

## LAKE MINCHUMINA BIBLIOGRAPHY REFERENCE

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**DRAFT**

ALASKA'S  
KUSKOKWIM RIVER REGION:

A History

By

C. Michael Brown  
Bureau of Land Management  
State Office  
Anchorage, Alaska

1983

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## CONTENTS

Editor's Introduction	iii
Introduction	1
I. The Kuskokwim River Region	4
II. Exploration	53
III. Mining	101
IV. Hunting, Fishing, and Trapping	142
V. Communities	156
VI. Water Transport	244
VII. Roads and Trails	692
Index	792

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information was presented to make a navigability determination. However, the recommendations for the Middle Fork in T. 33 N., R. 29 W., Seward Meridian, the Pitka Fork, and the Salmon River were approved. On August 11, 1981, the BLM State Director concurred with the recommendations. 130/

#### Guitar Lake

This lake is located about one mile north of the Pitka Fork in Tps. 33 and 34 N., R. 28 W., Seward Meridian. In 1981, the BLM Anchorage District Office recommended that the lake be determined navigable, for it was suitable for floatplane landings. The district office noted that several lakes in the western limit of T. 33 N., R. 30 W., Seward Meridian, were also suitable for floatplane landings but made no recommendations for the lakes. The BLM State Director took no action on the recommendation for Guitar Lake. 131/

#### NORTH FORK KUSKOKWIM RIVER

The North Fork of the Kuskokwim River has long been an important water route to the Tanana and Yukon basins. Indians and later white prospectors and trappers ascended the Tanana, Kantishna, and Muddy rivers to Lake Minchumina, crossed a low divide to the headwaters of North Fork, and then descended that stream to the Kuskokwim River.

Although neither had been on the route, Josiah Edward Spurr and Lieutenant Joseph S. Herron noted the existence of the portage between the Tanana and Kuskokwim rivers. 132/ The first specific mention of the Minchumina portage was made by Herron in 1899: "A short portage between Minchumina and the

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Kuskokwim results from the extraordinary invasion of the former into the latter's territory, and the Indian canoe route between these waters is via this portage." 133/ The location of the portage is correctly illustrated on Herron's map of the upper Kuskokwim basin.

Spurr and Herron were not the first white men to learn of the existence of the route. Spurr himself recorded that sometime in the late 1880s, Frank Densmore and a party of prospectors journeyed from the Tanana River to the Kuskokwim River. It is not known what season of the year the Densmore party made the journey, but if the prospectors traveled in the summer, as seems probable, they may have crossed the Minchumina portage. Other white men were to follow. Spurr wrote that a prospector named Al King followed Densmore's route about the same time. Interviewing several Indian elders in the basin in the early 1960s, Hosley learned that a few white trappers traveled from the Kuskokwim River to the Tanana River via Minchumina portage. In the late 1880s or early 1890s, a white trapper ascended the North Fork, crossed the portage, and descended Kantishna River to the Tanana River. According to Hosley, the Indians considered this ascent of the North Fork by one white man as a "near super-human feat, since the current is comparatively rapid on the upper reaches of the river." 134/ Not long thereafter, a small party of white trappers took the same route. Oral tradition has it that one of the white men was killed somewhere on the upper reaches of the North Fork by Koyukon Indians from the west. 135/

During the gold rushes to the Kuskokwim and Kantishna rivers in 1905, prospectors and trappers doubtless made use of the Minchumina portage to explore virgin territory, and to reach the new gold camps on the lower

Kuskokwim River, the Kantishna River, and the Tanana River. Unfortunately, few recorded their experiences. The Fairbanks Northern Light reported that J. D. Green and J. M. Smith ascended the North Fork in a knockdown steam launch in the summer of 1906. The two men wintered on the launch at the mouth of Swift Fork, then known as McKinley Forks, and in the spring, when trail conditions were suitable, traveled to Fairbanks. The two men claimed that "in high water a launch could be steamed to within ten miles of Lake Minchumina, the head of navigation for the Kantishna." 136/

By this time the Minchumina portage had already become an established route of travel between the Kuskokwim and Tanana rivers. In 1907, George B. Gordon and his brother Maclaren ascended the Kantishna and Muddy rivers to Lake Minchumina, crossed the portage to the North Fork, and descended that stream and the Kuskokwim River to Bethel. George B. Gordon's account of the journey, published in 1917, was the first detailed description of the route. While the journal is primarily of interest to anthropologists, as it holds a great deal of information about Indians in the Lake Minchumina area, it contains many references to the fact that the Minchumina portage was used by white prospectors.

The Gordon brothers learned of the existence of the Minchumina portage in 1905. At Tanana, an Indian village on the Yukon River opposite the mouth of the Tanana River, George B. Gordon obtained a crude map of the Lake Minchumina area showing the location of the portage from Chief Henry of the Tanana Indians, with the Reverend Jules Prevost, a missionary at the nearby Fort Gibbon acting as interpreter. They learned from the Indian that Kantishna River had its source in Lake Minchumina and that the Kuskokwim River could be reached from the lake. According to the Chief, the Kuskokwim River was "good water."

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Intending to take the Kantishna River-Lake Minchumina route to the Kuskokwim River, the Gordon brothers returned to Tanana in 1907, and learned of the recent gold rush to Kantishna River and rumors of someone ascending the Kantishna River to the lake in a poling boat. In June, the brothers began the long journey to the lake in a canoe. Using the map provided by Chief Henry as a guide, they reached the lake after nearly a month of difficult travel. There they met two Indians at a small village who informed them that two white men in a large poling boat had crossed the lake to the portage ten days earlier. The Indians told the brothers that one could cross the Minchumina portage in five days if traveling light, and gave them a birchbark map of the lake, portage, and the North Fork.

After exploring the lake the Gordon brothers began the trek across the portage in early August. After crossing a low divide, they found signs, including an improvised roller, of someone dragging a boat over the ground. About two miles from the North Fork, they finally encountered two men with a poling boat. Gordon failed to record the names of the two men, only saying that they were bound for the South Fork of the Kuskokwim River where they planned to spend two years in prospecting and trapping. Continuing their journey, the Gordon brothers finally reached the North Fork on August 7, having spent seven days on the portage. George B. Gordon estimated it to be ten miles in length.

The Gordon brothers subsequently required about eight days to descend the North Fork and the Kuskokwim River to McGrath in their canoe. On the first day on the North Fork, they saw a cabin on a high bank. A trapper had built the cabin the previous summer and occupied it through the winter. On the third day, they found the Indian summer camp on the left bank of the river

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which the Indians on Lake Minchumina had described. The camp was then occupied by only one "very ancient Indian." Then, on the fifth day on the river, August 12, they met two trappers rowing two boats upriver. The two men had met several days earlier, and decided to form a partnership and trap on the North Fork for the winter. One of the men had spent three years on the South Fork of the Kuskokwim River; the other had spent the previous winter on the Takotna River and decided to abandon the field when prospectors appeared in the spring.

Shortly after meeting the two trappers, the Gordon brothers passed the mouth of Swift Fork, or as the Indians called it the Totzona, a muddy stream. Near the mouth of the river, they saw a hut on the bank and met two Indians in birchbark canoes who stated that their village was a short distance upriver. On the eighth day on the river, the Gordon brothers finally passed the mouth of the East Fork or the Chedotlothna and the two outlets of the South Fork or Istna, where they met an Indian in a canoe and saw the cabin of a trapper who had died sometime in the previous winter. From that place they pushed on to the new trading post of McGrath, and thence to Bethel on the lower Kuskokwim River where they obtained passage on the Hattie B. to Nome. 137/

The Gordon brothers reached the upper Kuskokwim River shortly after the gold rush to Ganes Creek. As more prospectors entered the area following subsequent gold discoveries on Innoko River and Kuskokwim River, some would travel up the North Fork to trap and to prospect. The account of Lee Raymond Dice in 1911-12 provides additional insight into the extent of traffic on the North Fork.

In February 1912, Dice, a deputy game warden, and Stephen Foster, a noted guide, traveled overland from Tanana to the headwaters of the North Fork.

