOUSE (XMH-218)

Description: Log section of roadhouse built circa 1919.

Location: Milepost 186, Richardson Highway, 57 feet east of the highway.

Present Owner: Stan Brown, owner of the new Paxson Lodge.

Present Occupant: None.

Present Use: Abandoned after fire of Christmas 1975 which destroyed three-fourths of the old Paxson Roadhouse.

Architectural Character: Log cabin in Hudson Bay style with many interior rooms for lodging.

Condition of Fabric: Fair to poor. Windows smashed or boarded up. Foundation log sills showing signs of dry rot.

Construction: Exterior of north wing measures 42 by 26 feet. Horizontal log courses nailed to vertical corner posts. Gable roof on nine beams, 1 x 6 inch lumber, tar paper. Interior joists and ceiling.

Site Considerations: What remains is only one-fourth or one-third of the former Paxson Roadhouse (see Plates 74 and 75), a north wing oriented east-west with entry on the west side. Most of the site where burned section once stood is now a landfill and gravel bed. Just north of the wing is a 8½' by 5' privy. A telegraph station cabin was located just north of the roadhouse (Moffit, 1912: Plate I).

References: Stan Brown, Paxson Lodge; Slim Moore, Anchorage; Smith, M. E., 1974:21, 90-92, BLM notes and photos made in 1977.

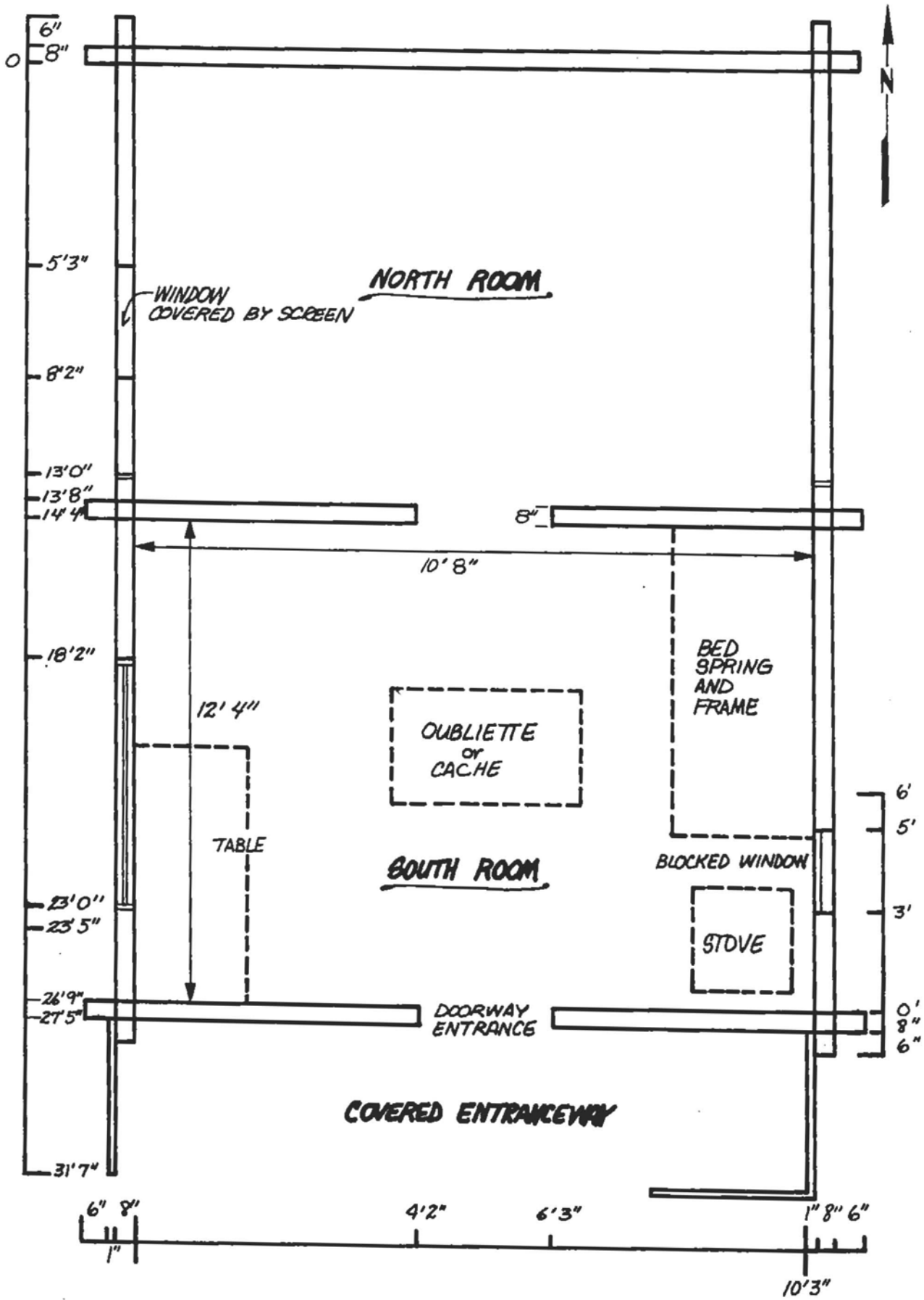


FIG.6 - FLOOR PLAN - FIELDING LAKE CABIN

Recommendations: Restoration and rehabilitation; can be renovated and used as a museum displaying photos, etc., interpreting the history of Paxson and the Richardson Highway. Historical marker on site of former Paxson Roadhouse.

ARC SHELTER CABIN SITE (3)

Description: Site of log shelter cabin built by Alaska Road Commission at unknown date sometime before 1927.

Location: North of Summit Lake near Isabelle Pass.

Present Owner: BLM; classified D-1.

Present Use: Unknown.

Site Considerations: Accessible by road.

References: ARC map, 1927.

Recommendations: On-the-ground examination and historic research to document. Possible archeological potential.

FIELDING LAKE CABIN (XMH-255)

Description: Log cabin built circa 1912 (Plate 73).

Location: On hillside east of Fielding Lake and campground; visible from the campground and accessible by a short trail.

Present Owner: BLM; classified D-1.

Present Occupant: None.

Present Use: Abandoned; no signs of recent habitation. Trail to cabin is well worn from curious visitors from the campground.

Architectural Character: Two room log cabin with subterranean storage space or cache beneath the floor (see Figure 6).

Condition of Fabric: Fair to poor. Much of the exterior is obscured by tall grasses. Sheet metal on roof

is rusty and cracking. Northwest corner of roof caved-in. Interior in disrepair, warped, and rotted floor. Cabin clearly in unsafe condition.

Construction: Exterior dimensions 31 by 12 feet. Two rooms indicative of two building stages. Horizontal log courses; gable roof on five beams, 1 by 6 inch lumber roof covered by sheet metal and flattened metal gasoline cans.

Site Considerations: The cabin is on a slope, slightly dug into the side of a hill and surrounded by an earth berm as high as the window sill. No outhouses or auxiliary structures were found. High visibility of the site from the public campground and frequent visitor trips there should encourage maintenance of the feature.

References: Moffit, 1912: Plate I; Doc Hufman, Paxson and Slim Moore, Anchorage; BLM notes and photos made in 1977.

Recommendations: Proper maintenance and possible functional use by landowning agency; interpretive marker giving information about the cabin.

YOST'S ROADHOUSE SITE (XMH-220)

Description: Possible location of roadhouse constructed circa 1906.

Location: West of the Richardson Highway - where Phelan and McCallum Creeks join together (Map 1).

Present Owner: BLM; State selected.

Present Use: None.

Site Considerations: Possibly the location of the old roadhouse is now in the streambed. McCallum telegraph station was also located just south of Yost's.

References: Stan Brown, owner of Paxson Lodge; Doc Hufman, Paxson Lake; Slim Moore, Anchorage; Smithm M. E., 1974:22; Moffit, 1912: Plate I.

Recommendations: Further historical research and on-the-ground investigations into exact location; erection

of historic marker conveying significance in region's history. Protection of cemetery associated with the roadhouse.

General Recommendations

Historic roadhouse sites on the Richardson Highway should be marked and interpreted to the public. A brochure designed along the lines of a road log could easily be prepared that would inform highway travellers about the roadhouses and other historical points of interest. A visitor center and museum with interpretive displays on the historic route, the roadhouses, and the history of the region should be developed at one of the historic points like the old Paxson Lodge or Sourdough Lodge.

The owners of old cabins located along the route, as perhaps the Neeley cabin and the Hogan Hill cabin, should be encouraged to maintain those structures and use them for some purpose that is consistent with their design and setting. Where owners no longer have an interest in the structure, the landowning agency should assume responsibility for their maintenance since their neglect is highly visible to the public. Cabins such as those at Hogan Hill and Fielding Lake would make excellent visitor information centers with a little restoration effort.

Historic properties on public land along the Richardson Highway should be maintained and possibly restored to the extent that they can serve some useful function. These historic features are highly visible to the public travelling the highway and their neglect reflects poorly on Alaska's management of cultural resources. The Poplar Grove cabins and remaining Meier's Roadhouse buildings are two such cases. There is also a question of public safety since many people stop to visit these structures that are in unsafe repair.

Features on the Bear Creek Trail to West Fork

BEAR CREEK FOUNDATION (4)

Identification:	A simple foundation feature in advanced decay, consisting of four logs in square formation, located 25 feet northeast of sled trail.
Location:	South of the Alaska pipeline access road by 500 feet and southeast from the sled trail intersection with the access road by 1,600 feet.
Present Owner:	Unknown.
References:	BLM field notes and photographs made in 1977.
Recommendations:	Leave in place; background research to determine origin and use.

JIM TYONE CABIN (5)

Description:	Log cabin built in the 1930s by Jim Tyone (Plate 65).
Location:	Approximately two miles north or northwest along sled trail from its intersection with the Gulkana pipeline access road, 120 feet south of Bear Creek.
Present Owner:	Jim Tyone of Gulkana, Alaska.
Present Occupant:	Hunting season cabin for Jim Tyone, friends, and relatives.
Present Use:	Hunting and trapping cabin.
Architectural Character:	Single room log cabin, 11 by 11½ feet, cradle notch corner joints, earth floor.
Condition of Fabric:	Walls in good condition, roof is deteriorating badly and will encourage progress of structural deterioration.
Construction:	Horizontal courses of log timbers; gabled roof on beams spanning the length of the cabin supported by pole trusses, sod covering.

Site Considerations:	In conjunction with the small cabin are a cache, drying rack, and larger cabin built in 1960. (One-quarter mile further northwest on the sled trail is the Frank Ewan cabin).
References:	Jim and John Tyone, Gulkana.
Recommendations:	Maintenance by owner(s) consistent with the use and setting.

FRANK EWAN CABIN (6)

Description:	Cabin owned by Frank Ewan, probably built circa 1920 (Plate 66).
Location:	Located on the south side of the Bear Creek sled trail one-fourth mile northwest of Jim Tyone cabin and 200 feet south of the creek.
Present Owner:	BLM; Native selected.
Present Use:	None, abandoned.
Architectural Character:	Single room log cabin, 13 by 16 feet, with two windows and single doorway.
Condition of Fabric:	Roof caved in, walls leaning badly; beyond effective restoration.
Construction:	Horizontal courses of log timbers; once a gable roof with three major roof beams, probably spruce pole rafters and sod covering.
Site Considerations:	The cabin is situated in a clearing some 60 feet in diameter, secluded from the sled trail and creek by spruce trees. In conjunction with the cabin are two privy pits and remains of a cache.
References:	Jim and John Tyone, Gulkana, Alaska.
Recommendations:	Sign with protective signs if on BLM land. Ruin stabilization would be possible; potential for archeological research on site to yield more accurate information on the structure and surrounding features.

STRUCTURES SOUTH OF BIRCH LAKE (7)

Description: Two structural features about one-half mile apart on the old sled trail route in a thickly forested area. One appeared to be a tent house (possibly a wanigan) and the other a log cabin ruin.

Location: About midway between Gulkana and Ewan Lake on the old sled trail at a point almost directly south of Birch Lake.

Present Owner: BLM; Native selected.

Present Use: None noted; abandoned.

Site Considerations: Accessible by floatplane.

References: BLM aerial photographs taken in 1977.

Recommendations: On-the-ground examination and historic research to document.

DOG LAKE CABIN SITE (8)

Description: Reported site of cabin built on the old sled trail route in early years by Paul Snell for hunting and trapping.

Location: On south side of Dog Lake opposite a small island in the lake.

Present Owner: BLM; classified D-1.

Present Use: Nothing noted in aerial reconnaissance.

Site Considerations: Accessible by floatplane.

References: Jim and John Tyone, Gulkana, Alaska.

Recommendations: Locate and document.

FISH LAKE CABIN SITE (9)

Description: Reported site of hunting and trapping cabin built on the old sled trail in early years by Charlie Ewan.

Location:	Southwest side of Fish Lake.
Present Owner:	BLM; classified D-1.
Present Use:	None.
Site Considerations:	Accessible by floatplane.
References:	Jim and John Tyone, Gulkana, Alaska.
Recommendations:	Locate and document.

General Recommendations

Potential historic features identified along this trail route should be examined in more detail on the ground. An effort should also be made to document more fully the origin and use of the historic features and sites located on the trail. Since this trail was an Indian trail used before white contact, there are undoubtedly many protohistoric aboriginal campsites located in the area, probably concentrated on the larger lakes and streams.

There is an excellent opportunity to mark the trail on the pipeline access road or the highway with a historical marker giving a brief history of the trail. The Alaska Pipeline does not block the trail where is crosses.

Features on the West Fork Trail - Sourdough to Valdez Creek

WEST FORK-LAKE CREEK CABIN SITE (10)

Description:	Ruins of cabin and other features attributed to Frank Ewan.
Location:	South side of the West Fork of the Gulkana River just above Lake Creek.
Present Owner:	BLM; classified D-1; in proposed wild river corridor.
Present Use:	Abandoned; cabin in ruins.
Site Considerations:	Several features visible, more probably overgrown with grass.
References:	BLM aerial photos taken in 1977; Jim and John Tyone, Gulkana, Alaska.
Recommendations:	On-the-ground examination and historic research to document. Site has archeological potential.

MARKEL EWAN CABIN (WEST FORK) (11)

Description:	Standing log cabin, in need of repairs.
Location:	On the north side of the West Fork of the Gulkana River just above an island formed by the river.
Present Owner:	BLM; classified D-1; in proposed wild river corridor.
Present Use:	None noted; abandoned.
Site Considerations:	Accessible by helicopter.
References:	BLM aerial photos taken in 1977.
Recommendations:	On-the-ground examination and historic research to document. Stabilization and protection of structure.

MARKEL EWAN CABIN SITE (south branch of West Fork) (12)

Description: Ruins of cabin that reportedly belonged to Markel Ewan.

Location: On the north side of the south branch of the West Fork about 3 miles above the fork.

Present Owner: BLM; classified D-1; in proposed wild river corridor.

Present Use: None noted.

Site Considerations: Cabin in ruins; accessible by helicopter. (The ruins of another cabin that looks like the roof was never finished is located approximately 1½ miles downstream from this site.)

References: BLM aerial photos taken in 1977.

Recommendations: On-the-ground examination and historic research to document. Possible archeological potential.

MOOSE CREEK CABIN SITE (13)

Description: Ruins of log cabin on the old sled trail.

Location: Just east of Moose Creek on a high terrace above the north branch of the West Fork of the Gulkana River on its north side.

Present Owner: BLM; classified D-1; in proposed wild river corridor.

Present Use: None noted; abandoned.

Site Considerations: Located just north of the trail; accessible by helicopter.

References: BLM aerial photos taken in 1977.

Recommendations: On-the-ground examination and background research to document origin and use.

PORTAGE CREEK FEATURES (14)

Description: Sleds or possibly platforms from sleds; 5 or 6 occur within a half mile on the north side of the creek.

Location: On the north side of Portage Creek, 1 to 2 miles above its confluence with the Maclaren River.

Present Owner: BLM; classified D-1; powersite withdrawal.

Present Use: None noted; abandoned.

Site Considerations: Appears to be sleds or parts of sleds; other sleds reportedly located at the confluence of the Maclaren and Susitna Rivers.

References: BLM aerial photos taken in 1977; Vern and Shirley Wickham, Cantwell.

Recommendations: Examine and document both possibilities.

BEN FRENCH'S CABIN (15)

Description: Standing log cabin built circa 1920s.

Location: On the Maclaren River above the confluence of the Maclaren and the Susitna and just south of Round Mountain.

Present Owner: BLM; unpatented mining claim; classified D-1.

Present Occupant: Mining claim owner.

Present Use: Apparently unoccupied. A large new log cabin is being built nearby.

Site Considerations: If cabin is located on an unpatented mining claim, BLM has responsibility for the cabin.

References: Doc Hufman of Paxson Lake; Slim Moore of Anchorage; BLM aerial photos taken in 1977.

Recommendations: On-the-ground examination of the cabin and site; further investigation of cabin's history.

DICK SECONDCHIEF CABIN (16)

Description: Cabin ruins attributed to Dick Secondchief.

Location: On the east side of an island formed by the Susitna River at the confluence of the Maclaren with the Susitna.

Present Owner: BLM; classified D-1; powersite withdrawal.

Present Use: None noted; abandoned.

Site Considerations: Apparently not directly associated with the trail; scarcity of timber may have precluded building a log cabin at the camping area on the trail north of the confluence.

References: Joe and Mori Secondchief, Mendeltna; BLM aerial photos taken in 1977.

Recommendations: On-the-ground examination and historic documentation.

CLEARWATER CREEK STRUCTURE (17)

Description: Wooden platform; possibly for a tent-house.

Location: North of the mouth of Clearwater Creek on the Susitna River trail.

Present Owner: BLM; classified D-1; powersite withdrawal.

Present Use: None noted; abandoned.

Site Considerations: No evidence of other remains.

References: BLM aerial photos taken in 1977.

Recommendations: On-the-ground examination.

SUSITNA-RAFT CREEK WANIGAN (TLM-010)

Description: Wanigan similar to that pictured in Plates 30 and 31 with canvas over a wood frame.

Location: On the east side of the Susitna south of Raft Creek and approximately 12 miles upstream from the Susitna's confluence with the Maclaren.

Present Owner: Unknown.

Landowner: BLM; classified D-1; powersite withdrawal.

Present Use: None noted; abandoned.

Site Considerations: May be only remaining example of early wanigans used on the trail.

References: BLM aerial photos taken in 1977.

Recommendations: On-the-ground examination and background research on its origin and use.

BUTTE CREEK LOGGING CABIN (18)

Description: Cabin reportedly built for logging on Butte Creek.

Location: At the mouth of Butte Creek.

Landowner: BLM; classified D-1; within powersite withdrawal.

Present Use: Unknown

Site Considerations: May be connected with a mineral lick reported at the mouth of Butte Creek.

References: Coffield, letter, 09/27/77.

Recommendations: Locate and document.

WICKERSHAM CABIN (19)

Description: Cabin reportedly built circa 1915 by L. S. Wickersham on the creek that bears his name.

Location: Eight to nine miles southwest of Valdez Creek on Wickersham Creek near its confluence with Butte Creek a few miles west of the Susitna River.

Present Owner: BLM; classified D-1.

Present Use: Unknown.

Site Considerations: Accessible by helicopter or 6-8 mile hike.

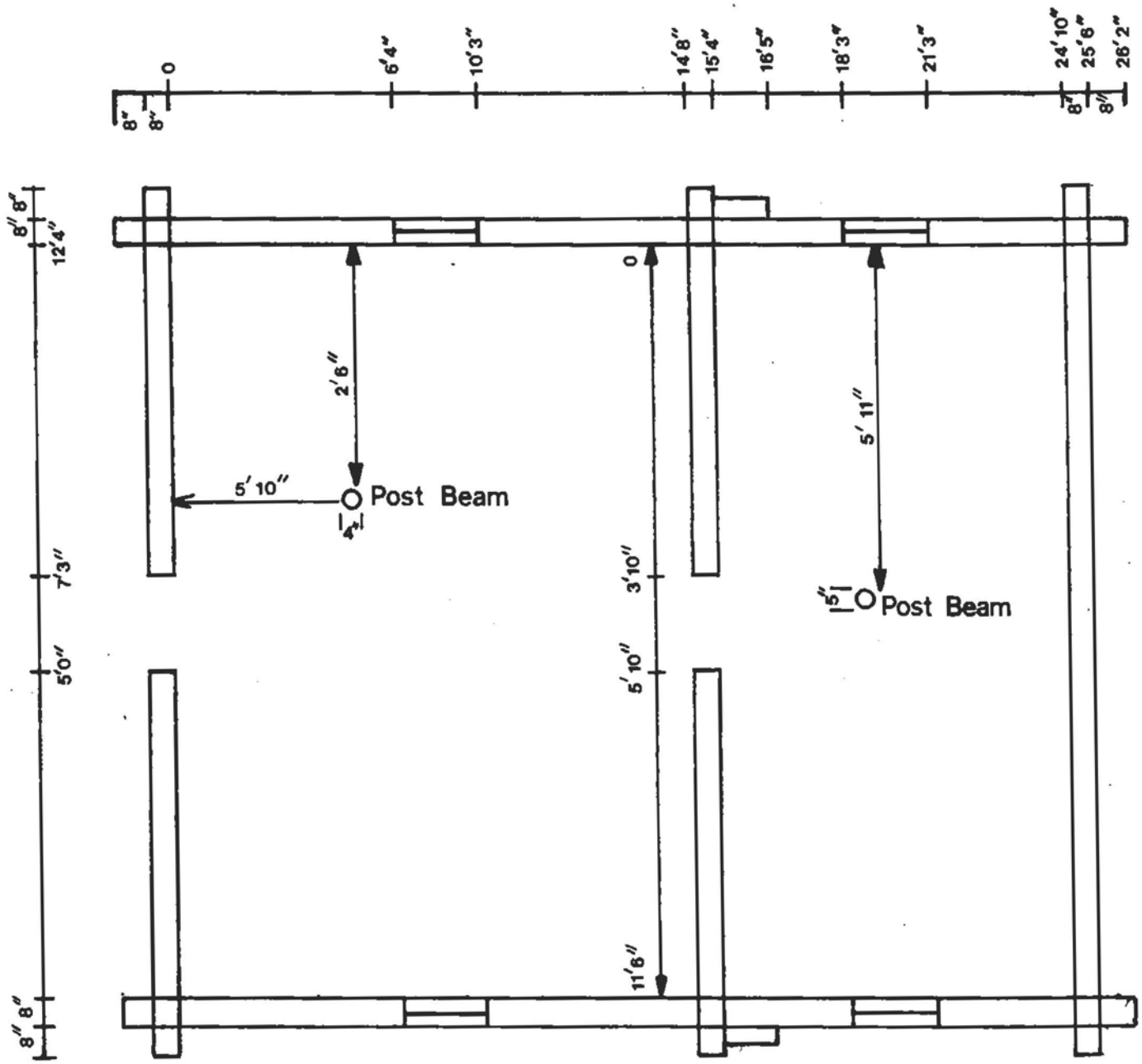
References: Harold Thompson, Anchorage; Moffit, 1915:76.

Recommendations: Locate and document.

General Recommendations

Potential historic features identified along this trail route should be examined in more detail on the ground and their origin and use documented more fully through historic research. (Of particular interest would be historic references to summertime navigation on the waterways, since only one surfaced in the course of our research.) Native campsites and fishing stations such as those mentioned in Wickersham's notebook will probably abound along the river.

The wanigan located near Raft Creek is of special significance since it may be the only surviving example of those pulled along the trail with the freight loads in the horse-sled days.



-Beams measured on center

-No glass on windows, covered by Polyethelene Plastic

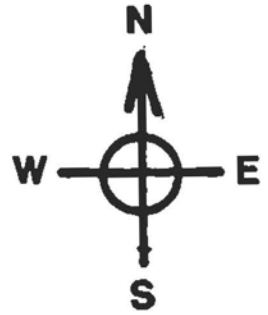


FIG.7 - FLOOR PLAN FOR DAWSON - NORWOOD CABIN

Features on the Middle Fork Trail - Meier's to Valdez Creek

DAWSON-NORWOOD CABIN (GUL-095)

Description:	Log cabin built in the 1920s, reportedly by Barney Dawson and Al Norwood (Plate 72).
Location:	Located east of the Gulkana River one-fourth mile south of the confluence of the Main Fork and Middle Fork and about 5 miles west of the Richardson Highway near milepost 170.
Present Owner:	Doc Hufman, Paxson, Alaska claims the cabin.
Landowner:	BLM; in proposed wild river corridor and utility corridor.
Present Occupant:	None.
Present Use:	Evidence of occasional use by hunting, fishing, and boating parties.
Architectural Character:	Two room log cabin built for year-round habitation for fishing, hunting, and trapping; built in two stages (see Figure 7).
Condition of Fabric:	Exterior in good condition, window openings covered by polyethelene plastic. Interior damp, with rotting floors, walls, and ceiling rafters.
Construction:	Exterior dimensions 26 by 14 feet, horizontal log courses, with cradle notched corner joints. Gable roof on west room on six beams, spruce timber rafters, polyethelene plastic, and sod; shed roof on east room addition.
Site Considerations:	South of the cabin by 20 feet is an overgrown mound measuring approximately 10 by 25 feet on which is discernibly the lay of foundation logs, perhaps once a barn. South by 30 feet is a privy. Depressions that are probably of aboriginal origin are also evident, possibly cache pit depressions. The site is near a salmon-holding area on the river.
References:	Doc Hufman, Paxson; Slim Moore, Anchorage; Frank Hobson, Tazlina; BLM notes and photos made in 1977.

Recommendations: Maintenance and preservation of cabin, archeological testing to determine aboriginal use.

BEN FRENCH'S MIDDLE FORK CABIN (20)

Description: Log cabin roportedly built by Ben French in the 1920s (Plate 41).

Location: Four miles upstream from the Middle Fork confluence with the Main Fork on the north side of the river.

Past Owner: Built by Ben French, Doc Hufman bought it in 1940s.

Pesent Owner: Abandoned.

Landowner: BLM; classified D-1; in proposed wild river corridor.

Present Use: None.

References: Doc Hufman, Paxson Lake.

Recommendation: Locate and document.

BOB SMITH CABIN (MIDDLE FORK) (21)

Description: Log cabin reportedly built by Bob Smith in the 1920s.

Location: South side of the Middle Fork of the Gulkana River on an unnamed creek entering opposite Canyon Creek.

Landowner: BLM; classified D-1; in Tangle Lakes Archeological District and proposed wild river corridor.

Present Use: Unknown.

Site Considerations: Site is near ORV trail.

References: Doc Hufman, Paxson.

Recommendations: Locate and document.

CANYON CREEK MINING CAMP SITE (22)

Description: Reported site of mining camp in the late 1920s.

Location: One-fourth to one-half mile north of the Middle Fork of the Gulkana just west of the Canyon Creek which flows south from Swede Lake.

Landowner: BLM; classified D-1; in Tangle Lakes Archeological District and proposed wild river corridor.

Present Use: Abandoned.

Site Considerations: Abandoned in 1930s. In 1949 some evidence remained.

References: Doc Hufman, Paxson; Sy Neeley, Glennallen; Slim Moore, Anchorage.

Recommendations: Locate and document.

MIDDLE-FORK CABIN (23)

Description: Ruins of log cabin.

Location: On north side of Middle Fork approximately 2 miles east of Dickey Lake.

Landowner: BLM; classified D-1; in proposed wild river corridor.

Present Use: Abandoned.

Site Considerations: Timber scarce, probably hauled to site from a distance.

References: L. Waller, BLM has photos taken in 1976.

Recommendations: Locate and document.

DICKEY LAKE CABIN SITE (24)

Description: Cabin reportedly built in the 1920s.

Location: East side of Dickey Lake. Air reconnaissance failed to discover any evidence of cabin ruins or probable site.

Landowner: BLM; classified D-1; in proposed wild river corridor and Tangle Lakes Archeological District.

Present Use: Abandoned.

Site Considerations: Timber scarce in this area.

References: Doc Hufman, Paxson; Slim Moore, Anchorage.

Recommendations: Locate and document.

AIRCRAFT WRECK AT DICKEY LAKE (25)

Description: Wreckage of large aircraft of unknown age and identity.

Location: Just south of Dickey Lake, pointing south. Aircraft may have been taking off from the frozen lake surface when it crashed.

Landowner: BLM; classified D-1; in proposed wild river corridor and Tangle Lakes Archeological District.

Present Use: Engines apparently salvaged; airframe possibly intact.

Site Considerations: Brush grown up around wreckage.

References: BLM aerial photos taken in 1977.

Recommendations: On-the-ground examination and historic background research to identify possible historical significance.

TEX'S CABIN ON CLEARWATER CREEK (26)

Description: A very small (6½ feet long) log cabin built by a trapper in the 1930s.

Location: On the old trail where it crosses Clearwater Creek.

Landowner: BLM; classified D-1.

Present Use: Abandoned in the 1950s.

Site Considerations: Possibly nothing remains.

References: Coffield, letter, 10/25/77.

Recommendations: Locate and document.

General Recommendations

The potential historic features identified along this trail route should be examined on the ground and their origin and use documented more fully through background research. Historic navigation on the waterway of the Middle Fork would be of special interest, as would information on Native use of the route. Native campsites and fishing stations will probably abound along the river system.

Much of this route lies within the Tangle Lakes archeological district and the trail and associated historic features are subject to regulations regarding National Register properties. This would include the mining areas on the Middle Fork and Eureka Creek.

Features on the Paxson to Valdez Creek Trail

TEN MILE CABIN (27)

Description:	Log cabin, probably dating from the 1950s.
Location:	Ten miles west of Paxson just south of the Denali Highway near a small lake in Hungry Hollow.
Present Owner:	BLM; State selected.
Present Use:	Alaska Department of Fish and Game for field personnel in the summer.
Architectual Character:	Single room cabin with gable roof. The logs are weathered in appearance and the cabin could be made aesthetically appealing with minimal effort. Clutter and disturbance around the cabin are incongruous with the setting.
Condition of Fabric:	Exterior is in good shape. Interior not examined.
Construction:	Horizontal courses of spruce logs on a square plan, gabeled roof with front eave extended.
Site Considerations:	Site is highly visible to travellers on the Denali Highway and should be maintained to fit the visual setting.
References:	Larry Kajdan, Glennallen Resource Area Office. (Not photographed or documented in 1977.)

General Recommendations

Although there were few potential historic sites identified on this trail route, continued survey and background research may reveal historic features overlooked. Although the cabin on the highway 10 miles west of Paxson is not historical in age, its design and setting would fit the historic theme and lend it well to use as a visitor information center or similar function.

Features on the Yost's to Valdez Creek Trail

GARRETTS' CABIN SITE (28)

Description: Cabin (presumably log) located at mouth of Garrett Creek in 1911. No ruins were noticed here in 1977.

Location: At mouth of Garrett Creek, an east tributary of the Delta River north of the Amphitheater Mountains.

Landowner: BLM; classified D-1; in proposed wild river corridor and Tangle Lakes Archeological District.

Present Occupant: None.

Present Use: Possibly used as a campsite by people on the Delta River Canoe Trail.

Site Considerations: Potential for linking by trail with Fielding Lake to the east 4 to 5 miles.

References: Moffit, 1912:65, Plate I.

Recommendations: Determine site location and preserve from disturbance; historical background research to document origin and purpose of cabin. Possible potential for archeological research.

EUREKA CREEK MINING AREA (29)

Description: Historic mining area dating from circa 1900. No features identified in 1977 except what appears to be the remains of a sled and other debris from a camp south of the creek near its lower end.

Location: West tributary of Delta River just north of the Amphitheater Mountains.

Landowner: BLM; utility corridor; in proposed wild river corridor and Tangle Lakes Archeological District.

Present Occupant: Some active mining claims.