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Descending the North Fork for about twelve miles, they met two men named Ben Anderson and James Johnson in a small cabin on a creek draining Haystack Mountain, also known locally as Cone Hill or Mount Unsuzi. Anderson and Johnson had spent the winter on the creek, digging prospect holes and trapping. Dice and Foster remained at the cabin for a time, and assisted the prospectors in the construction of a poling boat, a narrow, flat-bottomed craft about thirty-three feet in length with pointed ends. The boat was capable of carrying a load of one ton or more. On May 1, the ice in the North Fork went out; and eleven days later, Anderson, Johnson, and Foster left the camp in the poling boat for McGrath. The prospectors intended to trade their furs for provisions at McGrath, and then return to a different location on the North Fork for another year of prospecting and trapping.

In early June, Dice constructed a scow seventeen feet long with flared sides seven feet wide, and on June 18, a man named Ben Mozee joined him. Five days later, both began to float down the North Fork in the scow. Dice wrote that the river was "small, swift, with dangerous snags." Landing at the portage, Dice and Mozee walked over the eight-mile trail to Lake Minchumina, and met two men on the trail. One man had dragged a large canoe to the lake and was carrying his equipment over the last stage. His companion had already dragged a heavy poling boat over the trail to the lake. Dice saw various contraptions used to haul boats over the portage. One was a small cart designed to move on a track of birch poles. Another was a large cart which someone pulled over the trail with handmade pulleys and rope.

Returning to the North Fork, Dice and Mozee continued their journey down the river. Their progress was rapid, the current being swift in many places, occasionally broken by long sluggish stretches. After several days on the

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river, Dice noted that the current gradually became sluggish in a stretch of a few miles to the junction of the McKinley Fork (Swift Fork). Rowing the scow through the "dead water," they finally reached the mouth of the Swift Fork, a large muddy stream. There they met an Indian named Sheshuey or Shesuie in a canoe who had a cache of rotten moose meat nearby. According to the Indian, Dice wrote, the village of Telida was located ten miles overland or twenty-five miles by river up the Swift Fork.

Below the mouth of the Swift Fork, Dice and Mozee found the current of the North Fork very rapid and encountered many shallow places. Several times their scow struck the stream bottom. Numerous sunken logs and stumps, and sweepers were hazards to navigation, Dice wrote. They passed a few cabins on the banks, but most were vacant. They saw two cabins occupied by prospectors who had already made their summer trip to McGrath to obtain supplies. They met one man on the North Fork who was returning to his cabin; and near Big River they passed several men bound for the North Fork. Dice eventually reached McGrath, then consisting only of three or four cabins, and ascended the Takotna River to Takotna. He subsequently returned to McGrath and floated down the Kuskokwim to the Russian Mission summer portage. 138/

Not long after Dice passed through the district, the North Fork received a considerable amount of attention as the result of the disappearance of Bob Lagin, a trapper and prospector, in the headwaters of the stream. In August 1914, Stephen Foster, then back in Fairbanks, informed authorities that in March 1913, while in the Lake Minchumina area, he had learned from the Indians that Lagin was on the North Fork, about three miles below the Minchumina portage

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with ample supplies recently acquired from Jesse Yoder. Foster reported that, following a confrontation with Indians at the mouth of the North Fork, Yoder and Lagin ascended the North Fork in a boat and canoe. Apparently fearing reprisals from the Indians, Yoder refused to remain on the North Fork and returned to McGrath, leaving the canoe with Lagin. 139/

When Lagin failed to return to McGrath, rumors had it that Lagin had been murdered by the Indians. In a letter to Deputy Marshal Percy G. Charles, Wilbur F. Green, the U.S. commissioner, expressed his suspicions that Indians had killed Lagin, and described a recent conversation with Yoder. Lagin and Yoder had killed two moose about thirty-five miles up the North Fork. The two men separated on September 12, planning to meet again in McGrath at Christmas. Yoder then took the moose downriver in a poling boat to the Big River trading post while Lagin went up the North Fork for about forty-five miles in his canoe to trap. Two days later, Yoder encountered Indians from the Swift Fork who attempted to intimidate him. A fist fight resulted, and, according to Yoder, a gun battle would have occurred if the Indians had not been aware of his prowess with a rifle. Yoder was convinced that these same Indians had killed Lagin, recalling too that another man named John Sigurson had recently disappeared in the country.

Green also described a conversation with Paul Minnick, a German who had recently returned from a hunting trip on the North Fork. Minnick ascended the river in a motorboat to the mouth of McKinley Fork (Swift Fork), where a cabin owned by another German named Frederick was located. Shortly after Minnick reached the cabin, Chief "Soo Suey" also arrived in a boat. Upon

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questioning the Indian, Minnick was given to understand that Lagin and two Indians had died on the same day. Green noted, however, that Minnick and the Indian may have misunderstood one another, as neither understood English well. He wrote too that one Cowan, who found Lagin's canoe and took it to the Big River trading post, stated that Lagin had crossed the divide to the Nowitna River. 140/

Rumors that the Indians had killed Lagin were eventually squelched by the investigation of Harry Sheppard, a deputy marshal at Ophir. In January 1915, he announced that Lagin had not been murdered by Indians. 141/

During the the 1910s and 1920s, prospectors and trappers worked the tributaries of the North Fork. Sometimes they chartered boats to take them upriver to their headquarters. In May 1921, the Kusko Times reported the recent departure of Charles and Victor Nystrom from McGrath in the motor boat Shamrock. The two men were transporting a number of passengers to Salmon River and Medfra, before continuing up the North Fork to a point said to be 350 miles from McGrath where their launch Red Wing was left in the fall of 1920. 142/

About a month later, Herman Hinsche, a trapper whose cabin was located at the mouth of Swift Fork, descended the North Fork to McGrath in a boat. In late July, Arthur Berry returned Hinsche as well as Herman Hanson to their trapping headquarters. 143/ Several weeks later, Jesse Yoder descended the North Fork from the Swift Fork in a launch (probably the Maple Leaf) with C. O. Peterson on board. Yoder subsequently ascended the North Fork, this time to bring Major John C. Gotwals of the Alaska Road Commission downriver to Medfra. 144/

In September 1922, Charles and Victor Nystrom again took the launch Red Wing to the Swift Fork, intending to search for Hinsche who failed to appear at McGrath as was expected. They found Hinsche's canoe and large boat in the water, but Hinsche himself was not to be found. Some believed that the trapper was lost, since he left more than \$1,000 worth of furs with a friend and a strangely worded note. But he reappeared in McGrath in October 1922 with fellow trappers John Dunn and Bob Robeson. 145/

Boat traffic on the North Fork must have been fairly heavy, for in the early 1920s local residents began agitating for mail service on the route during the summer and winter seasons. At this time, residents of McGrath, Takotna, and Ophir were receiving their mail by trail from Ruby during the winter, and by river from Holy Cross and Bethel during the summer. The editor of the Kusko Times, complaining about the poor mail service, suggested that the mail be routed from Nenana on the government railroad to McGrath throughout the year. Mail carriers could use boats on the North Fork, Lake Minchumina, and Kantishna River in the summer; and they could use sleds on practically the same route in the winter. Referring to an unnamed authority on the summer route, the editor declared "that no impediments other than a few riffles at various distances apart, give any great hindrances to the successful navigation of the North Fork, at least until the portage point is reached. With a boat of proper draft, equipped with [an] engine to give speed averaging 10 miles an hour, the distance from McGrath to the portage would be accomplished in 40 hours." Allowing a day to cross the portage by horse or dog team, the editor argued that only seven days would be required to travel from McGrath to Nenana, a distance estimated to be six hundred miles. 146/

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In support of the editorial, the newspaper published a statement by Dave Clough, a roadhouse proprietor at McGrath. Clough claimed to know two men who crossed the divide from the Nowitna River to Lake Minchumina, and then portaged to the North Fork, which they descended to the Kuskokwim River. Theodore Von Frank, a well-known prospector, also crossed the portage and went down the river, although he did so in the winter. As to the winter route, Clough reported that Berry, who knew the country well, had informed officials of the Post Office Department that the trail from McGrath to the railroad line was about 150 miles in distance, and that a number of men had traveled from Kantishna to McGrath in five days. 147/