Present Use:	Mining; possibly also recreational use from the Delta River Canoe Trail.
Site Considerations:	Not accessible by foot from the Richardson Highway.
Reference:	Moffit, 1911:114; BLM photos taken in 1977.
Recommendations:	On-the-ground survey and historical background research to evaluate historic features remaining.

RAINY CREEK MINING AREA (30)

Description:	Historic mining area dating from circa 1900.
Location:	Tributary of Delta River north of Eureka Creek and the Amphitheater Mountains.
Landowner:	BLM; utility corridor; in proposed wild river corridor.
Present Use:	Mining, possibly also recreational prospecting and hiking from the Delta River Canoe Trail.
Site Considerations:	Not accessible by foot from the Richardson Highway.
References:	Moffit, 1911:114; BLM photos taken in 1977.
Recommendations:	On-the-ground survey and historical background research to identify historic features remaining.

General Recommendations

Almost no historical features were seen on the trail route in 1977. The lack of timber and the deep snow on the route precluded winter use and construction of log shelter cabins. The route would lend itself to development as a summer hiking trail if it was more accessible from the Richardson Highway.

Features on the Cantwell to Valdez Creek Trail

CANTWELL RAILROAD CAMP AND REINDEER CABIN SITE (31)

Description:	Site of an earlier railroad construction camp which was used as winter headquarters for the Cantwell reindeer herding enterprise.
Location:	Approximately one mile south of Cantwell north of the railroad track on a low rise some 400 feet west of the track, and just 100 feet north of a swiftly moving creek.
Landowner:	BLM; Native selected; railroad right-of-way.
Identification:	Site of cabin foundation; remains are traced in the soil contours.
Site Considerations:	Only a foundation outline remains at the edge of a clearing which is strewn with rusty metal and other debris from past habitation.
References:	Jack Luick, Director of the Cantwell Reindeer Research Laboratory; BLM notes and photos made in 1977.
Recommendations:	Preserve for archeological potential. Existance of the site should be brought to the attention of the Alaska Railroad authorities.

JACK RIVER 1898 HOUSE SITE (32)

Description:	Site of a house seen in 1898 by Eldridge.
Location:	On the Jack River at the foot of the Reindeer Hills.
Landowner:	BLM; Native selected.
Present Use:	Unknown.
Site Considerations:	May be part of the Jack River Bluff site (HEA-96) identified in 1976.
References:	Eldridge, 1900: Map 3.
Recommendations:	Locate and document.

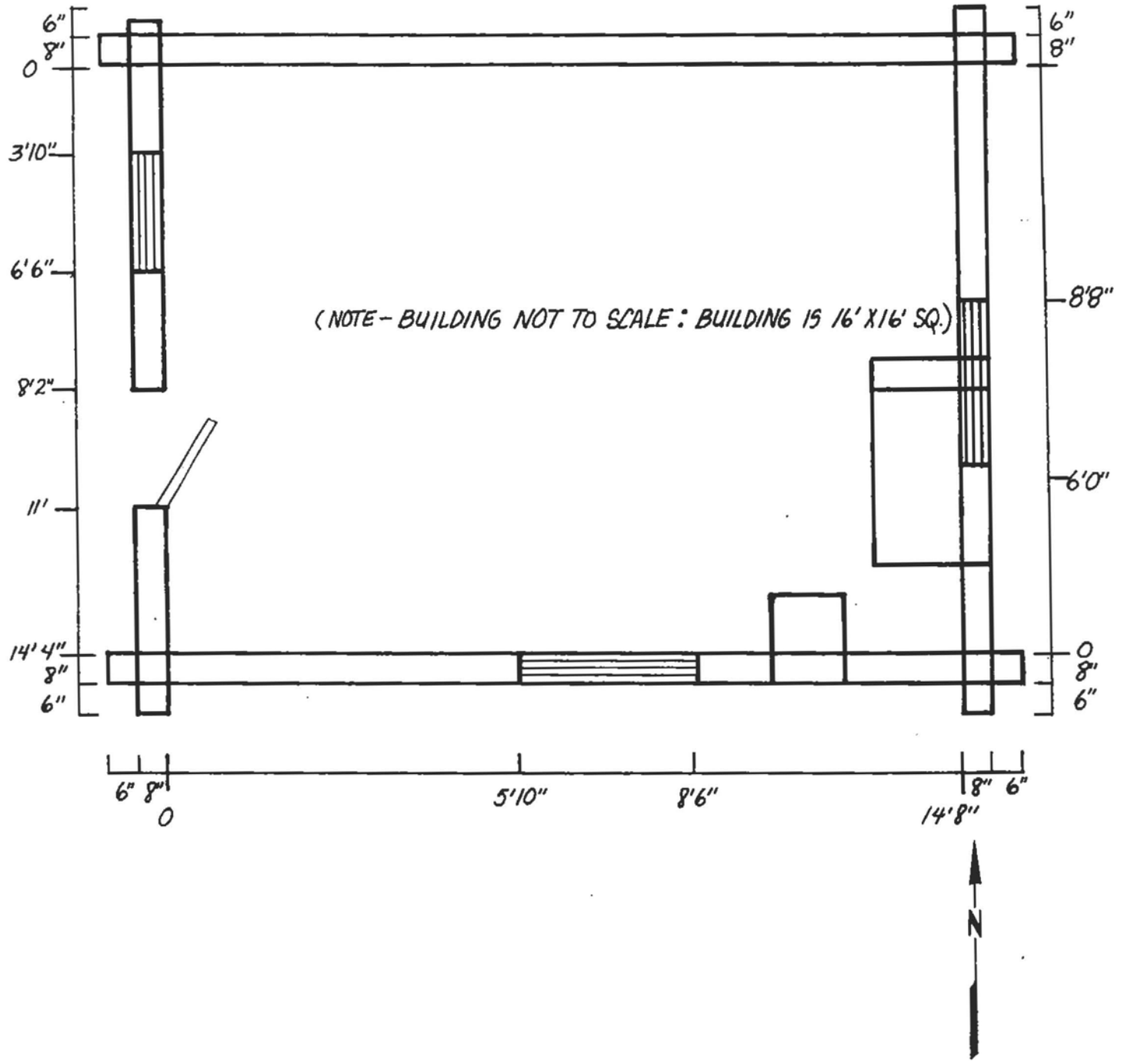


FIG.8 - FLOOR PLAN - 4 MILE CABIN

4 MILE REINDEER CABIN (HEA-112)

Description:	Log shelter cabin built in the 1920s for reindeer herders (Plate 76).
Location:	On the property of Nome Stickwan, Jack River Bluffs, off Denali Highway milepost 131 on gravel road leading south.
Present Owner:	Nome Stickwan.
Present Occupant:	None.
Architectural Character:	Single room log cabin with gable roof (Figure 8).
Condition of Fabric:	Poor; the roof is sagging, beams weak, chinking missing, sheet metal missing at southwest corner of roof; interior damp and showing signs of dry rot.
Construction:	Overall outside dimensions are 16 by 16 feet square; horizontal log courses; gable roof of five beams with narrow spruce timbers chinked with moss and earth, then covered with sheet metal. Cabin oriented east-west with entrance on west side.
Site Considerations:	New residence located in front of cabin. Cabin used for storage.
References:	Nome Stickwan, Anchorage; Henry Peters and Bud Carlson of Cantwell.
Recommendations:	Preservation through proper maintenance and continued use by the property owners.

7 MILE REINDEER CABIN (HEA-113)

Description:	Log shelter cabin built in the 1920s for reindeer herders (Plate 77).
Location:	On Fish Creek, one-half mile north of Denali Highway, between mileposts 128 and 129, approximately seven miles east of Cantwell.
Landowner:	BLM; Native village selection area.

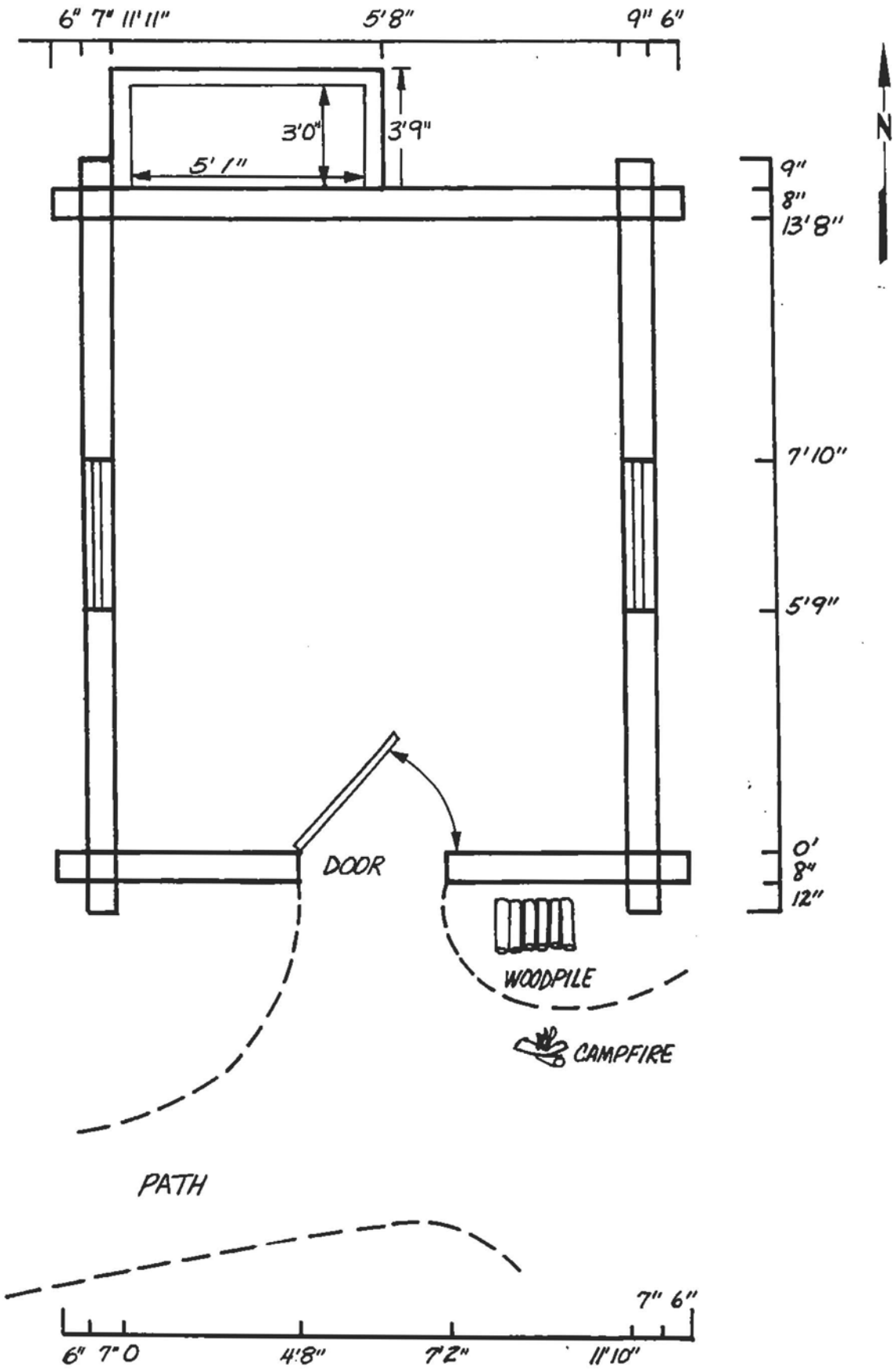


FIG.9 - FLOOR PLAN - 7 MILE CABIN

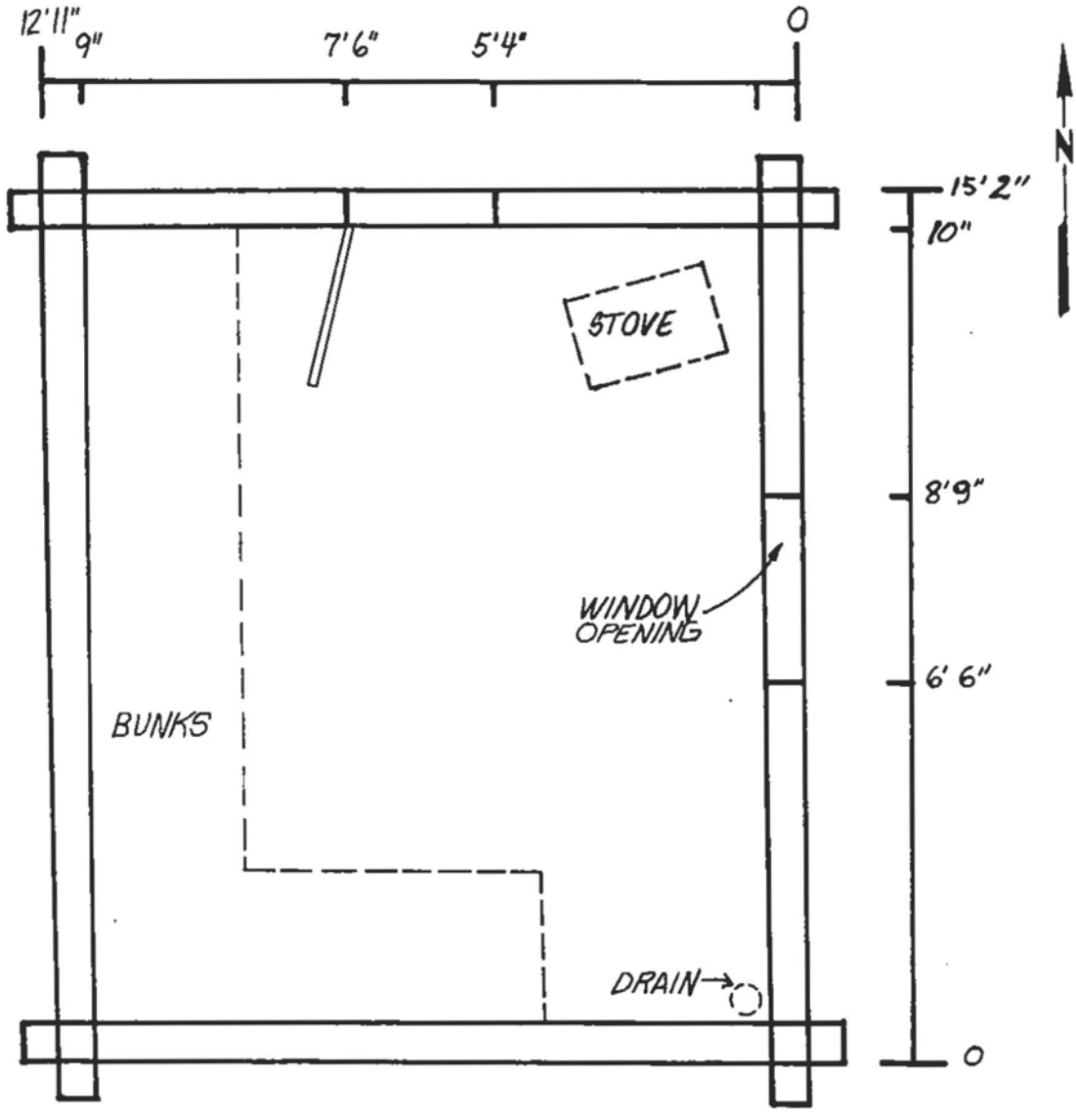


FIG.10 - FLOOR PLAN - 10 MILE REINDEER CABIN

Present Occupant:	Lawrence Winkler, with permission of Yedatene Native corporation.
Present Use:	Dwelling.
Architectural Character:	Single room solitary log cabin in otherwise undeveloped area (Figure 9).
Condition of Fabric:	Excellent condition.
Construction:	Horizontal log courses; fiberglass chinking. Gable roof on three beams, 1 by 6 inch boards, polyethylene covering; southeast corner stovepipe.
Site Considerations:	Cabin oriented north-south with entrance on south side, 120 feet north of Fish Creek. An outhouse is located 200 feet northeast of the cabin. Site is not readily accessible from the highway, but is visible from it.
References:	Henry Peters, Cantwell, Alaska.
Recommendations:	Continued upkeep by landowner; care should be taken to maintain historic integrity. Cabin should be posted with protective signs and a historical marker to explain its history.

10 MILE REINDEER CABIN (HEA-114)

Description:	Log shelter cabin built in the 1920s for reindeer herders (Plate 78).
Location:	At the foot of the Reindeer Mountains, approximately 10 miles east of Cantwell and 2 or 2½ miles south of the Denali Highway at milepost 128.
Landowner:	BLM; Native village selection area.
Present Occupant:	None.
Present Use:	Occasional use during hunting season.
Architectural Character:	Single room solitary log cabin with high pitched gable roof, notched corner joints, exterior dimensions 13 by 15 feet (Figure 10).

Condition of Fabric: Walls in good condition, no signs of dry rot, interior damp.

Construction: Horizontal courses of spruce logs, walls 5½ feet high, gable roof nearly 10 feet high at apex, three roof beams, split spruce pole roof covered with sheet metal.

Site Considerations: Located just west of a large open field with a dead tree in the center, in a small clearing surrounded by spruce trees. Not visible or readily accessible from the highway.

References: Bud Carlson, Henry Peters, and Jack Luick of Cantwell.

Recommendations: Should be preserved and maintained by landowner. Cabin should be posted with protective signs and interpretive information explaining the local significance of the cabin.

CABIN RUIN (33)

Description: Ruin of a small log structure of unknown age and use.

Location: A small stream north of the Nenana River and southwest of Pyramid Peak; opposite Edmonds Creek.

Landowner: BLM; Native village selection area.

Present Use: None observed.

Site Consideration: Possibly a trapping cabin.

References: BLM aerial photos taken in 1977.

Recommendations: On-the-ground examination and historic background research.

20 MILE SHELTER CABIN (HEA-115)

Description: Shelter cabin built by ARC in 1920s (Plate 79).

Location: North side of the Denali Highway between mileposts 117 and 118 on the Nenana River.

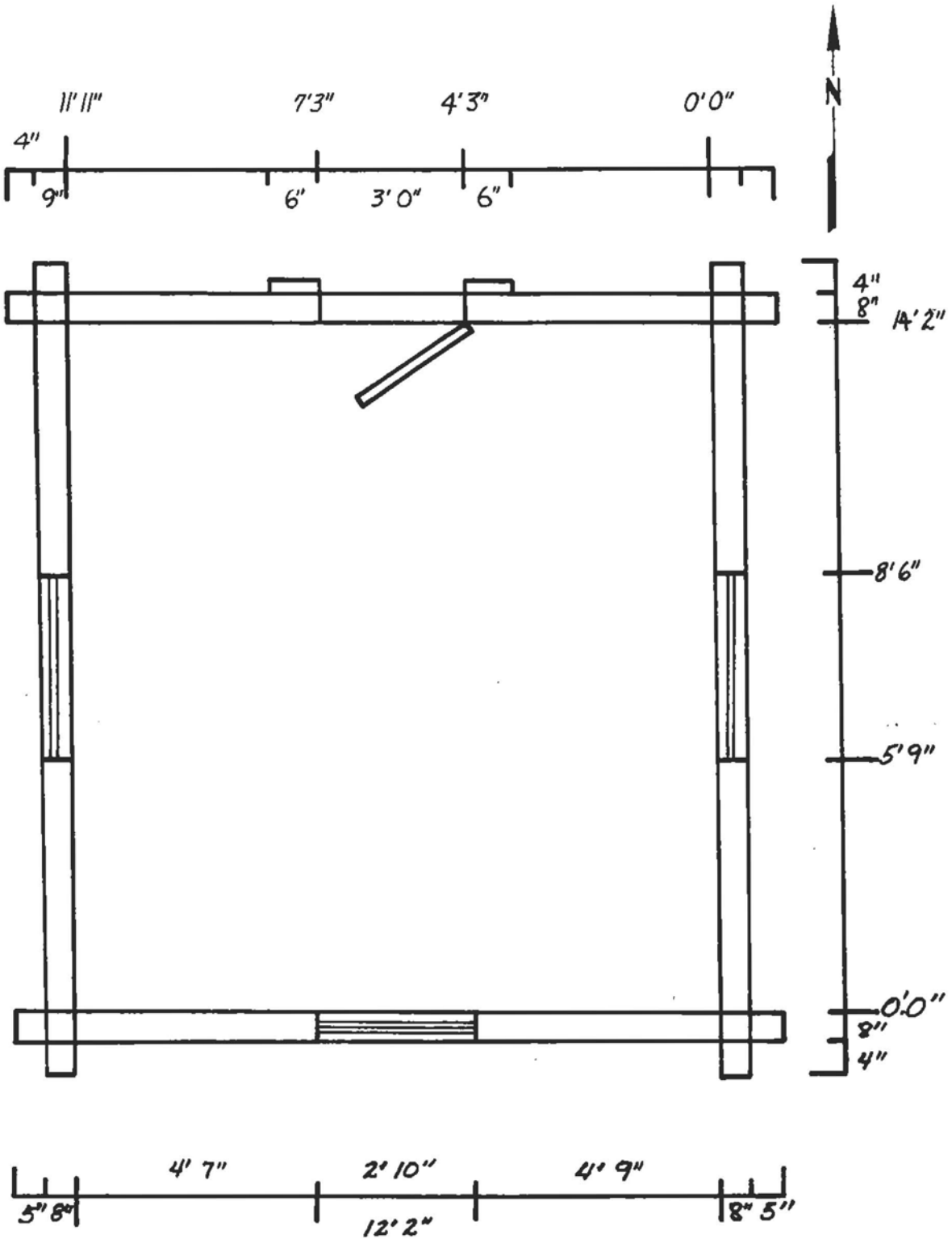


FIG. 11 - FLOOR PLAN - 20 MILE CABIN

Landowner:	BLM; classified D-1; on highway right-of-way.
Present Occupant:	No permanent resident.
Present Use:	Shelter, used on occasion by hunters or travelers.
Architectural Character:	Single room solitary log cabin with moss and earth chinking (Figure 11).
Condition of Fabric:	Southeast corner in disrepair; log courses rotted away; windows broken; floor warped.
Over-all Dimensions:	Exterior measurements 14 by 16 feet.
Construction:	Foundations - log sills; walls - horizontal courses of logs; doorway - north side; windows - three: south, east, and west sides; roof - gable shape, sheet metal covering on 1 by 6 inch boards and three roof beams.
Site Considerations:	The sled trail passes the north side of the cabin some 25 feet from the river. Fifty-eight feet west of the cabin are the remains of an old barn 25 feet square.
References:	Henry Peters and Jack Herman of Cantwell; BLM photos and notes made in 1977.
Recommendations:	In need of repairs; should be maintained by property owner and posted with protective signs and interpretive information.

OLD NICKOLAI CABIN (34)

Description:	Ruins of Nickolai cabin built circa 1920s.
Location:	Near the confluence of Monahan Creek with the Nenana River.
Landowner:	BLM; classified D-1.
Present Use:	None noted.
Site Considerations:	Not accessible on foot in summer.

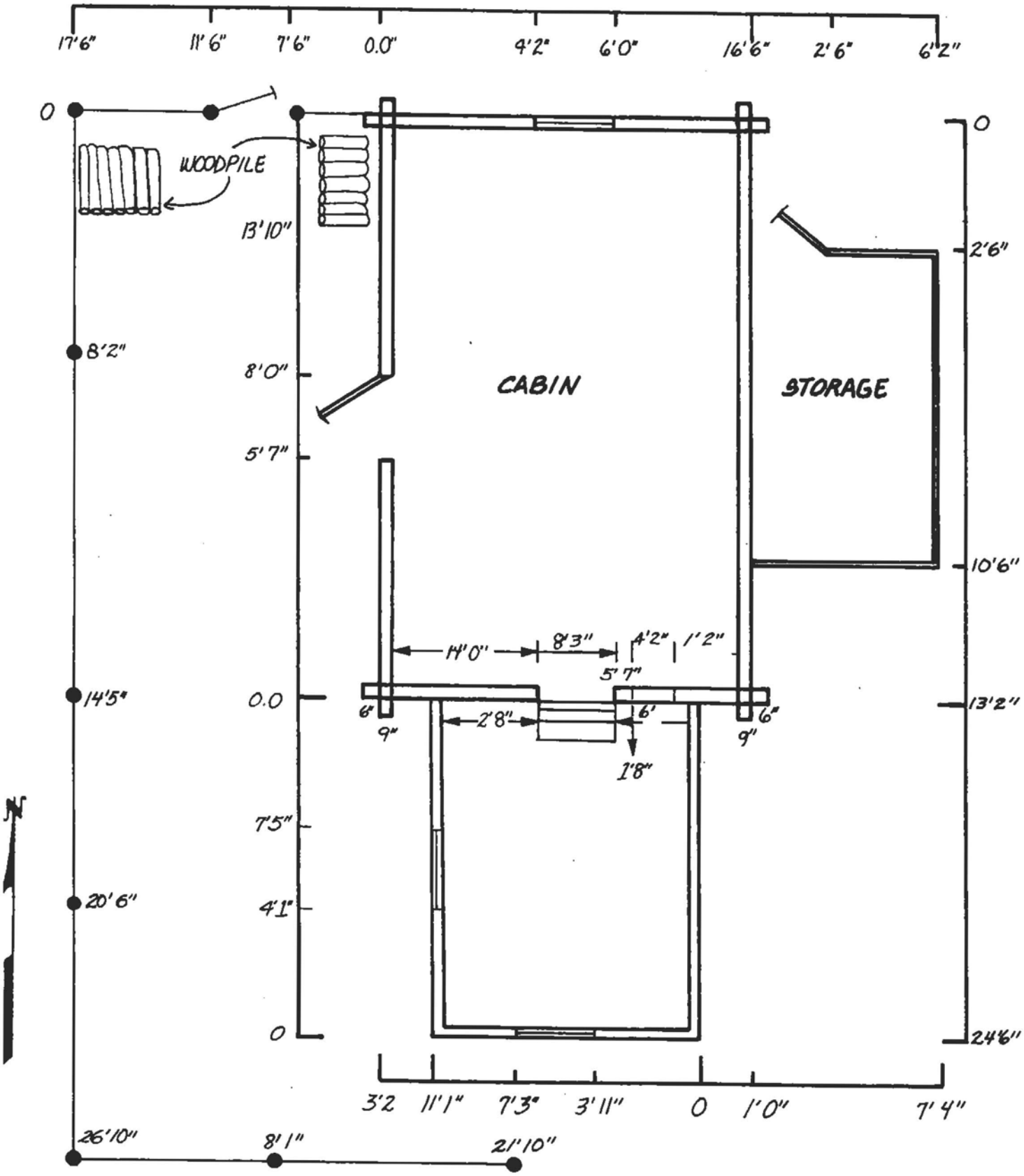


FIG. 12 - FLOOR PLAN - 30 MILE CABIN (BRUSHKANA)

References: Maggie Oliver of Anchorage; Bud Carlson of Cantwell; Henry Peters of Cantwell; Roy Tansy of Copper Center; BLM aerial photos taken in 1977.

Recommendations: On-the-ground examination, further investigation into historic significance.

BRUSHKANA "30 MILE" SHELTER CABIN (HEA-116)

Description: Shelter cabin built by ARC in the 1920s (Plate 80).

Location: One-half mile west of Bushkana Creek bridge, downstream; situated on the south bank some 20 feet from the creek.

Landowner: BLM; classified D-1.

Present Occupant: No permanent resident.

Present Use: Used frequently by people recreating, trapping, or hunting in the area.

Architectural Character: Log cabin, logs stripped of bark; south addition of heavy planks taken from the Brushkana Bridge nearby (Figure 12).

Condition of Fabric: Main cabin in good condition; logs insulated by fiberglass. South addition - ceiling caving in.

Contruction: Main cabin - 15 by 14 foot horizontal log courses, gable roof of boards and sheet metal with southwest corner stovepipe. South addition - flat roof of plywood, polyethylene plastic, moss, and earth; timber walls 11 by 11 feet intact; some planks nearly two feet wide.

Site Considerations: Foundation of barn west of the cabin. Site is accessible by foot and vehicle. Alterations of the original structure out of character; poorly built.

References: Henry Peters and Jack Herman of Cantwell; BLM notes and photos made in 1977.

Recommendations: Post with protective signs and interpretive information; control use and repair of cabin to maintain historical integrity. Provide fire extinguishers if use is continued.

BRUSHKANA CREEK BRIDGE (HEA-117)

Description: Wooden truss bridge built by ARC in the 1930s (Plate 81).

Location: Spans Brushkana Creek running north-south, some 2 miles north of milepost 105 Denali Highway.

Landowner: BLM; classified D-1.

Present Use: Derelict condition, not used except for infrequent foot traffic.

Architectural Character: Good example of a heavy timber truss bridge.

Condition of Fabric: The truss timbers are in good condition; bolts and plates rusty; bridge flooring is missing; approach ramps made of logs are rotting.

Overall Dimensions: Spans approximately 78 feet, is 14 feet wide, and 18 feet high.

Construction: Heavy timbers 12 by 8 inches in truss formation, bolted on plates at connections, reinforced by vertical iron tie rods.

Site Considerations: Bridge is located one-half mile east of the "30 Mile" relief cabin.

References: Ed Smith of Fairbanks; BLM notes and photos made in 1977.

Recommendations: Landowner should preserve bridge intact; post with protective signs; provide interpretive sign.

40 MILE SHELTER CABIN (HEA-118)

Description: Shelter cabin built by ARC in the 1920s (Plates 82 and 83).

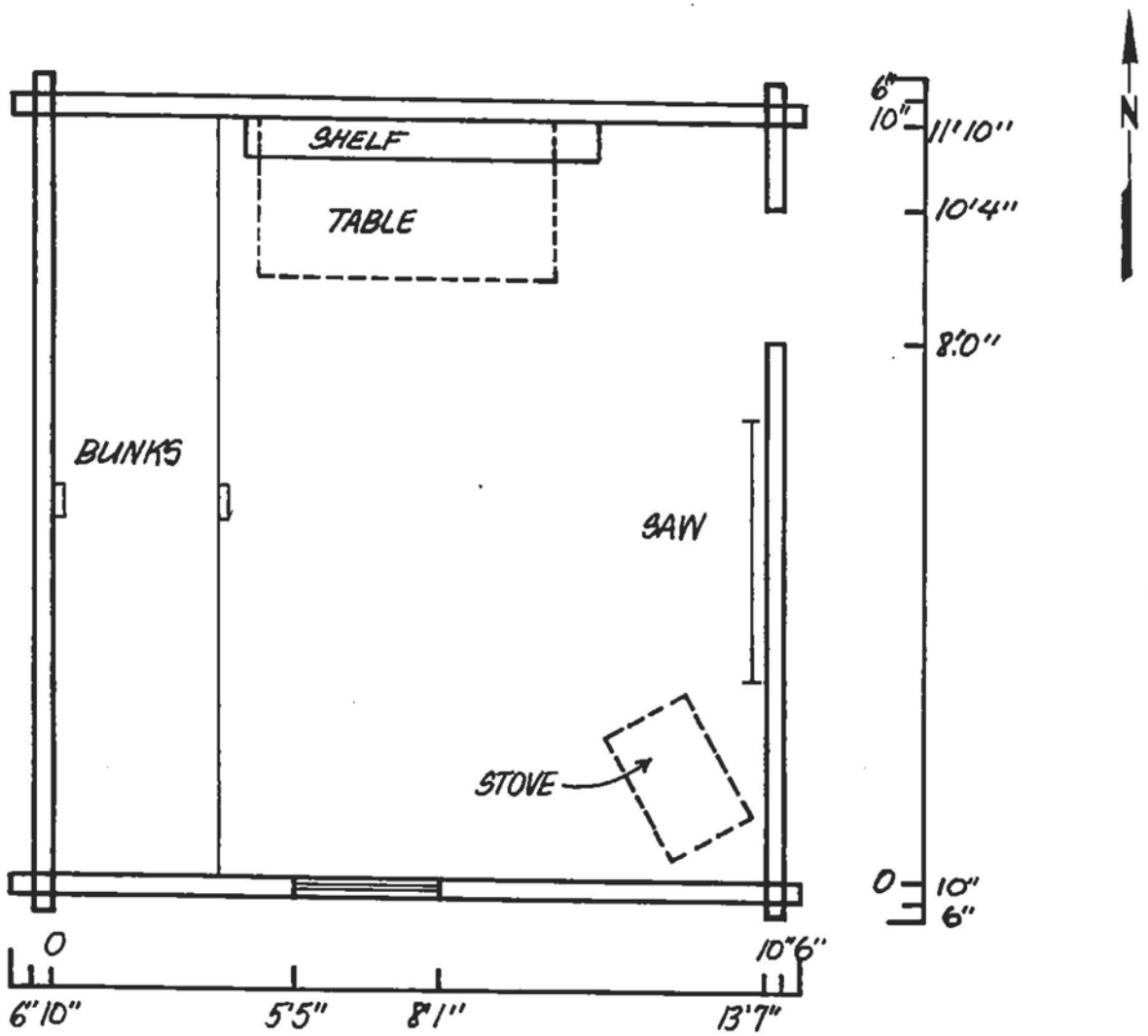


FIG. 13 - FLOOR PLAN - 40 MILE CABIN

Location:	Two miles north of Denali Highway at milepost 96 on Monahan Flats.
Landowner:	BLM; classified D-1.
Present Occupant:	Abandoned.
Present Use:	On occasion used for overnight stay by hunting parties in the winter.
Architectural Character:	Single room isolated log cabin and ruins of a barn.
Condition of Fabric:	Exterior in good condition; interior damp, signs of dry rot; floor and foundation sinking.
Construction:	Overall dimensions 16 by 14 feet; horizontal log courses; gable roof on three beams, 1 by 6 inch boards, and sheet metal; southeast corner stovepipe (Figure 13).
Site Considerations:	The cabin is oriented east-west with the entrance on the east side facing the foundation remains of a barn (18 by 22 feet) located 45 feet away. The cabin and barn remains are located in a clearing with excellent southern exposure, spruce on the east, north, and west sides, bog muskeg on the south. The sled trail runs 100 to 200 feet south of the cabin and barn complex. Site is accessible by foot, but not visible from the highway.
References:	Henry Peters, Alice Norton, Bud Carlson, and Jack Herman of Cantwell; Jim Grimes of Adventures Unlimited, milepost 100 Denali Highway; BLM notes and photos made in 1977.
Recommendations:	Post cabin with protective signs; provide interpretive information; repair to perform useful function; maintain and preserve from deterioration.

87.2 MILE CABIN (35)

Description:	Isolated log cabin, or cache (Plate 84).
Location:	Located near 87.2 mile, Denali Highway, some 200 yards north of the road in a densely vegetated ravine near a swift flowing creek.

Landowner: BLM; classified D-1.

Present Occupant: Abandoned.

Present Use: None noted.

Architectural Character: Low ceiling and roof, small dimensioned log cabin, probably an overnite shelter for hunters and trappers, or possibly a cache.

Condition: of Fabric: No signs of dry rot, but roof slightly disjointed and deflecting outward.

Construction: Horizontal courses of log timbers, cradle notch joints, walls three feet high; gable roof of spruce timbers and sod; dimensions 8 by 8½ feet.

Site Considerations: Cabin snugged into the side of a slope, entrance 2 feet high by 18 inches wide crawlin space on east side.

References: BLM notes and photographs made in 1977.

Recommendations: Leave in place; document origin and use.

83 MILE CABIN (37)

Description: Isolated log cabin (Plate 85).

Location: 500 to 600 feet north of the mouth of Lost Indian Creek where it empties into the Susitna River and approximately one-quarter mile east of milepost 83, Denali Highway.

Landowner: BLM; classified D-1; in powersite withdrawal.

Present Occupant: Abandoned; ruins.

Present Use: None noted.

Architectural Character: Single room square cabin, 9 by 9 foot exterior dimensions; probably a hunting and trapping cabin. Singular feature - glass pane window on the door.

Condition of Fabric: Ruin - logs rotting and roof caved in.

Construction: Horizontal log courses, visible walls six courses high, cradle notched corner joints; gable roof on ridge beam approximately seven feet high, spruce pole rafters, covering of sod and moss.

Site Considerations: Located in a clearing marked by stumps and tall grasses, surrounded by spruce forest, 200 feet west of the Susitna River.

References: Shirley and Vernon Wickham of Cantwell, Alaska; BLM notes and photos made in 1977.

Recommendations: Preserve in place; document origin and use.

LOST INDIAN CREEK CABIN (36)

Description: Isolated ruins of log cabin and outbuilding (Plate 86).

Location: On the Lost Indian Creek mining claim, north side of Lost Indian Creek, west up a trail approximately one mile from gravel pit on Denali Highway milepost 82.5.

Landowner: Vernon and Shirley Wickham of Cantwell, Alaska.

Present Occupant: Abandoned.

Present Use: None noted.

Architectural Character: Single room cabin, square, 12 by 12 foot exterior dimensions, 6 feet high at roof peak; ruins of another log building of unknown function 400 feet west of cabin.

Condition of Fabric: Ruins - roof beams and rafters of cabin collapsed into interior; west end of gable caved in; other structure totally in ruins.

Construction: Cabin of horizontal log courses 40 inches high; gable roof on ridge beam, spruce timber rafters covered with moss and sod.

Site Considerations:	Cabin oriented east-west with 2'3" high by 2'5" wide entrance on east side. The cabin is some 40 feet from the bank of Lost Indian Creek in a small clearing surrounded by bushes. Four hundred feet west up the creek are the foundation remains of an unfinished structure and a pile of rotting logs are located to the southwest.
References:	Shirley and Vernon Wickham, Henry Peters, Jack Herman, Cantwell, Alaska; BLM notes and photos made in 1977.
Recommendations:	Simple stabilization and repair could render the cabin usable as a shelter.

WINDY CREEK CABIN (38)

Description:	Isolated log cabin ruins (Plate 87).
Location:	On the north side of Windy Creek near the confluence of Windy Creek and the Susitna River.
Landowner:	BLM; classified D-1; in powersite withdrawal.
Present Occupant:	Abandoned and in ruins.
Present Use:	None noted.
Architectural Character:	Was a single room 12½ x 14 foot log cabin with cradle notched corner joints.
Condition of Fabric:	Exterior walls intact up to four feet, roof fallen in, interior damp, and overgrown.
Construction:	Horizontal log courses; evidence of a former gable roof on beams and spruce timber rafters covered with moss and sod.
Site Considerations:	Situated in a clearing, surrounded by stumps and brush. Accessible by foot from the Denali access road; not visible from the roadway.
References:	Henry Peters, Cantwell, Alaska; BLM notes and photos made in 1977.
Recommendations:	Leave in place, document origin and use.

General Recommendations

Several potential historic features identified along this route need to be examined in detail on the ground. Their origin and use should be documented through historic research and those on BLM land managed to preserve their historical values. Native hunting and fishing camp sites will probably abound in the area and should be identified and evaluated for their historic significance.

Highway improvement and related development along the route could endanger significant historic features directly by construction disturbance, or indirectly by the subsequent influx of the recreating public. The historical resources should be identified and fully incorporated into BLM's management of the highway corridor as rapidly as possible to prevent loss of historical values from inadvertent disturbance or neglect.

BLM should actively maintain significant historic features such as the shelter cabins on the old trail from Cantwell to Valdez Creek. Necessary repairs and restoration should be carried out so as to maintain the historical integrity of the original structures. Continued use of the cabins can help to maintain them if adequate fire protection is provided. This should include safe stove installations and adequate fire extinguishers.

Other Sites Identified in the Region

"STICK HOUSE" VILLAGE SITE (TLM-009)

Description:	Native village site with traditional houses in existence in 1903.
Location:	At the confluence of the Tyone River with the Susitna River.
Present Owner:	BLM; classified D-1; 14(h)(1) selection.
Present Use:	Several recreation cabins are located at the confluence.
Site Considerations:	Air reconnaissance in 1977 failed to reveal surface evidence of the former Ahtna village. Though no surface remnants exist, the site has high archeological potential. Reportedly one of the largest inland Athapaskan villages prior to 1500 A.D.
References:	Moffit, 1912:54; Bacon, 1975.
Recommendations:	On-the-ground survey to identify the village site. Instigate protection through physical and administrative means.

CARIBOU OVERLOOK SITE (39)

Description:	Rockwork hunting blinds, chippage waste.
Location:	At base of Clearwater Mountains above milepost 75 on the Denali Highway.
Present Owner:	BLM; classified D-1.
Present Use:	None known.
Site Considerations:	Accessible by one-half mile hike from highway. Has archeological potential.
References:	BLM notes and photographs made in 1977.
Recommendations:	Mapping and testing of the site; protection through physical and administrative means.

SUSITNA EAST FORK CABIN (40)

Description: Cabin found by Edwin "Smitty" Smith circa 1950s with a human skeleton inside.

Location: At the mouth of a creek north of and paralleling Valdez Creek, tributary to the East Fork of the Susitna.

Present Owner: BLM; classified D-1.

Present Use: Unknown.

Site Considerations: Accessible by shallow draft boat or helicopter. Probably located near area with trees available.

References: Coffield, letter, 09/27/77.

Recommendations: On-the-ground survey to locate the site; protection through physical and administrative means; historical research on its origin and use.

PETROGOF LAKE CABIN (41)

Description: Log cabin ruins.

Location: Sighted from the air east of the Susitna River near Petrogof Lake.

Landowner: BLM; classified D-1.

Present Use: Unknown.

Site Considerations: Possibly an old trail from Paxson to Valdez Creek.

References: Kevin Meyer, BLM.

Recommendations: Locate and document. Possible archeological potential.

1898 AHTNA CARIBOU HUNTING CAMP SITE (42)

Description: Site of an Ahtna caribou hunting camp photographed in 1898 by military exploration party (Plate 1).

Location: On Delta River opposite Wildhorse (Wilders) Creek.

Landowner: BLM; classified D-1; in proposed wild river corridor and Tangle Lakes Archeological District.

Present Use: Unknown.

Site Considerations: May have unique ethno-archeological potential.

References: Mendenhal, 1900:340, Plate XXI-A.

Recommendations: Locate and protect. On-the-ground evaluation of archeological potential.

"BUSY HOUSE" SITE (43)

Description: Hunting camp site unused in decades, former cabin there built by Frank Ewan.

Location: South of lake giving rise to Moose Creek, a north tributary of the West Fork of the Gulkana River.

Present Owner: BLM; classified D-1.

Present Use: None observed in 1977 aerial reconnaissance.

Site Considerations: Little was visible from the air in 1977.

References: Harding Ewan, Gulkana, Alaska.

Recommendations: On-the-ground examination to document. In 1977 little except debris was visible from the air.

TYONE CREEK VILLAGE SITE (44)

Description: Native village site of historic/protohistoric period.

Location: At confluence of Tyone Creek with the Tyone River.

Present Owner: BLM; classified D-1.

Present Use: None seen in 1977 aerial reconnaissance.

Site Considerations: Probably archeological in nature, without extant surface remains.

References: de Laguna, n.d.; Bacon, 1975.

Recommendations: On-the-ground examination to identify the village site. Protect through physical and administrative means.

EWAN LAKE SITE (45)

Description: Old cabins and pit outlines in the ground.

Location: Between Middle and Ewan Lakes.

Present Owner: BLM; Native village selection area.

Present Use: Unknown.

Site Considerations: Site may have precontact components too.

References: Sterling Eide, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Glennallen, Alaska.

Recommendations: On-the-ground examination and historical research to document the site; protection through physical and administrative means.

CLARENCE LAKE SITE (not on map)

Description: Old cabin and square pit outlines in the ground. Local old-timers report the Tyone Ahtna used to go there to kill caribou crossing the lake.

Location: On south side of lake outlet on the lakeshore.

Present Owner: BLM; State selected.

Present Use: Unknown.

Site Considerations: Site may have precontact components.

References: Sterling Eide, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Glennallen, Alaska.; Oscar Ewan, Gulkana.

Recommendations: On-the-ground examination and historical research to document the site; protection through physical and administrative means.

PORTAGE CREEK 1897 INSCRIPTION SITE (not on map)

Description: Rock face upon which are inscribed the names of four people who travelled the Upper Susitna in 1897 (Plate 93).

Location: At the mouth of Portage Creek, a north tributary of the Susitna River in the Talkeetna Mountains.

Present Owner: BLM; State selected.

Present Use: Unknown.

Site Considerations: May be affected by damsite planned on Upper Susitna at Devil's Canyon. Accessible by helicopter.

References: Doug Reger, Alaska State Archeologist.

Recommendations: On-the-ground survey to locate the site; protection through physical and administrative means.

INDIAN RIVER TRADING POST SITE (not on map)

Description: Site of trading post built circa 1906-07 by Northern Commercial Company. An early day character named "Tough Nuts Mike" is reportedly buried at the trading post site.

Location: At the mouth of the Indian River above where the Alaska Railroad crosses north over the Susitna River.

Present Owner: State of Alaska

Present Use: Unknown

Site Considerations:	Trading post only operated a few years and closed around 1909. Site not accessible on foot from the Parks Highway.
References:	Talkeetna Recording District Records for 1906 contain notice of filing on site; Cordova Daily Alaskan, 17/09/09:30.
Recommendations:	On-the-ground survey to locate the site; protection through physical and administrative means.

General Recommendations

Since our inventory concentrated on historic resources connected with the historic mining district, the entire region has not been examined in detail for historic and prehistoric cultural sites, but appears to be rich in both. The region should be systematically inventoried for cultural resources so that they can be evaluated before development (such as the Upper Susitna hydroelectric projects) impacts properties of cultural significance. The BLM should remove and preserve historic objects on public lands whenever there is a possibility that they are threatened by destruction or unauthorized removal. Structures and objects which cannot be removed should be signed with protective signs wherever possible and maintained according to their significance.

PART IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The small handful of miners that began the settlement on Valdez Creek at the turn of the century were responsible for opening up the then wilderness region of the upper Susitna drainage. No vast fortunes were made or lost in the Valdez Creek District, nor did it shape the mainstream of Alaska's history to any noticeable degree. Nonetheless, the miners and others who followed were emissaries of change, pushing forward the threshold of civilization in an inhospitable region as large as the states of Vermont and New Hampshire combined. Their confrontations with a seemingly harsh and unforgiving environment in the isolated region resulted in a remarkably high degree of community self-sufficiency and individual self-reliance. Though many men came and went without leaving evidence of their visit, many stayed and persevered and left their impression upon the land, while the land, in turn, left its impression upon them.

The remnants of their industry and their personalities are now few and widely scattered. A ramshackle building, an old steam powered drill, a photograph of miners at their sluice box, a mining claim record written down by hand, a remembrance of an incident that cost a man his life. Nearly everything has faded from the scene along with the people who came to Valdez Creek and later went their separate ways. Though few and widely scattered as they are, the remnants that remain today are all the more important for their scarcity.

Our aim has not been to reconstruct the history of the Valdez Creek mining district, as much as to show the historic significance of what remains on the land today. Confronted with increasingly rapid and long term commitments of the land and its resources, the people of this generation must decide which aspects are important to preserve; how to meet the multiplicity of demands for use of the land and still protect the rich and unique aspects of the environment that it provides. Our heritage resources are an important aspect of that environment. Understanding the past enhances our appreciation of the present and improves our commitments of the future.

Alaska's vastness hampered economic development and settlement in the historic past, and this same factor today obstructs comprehensive statewide planning to protect resources of historic significance remaining on the land. Like the old-timers, Alaskans must still strive for a high degree of cooperative self-sufficiency and individual self-reliance to meet the challenges of the present. This is especially true in historic preservation efforts because all Alaskans share a common heritage, but each has an individual role as well.

Epilog to the Destruction of Denali

After the destruction of Denali a case history (BLM Casefile No. AK-01-4384) was prepared documenting the case and the legal aspects of the mining claims at Denali as competely as possible. Over two inches thick, the casefile also included copies of newspaper articles and other publicity that the incident received, as well as records of telephone conversations, photographs, and other documents and records. The case was presented to the U. S. Attorney's Office in Anchorage in August of 1977 to determine if an indictment would be sought against Doug and Dave Clark for their act. The U. S. Attorney felt that the law had certainly been broken and in September presented the case to the grand jury. David Harvey and Peter Dessauer both gave testimony to the jury, as did Doug and Dave Clark. After lengthy delay, during which a new jury was commissioned, BLM was informed by a memorandum May 13, 1978, that:

> "The grand jury voted (12-11) not to indict the Clark brothers for destroying the Denali ghost town. Apparently the jury was not convinced that the United States ownership of the buildings was something the Clarks should have been aware of. The vote came as a disappointment to us and the U. S. Attorney."

Following the bulldozing of Denali there was much publicity in newspapers and periodicals. Some of this publicity was obviously biased and inflamatory. However, some of the articles were truthful, unbiased, and well-written. BLM is especially grateful to Rosemary Shinohara, staff writer for The Anchorage Daily News for her unbiased coverage of the story, and also to Carleton Knight III and Ashton Nickols, editors of Preservation News which is published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, for the excellent article in that publication and for their continuing interest in the case.

I hope that this report, though delayed as it may be, will be read by all who have shown an interest in the case, regardless of their alignment on the matter. Hopefully, it will help to inform the public about the aims of historic preservation and its possible benefits, eliminating the potential for tragedies like that at Denali in the future.

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The authors are deeply indebted to numerous people who assisted in several different ways in gathering information about the history of the Valdez Creek district and the region in general. Many are named in the list of people whose personal communications are referenced in the report. Many others who supplied historic information are not listed, even though their assistance did help us in understanding the diverse history of the region. Many others who gave us help and who provided information of other than a historic nature were invaluable in our carrying out the study. Those who are unnamed will undoubtedly remember without us listing their names here, though it is to each of them that this acknowledgement is directed. Not only did they contribute greatly to our carrying through the study, they also made this project a most enjoyable and memorable one for us. We hope that all who helped (in whatever way) will also feel a certain reward in seeing some of the history put down for future generations to share, just as we have felt a certain reward in being able to bring it together. However, in no way should those named or unnamed who helped us be held responsible for any shortcomings of the study or of the report.

The Authors

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David W. Harvey is a graduate of Western Washington State College, Bellingham, where he majored in history. Dave received his BA in American History and Government from Fairleigh Dickinson University in Teaneck, New Jersey in 1970, and his MA from Western Washington State University in 1975. Dave completed a historic resource study of the Pryor Mountains for the BLM Billings, Montana District Office in 1974 and utilized research for that project for his Master's Thesis. He also worked on the excavation and restoration of a medieval Roman ruin in Tours, France in 1976.

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Grimes, Jim	Mile 100, Denali Highway
Herman, Jack	Cantwell
Hobson, Frank	Tazlina
Huffman, "Doc" L. L.	Paxson Lake
Laueson, Bud	Sourdough
Luick, Jack	Cantwell
McKinley, Jim	Copper Center
Moore, "Slim" M. W.	Anchorage
Neeley, Ben	Gulkana
Neeley, Sy	Gulkana
Nickolai, Ole	Cantwell
Nickolai, Tammany	Cantwell
Norton, Alice	Cantwell
Oliver, Maggie	Anchorage
Peters, Henry	Cantwell
Pettyjohn, F. S.	Anchorage
Saxton, Ellsworth	Tacoma, Washington
Secondchief, Joe	Mendeltna
Seconchief, Mori	Mendeltna
Smith, Clarence	Anchorage
Smith, Ed	Fairbanks
Stickwan, Nome	Anchorage
Tansy, Jake	Cantwell
Tansy, Roy	Copper Center
Thompson, Harold	Anchorage
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Wickham, Vern	Cantwell

Plate 1 – Ahtna caribou hunting camp on the Delta River in 1898. (From Mendenhall 1900: Plate XXI-A.)

Plate 2 – Peter Monahan, discoveror of gold on Valdez Creek, taken around 1909: (From Alaska Yukon Magazine, April 1909: 76.)

Plate 3– Camp on Valdez Creek, 1905. Cabin to right with two tents behind. (From Crary-Henderson Collection, Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum.)

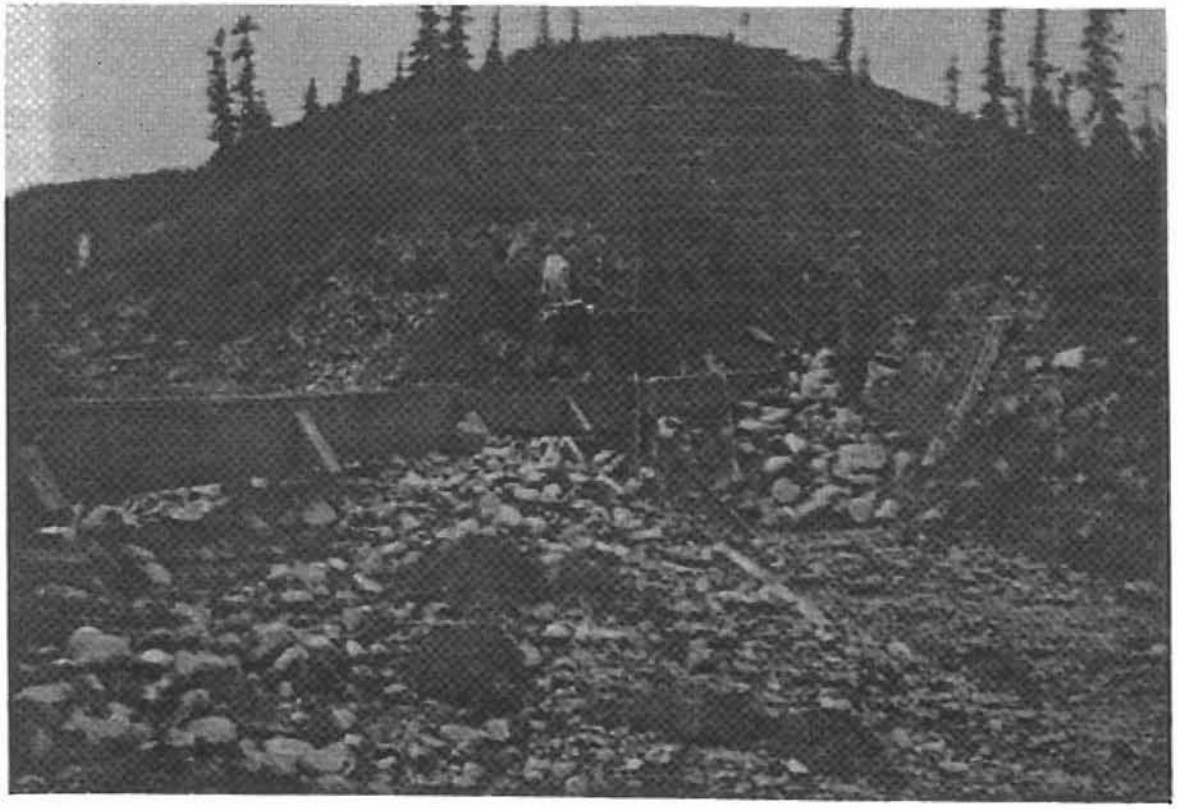


Plate 4– Placer Operation on Lower Valdez Creek, 1905. (From Crary-Henderson Collection, Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum.)

Plate 5 – Shovelling pay dirt into sluice box on Discovery Claim, 1905. (From Crary-Henderson Collection, Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum.)

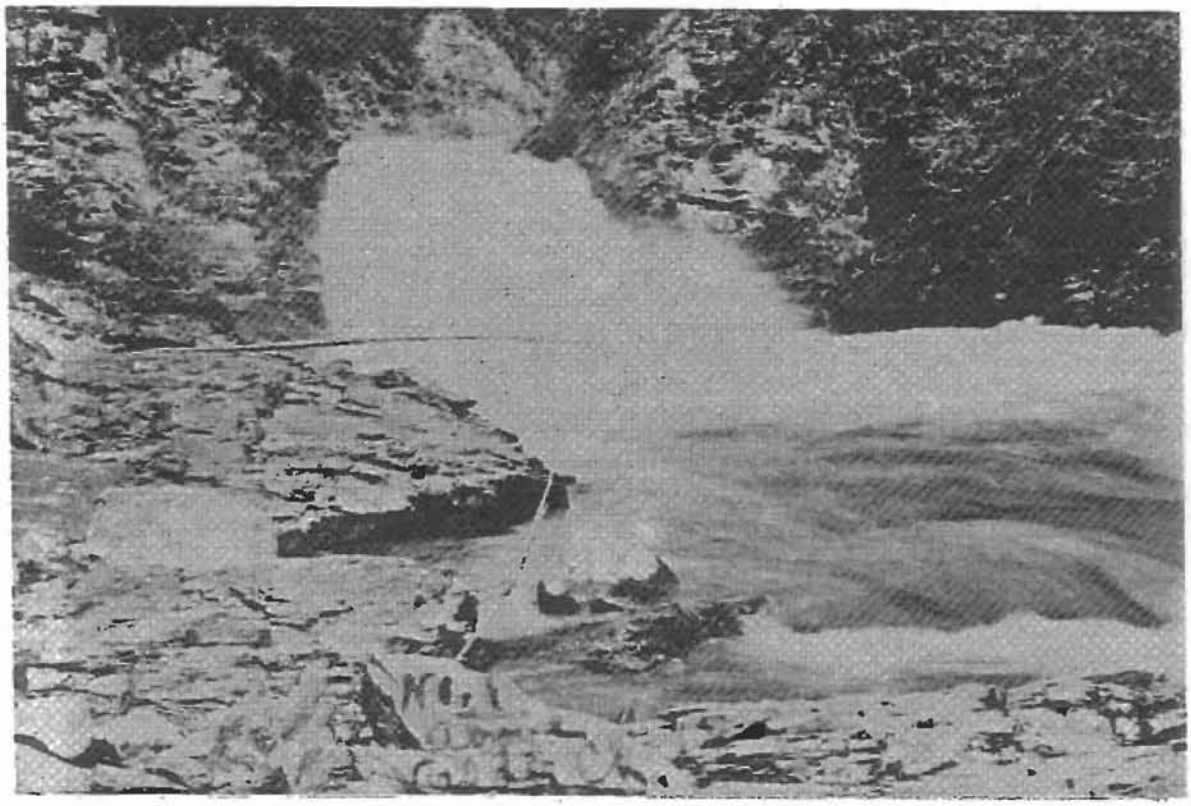


Plate 6 – Waterfall on No. 1 above Discovery, 1905. (From Crary-Henderson Collection, Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum.)

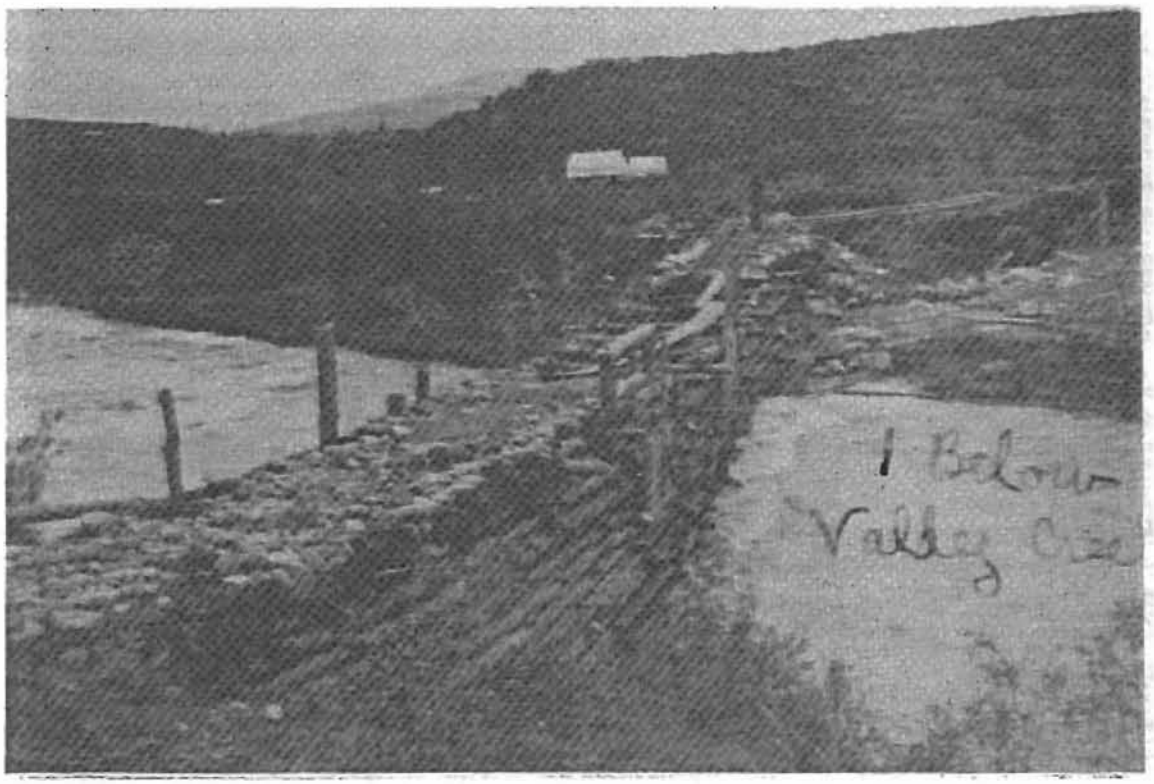


Plate 7 – Dam on No. 1 below Discovery for sawmill race, 1905. (From Crary-Henderson Collection, Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum.)

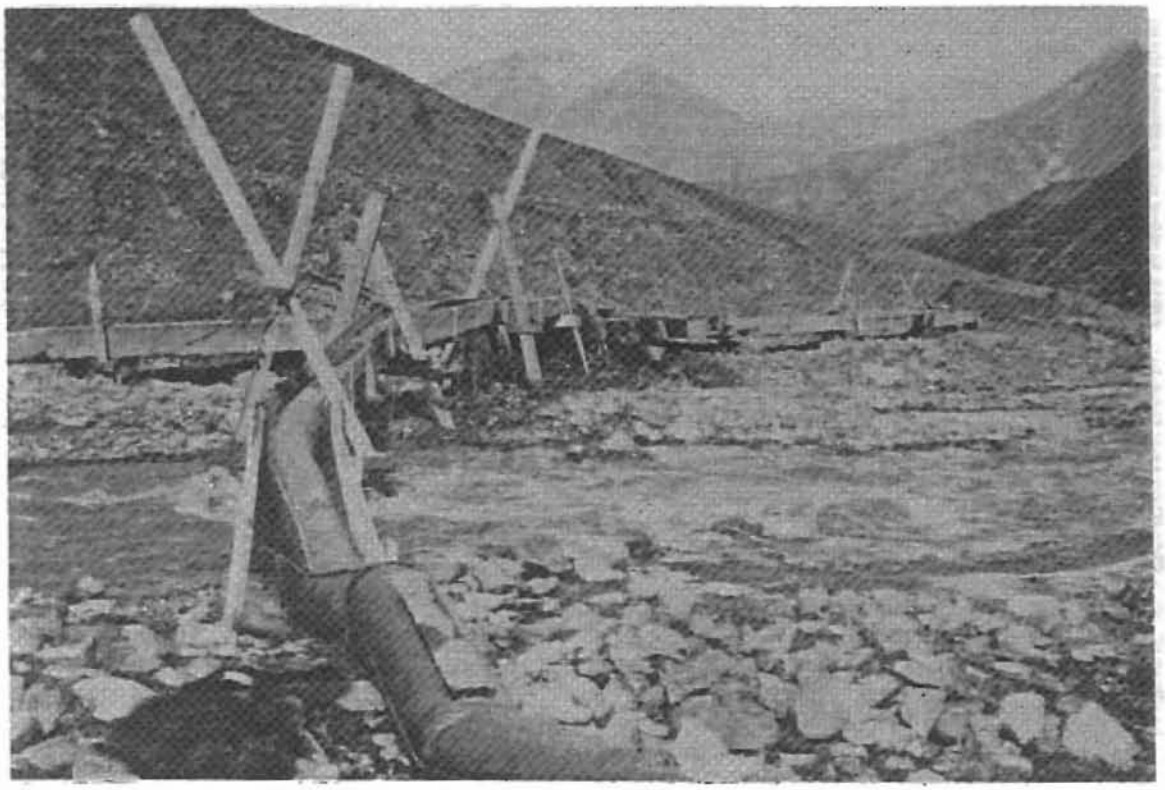


Plate 8 – Canvas pipe and flume on Timberline Creek. (From Crary-Henderson Collection, Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum.)