The Alaska Road Commission was not unaware of the agitation. In August 1921, Major John C. Gotwals ascended the Kantishna and Muddy rivers to Lake Minchumina in a small steamboat. With the assistance of K. B. Kammersgard, a trapper and roadhouse proprietor on the lake, he crossed the portage, constructed a raft, and then floated down the North Fork. Near the close of the first day on the river, Gotwals met Sam Sanderson and a group of prospectors in a twenty-six-foot boat and Arthur Berry in his motor boat. Gotwals borrowed Sanderson's boat, and by himself rowed it to Herman Hinsche's headquarters at the mouth of Swift Fork. In the meantime, Arthur Berry transported Sanderson and presumably his party to the portage in the motorboat. Gotwals remained at Hinsche's cabin for two days before Jesse Yoder arrived in his launch, the Maple Leaf. He then accompanied Yoder downstream to Berry's Landing, and then took the steamboat Tana to McGrath, arriving there on September 3. From McGrath, Gotwals went to Takotna on the launch Maple Leaf, and subsequently followed the summer trail to Ophir and Ruby. 148/

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Not long after Gotwals passed through the section, local residents circulated a petition for the establishment of mail service on the Nenana-McGrath summer route. Stating that motor boats could be used on the entire route with the exception of the portage, the petitioners called for the establishment of a mail service on the route on a bi-weekly basis during the months of June, July, August, and September. In addition, Robert S. Boyd, chairman of the McGrath Commercial Club, wrote a letter dated November 5, 1921 to Alaska's Delegate in Congress, Don Sutherland, requesting his assistance in establishing the Nenana-McGrath route as a summer mail route. Boyd claimed that mail carriers would be able to haul one thousand pounds of mail on each trip. An Indian village was located near the portage, and a white trader at the foot of the lake. He noted as well that the steamboat Pioneer, carrying four horses and outfits for four men, had traveled from Nenana to Lake Minchumina in 1921 in a matter of four days. 149/

Little more was said about the summer route until the Post Office Department established winter mail service on the Nenana-McGrath trail, and the Alaska Road Commission decided to improve the winter trail. Writing to the Kusko Times on January 12, 1925, W. J. Widman, a resident of Medfra since 1921, advocated the establishment of summer mail service on the Nenana - McGrath route, and in support of his argument noted the fact that Arthur Berry of Medfra "always seemed to be able to get to the portage whenever he had occasion to go there." 150/ In October 1924, for example, Berry transported a number of people up the North Fork to the portage. Leaving Medfra on October 5, Berry ascended the river in his launch with J. L. Berry, Archie Higgins, and a child named Bessie Higgins on board. Arriving at the portage on October 10, Arthur Berry escorted his passengers across the portage to

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Lake Minchumina, where they were met by K. B. Kammersgard. Leaving the lake on October 12, Kammersgard transported the passengers in his boat to Nenana where they arrived on October 15. The passengers then continued their journey to San Francisco by train and steamship. 151/ Later interviewing Arthur Berry, Widman learned that the water in the North Fork at the time of the trip was "pretty low," and that the trip would have been easier in a sternwheeler than in his propeller-driven launch. 152/

In addition, Widman sent the newspaper a copy of a letter written by K. B. Kammersgard on January 3, 1925. Kammersgard wrote that the portage was about eight and one-half miles long, striking Lake Minchumina in its southwest corner. The trail was in poor condition, and should be relocated to a high, dry ridge where it would strike the lake in its northwest corner and reduce the distance by one-half mile to one mile. Kammersgard claimed that freight from Nenana could be landed at the portage for four cents a pound; and that he would transport passengers to Nenana for about \$200, depending upon the size of the party. One man and his board would be charged \$50. As concerns the route for the transportation of mail, Kammersgard wrote, "I believe that's the only route by which it can be landed in McGrath two times a month, if they want it." 153/

The people of McGrath and Takotna wanted it. The Kusko Times published the correspondence of Widman and Kammersgard; and letters were sent to H. H. Ross, the representative of the Fourth Division in the Territorial Legislature, requesting his assistance. On March 12, 1925, Ross wrote to James G. Steese, president of the Alaska Road Commission, on the possibility of the Commission surveying the Minchumina portage, and forwarded to him letters from W. J.

Widman, Peter McMullen, the Innoko Lumber Company, and the Schwabacher Hardware Company, all advocating adoption of the summer route for the transportation of mail. Ross stated that it was his understanding that local inspectors of the Post Office Department desired to adopt the route, but could not do so until a survey had been made. Steese replied by letter dated March 13, informing Ross that a representative of the Commission was to examine the portage in the summer. 154/

In June 1925, the Road Commission announced that Major Lunsford E. Oliver, the Engineer Officer of the Commission, and Robert Sommers, a member of the Territorial road commission, were to inspect the portage with a view to its improvement to road, trail, or tramway standard. They were also to investigate water conditions on the upper Kantishna River and the North Fork and determine the practicality of river boat service on the streams. According to Steese, the Road Commission expected to improve the portage if Oliver's report was favorable and if the Post Office Department agreed to establish mail service on the route during the summer months. 155/

Oliver and Sommers made the trip from Nenana to McGrath in six and one-half days. They chartered a boat at Nenana to take them to Lake Minchumina, and on the North Fork side of the portage they met Joe Oates by previous arrangement. Oates took Oliver and Sommers in his launch to McGrath. Continuing to Takotna, the two men subsequently went over the summer trail to Iditarod, and there obtained passage on a boat to Holy Cross. 156/

While at Takotna, Oliver refused to discuss his investigations with local newspaper reporters. Evidently the Road Commission decided that the route was feasible, but would not improve the portage until the Post Office Department let a contract

for summer mail service on the route. 157/ However, the department was at this time planning to use airplanes for the delivery of mail to communities on the upper Kuskokwim River. Mail service on the Minchumina portage route was never instituted.

The introduction of airplanes as carriers of the mail was not entirely welcomed by local residents. On September 4, 1925, Jack Mutchler of Takotna wrote to Alaska Delegate Dan Sutherland that airplanes would not meet the local needs for better mail service. He stated that the majority of local residents favored the adoption of the Lake Minchumina route for the delivery of mail on a bi-weekly basis during the open season. Once mail service on the route was established, perishable freight could be delivered at McGrath from four to six weeks earlier than usual. Also, mail carriers on the route would be in touch with the winter mail trail whenever an early freeze-up of the river occurred. Finally, the adoption of the route would tend to develop the country between McGrath and Nenana. As Mutchler put it, "Prospectors who want to go into that section at present are either compelled to buy or charter a gas boat, which you know isn't likely to happen. With a permanent route established as proposed, they could come and go at will." 158/

As airplanes became the general mode of travel between Fairbanks and Nenana and McGrath, boat traffic on the North Fork declined in frequency. The North Fork continued, however, to be the primary route of travel to hunting and trapping grounds. In September 1937, for example, the Kusko Times reported that Victor Nystrom was headed to his trapping grounds on the North Fork in a boat. He was accompanied by two other trappers named George Harwood and Arnold Akers, both bound for Bill Hartzberg's trapping grounds. 159/

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Local residents continue to travel on the North Fork in connection with hunting and trapping activities. However, only a few travel up the river as far as the mouth of Swift Fork. In 1979, Diane Gudgel-Holmes of the Alaska Division of Research and Development contacted twelve individuals who had operated boats on the river. Five individuals had ascended the North Fork beyond the Swift Fork. In 1971, Kenneth T. Alt ascended the "slow and crooked" river as far as Little Hog Butte with a twenty-four-foot boat and propeller unit. Miska Deaphon stated that he had ascended the river to the Minchumina portage only twice in his lifetime. Deaphon Eluska, whose winter home is located on the North Fork opposite the mouth of the Swift Fork, stated that he once went to the Minchumina portage and beyond about thirty years ago in a poling boat. He said there were places where he had to line his boat through some shallow spots, but had no problem descending the river. He may have used a thirty-foot poling boat, but now uses an eighteen-foot boat with a propeller unit. Dick Nikolai claimed to have gone hunting nearly every year on the North Fork above the Swift Fork; he usually did not go beyond the Chleca Lakes but said that it was possible to go farther. Steve Nikolai said that he ascended the river to a cabin above the West Fork of the North Fork just for sightseeing, but not often. 160/