Plate 9 – Dam on upper tributary of Valdez Creek. Man in photo is Lou Powless. (From Crary-Henderson Collection, Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum.)

Plate 10 – Canvas pipe and sluice box at placer site below the dam. (From Crary-Henderson Collection, Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum.)

Plate 11 – Sluice box on White Creek with six men working. (From Crary-Henderson Collection, Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum.)

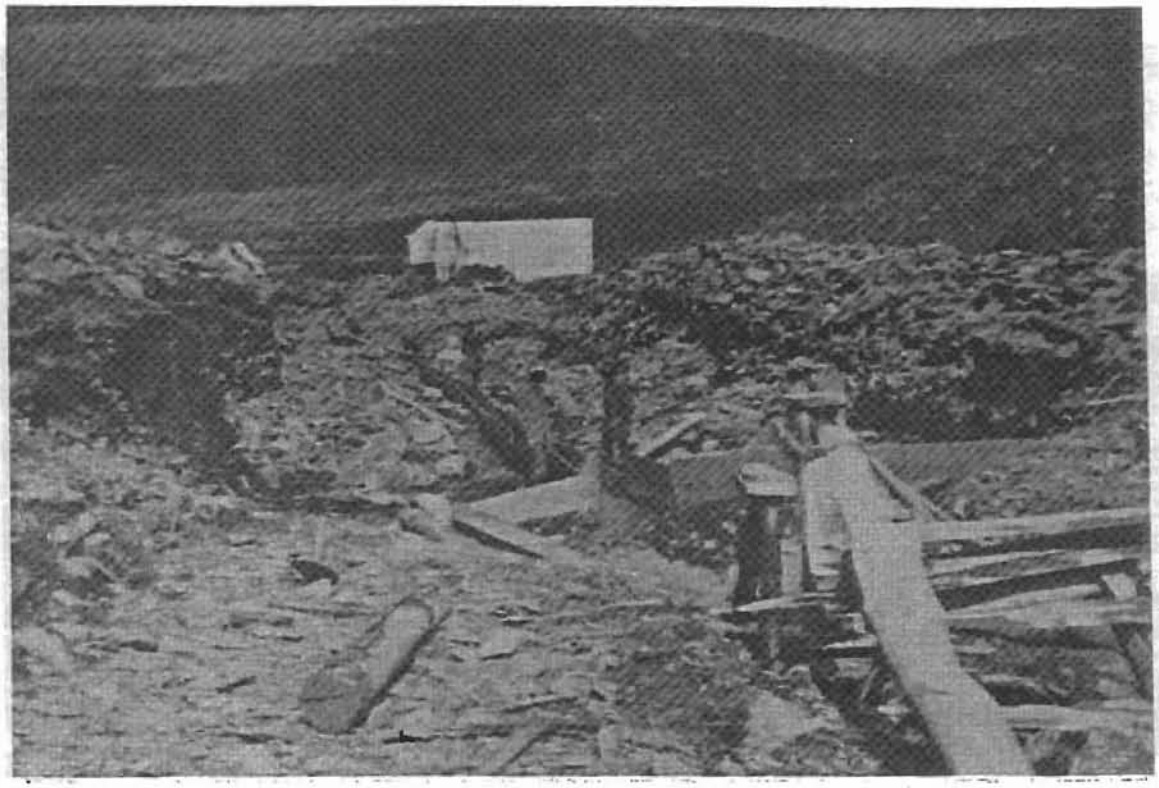


Plate 12 – Sluice box on Lucky Gulch for hydraulic operation. (From Crary-Henderson Collection, Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum.)

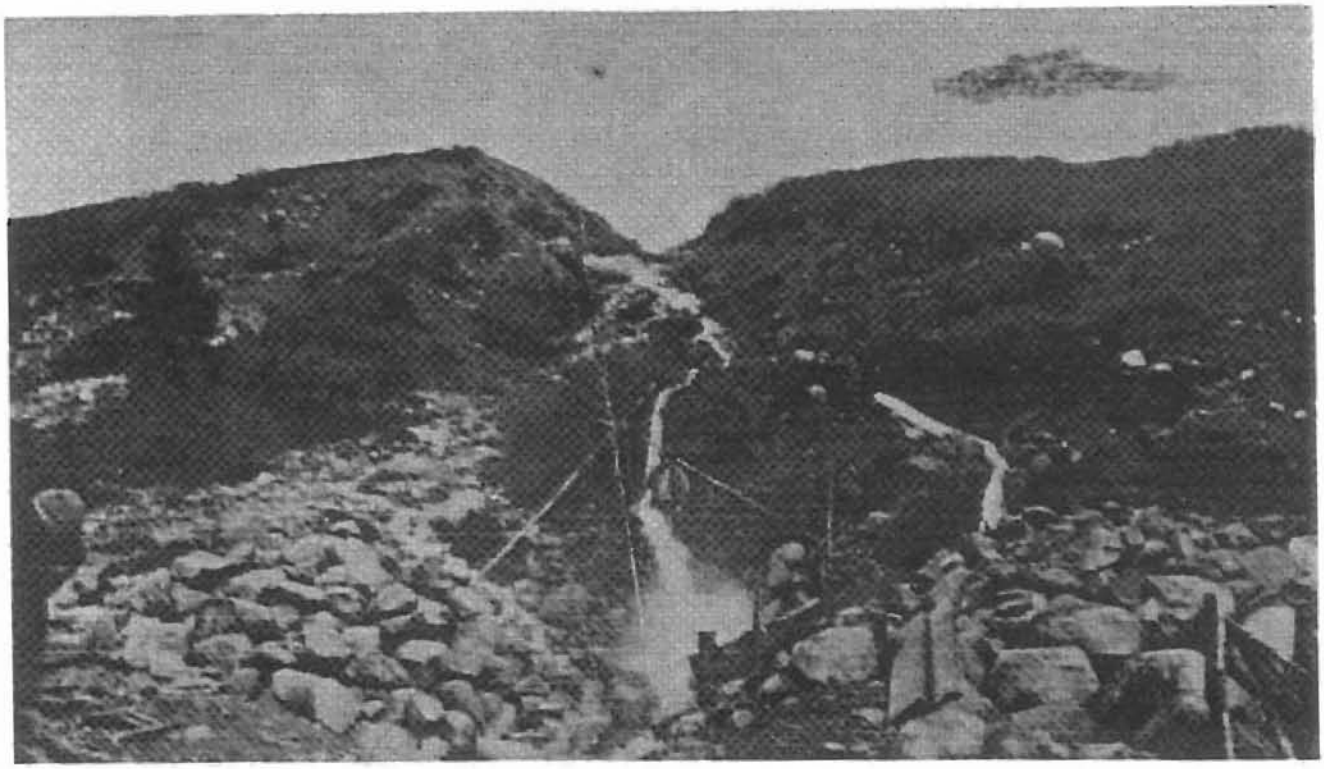


Plate 13 – Ole Nickolai's cut on Valdez Creek below Tammany channel. (From Ole Nickolai, Cantwell.)

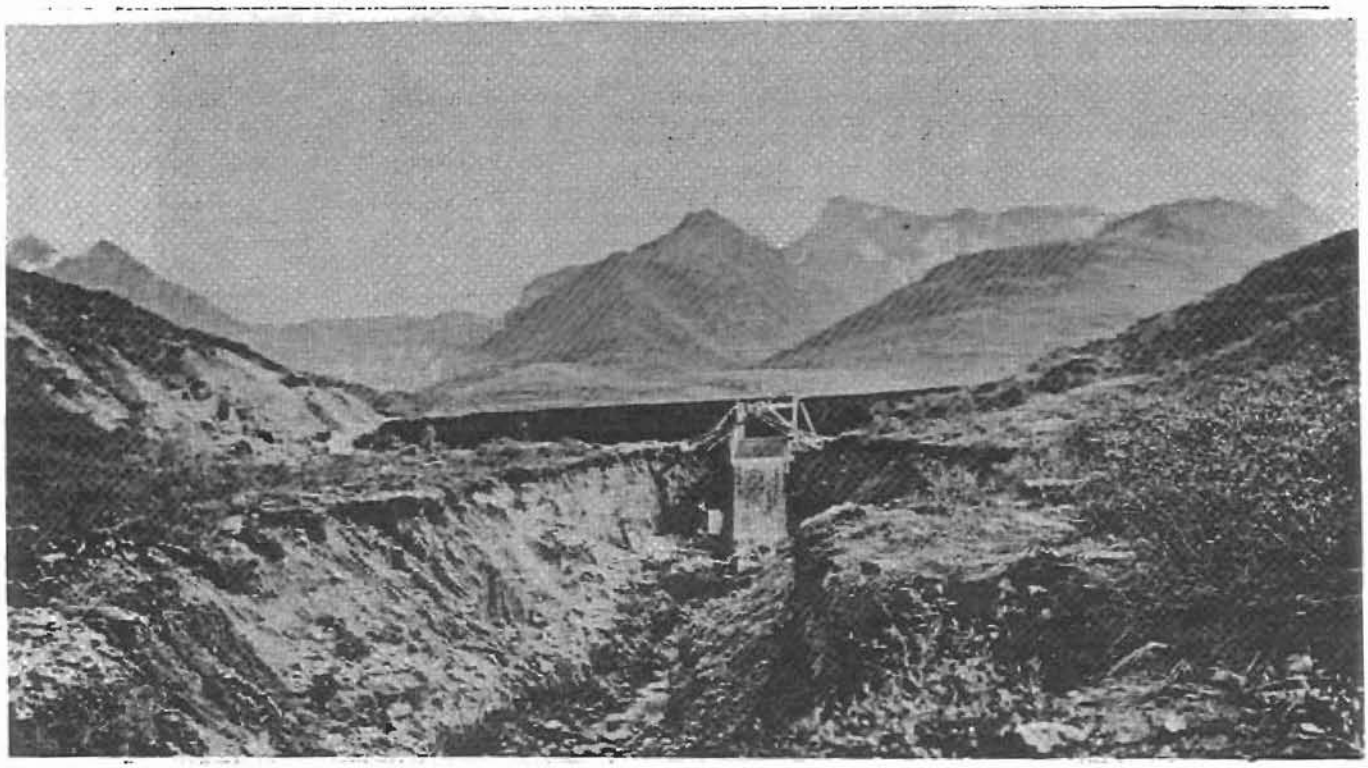


Plate 14 – Dam and boomer on Rusty Creek, 1911. (From Moffit 1912: Plate X.)

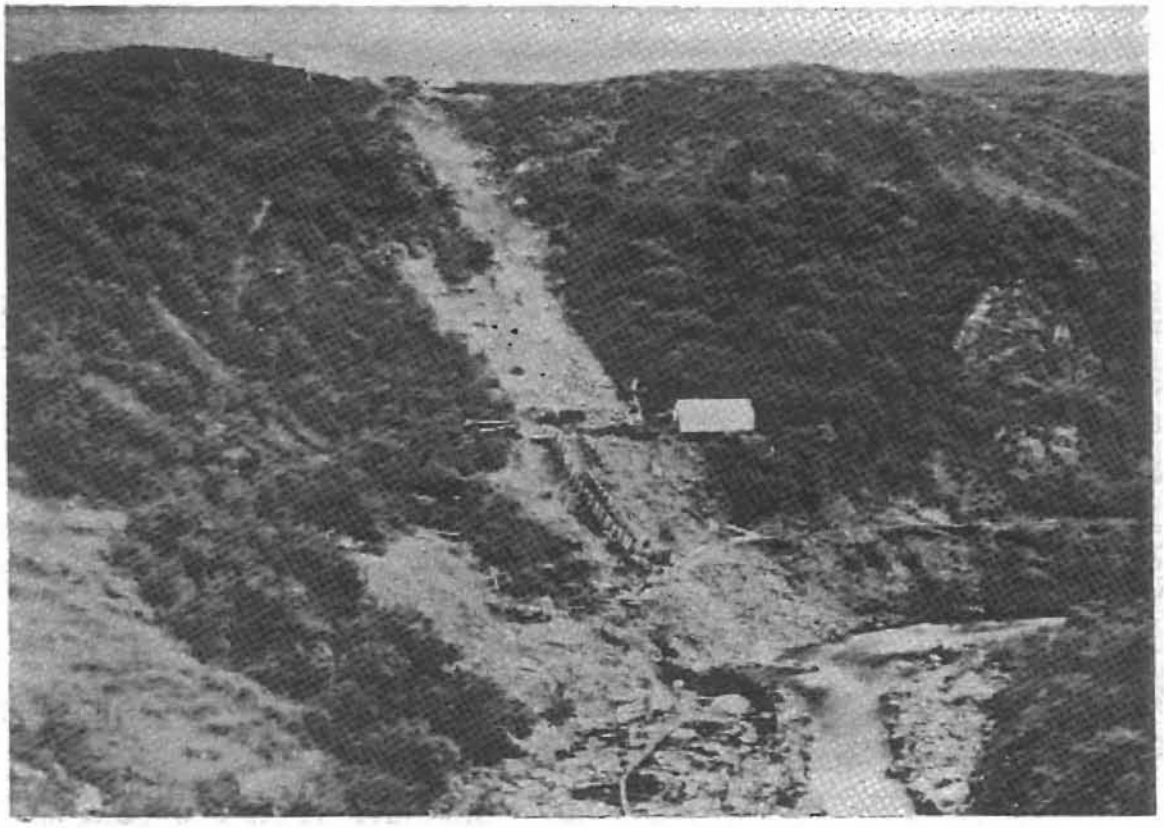


Plate 15 – Monahan Tunnel into the bottom of the Tammany channel, 1917. (From Moffit 1912: Plate IX.)

Plate 16 – Bunkhouse, superintendent's office and store at Denali, circa 1918. (From A. B. Smith, Big Delta.)

Plate 17 – Store, sawmill and tent cabins at Denali, circa 1918. (From A. B. Smith, Big Delta.)

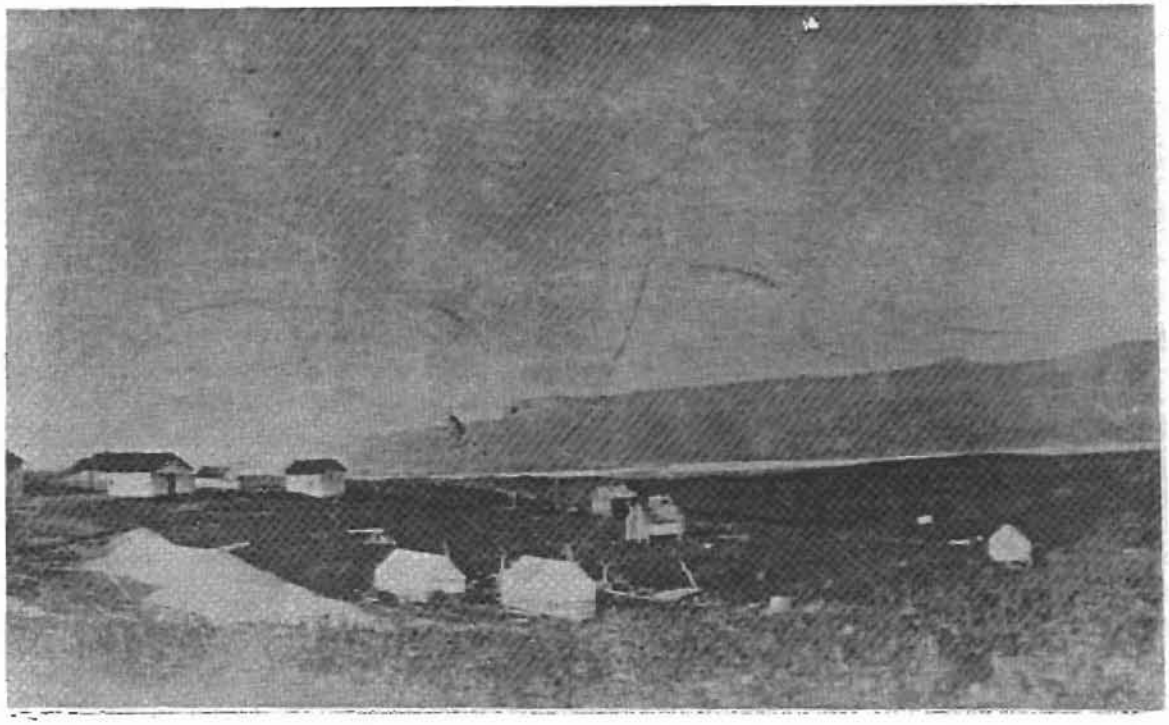


Plate 18 – Denali buildings from below the sawmill, circa 1918. (From A. B. Smith, Big Delta.)

Plate 19 – Harness shed and repair shop, superintendent's house in left background. (From A. B. Smith, Big Delta.)

Plate 20 – Denali post office, circa 1920. (From A. B. Smith, Big Delta.)

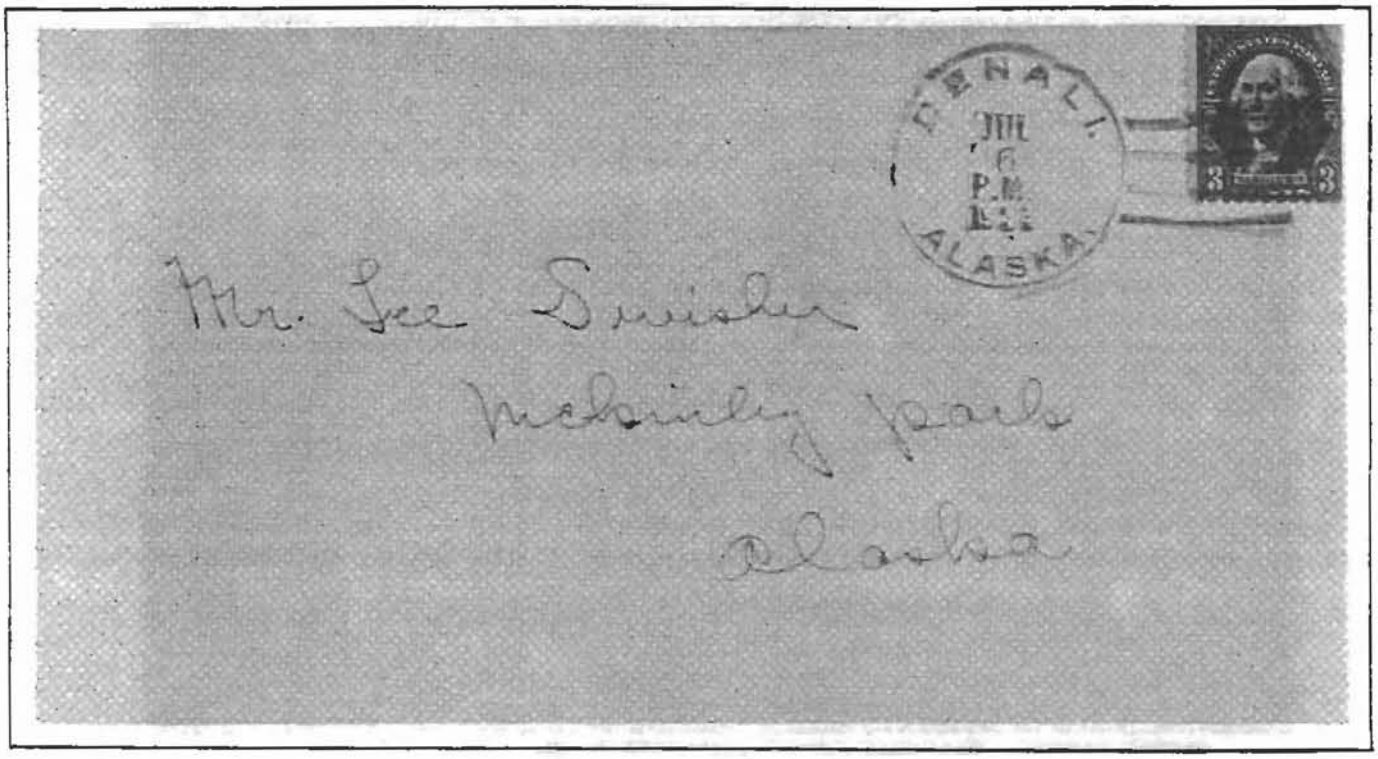


Plate 21 – Denali postmark on 1933 letter. (From Ed Powell, Cantwell.)

Plate 22 – Native cabins at Valdez Creek, circa 1920. Tammany and Dan Nickolai in foreground. (From Henry Peters, Cantwell.)

Plate 23 – Natives at Valdez Creek village, 1931. Left to right, Dan Nickolai, Tory Stickwan, Jake Tansy, Jimmy Nickolai, Pete Tyone, and Dick and Jack Secondchief in front of Pete Tyone's house. (From Maggie Oliver, Anchorage.)

Plate 24 – Native children at Valdez Creek Village. Left to right, Andrew Nickolai, Lingo Nickolai and Jeanne Tansy. (From Ole Nickolai, Cantwell.)

Plate 25 — Dan Nickolai's cabin at Valdez Creek Village, Johnson Nickolai and Jeanne Tansy. (From Ole Nickolai, Cantwell)

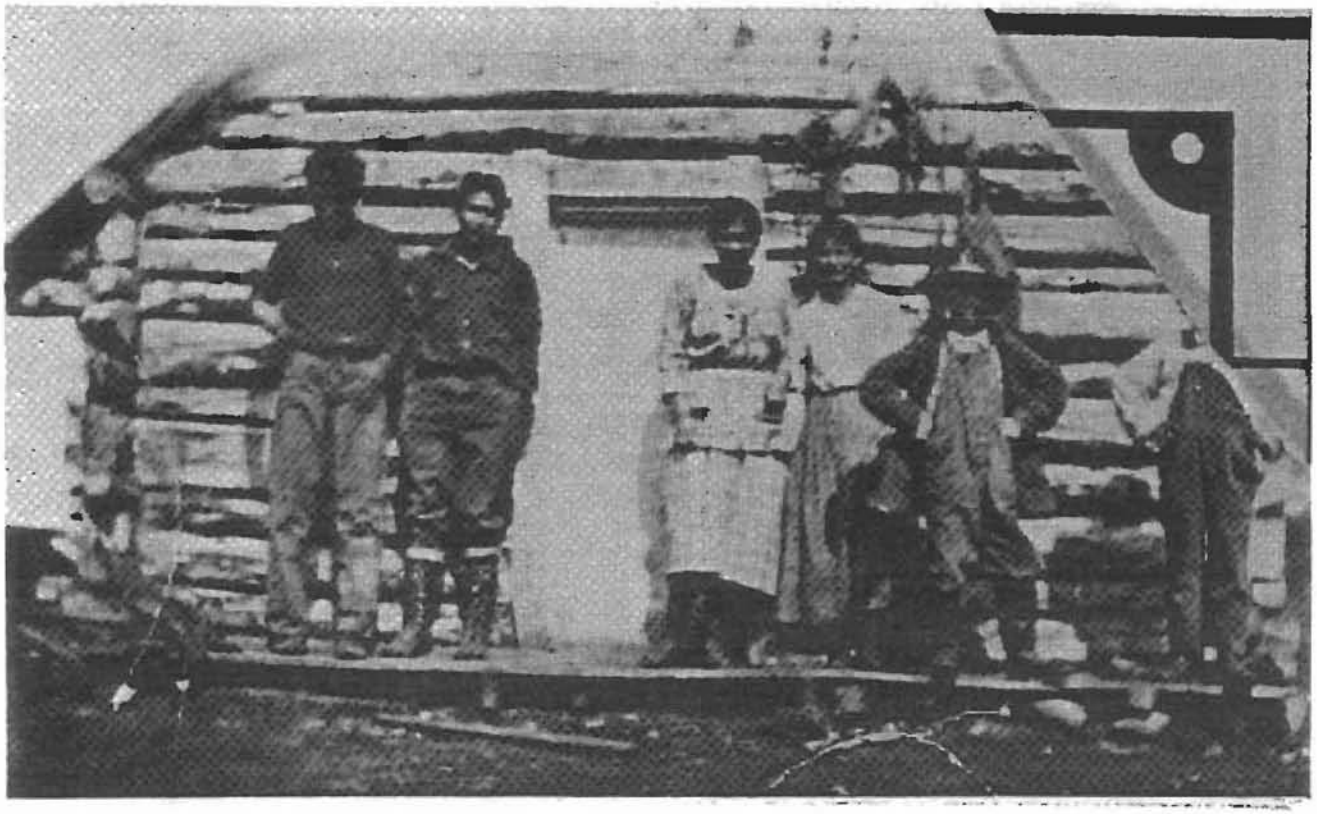


Plate 26 — Jim Secondchief's cabin at Valdez Creek Village. Left to right. Dan Secondchief, Dan Nickolai, Jesse Tyone, Tammany Nickolai, Henry Peters, Frank Thompson. (From Ole Nickolai, Cantwell.)

Plate 27 – Jake Tansy's cabin at Valdez Creek Village. Lillian Tansey (left) and Blanche Tyone. (From Ole Nickolai, Cantwell)

Plate 28 – Tammany and Dan Nickolai at Valdez Creek, 1932. Elsie, Andrew and Lingo are children. (From Ole Nickolai, Cantwell.)

Plate 29 – Jennie and Henry Peters at Valdez Creek. (From Ole Nickolai, Cantwell.)

Plate 30 – Wanigans with sled train to Valdez Creek, circa 1918. (From A.B. Smith, Big Delta.)

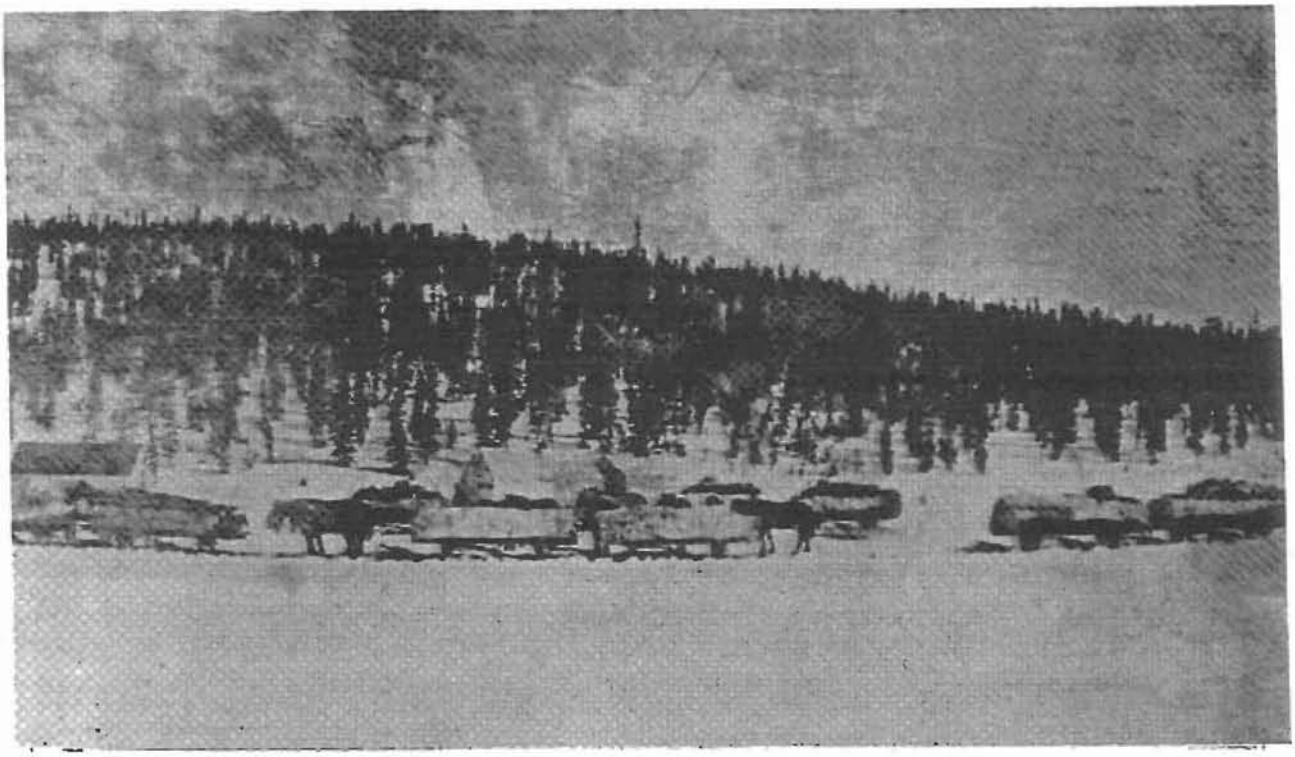


Plate 31 – Sled train to Valdez Creek, circa 1918. (From A.B. Smith, Big Delta.)

Plate 32 – Gulkana Roadhouse and Fairbanks-Valdez Stage, circa 1918. (From McKay Collection, Archives, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.)

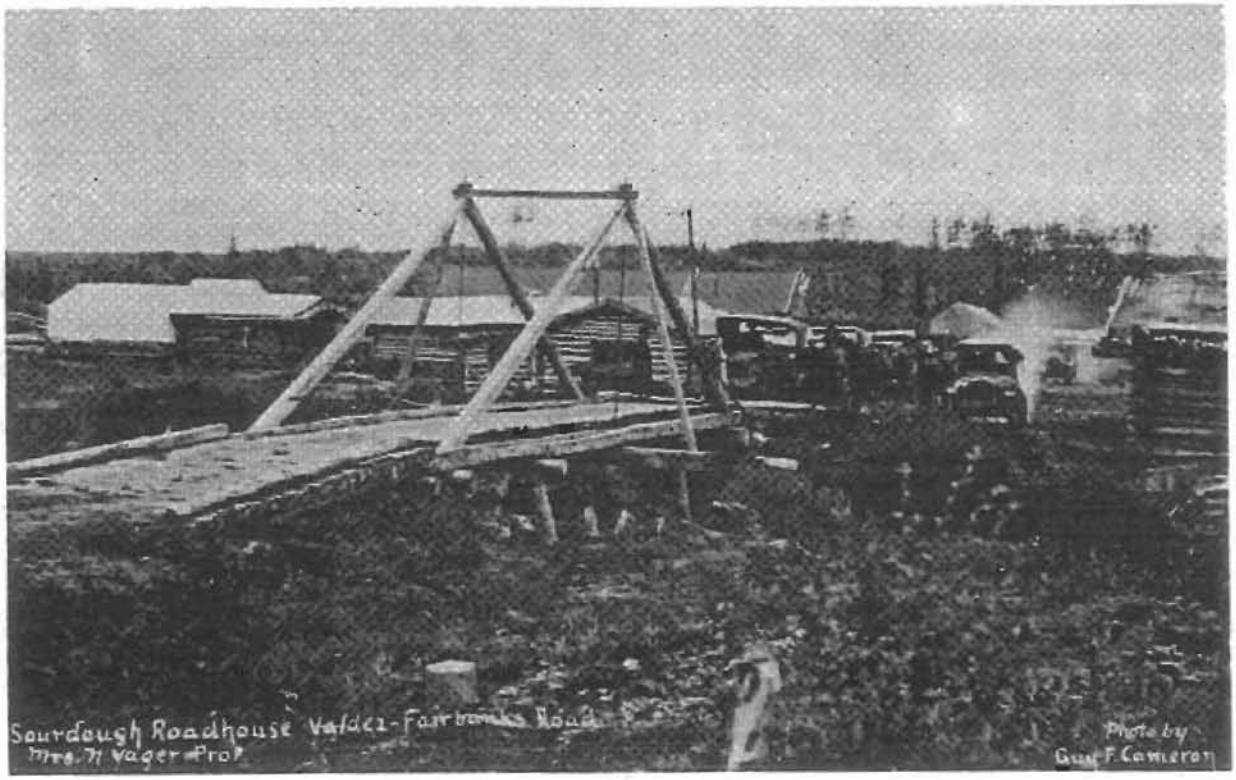


Plate 33 – Sourdough Roadhouse and automobiles, circa 1918. (From Guy F. Cameron Collection, Archives, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.)

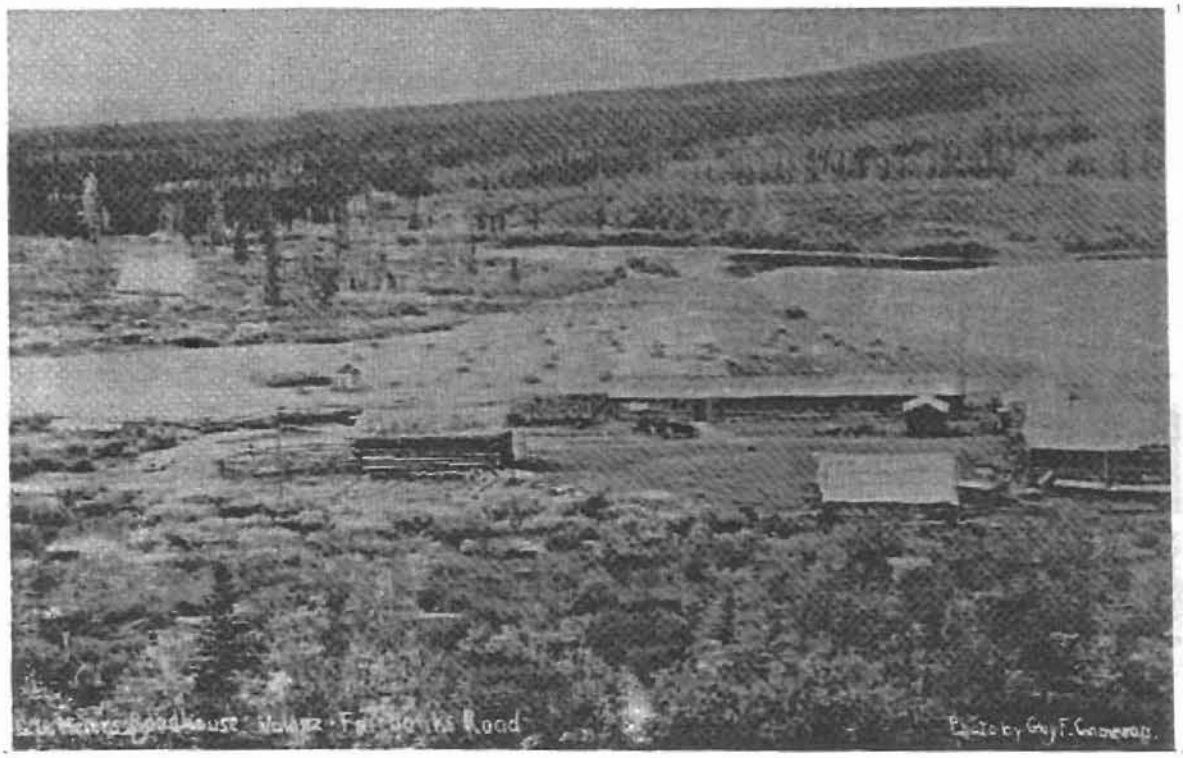


Plate 34 – Meiers' Roadhouse and outbuildings, circa 1918. (From Guy F. Cameron Collection, Archives, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.)

Plate 35 – Timberline Roadhouse and dogsleds, circa 1906. (From McKay Collection, Archives, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.)

Plate 36 – Paxson's Roadhouse as originally built in 1907. (From Jack Paxson Collection, Archives, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.)

Plate 37 – Yost's Roadhouse and dogsleds, circa 1910. (From Charles Bunnell Collection, Archives, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.)

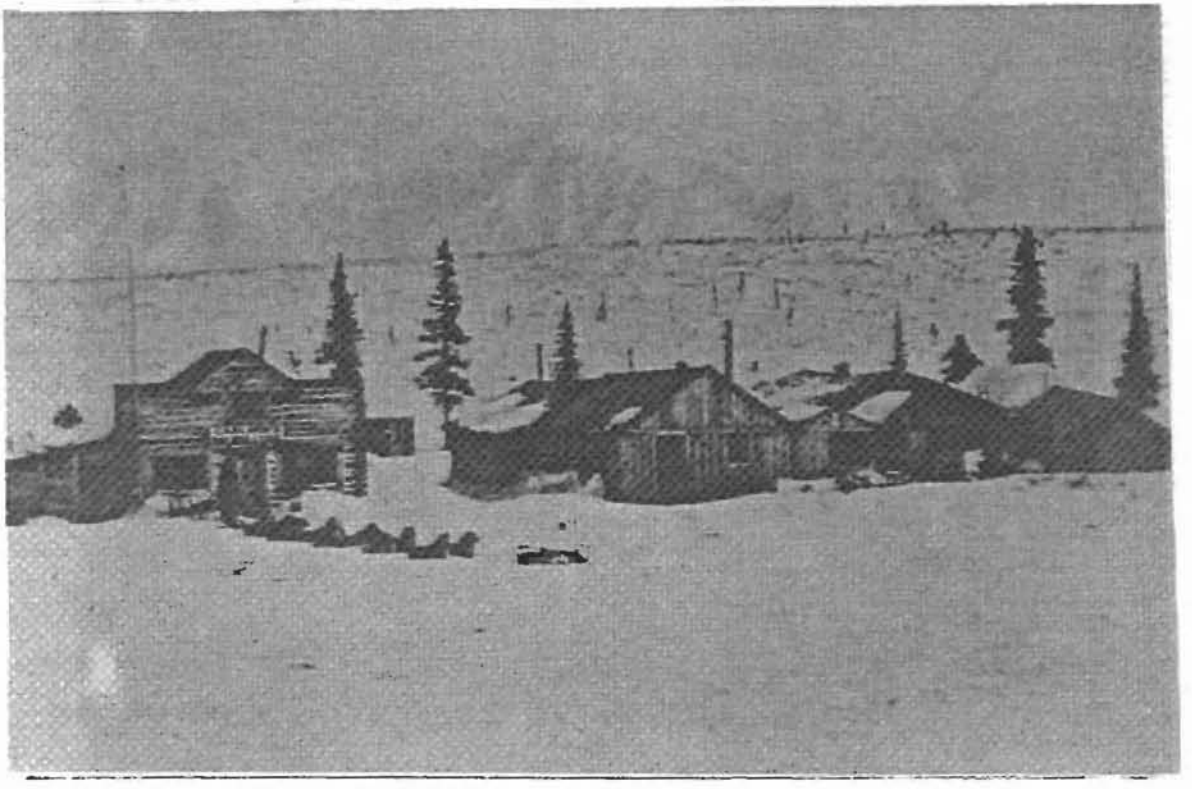


Plate 38 – Carlson's Roadhouse at Cantwell, circa 1920. (From Jack Luick, Cantwell.)

Plate 39 – Summer pack trip to Valdez Creek, circa 1920. John Carlson mounted, and John Rumohr. (From Henry Peters, Cantwell.)

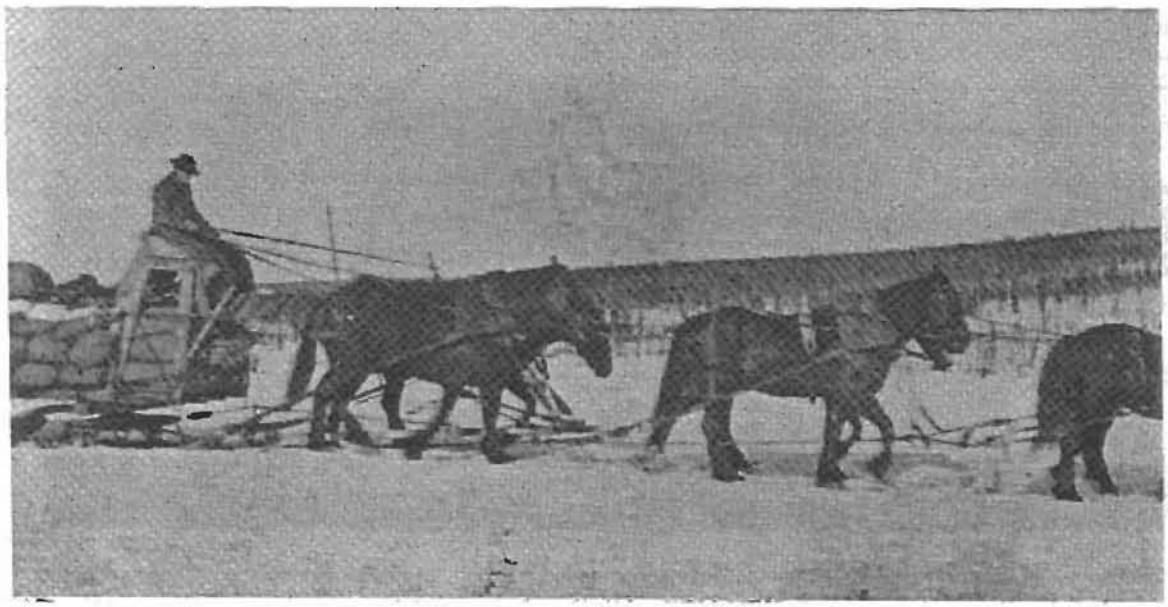


Plate 40 – Horse sled bound for Valdez Creek, circa 1920. Wallace Fairfield is teamster. (From A.B. Smith, Big Delta.)

Plate 41 – French's cabin on the Gulkana Middle Fork, circa 1945. (From L.L. Hufman, Paxson.)

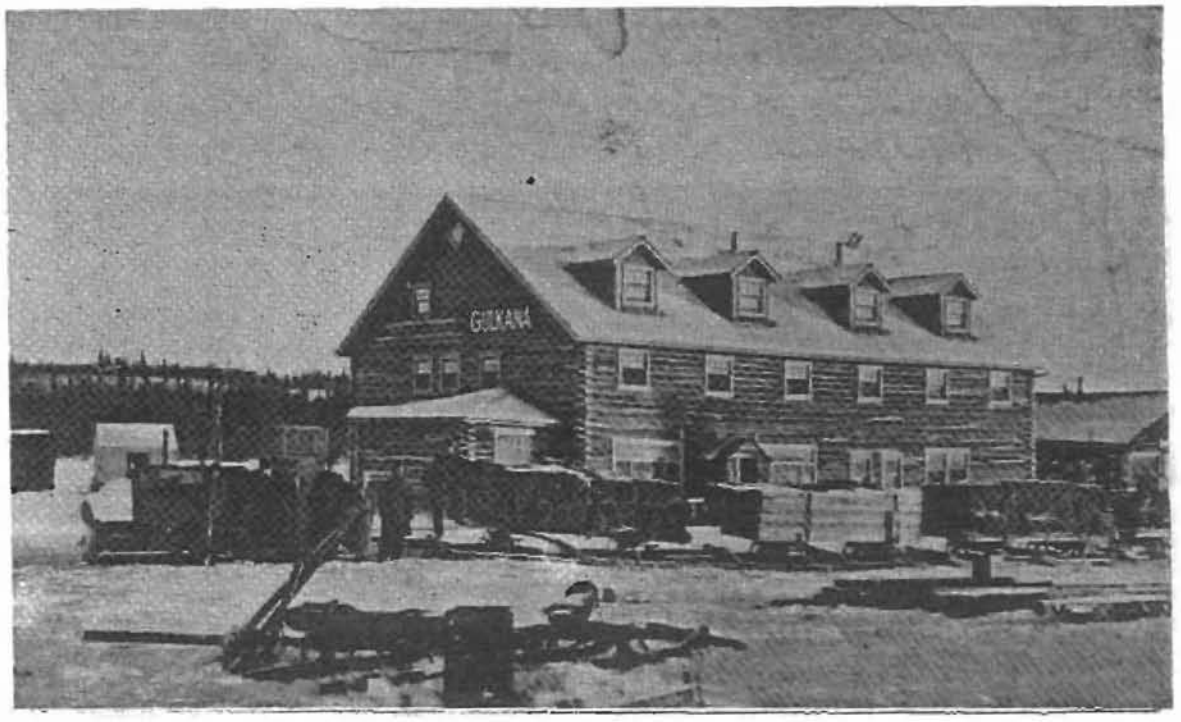


Plate 42 – Gulkana Roadhouse and tractor train, 1930. (From Sy Neely, Glennallen.)

Plate 43 – Tractor train on Cantwell trail to Valdez Creek, 1934. Ole Nickolai is driver. (From Ole Nickolai, Cantwell.)

Plate 44 – Miners on Timerline Creek, circa 1934. Lawrence Coffield is the one at the far right. (From Truman Coffield, Anchorage.)

Plate 45 — Bob Smith's cabin at south end of Paxson Lake, circa 1934. Left to right, "Doc" Hufman, L.A. Canter and Al Norwood. (From L.L. Hufman, Paxson.)

Plate 46 — John Carlson (right) and pilot Haakon Christiansen (left) at Cantwell with a Wakea, the first airplane in Cantwell, 1934. (From Maggie Oliver, Anchorage.)

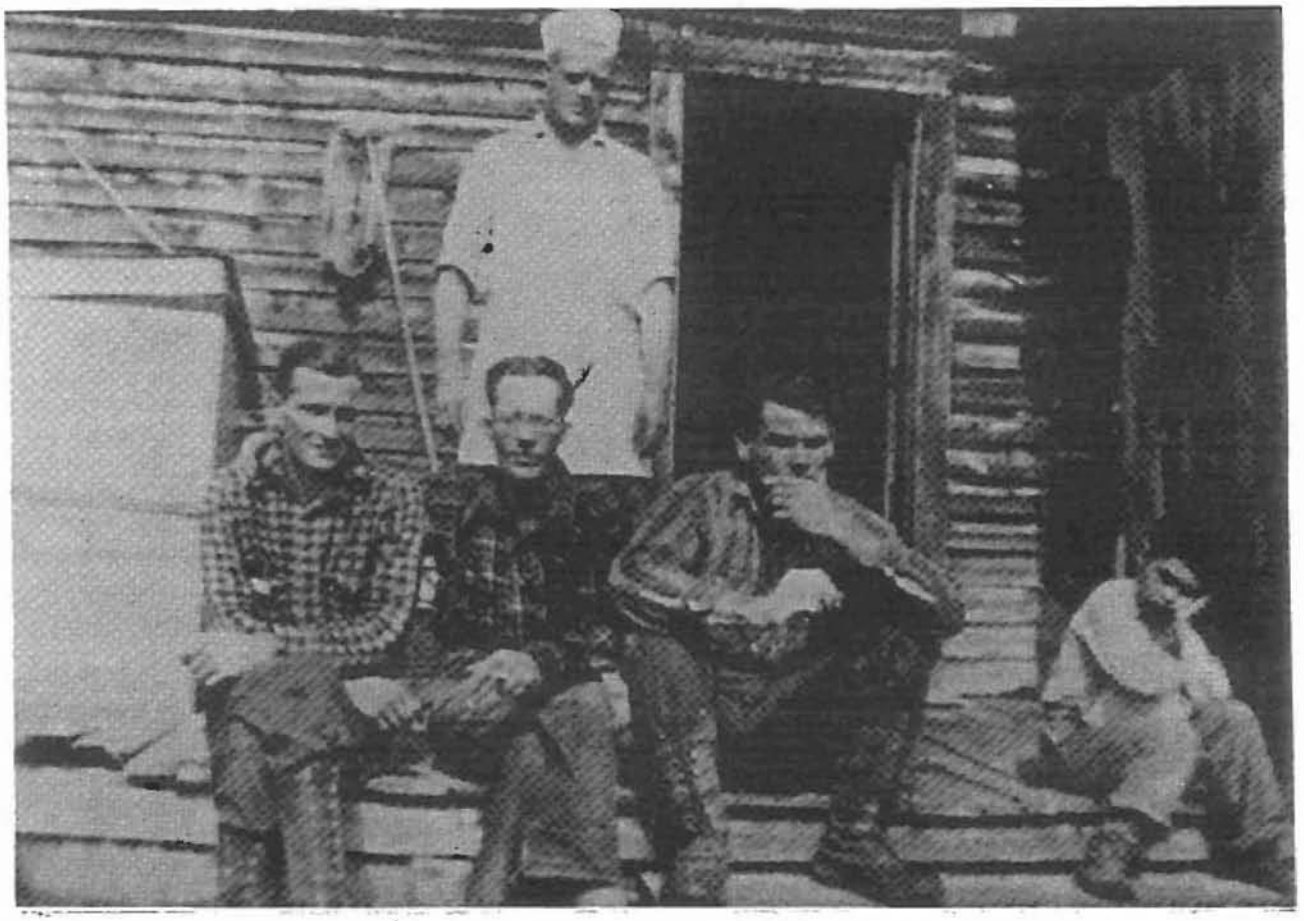


Plate 47 – Porch of Denali bunkhouse, circa 1940. Charlie Borgner (standing), the cook and, left to right, Elmer Bohman, Elmer Carlson, Slim Gagnon and Bud Carlson.

Plate 48 – Wickersham brothers, Horace (left) and Leburn (right), and Anne at Valdez Creek. (From A.B. Smith, Big Delta.)

Plate 49 – Jack West (center) and Cantwell railroaders Paddy McFadden (left) and Paddy McCafferty (right). (From Henry Peters, Cantwell.)

Plate 50 – John Carlson at his store in Cantwell, 1947. (From Bud Carlson, Cantwell.)

Plate 51 – Woman gandy dancers of Cantwell. Left to right, Valdez Tyone, Alice Norton, Grace Secondchief, Helen Stickwan. (From Bud Carlson, Cantwell.)

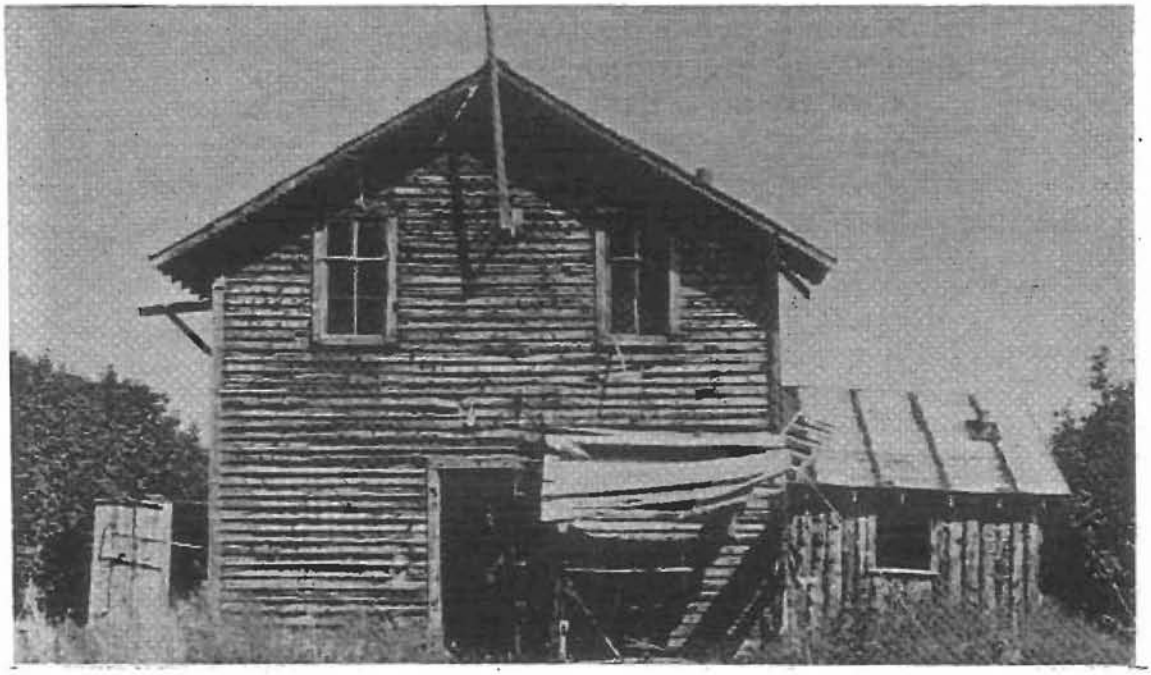


Plate 52 – Denali bunkhouse, south end, 1977 just before it was destroyed. (BLM photo.)

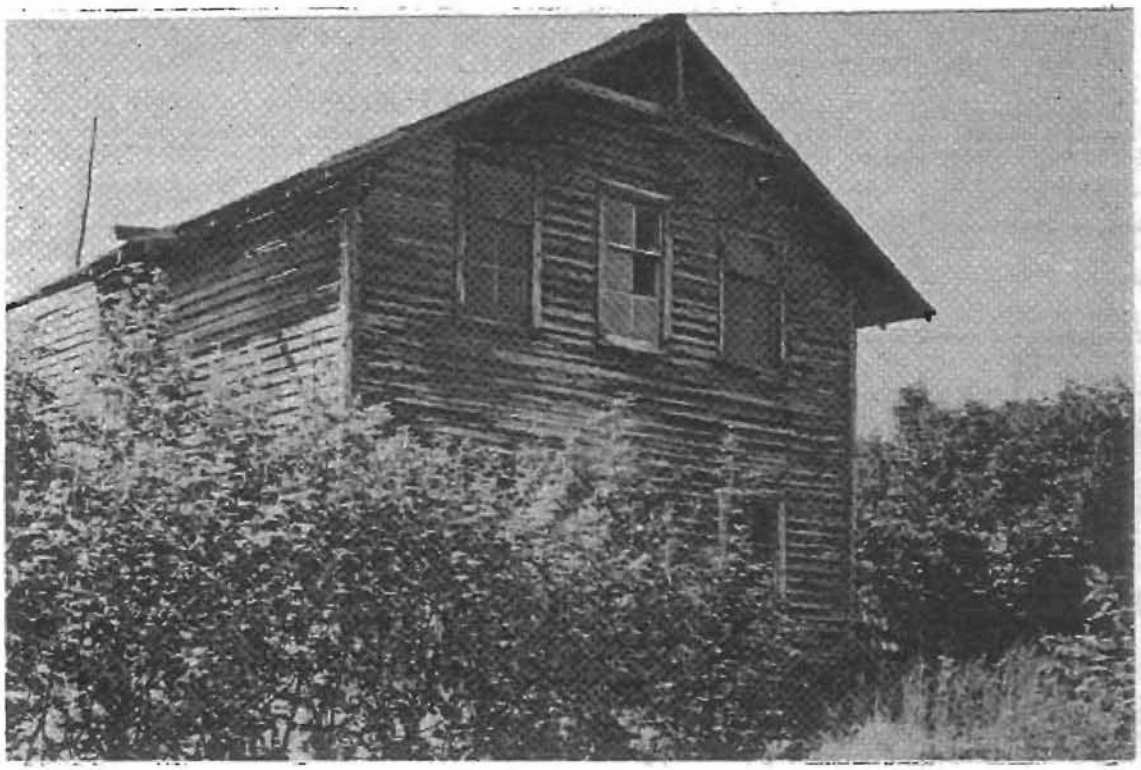


Plate 53 – Denali bunkhouse, north end, 1977 just before it was destroyed. (BLM photo.)

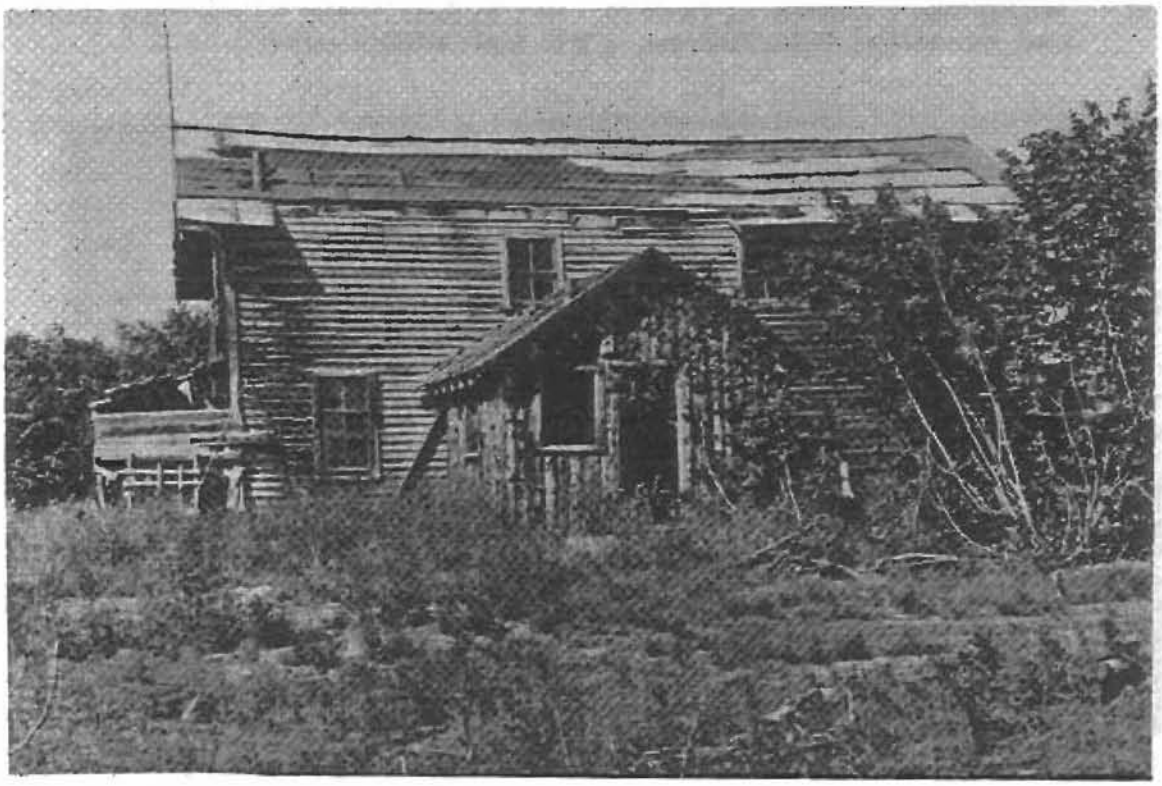


Plate 54 – Denali bunkhouse, east side, 1977 just before it was destroyed. (BLM photo.)

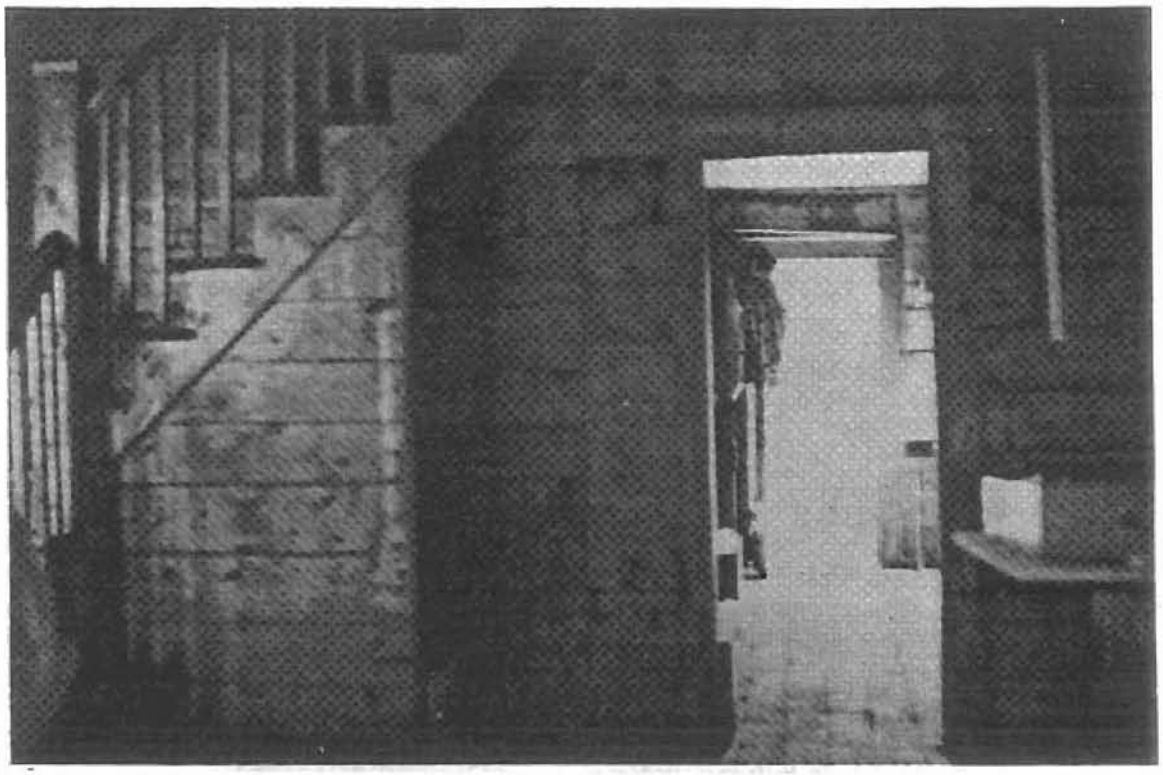


Plate 55 – Denali bunkhouse interior showing a staircase and kitchen doorway in 1977 just before it was destroyed. (BLM photo.)

Plate 56 – North building, south end, in 1977 just before it was destroyed. (BLM photo.)

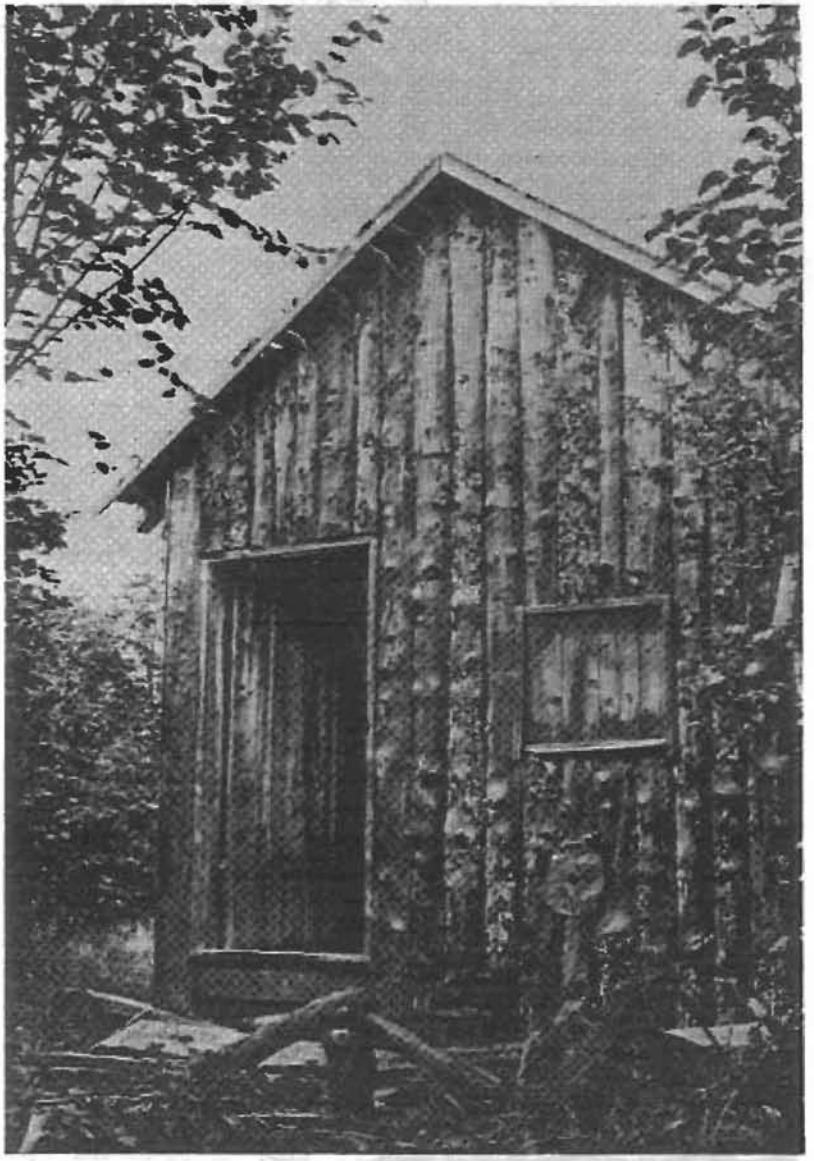


Plate 57 – Northwest building, south end, in 1977 just before it was destroyed. (BLM photo.)