The BLM first considered the navigability of the North Fork in 1977 in connection with land selections made by Nikolai Village under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. In June of that year, the Anchorage District Office recommended that the river be determined navigable to the mouth of the Swift Fork as the river was used for travel, trade, and commerce to Telida Village. The district office indicated moreover that the river was susceptible to navigation above the

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mouth of the Swift Fork and that a "moderate" amount of traffic occurred on the river. Small barges, skiffs, canoes, and rafts were used on the river for inter-village travel and for hunting and fishing trips. 161/

On May 6, 1980, the BLM State Director determined the North Fork to be navigable to the Minchumina Portage. This determination was made upon the recommendation of the BLM State Office's Division of Resources. According to a report entitled "Navigable and Nonnavigable Waters in the Upper Kuskokwim Basin" which was prepared in the Division of Resources: "The historic record indicates that the North Fork was an important route of travel between the Kuskokwim and Tanana River basins. Pole boats and launches have been used on the river." 162/

#### Swift Fork

With the North Fork of the Kuskokwim River, the Swift Fork has been the primary route of summer travel to Medfra and McGrath for residents of Telida Village. White prospectors and trappers may have ascended the river as far as the village in poling boats or launches; but there does not appear to be documentation of the journeys. The record indicates that canoes and river boats were used on the river.

In 1979, several people reported to Diane Gudgel-Holmes that they traveled by boat on the Swift Fork and its tributaries. Kenneth T. Alt stated that in the fall of 1971, he ascended the Swift Fork to the mouth of Highpower Creek, and thence up that creek for a distance of about twenty miles, or to the eastern edge of T. 23 S., R. 30 E., Kateel River Meridian, in a twenty-four-foot riverboat. Beyond the mouth of Highpower Creek, he said, one would need an

FF 9461 1

airboat to ascend the Swift Fork. Nic Dennis, Deaphon Eluska, and Dick Nikolai stated that they also used the Swift Fork in boats to reach Telida Village. Eluska, who maintains a summer home at Telida, stated that the Swift Fork is shallow at times and mentioned the existence of sandbars and snags on the river. Steve Nikolai stated that he ascended the Swift Fork as far as the mouth of Highpower Creek in the fall to hunt, and Highpower Creek to the mouth of Deep Creek to fish. He said that he went there several times a year, and could have proceeded farther up Highpower Creek if he wanted. Dick Nikolai ascended the river as far as the mouth of Highpower Creek. Above that point, he said, the Swift Fork is too shallow and swift for boats. In addition, he ascended Highpower Creek to the mouth of Lonestar Creek in an eighteen-foot boat with a propeller unit. At that point, the water in Highpower Creek is about two feet deep and the channel about thirty feet wide with a gravel bottom. Sweepers are apparently common along the creek above the mouth of Lonestar Creek.

Both Dick Nikolai and Steve Nikolai reported that they used Red Slough as a route of travel. Dick Nikolai stated that the slough was easy to navigate in his eighteen-foot boat; he hunted along the entire length of the slough. Steve Nikolai said that he used the slough a lot for hunting, and in making trips to Telida. 163/

In 1977, when identifying public easements on land selected by Telida Village under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, the BLM proposed to determine the Swift Fork navigable through Section 6, T. 25 S., R. 30 E., Kateel River Meridian, a point well above the mouth of Highpower Creek, and Highpower Creek to Section 26, T. 23 S., R. 30 E., Kateel River Meridian. Describing

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Navigable and nonnavigable waters in the

Navigable and Nonnavigable Waters in the  
Upper Kuskokwim River Basin

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## NORTH FORK OF THE KUSKOKWIM RIVER

The North Fork of the Kuskokwim River has long been an important water route to the Tanana and Yukon basins. Indians and later white prospectors, trappers, and hunters ascended the Tanana, Kantishna, and Muddy Rivers to Lake Minchumina, crossed a low divide to the North Fork, and descended that stream to the Kuskokwim River.

Although neither had been on the route, Josiah Edward Spurr and Lieutenant Joseph S. Herron knew of the portage between the Tanana and Kuskokwim Rivers. 75/ The first specific mention of the Minchumina Portage was made by Herron in 1899: "A short portage between Minchumina and the Kuskokwim results from the extraordinary invasion of the former into the latter's territory, and the Indian canoe route between these waters is via this portage." 76/ The location of the portage is correctly illustrated on Herron's map of the upper Kuskokwim basin.

Spurr and Herron were not the first white men to know of the existence of the trail. Spurr himself recorded that sometime in the late 1880's, Frank Densmore and a party of prospectors journeyed from the Tanana River to the Kuskokwim River. It is not known what season of the year the journey occurred, but if the prospectors traveled in the summer, as seems probable, they doubtless crossed the Minchumina Portage. Other white men were to follow. Spurr learned that a prospector named Al King followed Densmore's route about the same time. Interviewing several Indian elders in the basin in the early 1960's, Hosley learned that a few white trappers travelled from the Kuskokwim River to the Tanana River via Minchumina Portage. In the late 1880's or early 1890's, a white trapper ascended the North Fork, crossed the portage, and descended the Kantishna River to the Tanana River. The Indians considered this ascent of the North Fork by one white man as a "near super-human feat, since the current is comparatively rapid on the upper reaches of the river." 77/ Not long thereafter, a small party of white trappers took the same route. Oral tradition has it that one of the white men was killed somewhere on the upper reaches of the North Fork by Koyukon Indians from the west. 78/

Following the gold rushes to the Kuskokwim River and the Kantishna River in the 1900's, prospectors and trappers doubtless crossed the Minchumina Portage to explore virgin territory, and to travel to the new gold camps on the Lower Kuskokwim River, the Kantishna River, and at Fairbanks. Unfortunately, few recorded their experiences. The Fairbanks Northern Light, a local newspaper, did report that J. D. Green and J. M. Smith ascended the North Fork in a knockdown steam launch in the summer of 1906. The two men wintered on the launch at the mouth of Swift Fork, then known as McKinley Forks, and in the spring, when trail conditions were suitable, traveled to Fairbanks. The two men reported that "in high water a launch could be steamed to within ten miles of Lake Minchumina, the head of navigation for the Kantishna." 79/

By this time the Minchumina Portage had already become a well-known route of travel between the Kuskokwim and Tanana Rivers. In 1907,

George B. Gordon and his brother Maclaren ascended the Kantishna and Muddy Rivers to Lake Minchumina, crossed the portage to the North Fork, and descended that stream and the Kuskokwim River to Bethel. George B. Gordon's account of the journey was published in 1917; it was the first detailed description of the route. While the journal is primarily of interest to anthropologists, as it contains a great deal of information about Indians in the Lake Minchumina area, it contains many references to the fact that the Minchumina Portage was heavily used by white prospectors and trappers.

The Gordon brothers had learned of the existence of the Minchumina Portage in 1905. While visiting Tanana, an Indian village on the Yukon River opposite the mouth of the Tanana River, George B. Gordon obtained a crude map of the Lake Minchumina area showing the location of the portage from Chief Henry of the Tanana Indians, with the Reverend Jules Prevost, a missionary at nearby Fort Gibbon, acting as interpreter. They learned from the Indian that Kantishna River had its source in Lake Minchumina and that the Kuskokwim River could be reached from the lake. According to the Chief, the Kuskokwim River was "good water."

Intending to take the Kantishna River - Lake Minchumina route to the Kuskokwim River, the Gordon brothers returned to Tanana in 1907, and learned of the recent gold rush to Kantishna River and rumors of someone ascending the Kantishna River to the lake in a poling boat. In June 1907, the brothers began the long journey to the lake in a canoe. Using the map provided by Chief Henry as a guide, the Gordon brothers reached the lake after nearly a month of difficult travel. They met two Indians in a small village on the lake who informed them that two white men in a large poling boat had crossed the lake to the portage 10 days earlier. The Indians told the brothers that one could cross the Minchumina Portage, travelling light, in five days, and gave them a birchbark map of the lake, portage, and the North Fork.