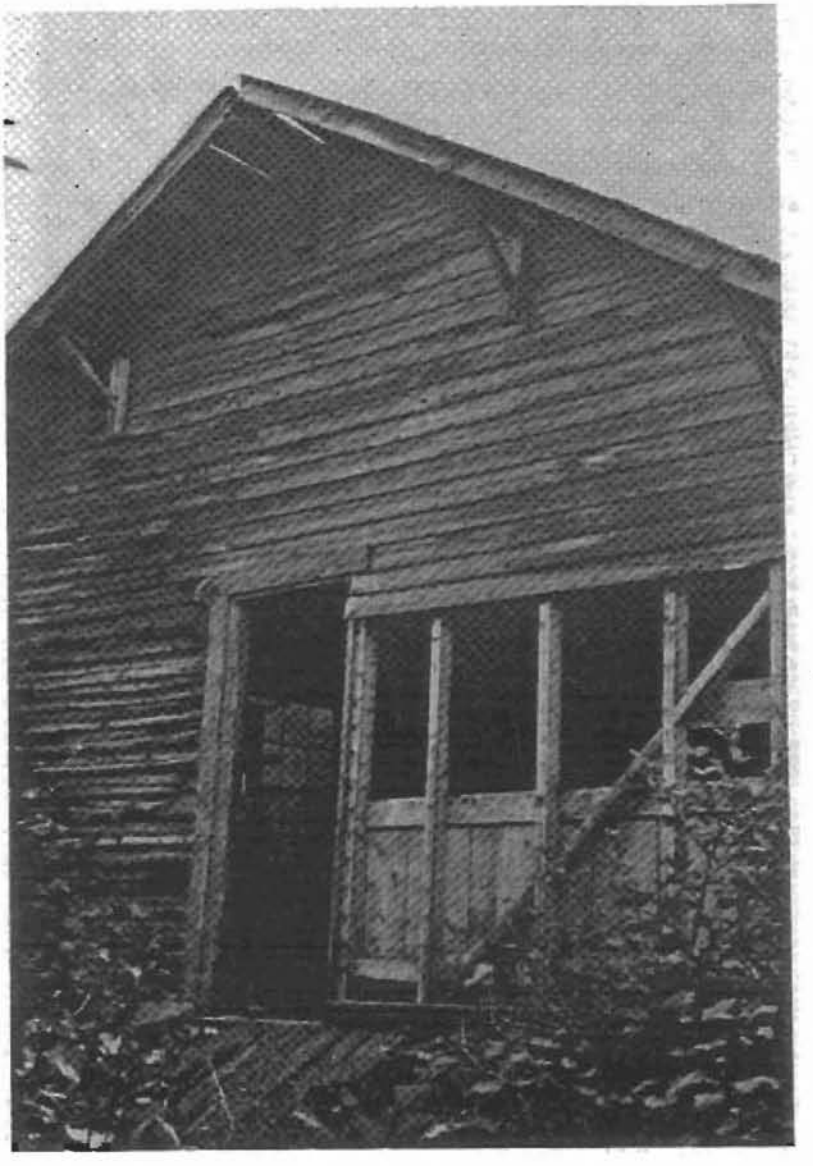


Plate 58 – West building, north end, in 1977 just before it was destroyed. Note where siding had been taken off. (BLM photo.)

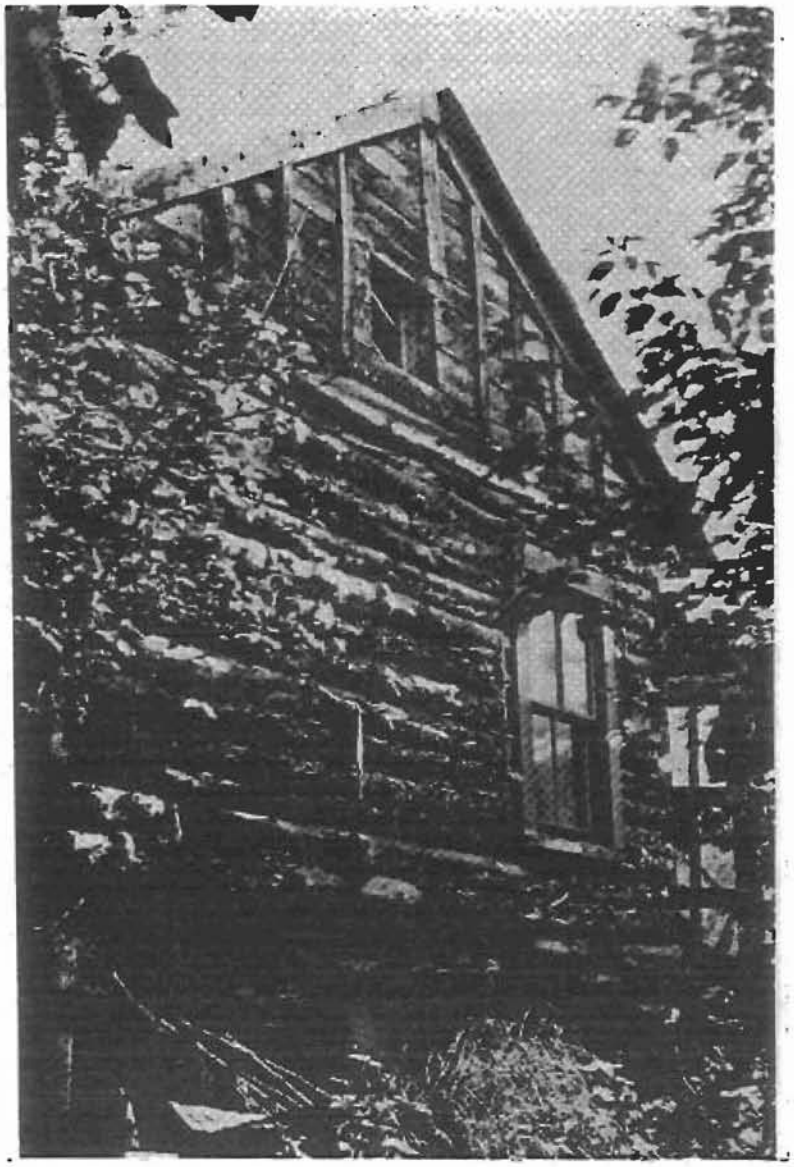


Plate 59 – Superintendent's house, north end, in 1977. (BLM photo.)

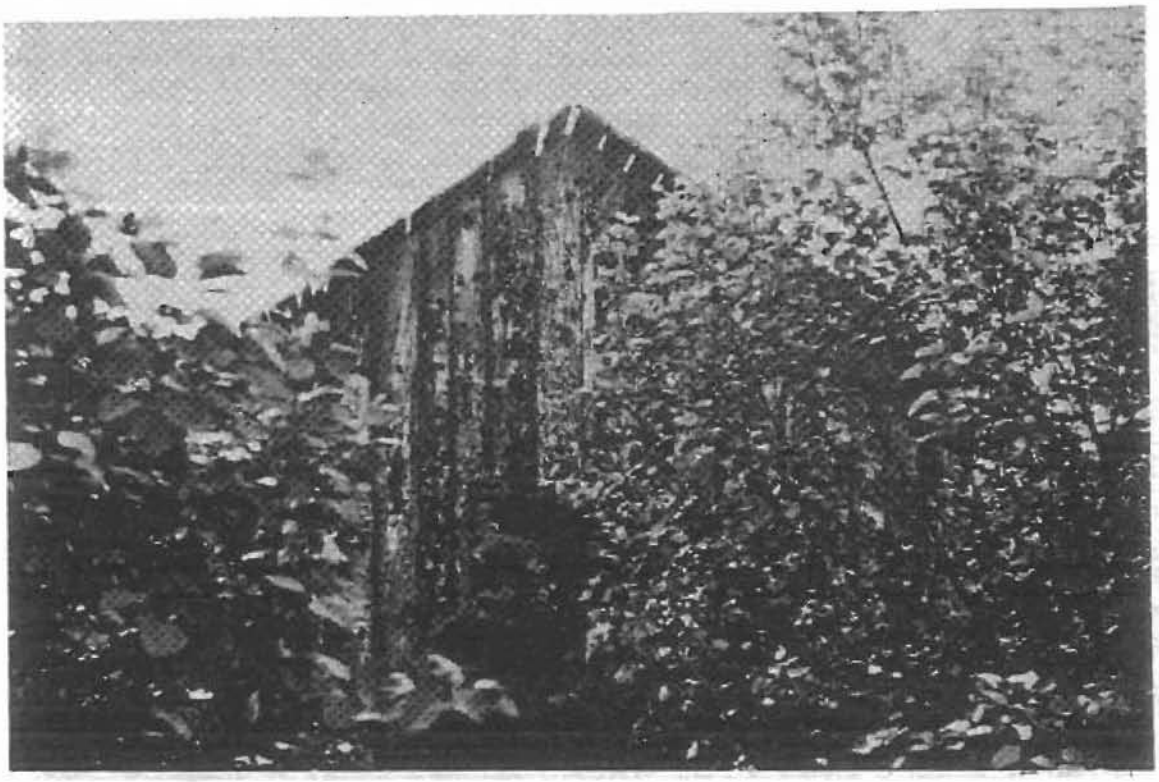


Plate 60 – Northeast building, west end, in 1977. One of three buildings at Denali not destroyed. (BLM photo.)

Plate 61 – Repair shop, northwest corner, in 1977 just before it was destroyed. (BLM photo.)

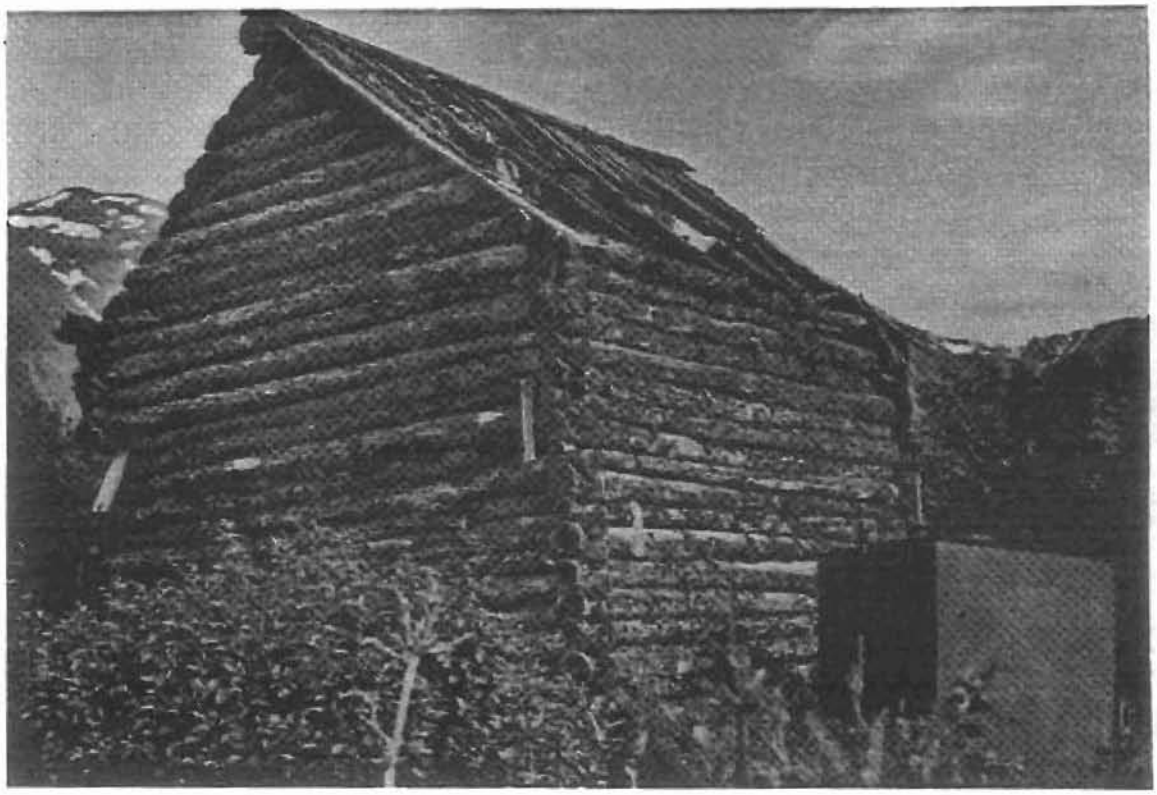


Plate 62 – Harness shed, northwest corner, in 1977 just before it was destroyed. (BLM photo.)

Plate 63 – Post Office, southeast corner, in 1977. Note padlock on door. because it was being lived in, the post office was not bulldozed. Peter Dessauer is making a sketch plan. (BLM photo.)

Plate 64 – Keystone drill obscured by regrowth. (BLM photo.)

Plate 65 – Jim Tyone's cabin on the Bear Creek Trail, built in the 1930's. Note absence of a padlock on the door. (BLM photo.)

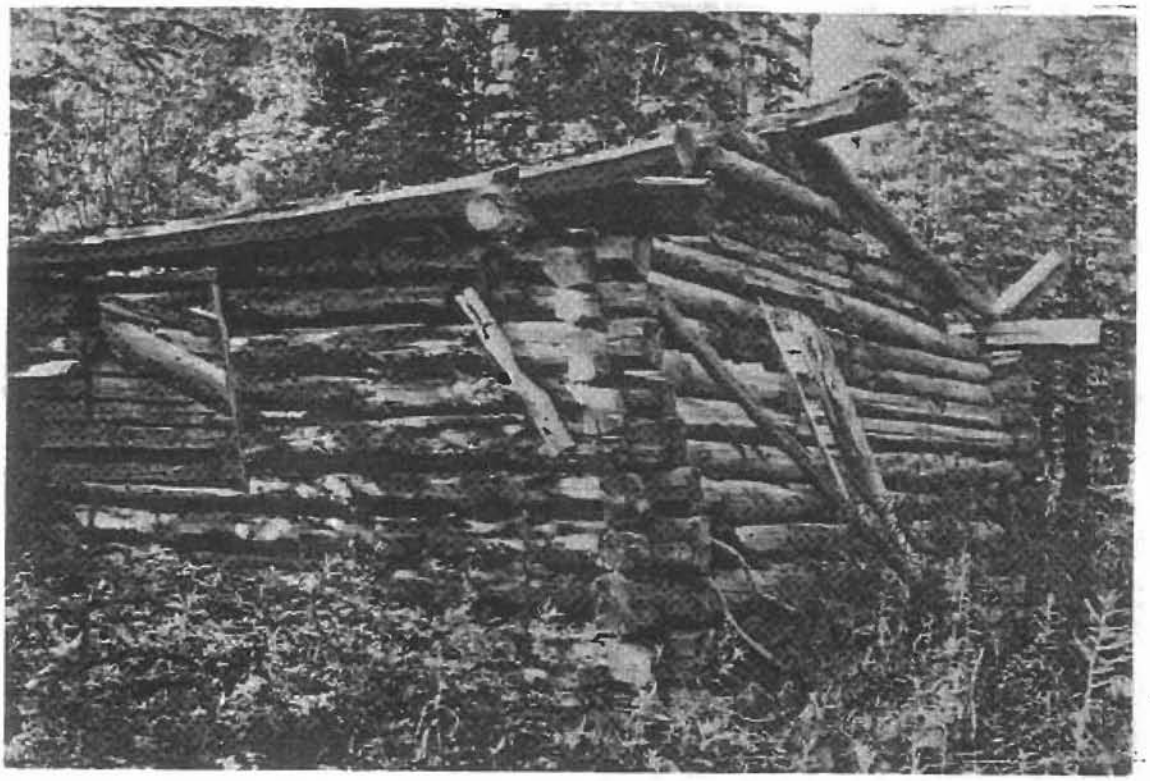


Plate 66 – Ruins of Frank Ewan's cabin on the old Bear Creek Trail, probably built around 1920. (BLM photo.)

Plate 67 – Tom Neely's cabin on the Gulkana River, built in 1943. (BLM photo.)

Plate 68 – Poplar Grove, north cabin. Note name painted on front. (BLM photo.)

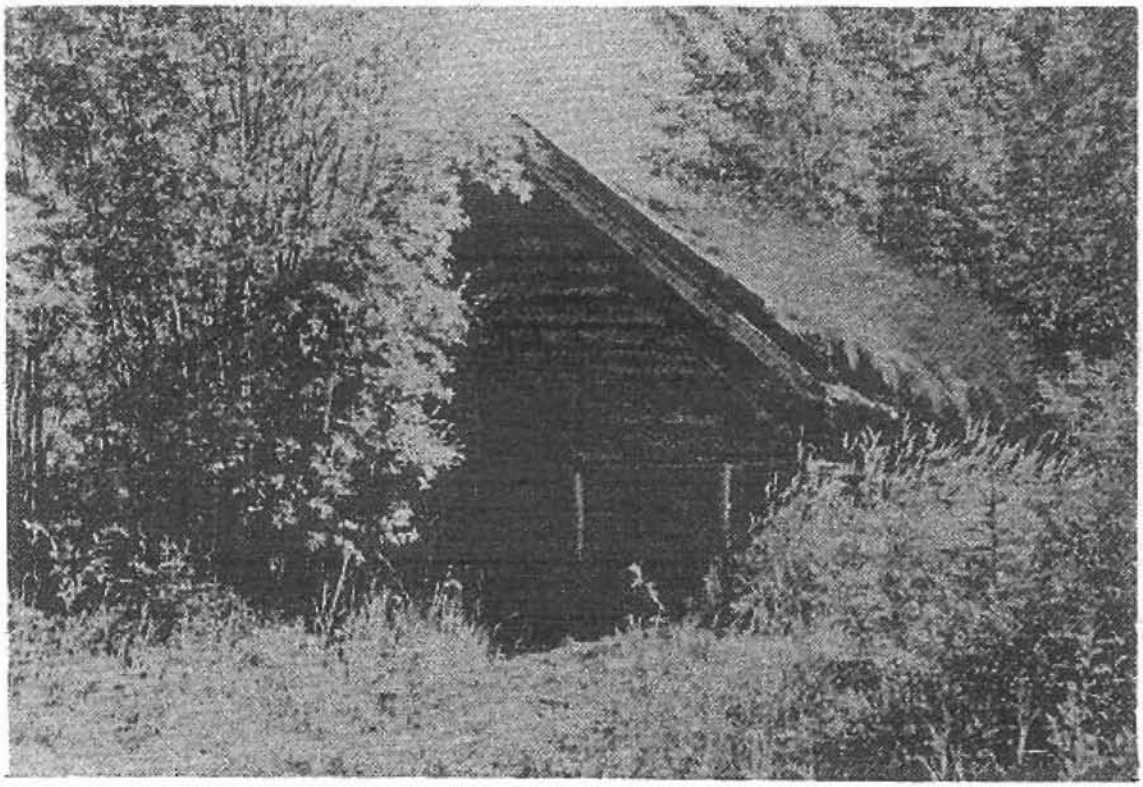


Plate 69 – Poplar Grove, south cabin. (BLM photo.)

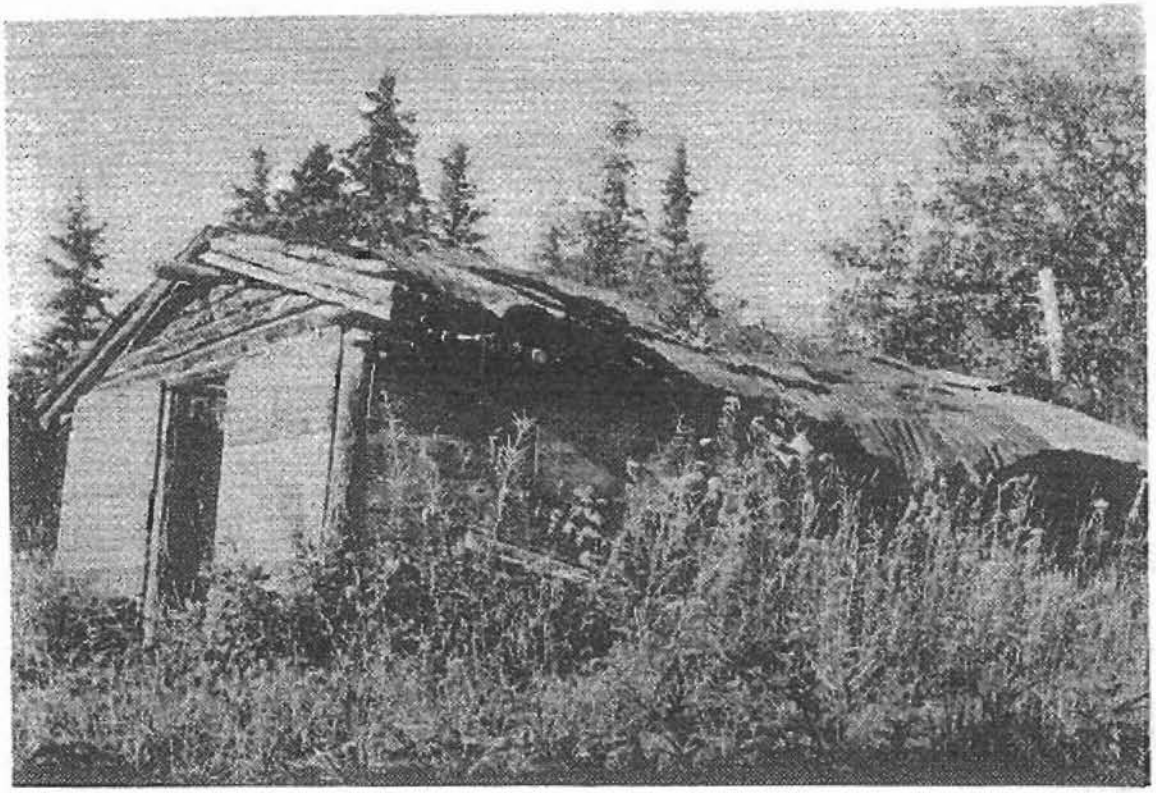


Plate 70 – Hogan Hill cabin built circa 1927. Cabin is on the highway right-of-way. (BLM photo.)

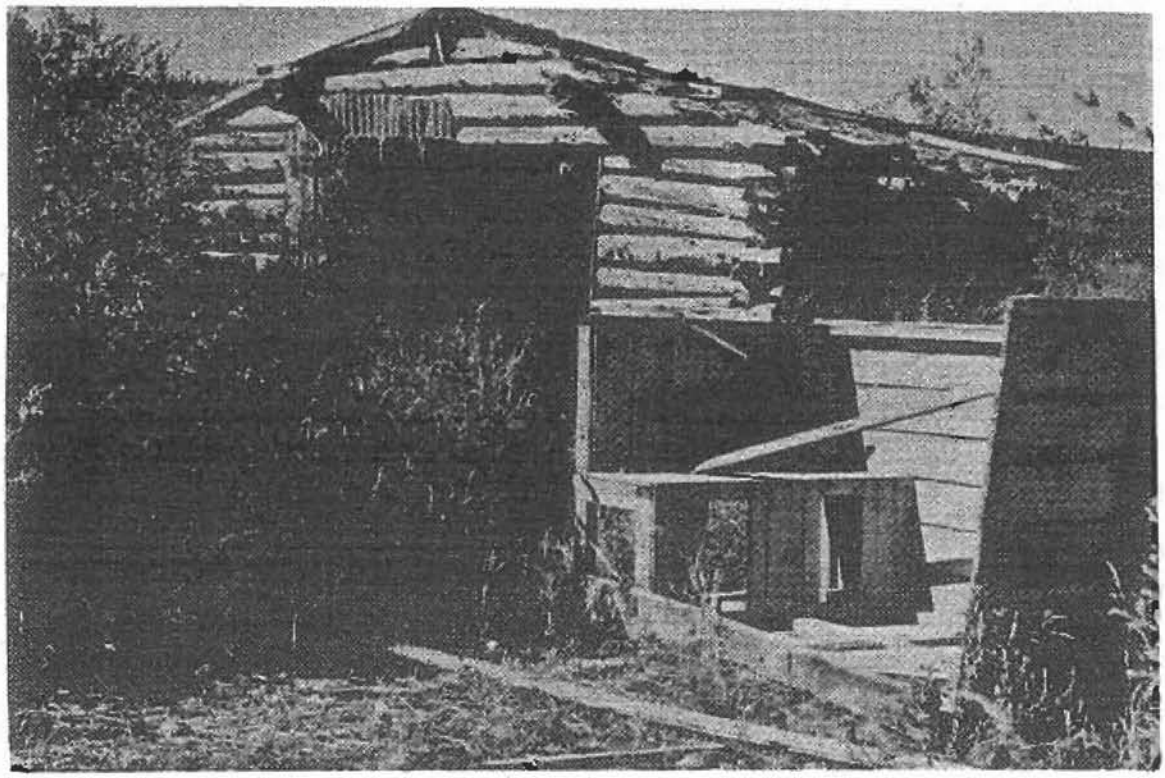


Plate 71 – Log barn, Meier's Roadhouse site. One of original outbuildings where the middle Fork Trail headed to Valdez Creek. (BLM photo.)

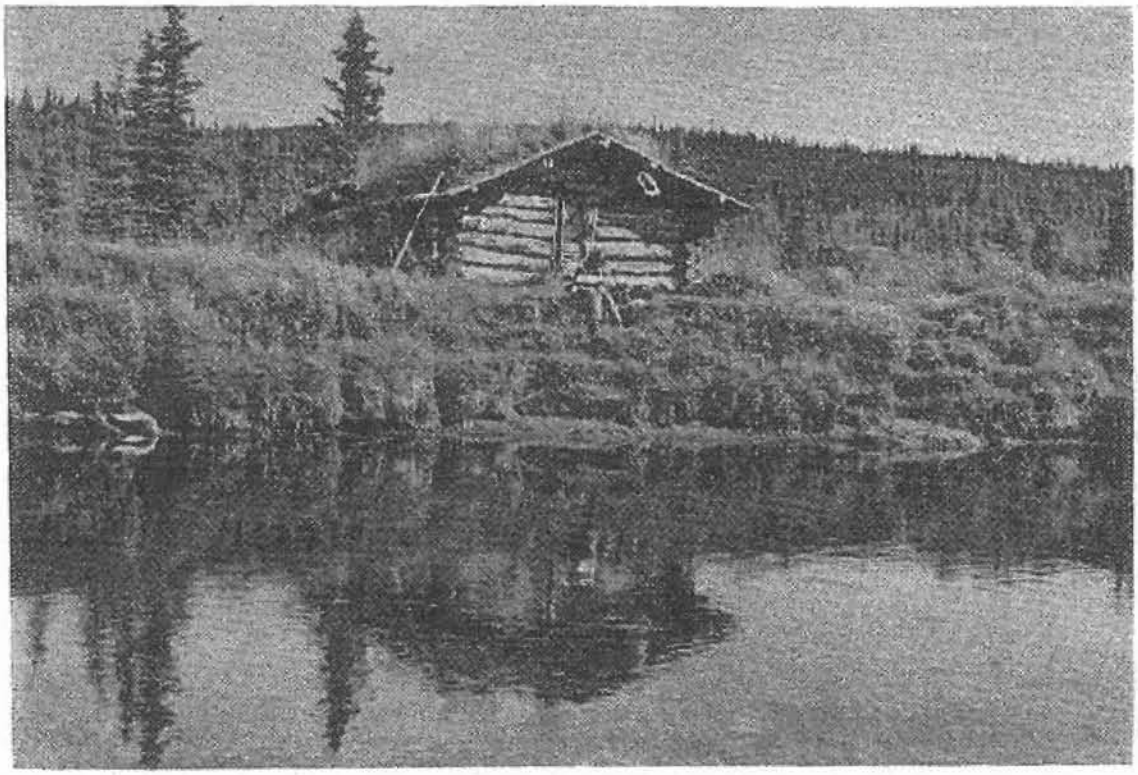


Plate 72 – Dawson-Norwood cabin on the Middle Fork Trail, built in the 1920's. (BLM photo.)

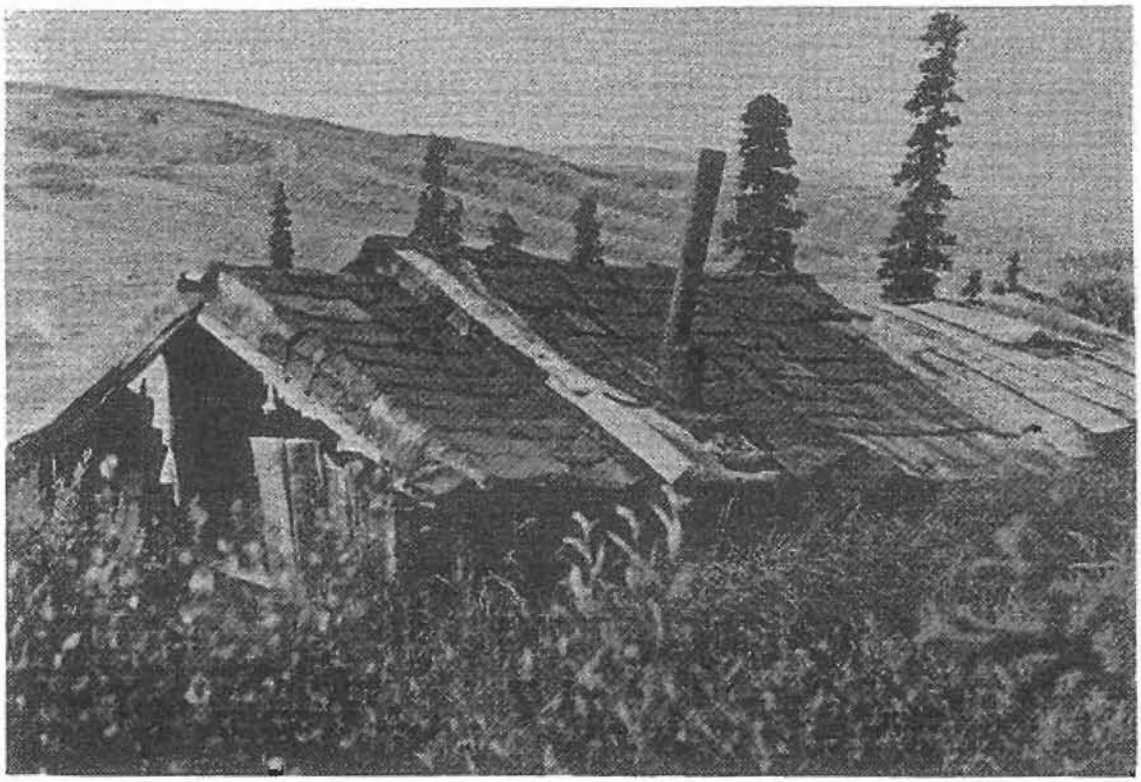


Plate 73 – Fielding Lake cabin, built circa 1912. (BLM photo.)

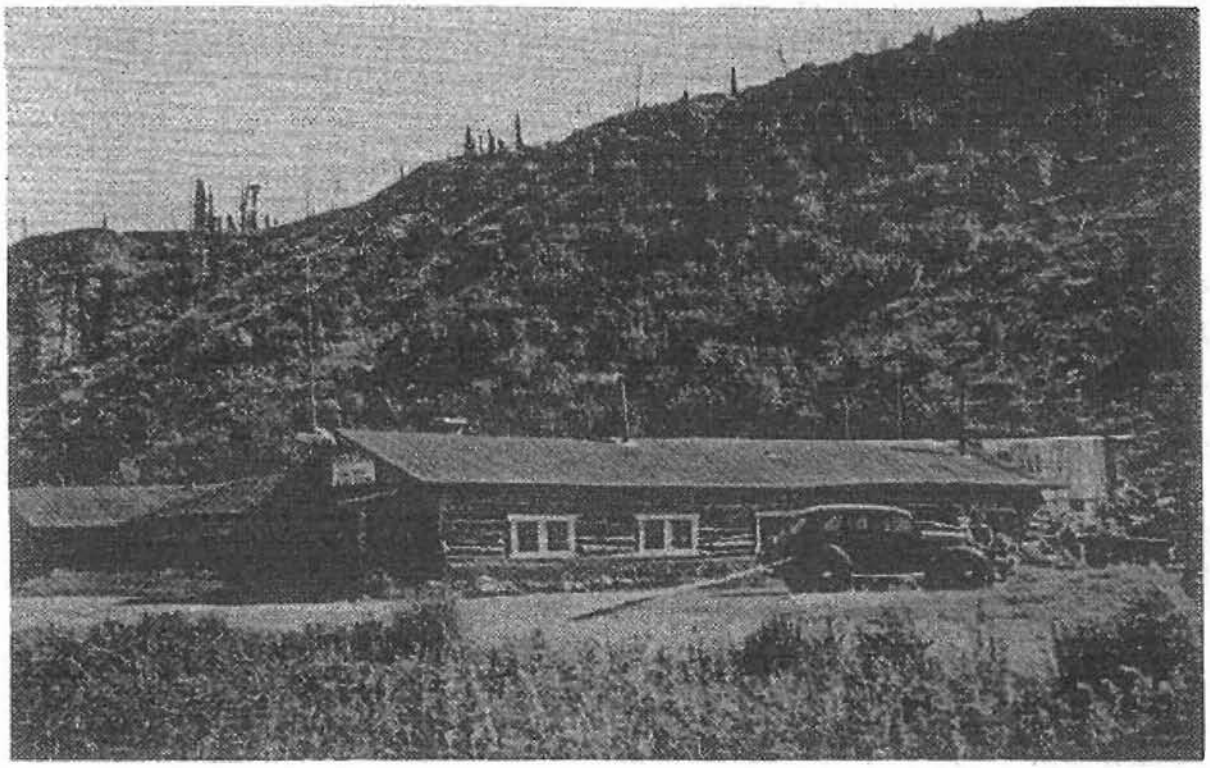


Plate 74 – Paxson Lodge circa 1940. Part of this building may date from 1919 or earlier. (From Jack Paxson collection, Archives, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.)

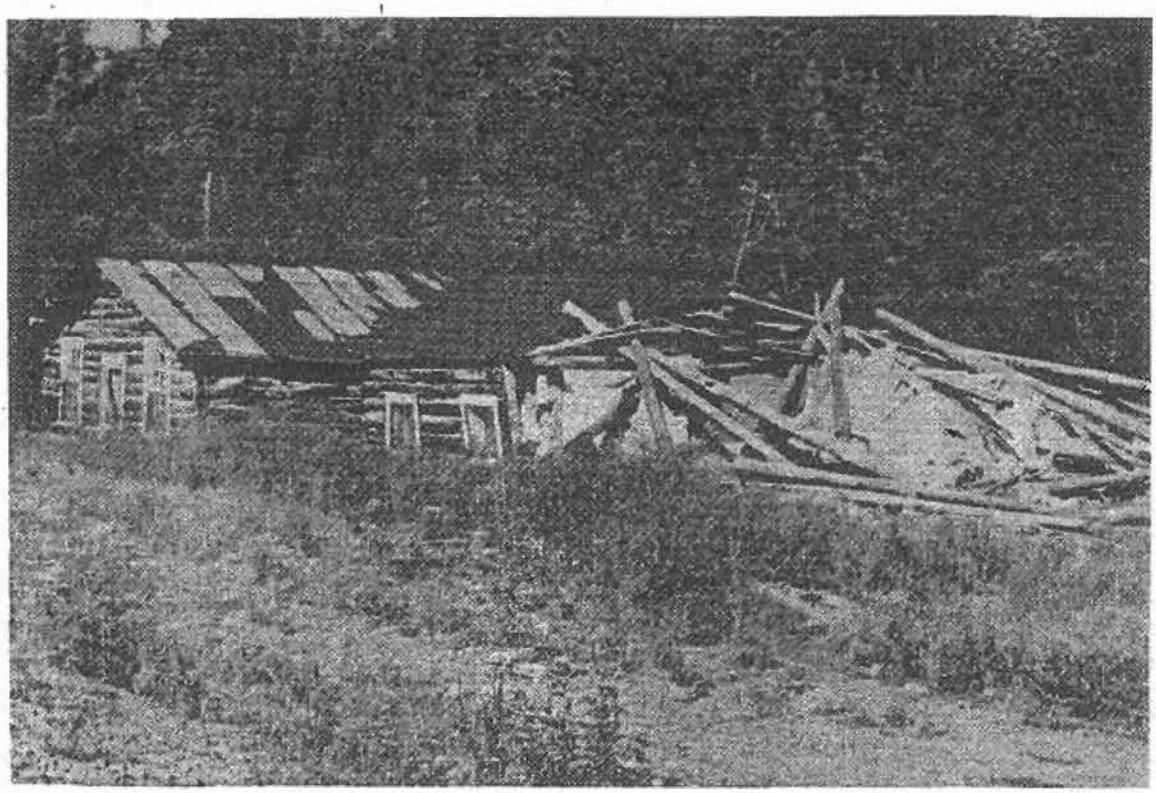


Plate 75 – Paxson Lodge in 1977. Fire destroyed more than half of the H-shaped building Christmas 1975. (BLM photo.)

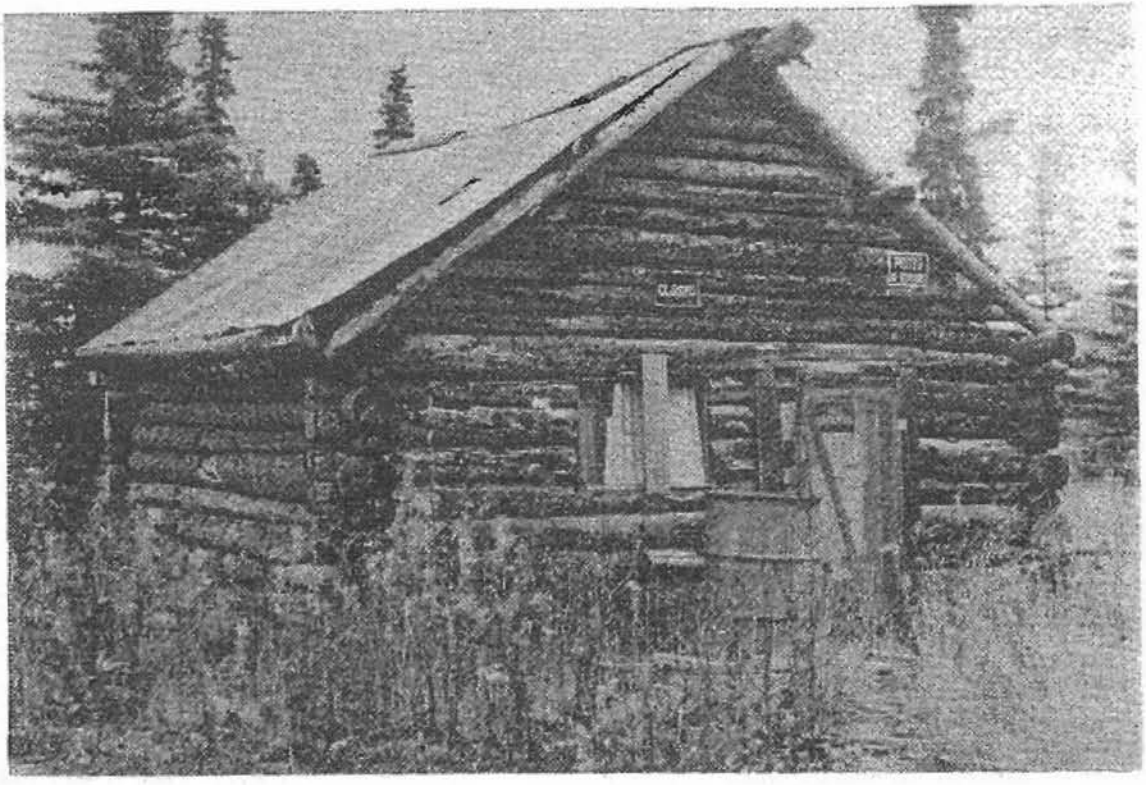


Plate 76 – Four-Mile Reindeer cabin built in the 1920's. (BLM photo.)

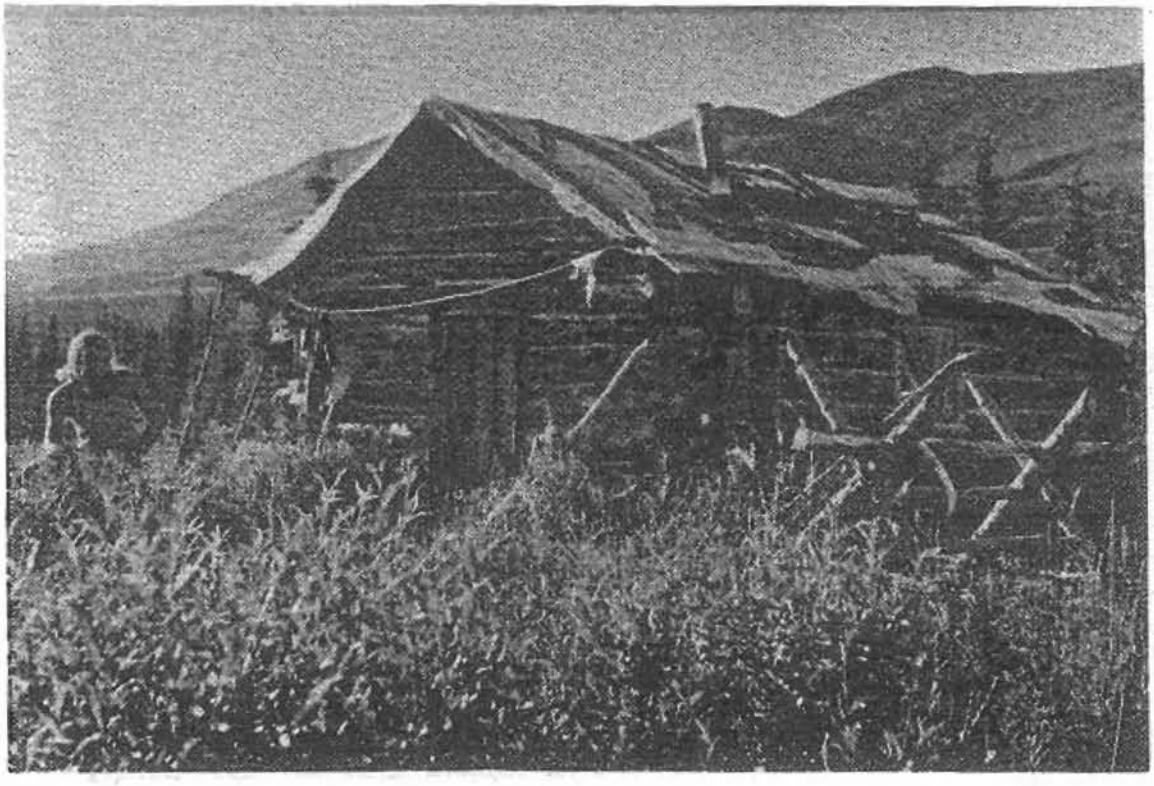


Plate 77 – Seven-Mile Reindeer cabin built in the 1920's. (BLM photo.)

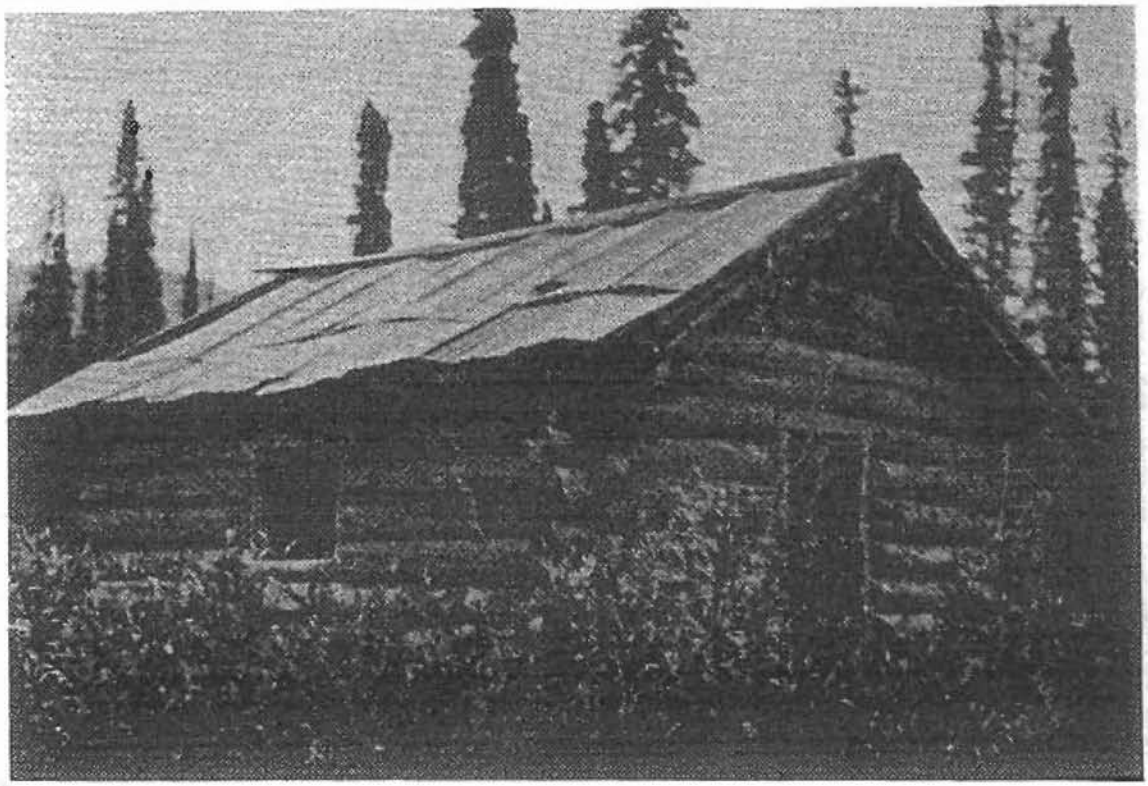


Plate 78 – Ten-Mile Reindeer cabin built in the 1920's.. (BLM photo.)

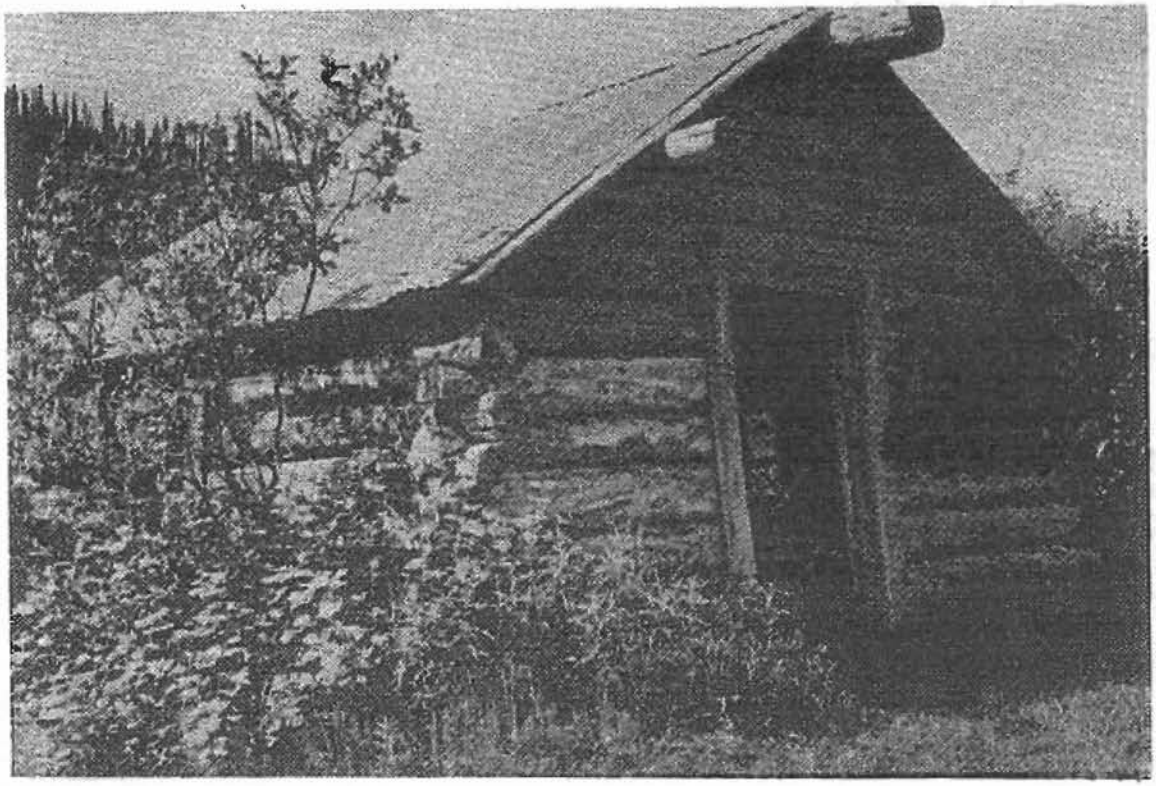


Plate 79 – Twenty-Mile Shelter cabin built in the 1920's. (BLM photo.)

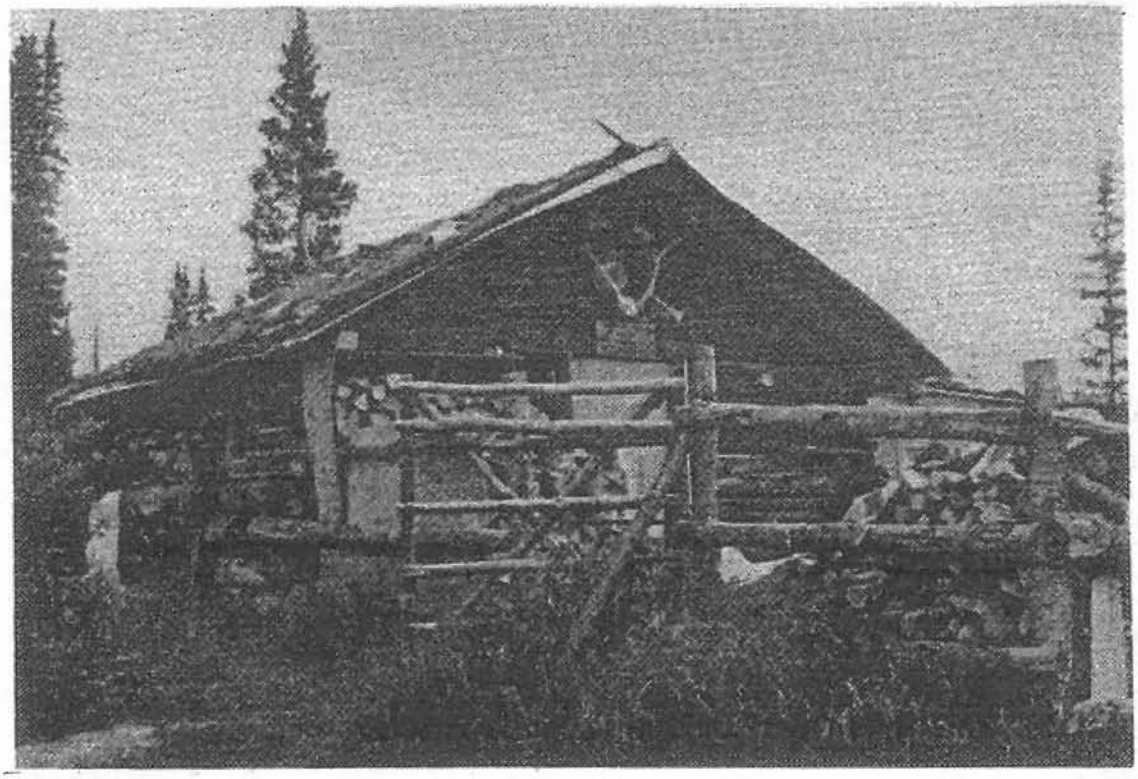


Plate 80 – Thirty-Mile Shelter cabin built in the 1920's. (BLM photo.)

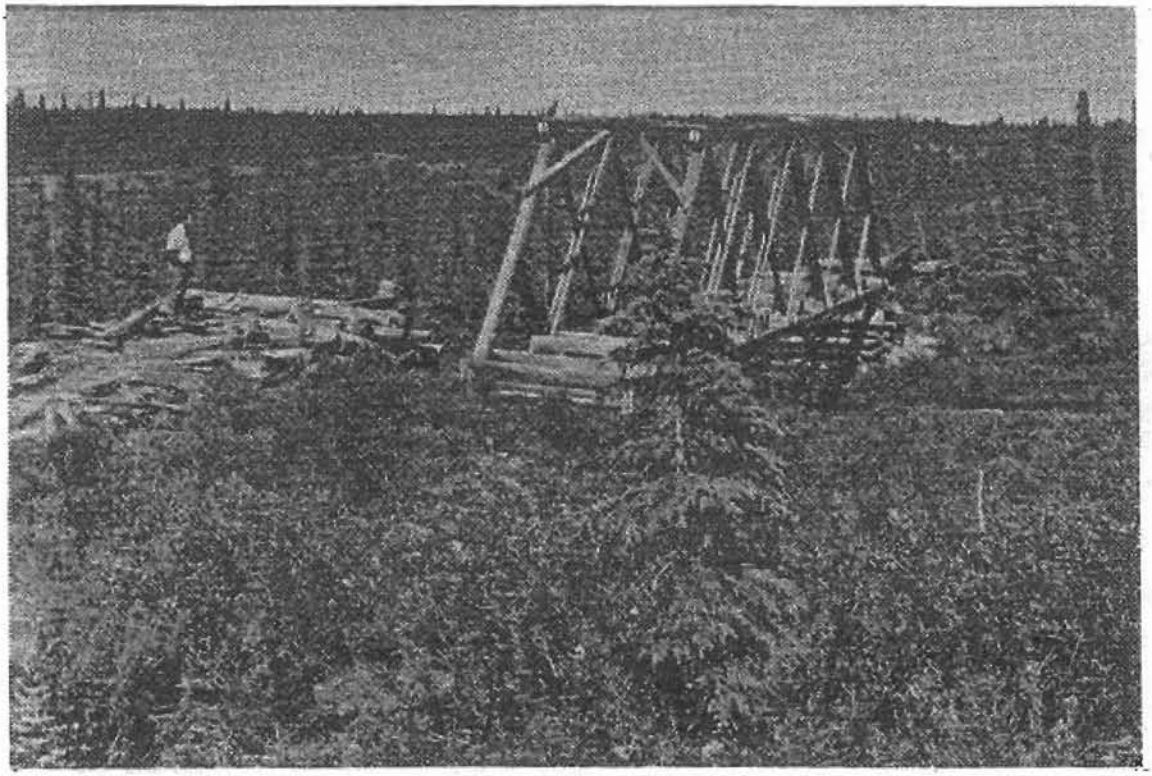


Plate 81 – Brushkana Creek Bridge. Built in the 1940's, this wooden truss bridge was never used. (BLM photo.)

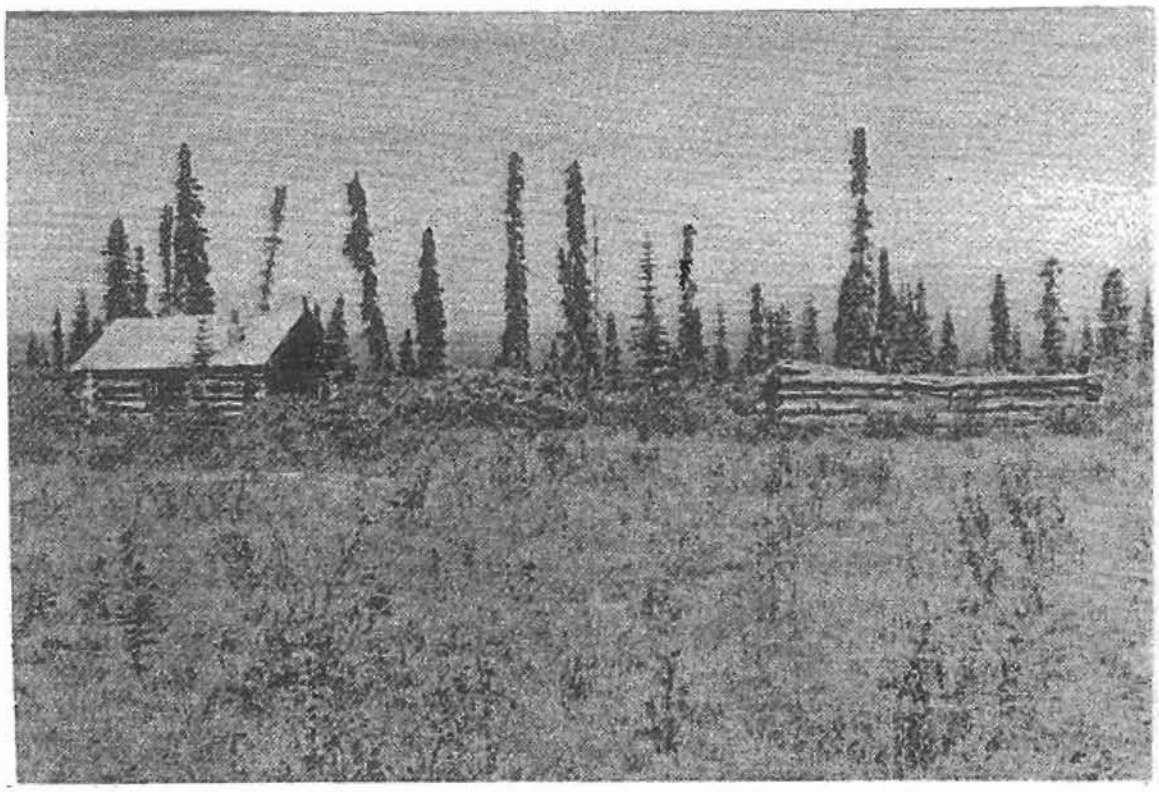


Plate 82 – Forty-Mile Shelter cabin and barn built in the 1920's. (BLM photo.)

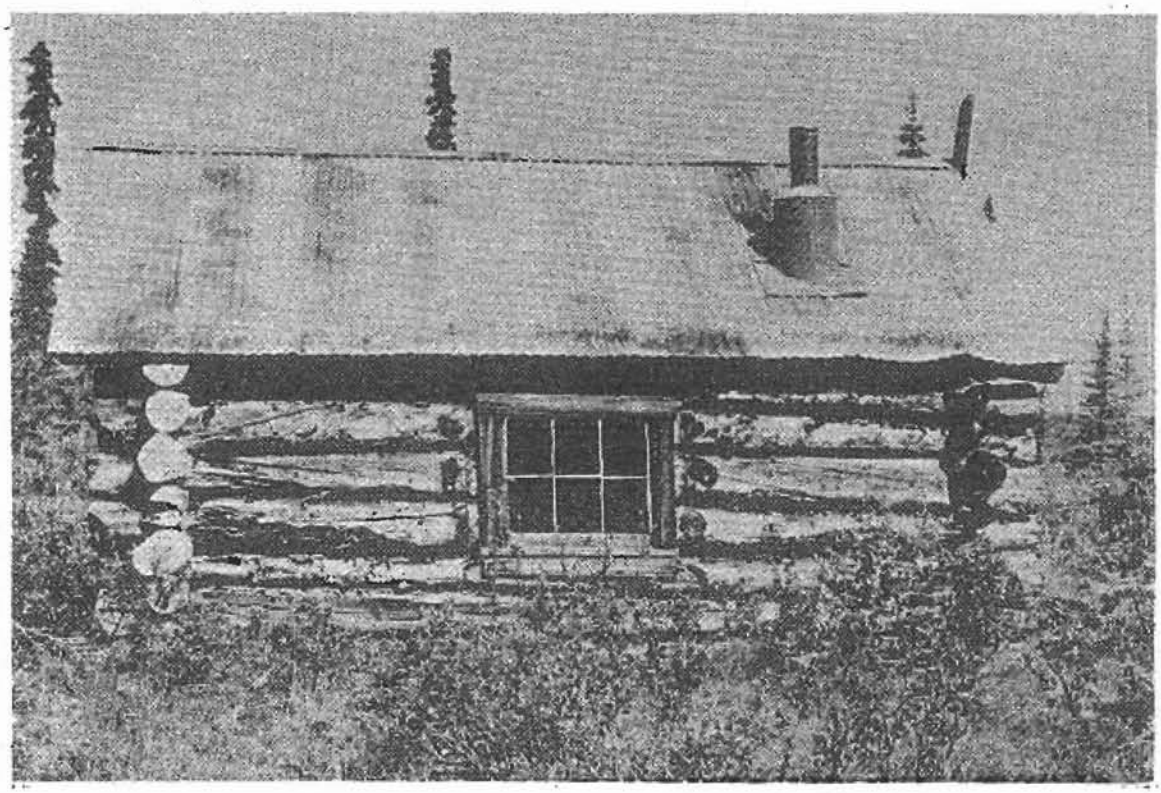


Plate 83 – Forty-Mile Shelter cabin. Because of roofing cabin is still in good condition. (BLM photo.)