After exploring the lake the Gordon brothers began the trek across the portage in early August. After crossing a low divide, they found signs, including an improvised roller, of someone dragging a boat over the ground. About two miles from the North Fork, they finally encountered two men with a poling boat. Gordon failed to record the names of the two men, only saying that they were bound for the South Fork of the Kuskokwim River where they planned to spend two years prospecting and trapping. Continuing their journey, the Gordon brothers finally reached the North Fork on August 7, having spent seven days on the portage, estimated to be 10 miles in length.

The Gordon brothers subsequently required about eight days to descend the North Fork and the Kuskokwim River to McGrath in their canoe. On the first day on the North Fork, they saw a cabin on a high bank. A trapper had built the cabin the previous summer and occupied it through the winter. On the third day, they found an Indian summer camp on the left bank of the river. The Indians on Lake Minchumina had described the camp to the Gordon brothers. The camp was occupied by only one "very ancient Indian." Then, on the fifth day on the river, August 12,

they met two trappers rowing two boats upriver. The two trappers had met several days earlier, and decided to form a partnership and trap on the North Fork for the winter. One of the men had spent three years on the South Fork of the Kuskokwim River; the other had spent the previous winter on the Takotna River and decided to abandon the field when prospectors appeared in the spring.

Shortly after encountering the two trappers, the Gordon brothers passed the mouth of Swift Fork, or as the Indians called it the Totzona, a muddy stream. Near the mouth of the river, they found a hut on the bank and two Indians in birchbark canoes who stated that their village was a short distance upriver. On the eighth day on the river, the Gordon brothers finally passed the mouth of the East Fork or the Chedotlothna and the two outlets of the South Fork or Istna, where they met an Indian in a canoe and saw the cabin of a trapper who had died sometime in the previous winter. From that place they pushed on to the new trading post of McGrath, thence to Bethel on the lower Kuskokwim River where they obtained passage on the Hattie B. to Nome. 80/

The Gordon brothers reached the upper Kuskokwim River shortly after the gold rush to Ganes Creek. As more prospectors entered the area following subsequent gold discoveries on the Innoko River and Kuskokwim River, some would travel up the North Fork to trap and to prospect. The account of Lee Raymond Dice in 1912 reveals the extent of traffic on the North Fork at that time.

In February 1912, Dice, a deputy game warden, and Stephen Foster, a noted guide, traveled overland from Tanana to the headwaters of the North Fork by way of the Cosna River, a tributary of the Tanana River. Descending the North Fork for about 12 miles, they found two men named Ben Anderson and James Johnson in a small cabin on a creek draining Haystack Mountain, also known locally as Cone Hill or Mount Unsuzi. Anderson and Johnson had spent the winter on the creek, digging prospect holes and trapping fur-bearing animals. Dice and Foster remained at the cabin, and assisted the prospectors in the construction of a poling boat, a narrow, flat-bottomed craft about 33 feet in length with pointed ends. The boat was capable of carrying a load of one ton or more. On May 1, the ice in the North Fork went out; and 11 days later, Anderson, Johnson, and Foster left the camp in the poling boat for McGrath. The prospectors intended to trade their furs for provisions at McGrath, and then return to a different location on the North Fork for another year of prospecting and trapping.

During early June, Dice constructed a scow, which was 17 feet long with flared sides seven feet wide. On June 18, a man named Ben Mozee joined him, and five days later both began to float down the North Fork. Dice recalled that the river was "small, swift, with dangerous snags." Landing at the portage, Dice and Mozee walked over the trail to Lake Minchumina. Dice recalled that men took boats over the portage each year, and in this instance he found two men on the eight-mile portage. One man had dragged a large canoe to the lake and was carrying his equipment over the last stage. His companion had already dragged a

McGrath, Takotna, and Ophir were receiving their mail by trail from Ruby during the winter, and by river from Holy Cross and Bethel during the summer. The editor of The Kusko Times, complaining about the poor mail service, suggested that the mail be routed from Nenana on the Government railroad to McGrath throughout the year. Mail carriers could use boats on the North Fork, Lake Minchumina, and Kantishna River in the summer; and they could use sleds on practically the same route in the winter. Referring to an unnamed authority on the summer route, the editor declared "that no impediments other than a few riffles at various distances apart, give any great hindrances to the successful navigation of the North Fork, at least until the portage point is reached." He then continued: "With a boat of proper draft, equipped with [an] engine to give speed averaging 10 miles an hour, the distance from McGrath to the portage would be accomplished in 40 hours." Allowing a day to cross the portage by horse or dog team, the editor argued that only seven days would be required to travel from McGrath to Nenana, a distance estimated to be 600 miles. 89/

In support of the editorial, the newspaper published a statement by Dave Clough, a roadhouse proprietor at McGrath. Clough claimed to know two men who crossed the divide from the Nowitna River to Lake Minchumina, and then portaged to the North Fork, which they descended to the Kuskokwim River. Theodore Von Frank, a well-known prospector on the Nixon Fork, also crossed the portage and went down the river, although he did so in the winter. As to the winter route, Clough reported that Berry, who knew the country well, had informed officials of the Post Office Department that the trail from McGrath to the railroad line was about 150 miles in distance, and that a number of men had traveled from Kantishna to McGrath in five days. 90/

The Alaska Road Commission was not unaware of the agitation. In August 1921, Major John C. Gotwals of the Commission ascended the Kantishna River and Muddy River to Lake Minchumina in a small steamboat, the Pioneer. With the assistance of K. B. Kammersgard, a trapper and roadhouse proprietor on the lake, Gotwals crossed the portage, constructed a raft, and then floated down the North Fork. Near the close of the first day on the river, he encountered Sam Sanderson and a group of prospectors in a 26-foot boat and Arthur Berry in a motorboat. Gotwals borrowed Sanderson's boat, and by himself rowed it to the mouth of Swift Fork, where he found Herman Hinsche's headquarters. In the meantime, Arthur Berry transported Sanderson and presumably his party to the portage in his boat. Gotwals remained at Hinsche's cabin for two days before Jesse Yoder arrived in his launch, the Maple Leaf. He then accompanied Yoder downstream to Berry's Landing, where he took the steamboat Tana to McGrath, arriving there on September 3. Gotwals then took the launch Maple Leaf to Takotna, and subsequently followed the summer trails to Ophir and Ruby. 91/

Not long after Gotwals passed through the section, local residents circulated a petition for the establishment of mail service on the Nenana-McGrath summer route. Stating that motorboats could be used on

the entire route with the exception of the portage, the petitioners called for mail service on a bi-weekly basis during the months of June, July, August, and September. In addition, Robert S. Boyd, Chairman of the McGrath Commercial Club, wrote a letter dated November 5, 1921, to the Alaska Delegate to Congress, Dan Sutherland, requesting his assistance in establishing summer mail service on the the Nenana-McGrath route. Boyd claimed that mail carriers would be able to haul 1,000 pounds of mail on each trip. An Indian village was located near the portage, and a white trader at the foot of the lake. He noted as well that the steamboat Pioneer, carrying four horses and outfits for four men, had traveled from Nenana to Lake Minchumina in 1921 in a matter of four days. 92/

Little more was said about summer route until the Post Office Department established winter mail service on the Nenana - McGrath trail, and the Alaska Road Commission began improvement of the winter trail. Writing to The Kusko Times on January 12, 1925, W. J. Widman, a resident of Medfra since 1921, advocated the establishment of summer mail service on the Nenana - McGrath route, and in support of his argument noted the fact that Arthur Berry of Medfra "always seemed to be able to get to the portage whenever he had occasion to go there." 93/ In October 1924, for example, Berry transported a number of people up the North Fork to the portage. Leaving Medfra on October 5, Berry ascended the river in his launch with J. L. Berry, Archie Higgins, and a child named Bessie Higgins on board. Arriving at the portage on October 10, Arthur Berry escorted his passengers across the portage to Lake Minchumina, where they were met by K. B. Kammersgard. Leaving the lake on October 12, Kammersgard transported the passengers in his boat to Nenana where they arrived on October 15. The passengers then continued their journey to San Francisco by train and steamship. 94/ Later interviewing Arthur Berry, Widman learned that the water in the North Fork at the time of the trip was "pretty low," and that the trip would have been easier in a sternwheeler than in his propeller-driven launch.