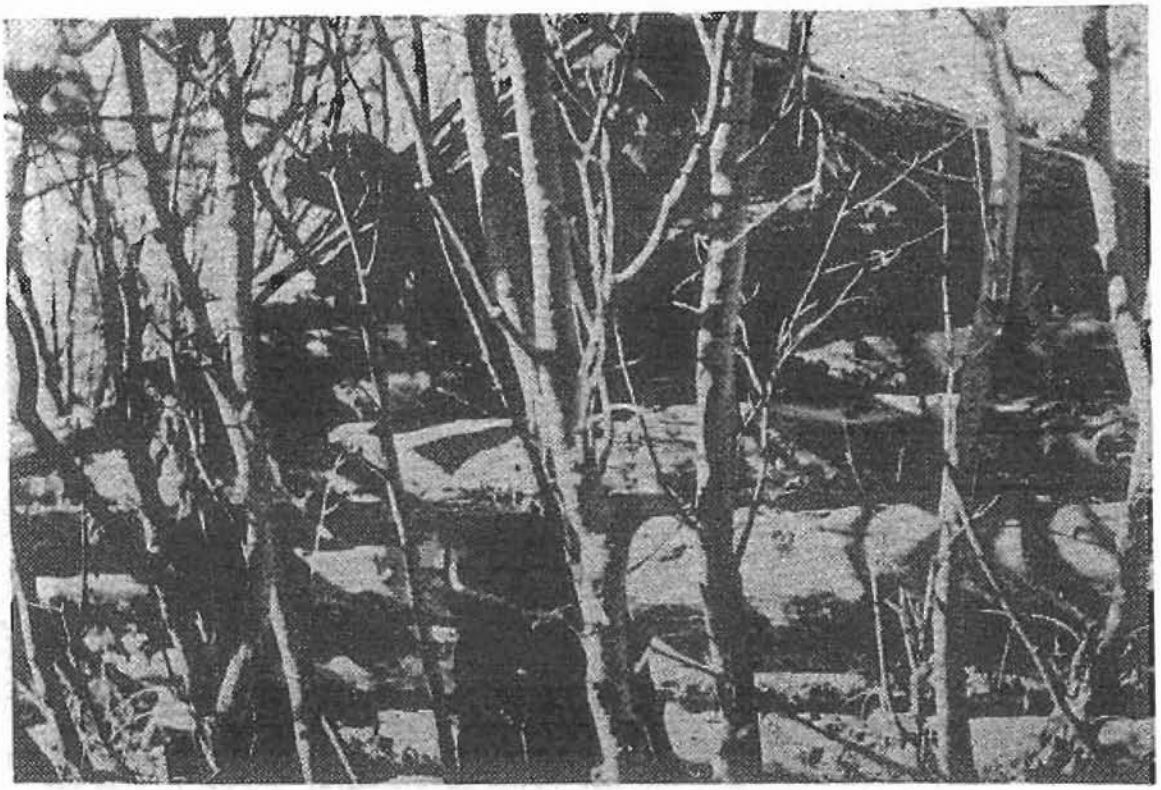


Plate 84 – Cabin ruins near mile 87.2, possibly a cache. (BLM photo.)

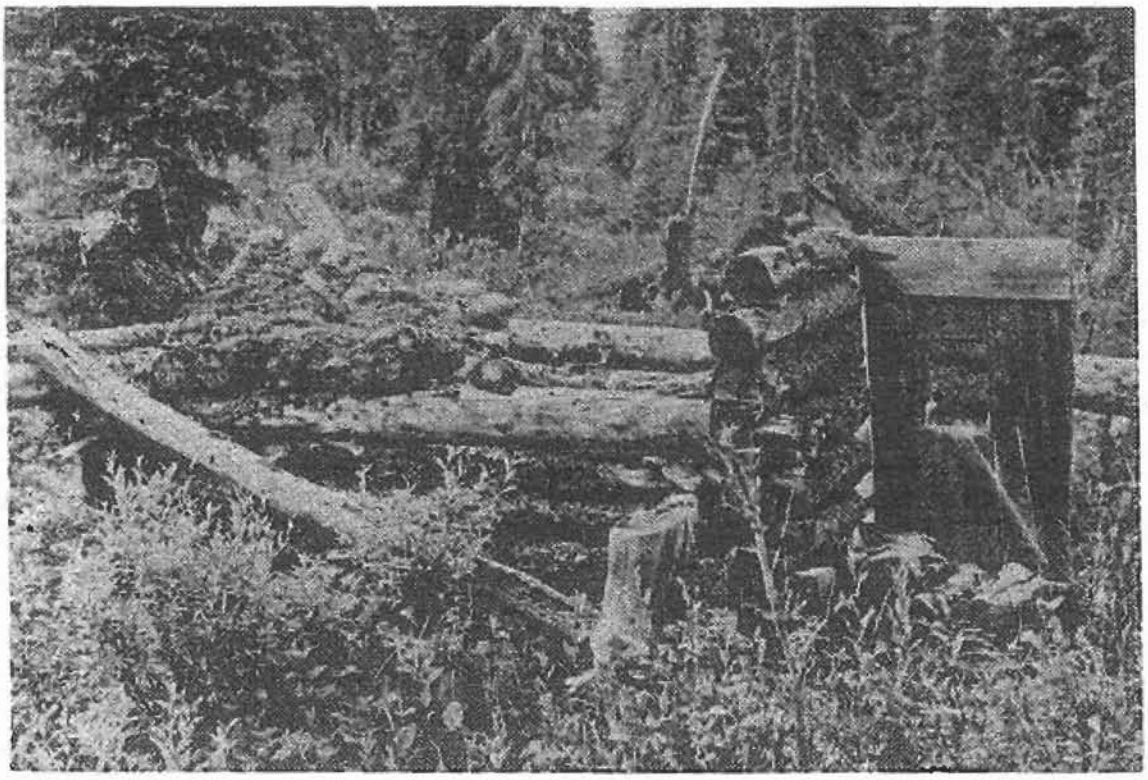


Plate 85 – Cabin ruins near mile 83. Glass pane in door is unusual. (BLM photo.)

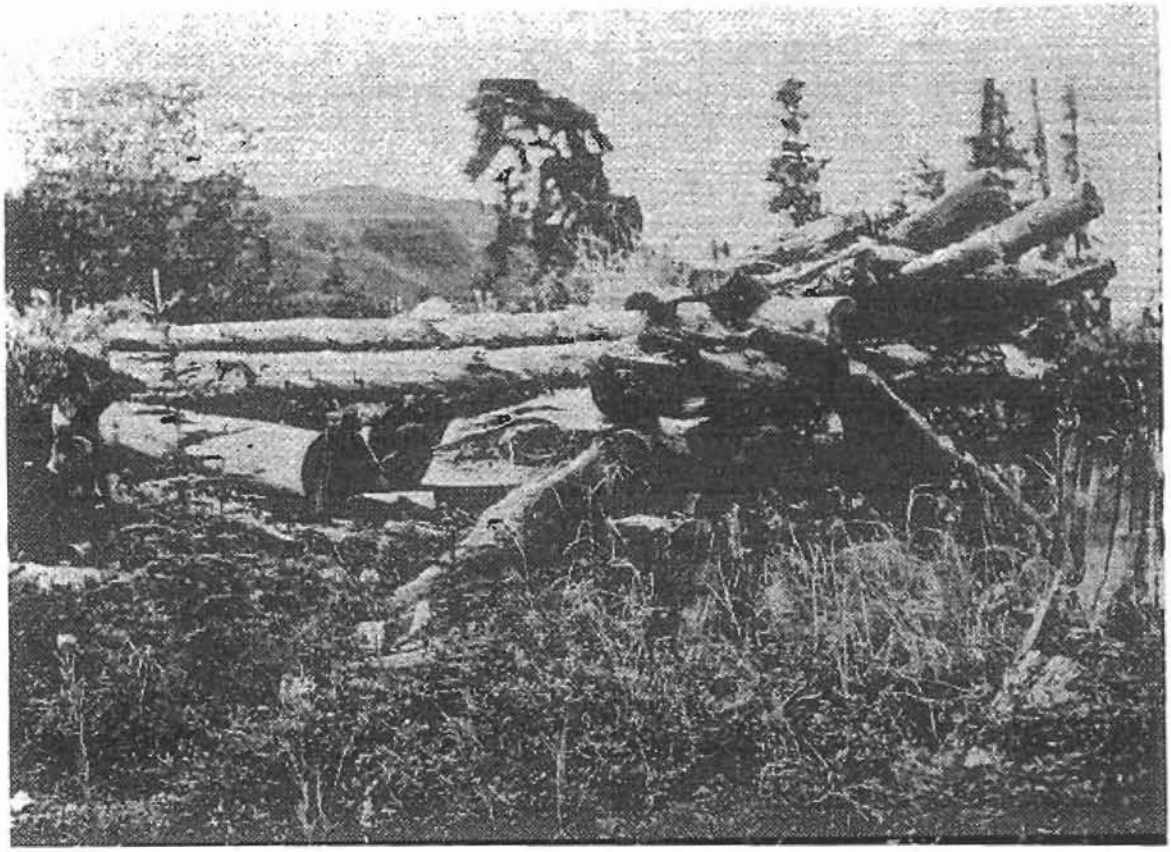


Plate 86 – Cabin ruin on Lost Indian Creek. (BLM photo.)

Plate 87 – Windy Creek cabin ruin. (BLM photo.)

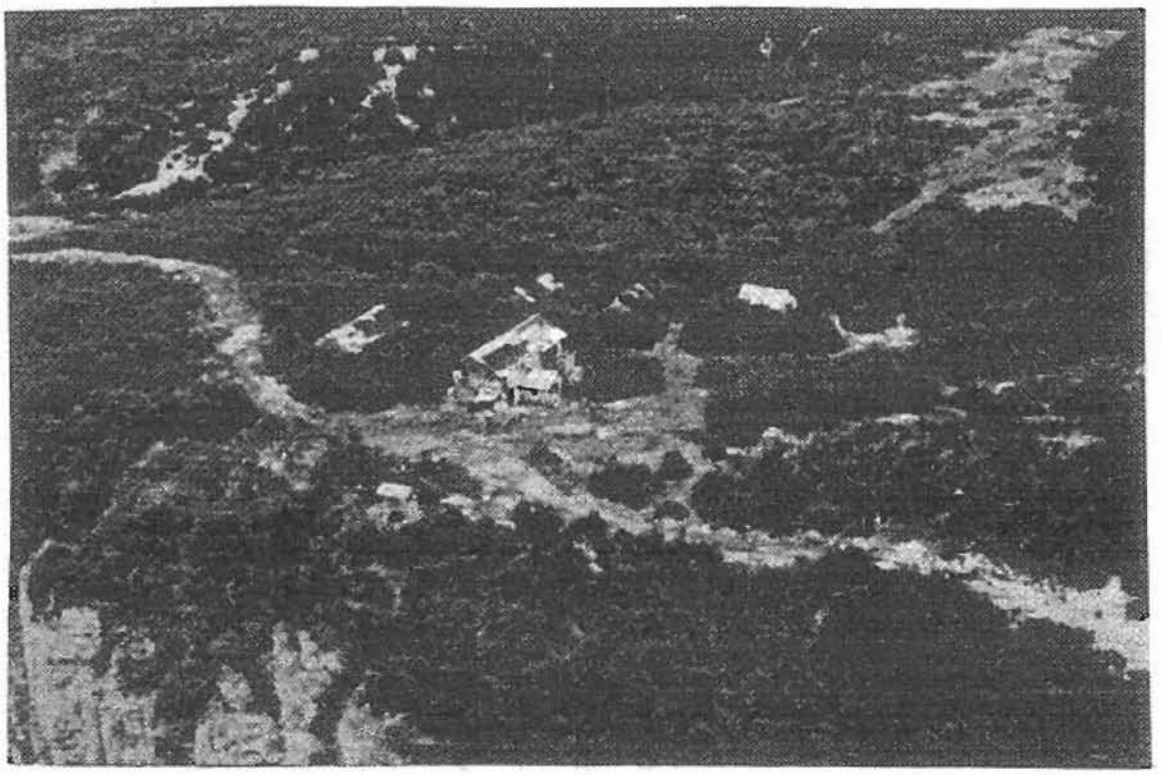


Plate 88 – Bunkhouse and surrounding buildings at Denali in 1977 before destruction. (BLM photo.)

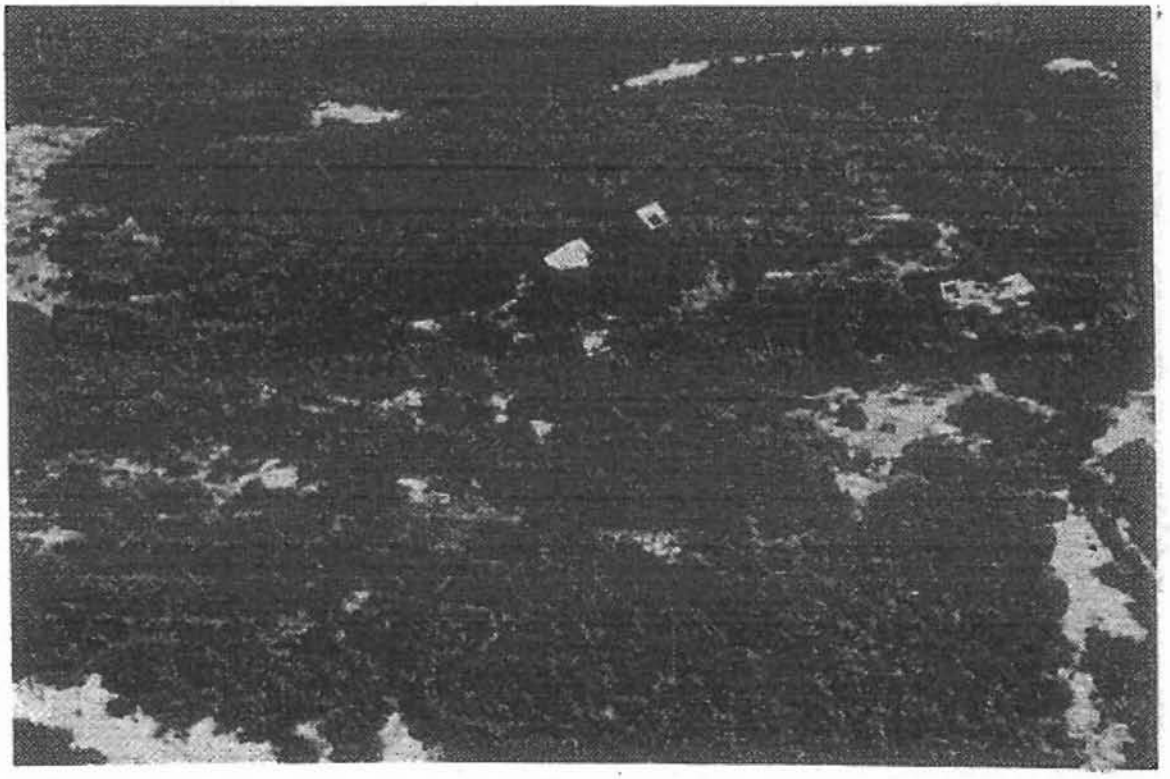


Plate 89 – Repair shop, harness shed and superintendent's house in 1977 before destruction. (BLM photo.)

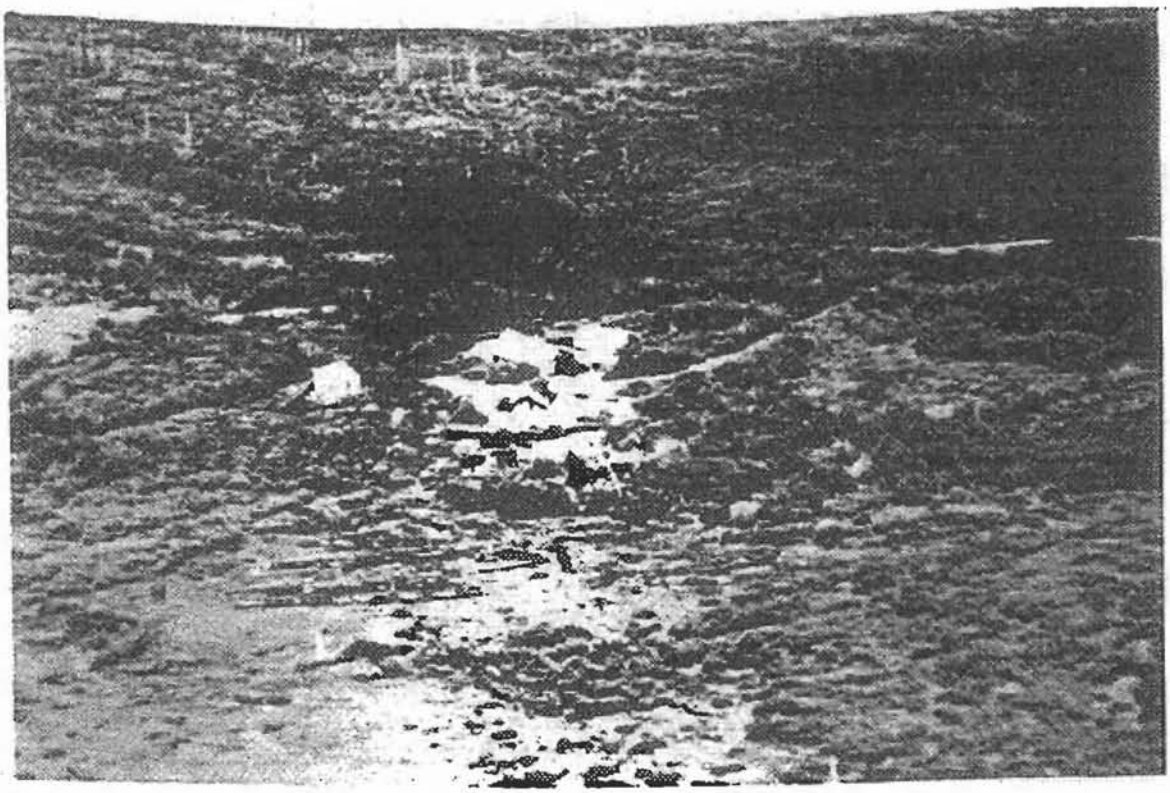


Plate 90 – Cabins at upper shaft in 1977 before destruction. (BLM photo.)

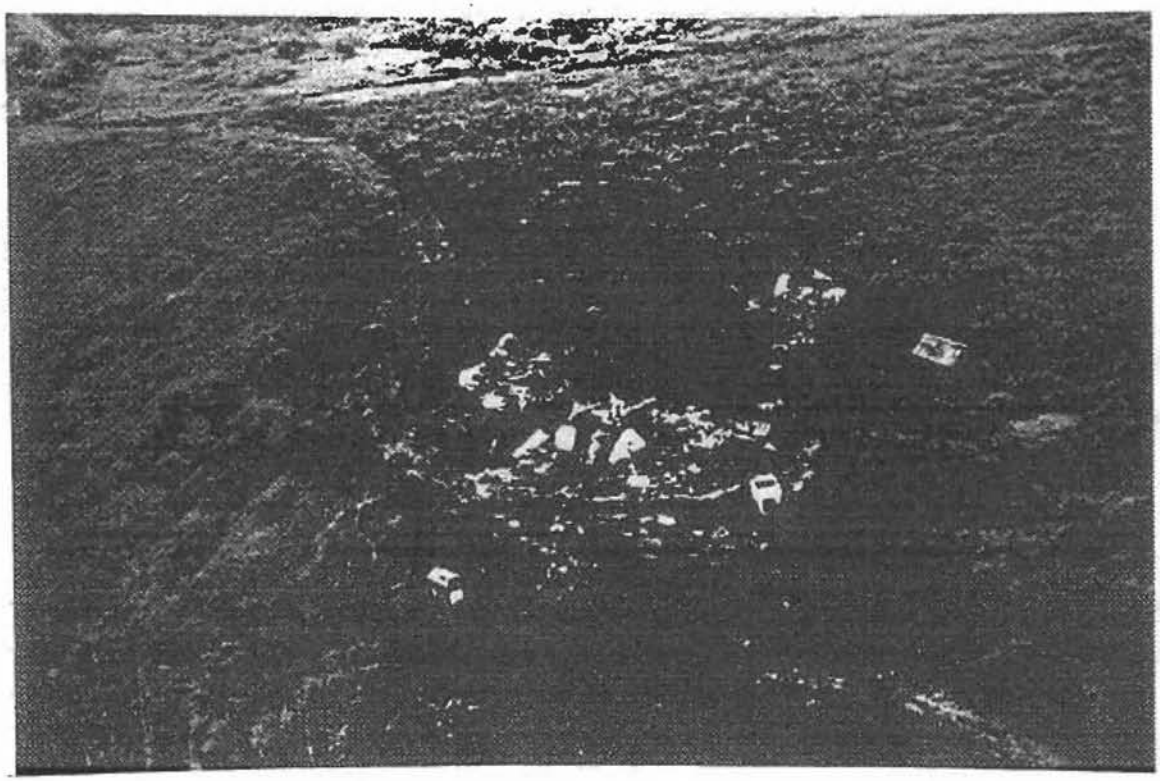


Plate 91 – Bunkhouse and surrounding buildings in 1977 after destruction. (BLM photo.)

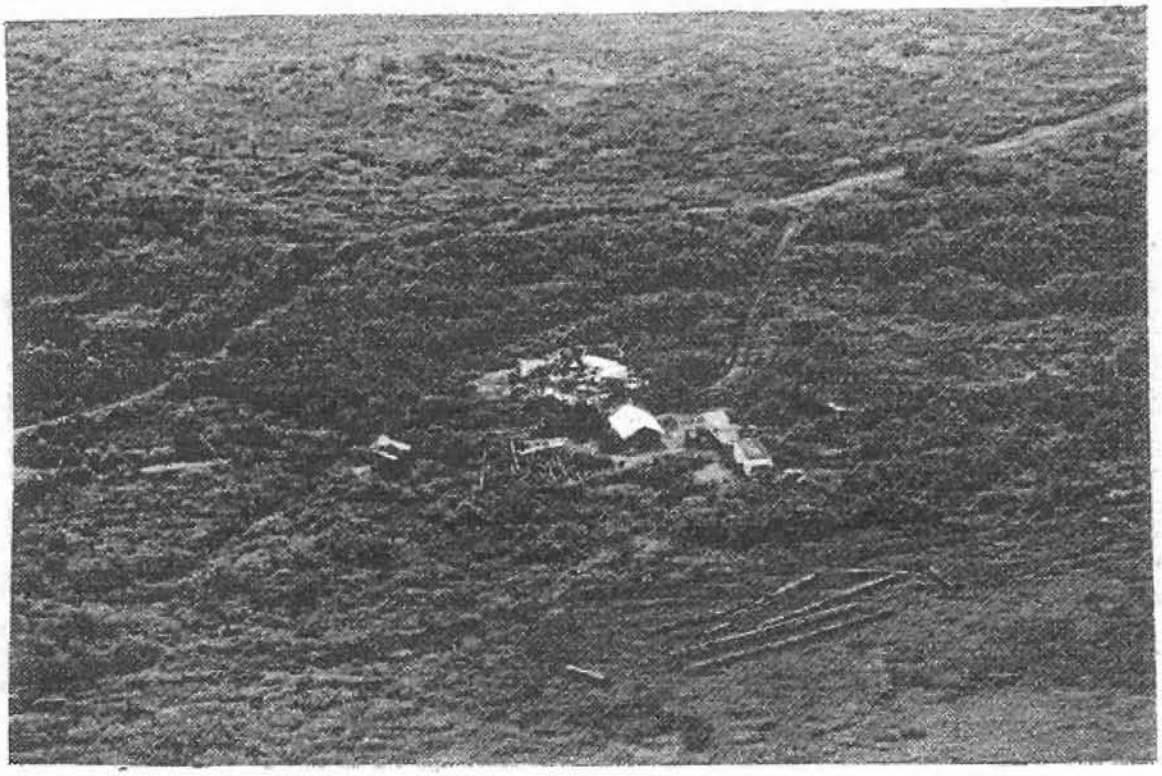


Plate 92 – Cabins at upper shaft in 1977 after destruction. (BLM photo.)

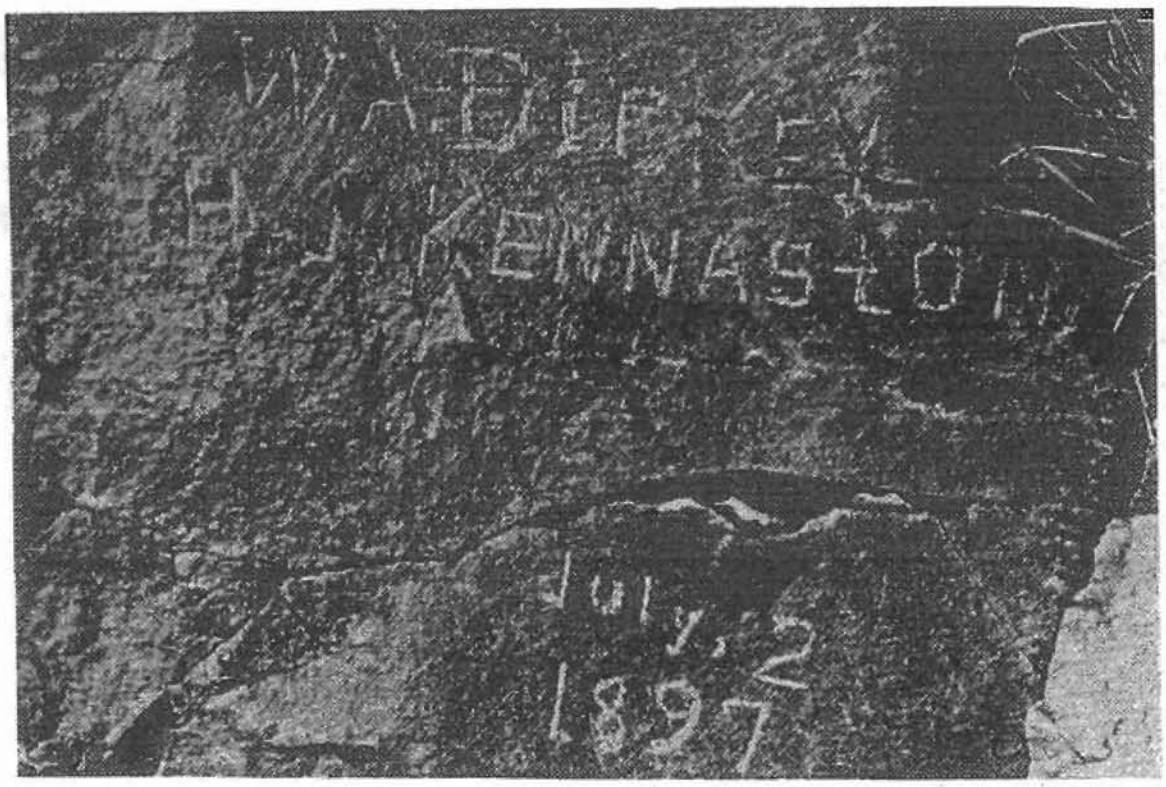
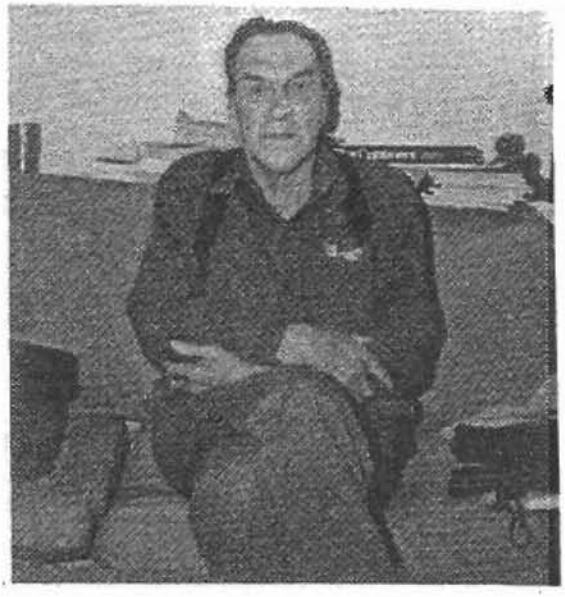


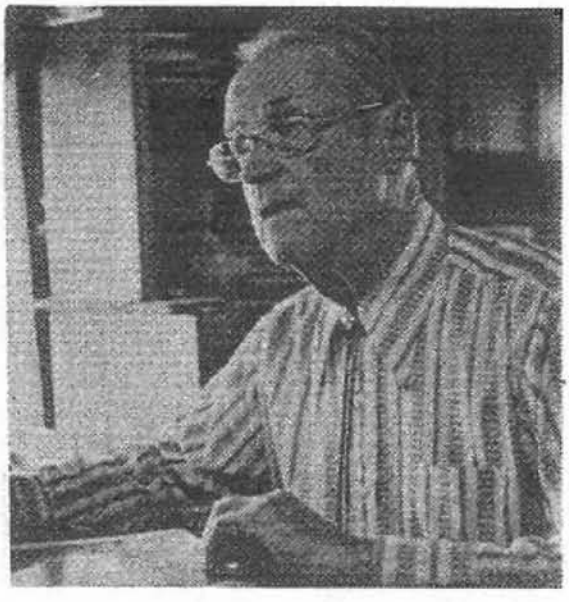
Plate 93 – 1897 inscription site at Portage Creek. (Alaska Heritage Resource Survey photo.)

Lawrence and Don Coffield. 1962
(From Truman Coffield, Anchorage)



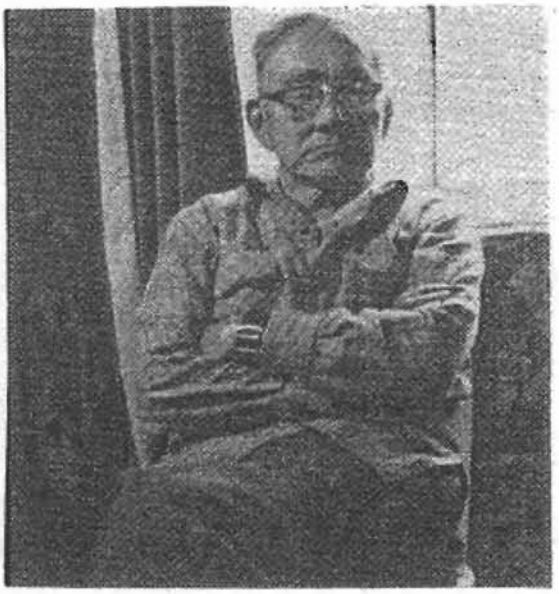
Jack Herman, Cantwell.

Frank and Walya Hobson, Tazlina.



L. L. "Doc" Hufman, Paxson.

Plate 94 — Some historical informants. (BLM photo, except as noted.)



Jim McKinley, Copper Center.

Ole Nickolai, Cantwell.

Tammany Nickolai, Cantwell.

Henry Peters. Cantwell

Plate 95 – Some historical informants. (BLM photos.)

Joe and Mori Secondchief, Mendeltna.

A. B. Smith, Big Delta.

Ed Smith, Fairbanks.

Jim and John Tyone, Gulkana.

Plate 96 – Some historical informants. (BLM photos.)

This intern report was read and accepted by a staff member at:

Agency: BLM, Anchorage District Office
Address: 4700 E. 72nd Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99507

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), located in Boulder, Colorado, is a compact organization serving regional higher education needs in the 13 western states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. During its 25-year history, it has provided projects in higher education in a number of areas: professional student exchanges, health and human services, criminal justice, minority programs, and student internships.

The WICHE Intern Program

The WICHE Intern Program is a service-learning/student internship program for students in the 13 western states. The program provides work experiences for upper division undergraduate, and graduate and professional students. The internship involves a fulltime commitment for a period of 12-36 weeks in an approved agency, some with credit, all with paid stipends. The fields for student internships have been varied, with special efforts by WICHE to develop student experiences in areas traditionally lacking in practicum opportunities: humanities, multicultural education, economic development, energy, rural education, and handicapped education. The criteria for approval of a student internship "project" is that students perform professional-level work for the agency in which they are placed, most times completing a professional report "commissioned" by the sponsoring agency.

Services of the WICHE Intern Program

Although the Intern Program provides internships in a variety of fields contingent upon the sources of its funding, the services it provides are consistent in all internship projects:

- We locate the sponsoring agencies and work with them to develop projects for students;
- We recruit qualified students for the agency's selection of final intern(s);
- We assume responsibility for the accounting/bookkeeping functions which relate to internships, i.e., payment of weekly stipends, intern travel reimbursements, costs of publishing reports, liability insurance for students;
- We assist students to locate resource materials for the conduct of their project;
- We print intern reports and distribute them to agencies, depository libraries in the West, and others interested in reports;
- We evaluate the intern experience and conduct follow-ups with sponsors.

For further information, write WICHE Intern Program, WICHE, P.O. Drawer 'P', Boulder, Colorado 80302 or call (303) 497-0230.

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504:1080:IMC:WICHE:2H610