In addition, Widman sent the newspaper a copy of a letter written by K. B. Kammersgard on January 3, 1925 in response to Widman's letter of inquiry dated December 14, 1924. Kammersgard stated that the portage was about 8.5 miles long, striking Lake Minchumina in its southwest corner. The trail was in poor condition, and thus should be relocated to a high, dry ridge where it would strike the lake in its northwest corner and reduce the distance by one-half mile to one mile. Kammersgard claimed that freight from Nenana could be landed at the portage for four cents a pound; and that he would transport passengers to Nenana for about \$200, depending upon the size of the party. One man and his board would be charged \$50. As concerns the route for the transportation of mail, Kammersgard wrote, "I believe that's the only route by which it can be landed in McGrath two times a month, if they want it." 95/

The people of McGrath and Takotna wanted it. The Kusko Times published the correspondence of Widman and Kammersgard; and letters were sent to H. H. Ross, the representative of the Fourth Division in the Territorial

Legislature, requesting his assistance. On March 12, 1925, Ross wrote to James G. Steese, president of the Alaska Road Commission, in regards to the possibility that the Commission survey the Minchumina Portage, and forwarded him letters from W. J. Widman, Peter McMullen, the Innoko Lumber Company, and the Schwabacher Hardware Company. Ross stated that it was his understanding that local inspectors of the Post Office Department desired to adopt the route, but could not do so until a survey had been made. Steese replied by letter dated March 13, informing Ross that a representative of the Commission was to examine the portage in the summer. 96/

In June 1925, the Commission announced that Major Lunsford E. Oliver, the Engineer Officer of the Commission, and Robert Sommers, a member of the Territorial road commission, were to inspect the portage, with a view to its improvement to road, trail, or tramway standard. They were also to investigate water conditions on the upper Kantishna River and the North Fork and determine the practicality of riverboat service on the streams. According to Steese, the Commission expected to improve the portage if Oliver's report was favorable and if the Post Office Department agreed to establish mail service on the route during the summer months. 97/

Oliver and Sommers made the trip from Nenana to McGrath in 6.5 days. They chartered a boat at Nenana to take them to Lake Minchumina, and on the North Fork side of the portage they met Joe Oates by previous arrangement. Oates took Oliver and Sommers in his launch to McGrath. Continuing to Takotna, Oliver and Sommers then took the summer trail to Iditarod where they took passage on a boat to Holy Cross. 98/

While in Takotna, Oliver refused to discuss his investigation of the route with local newspaper reporters. Evidently the Commission decided that the route was feasible, but would not improve the portage until the Post Office Department let a contract for summer mail service on the route. 99/ However, the department was at this time planning to use airplanes for the delivery of mail to communities on the upper Kuskokwim River. Mail service on the Minchumina Portage route was never instituted.

The introduction to airplanes as carriers of the mail was not entirely welcomed by local residents. On September 4, 1925 Jack Mutchler of Takotna wrote a letter to Alaska Delegate Dan Sutherland, expressing his belief that airplanes would not meet the local needs for mail service. He stated that the majority of local residents favored the adoption of the Lake Minchumina route for the delivery of mail on a bi-weekly basis during the open season. Once the mail service was established, perishable freight could be delivered at McGrath from four to six weeks earlier than presently possible. Also, mail carriers on the route would be in touch with the winter mail trail whenever the early freeze-up of the river ice occurred. Finally, the adoption of the route would tend to develop the country between McGrath and Nenana. As Mutchler put it, "Prospectors who want to go into that section at present are either compelled to buy or charter a gas boat, which you know isn't likely to happen. With a permanent route established as proposed, they could come and go at will." 100/

## NENANA-MCGRATH TRAIL

Before the winter mail trail was adopted in 1922, the Nenana-McGrath route had attracted some attention as a possible route for summer and winter travel between the Tanana and Kuskokwim Rivers. Observing the country from the headwaters of the South Fork in 1898, Josiah Edward Spurr wrote, "The divide between the upper Kuskokwim and the lower Tanana consists of low mountains which offer few obstacles; indeed, a native route to the Kuskokwim is by way of the Toclat River, which enters the Lower Tanana and which communicates with a tributary of the Kuskokwim. He believed it probable that a wagon road or railroad across this divide could be easily located and constructed. 37/

In the winter of 1899-1900, Lieutenant Joseph S. Herron and his men learned from the Indians of Telida Village the location of the summer portage from Lake Minchumina to the North Fork of the Kuskokwim River, and the winter trail from Telida Village to Coschaget on the Tanana River. Two years later, the expedition of Alfred Hulse Brooks followed the foothills of the Alaska Range from Rainy Pass into the Tanana River valley. Both Herron and Brooks confirmed Spurr's suspicions that practicable routes for summer and winter travel between the Tanana and Kuskokwim Rivers existed.

Following the various gold rushes to the Kantishna and Kuskokwim Rivers in 1900's, the Minchumina Portage became an important summer route of travel. In contrast, the winter route was seldom traveled, most prospectors in the Tanana and Yukon River valleys preferring the shorter winter trails leading directly to Ophir and Iditarod. Only a few people were willing to traverse the largely unexplored area between the North Fork and the Tanana River. In the winter of 1910-11, Hudson Stuck, an Episcopalian missionary, blazed a trail from Lake Minchumina to Takotna in 22 days, visiting several Indian villages en route. He repeated the journey in the winter of 1914-15. 38/

While other men may have taken the Nenana-McGrath winter route in the 1910's, it was not until the early 1920's that serious consideration was given to the route as potential thoroughfare. As construction of the Government railroad neared completion, residents of Iditarod, Ophir, Takotna, and McGrath, greatly dissatisfied with their mail service, suggested that the mail be routed from Nenana to McGrath. During the summer months, mail could be transported up the Tanana and Kantishna Rivers to Lake Minchumina by steamboat, carried across the Minchumina Portage by horse, and then sent down the North Fork to McGrath by launch. During the winter months, mail carriers could take one of two routes to Nenana. According to The Kusko Times, the local newspaper, one trail led from McGrath to the mines on Nixon Fork, thence in a northeast direction to Kantishna, connecting there with a sled road to the railroad. Another route was that taken by Thomas P. Aitken, who hired Indians to guide him from Big River to Birch Creek, a tributary of the Kantishna River. According to one of his Indian guides, Aitken reached his destination in six days. Dave Clough, a long-time resident of the area, reported that J. W. Berry, who knew the country well, informed the Post Office Department that the trail was about 150 miles in distance, and that a number of men had traveled from Kantishna to McGrath in five days. 39/

Visiting McGrath in early 1921, Major Gotwals, the Engineer Officer on the Alaska Road Commission, announced the Commission's plans to improve the Rainy Pass trail, it being the shortest and most important route to the upper Kuskokwim River, and to press for the restoration of the mail service on the trail. Gotwals had little to say about the Nenana-McGrath route, except that the Commission intended to investigate it, among others, in connection with plans for a winter road to McGrath. The Commission was considering Talkeetna, Healy, and Kantishna as termini for such a road. 40/

With the restoration of mail service on the Rainy Pass trail, the Commission sent several expeditions to investigate the Nenana-McGrath route. In the summer of 1921, Major Gotwals ascended the Kantishna River to Lake Minchumina, crossed the portage to the North Fork, and descended that stream to McGrath. In January 1922, Hawley W. Sterling of the Road Commission left Nenana for Berry's Landing (Medfra) with his wife, intending to explore and map the country, and to locate winter trail routes. Erecting shelter tents along the way, Sterling was only able to reach Telida Village with much difficulty, having to break trail from Moose Creek, a tributary of the Kantishna River, to the village. Sterling returned to Nenana, reporting favorably on the route as the divides on the trail were very low. 41/

The Road Commission intended to continue its investigations in the winter of 1922-23, and to begin trail construction in the following winter season. However, the Post Office Department forced the Commission to revise its schedule when an emergency contract was let to E. Coke Hill to carry the mail from Kobe to Flat. Hill's contract called for a weekly service from November 1, 1922 to April 1923.

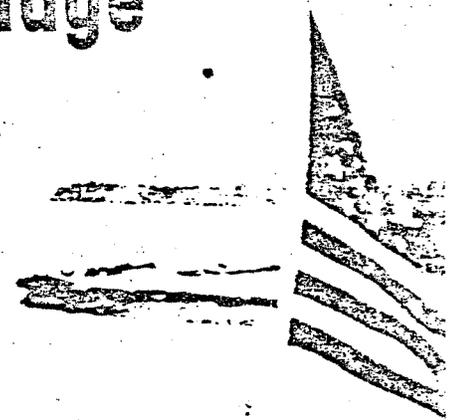
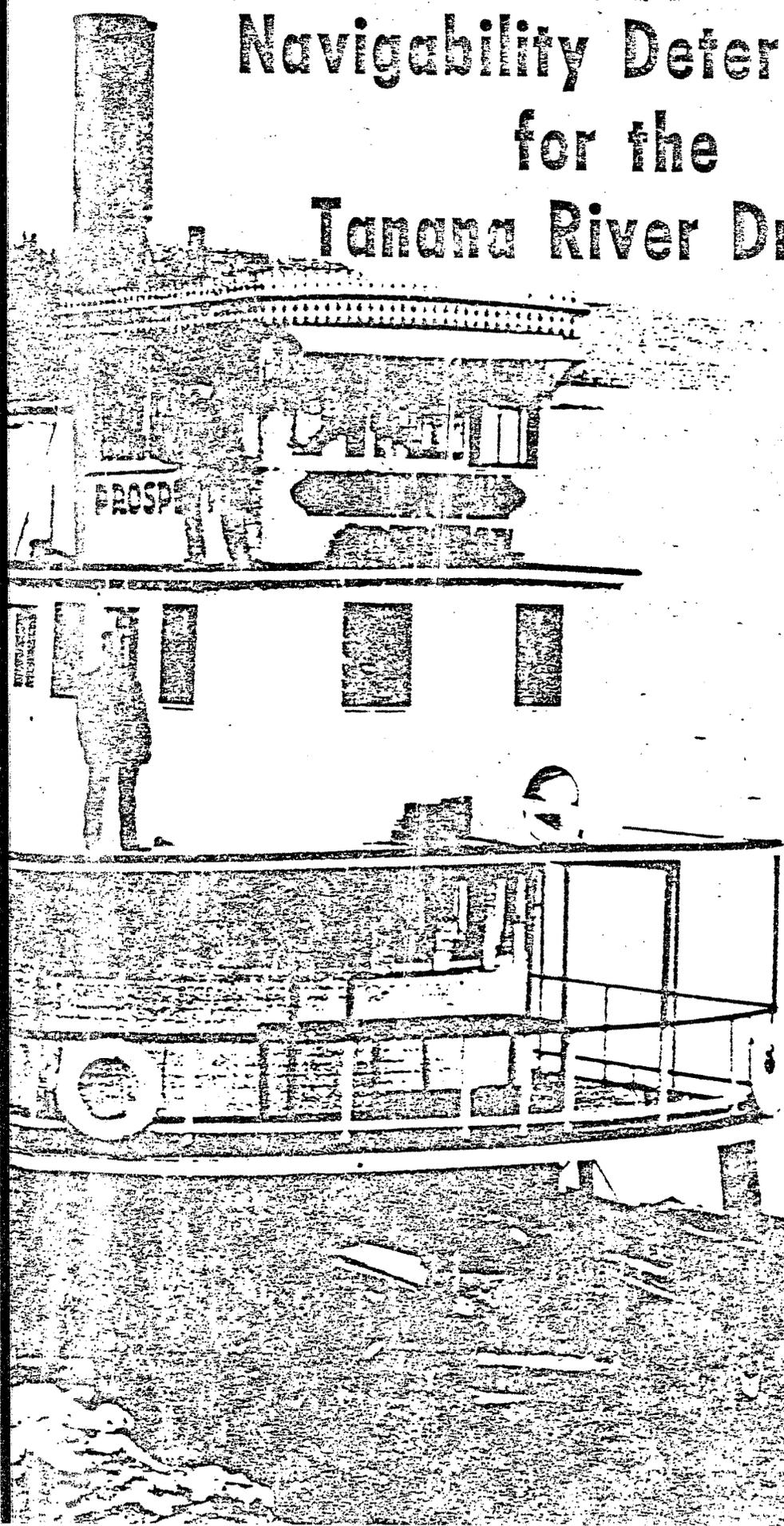
When awarded the contract, E. Coke Hill, a former assistant attorney at Fairbanks and a future district judge, had never been over the Nenana-McGrath trail. It is likely, however, that he had learned something about the location and condition of the trail from someone who had been on the trail, perhaps from the engineer, Livingston Wernecke, or the naturalist, Olaus J. Murie, both of whom went over the trail at different times in March 1922. 42/

Hill planned to start the mail carriers at Kobe and Flat at the same time. In early November 1922, Chester Brink left Flat for Big River with about 100 pounds of mail. He continued to Nikolai Village, where he expected to meet the carrier, Charles E. Armour, from Kobe. However, Armour never arrived, having lost the trail somewhere on Lake Minchumina. E. Coke Hill personally carried the second lot of mail from Kobe to Big River, arriving there on December 4. He then went to McGrath, returning to Big River on the same day to start the Indian drivers on the trail with the accumulated mail and a gold shipment valued at \$200,000.

Interviewed by The Kusko Times while in McGrath, Hill described the Nenana-McGrath trail as entirely practicable for the transportation of mail and freight. He said, "There is no stretch of over 21 miles without a cabin, cooking stove, and cooking utensils, and at least at times occupied by natives, except between Telida and Lake Minchumina." Principal stops on the trail included New Telida, Slow Fork, East Fork,

*none among*

# Navigability Determinations for the Tanana River Drainage



## Volume I

prepared by:  
40-Mile Area Staff



FF 9461 1

travelers. Most of these, like Harper and Bates, were prospecting and assessing the possibilities for trade and not little more than oral traditions concerning their explorations.

Such is the account by Henry Davis of a twelve day poling trip up the Kantishna River and a portage from Lake Minchumina to the Kuskokwim (Heller 1967:67). Descriptions like these are fragmentary and not entirely trustworthy but are somewhat balanced by the reports of the military expeditions, in particular, that of Lt. Henry Allen in 1885. After ascending the Copper River and crossing the Alaska Range via Suslota Pass, Allen spent a day at "Tetling's" camp while a boat was made, probably by the Indians of that camp, out of the only three caribou skins that could be obtained at the time.

"With two natives, our three pack dogs, and a large supply of meat and fish we [five white men] started down the stream at 6 a.m. on the 14th [June]. There were six paddlers and one steersman. After a run of two and a half hours down Tetling River, with its many windings and general course of north by east we reached the muddy Tanana, with its quicksands and boilings, sand spits, and absence of rocks. The current of the river was between 3 and 3 1/2 miles per hour." (Allen 1900:446). The trip to Nuklukayet was a rapid one; only one stop at Lake Mansfield was made besides normal overnight camps. They were out of the Tanana on June 26.

Lt. Frederick Schwatka, in 1883, made a similar trip down the Yukon and reported on the Tanana but did not actually do any exploration of the river. It was not until 1896 that a series of systematic surveys was begun by government agencies, in particular, the U.S.G.S. and the Army. Whereas, many of these expeditions worked in the Tanana valley or traversed it to arrive at some other destination, they generally traveled with pack horses rather than boats or rafts.

However, by this time, river traffic had turned from geographic exploration anyway. The gold strikes in the Yukon Territory had brought prospectors into the upper part of that drainage. These had spread downriver and up the Fortymile where coarse gold was found in 1886 at Franklin.

A new post was established at the mouth of the Fortymile by Arthur Harper in the following year and it soon grew to some 500-600 miners (Nielson 80:88). The next decade saw an accelerating amount of prospecting over a rapidly expanding area. Birch Creek, Rampart, and the Koyukuk became familiar regions; Circle City was established and soon became larger than Fortymile. And all of these activities had to be supported from Outside. And at the turn of the century, the Klondike, Nome, and Fairbanks fields pulled more people and their needs into the State. Support activities of all kinds sprang up and all required supplies. The first 10 years of the 1900's saw some 170,000 tons of freight shipped up the Yukon and Tanana to American interests (Nielson 80:181) and passenger traffic in 1901 totalled some 2,500 persons (Brooks 1953:420).

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# In the Alaskan Wilderness

By  
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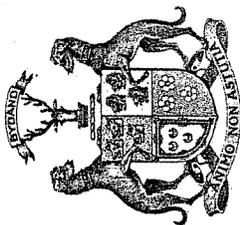
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*Lieutenant Mac-Laron Gordon*

FF 94611

villages is to start from St. Michael at the mouth of the Yukon and either cross the "Yukon portage" or, still more easily, await a small steamer that now sometimes passes over the great flats that exclude larger vessels from the Kuskokwim, and that make all navigation give that part of the Alaskan coast a wide berth.

Observations that we made during our journey, upon the geography of the country, its physical features, its resources and its few Indian inhabitants, have been given to the public only in brief fragments. In the course of time similar and more thorough observations will be made by others with more time at their command. Maps will be prepared, routes will be surveyed and reports will be written, but in some respects the experiences of the explorers to whom this work may be assigned will not be the same as ours. I venture, therefore, to entertain the thought that this narrative may not be entirely without value as an Alaskan document, although it makes no claim at all other than to be an accurate record of personal adventure and individual effort.

Prior to our trip in 1907, one expedition had penetrated into the central Alaskan wilderness and reached Lake Minchumina. It was a govern-

ment expedition sent out by the War Department under Lieutenant Joseph H. Herron in 1899. Lieutenant Herron, with five companions, entered the territory from the south through a low divide in the Alaskan range. His route lay roughly from south to north and terminated on the Yukon, at the mouth of the Tanana. We proceeded from the Tanana River by way of the Kantishna River and our route, lying roughly east and west, crossed Herron's at right angles. Herron's report, which was published by the War Department in 1901, contains a map of his route. On that map Lake Minchumina, the point at which our trails crossed, appears for the first time. The Kantishna is not mentioned in Herron's report, and although he stated the fact that the lake drains into the Tanana, his statement, together with his map, shows that Herron made no claims to personal knowledge of the stream that flows from the lake, and his sketch of the lake itself, which he crossed in winter on snowshoes and with dog sleds, is a rough outline. All the maps of the region published since 1901 are based on Lieutenant Herron's map, of which we were ignorant in 1907 when we made our journey.

The map of the Kantishna region that accom-

18

panies this volume is based entirely on our own observations, but we had no instruments for surveying and the map professes only to show roughly the contour of the lake and its drainage. It is, nevertheless, although ten years old, the first map to be published based on personal knowledge.

The Kuskokwim River was known on its lower course to the Russians as far as the mouth of the Tacotna. In 1898 it was surveyed from its South Fork (the Istna) by J. E. Spurr and W. S. Post of the United States Geological Survey, who started from Cook Inlet and ascended the Skwentna and crossed over to the Istna. The North Fork of the Kuskokwim, which the Indians call the Tichinik, was not known to white men prior to our journey, except to one or two wandering trappers of whose presence at certain points we saw signs.

Thus our route lay for the most part through country either entirely unknown and unexplored or rarely visited. We were the first to travel across Alaska from the Tanana to Bering Sea by this route.

Writing of his journey within the boundaries of the same wide region, Lieutenant Herron sums up his experiences in a sentence that shows how

19

who acted as interpreter. Chief Henry drew on a piece of birchbark, and I copied, a map of the Kantishna River and of Lake Minchumina. It was thus that I learned that the Kantishna River, which empties into the Tanana fifty miles above its confluence with the Yukon, has its source in Lake Minchumina, that the Kuskokwim could be reached from that lake and that the Kuskokwim itself was "good water." Chief Henry's map was afterwards our guide in making the journey of 1907.

The latest government map at that time indicated Lake Minchumina, and a dotted line showed the supposed position of a river flowing from the lake eastward into the Tanana, the great tributary of the Yukon which drains the country to the south in the eastern part of the territory of Alaska. Another river called the Kuskokwim, with its source somewhere near the lake, flowed in the opposite direction clear across the map and entered Bering Sea about 400 miles from the mouth of the Yukon, the only Alaskan river that exceeds it in size. The mouth of the Kantishna was well known in 1905 to hunters, traders and prospectors and to others who traveled on the Tanana, into which it poured in a considerable torrent.

The plan that first occurred to us in 1905 was to reach Lake Minchumina by way of the unexplored Kantishna, make our way across the divide to the headwaters of the Kuskokwim and descend that river to Bering Sea. After reaching the sea, we proposed to steer our canoe along the coast for 400 miles to St. Michael at the mouth of the Yukon. The whole summer would be short enough for the journey, and as it was then autumn at the time of which I am writing, we gave up the trip reluctantly and turned elsewhere. It was two years later, in the spring of 1907, as I have said, that I found an opportunity of escaping from the city and from civilization and was drawn again towards the North.

Arriving on the Tanana in June, 1907, we found that some changes had taken place in the condition of geographical knowledge since our visit in 1905. Someone had reported the existence of gold on the lower Kantishna and there had been a small stampede the year before; a town had been built—it was named Roosevelt, and then it was discovered that no gold existed, and before winter the town was deserted, its population was scattered over the continent and complete solitude again reigned on the banks of the Kantishna from its source to its confluence with the Tanana.

for experience had long convinced us both that untutored Indians are particularly trustworthy.

I must here explain that the winter camp of the band to which these two men and three women belonged, lay to the southwest side of the lake. All the rest of the band were far away hunting near the mountains. The men who remained were undoubtedly lazy and worthless fellows, otherwise they would have been with the hunters who, with their women, were at that time camped on the hunting ground gathering and preparing meat and skins for their winter food and clothing.

One of the things that we learned was that the Indians who live on Lake Minchumina, on the Kantishna and on the Tichininik (North Fork of the Kuskokwim) call themselves "Minkhotana" (meaning Lake People). I could form only a rough idea of their numbers, but one of the statements in which our informants always persisted was that the Minkhotana had formerly been a large tribe with many villages on the lake, on the Tichininik, on the Kwalana and on other streams over towards the mountains. The people living on the lower Kuskokwim, *i. e.*, the Eskimo, they called Totzatla Retu.

The arts and industries of the Minkhotana

Fork of the Kuskokwim, which they call Tichinik. The lowest branch of the Kantishna is called the Toklat. The stream now marked on the government map published in 1916 as "Birch Creek" was known to the Indians as Nutchitalchaket. The one that flows into the lake at the outlet from the direction of Mount Denali and which does not appear on any map except our own, they called Kwalana, and the stream that enters the lake at its upper end they called Tonzolana.

At the same time that I offer the foregoing frank criticism of geographers and map makers in the matter of names, I wish to record the grateful feelings which I am sure everyone will share with me that the same maps that give the names of McKinley and Foraker preserve such Indian names as Minchumina, Kantishna and Tanana. If this happy method could be more generally followed in making the maps of country newly explored I believe that no loss would result and something would be gained, something for which posterity might perhaps be grateful.

At the end of six days in camp we felt completely rested. In the meantime, we had turned over in our minds our next course of action and exchanged ideas on this important subject. The thought had gradually come to each of us inde-

80

pendently that this would be a capital place to spend the remainder of the summer and the following winter. When the idea was first mentioned we found that the same thought had been taking form in both our minds since the day we arrived at the lake. Back of my own thought was the fascination of the wilderness and the desire for further adventure, and coupled with this was a very natural desire to pursue further a knowledge of the Indians who live on Lake Minchumina and who would not return from the hunting grounds till winter. By spending the winter with them I could undoubtedly procure a collection that would admirably illustrate the arts and industries and the various activities of the original inhabitants of this part of the continent, and I could learn a great deal of their language, their habits of thought and their general conduct of life. To make such a study would require spending the winter with the Indians, when men who live by their hunting have time to talk and when their legends and myths come to them and may be told.

We got so far in this plan that we thought we would spend the rest of the summer and as much more time as necessary in climbing Mount Denali, which at that time had never been climbed.

81

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# Ethnohistory of Four Interior Alaskan Waterbodies

by: Dianne Gudgel-Holmes  
Department of Natural Resources — Alaska



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ETHNOHISTORY OF FOUR INTERIOR  
ALASKAN WATERBODIES

DIANNE GUDGEL-HOLMES  
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Sponsoring Agency

State of Alaska  
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August, 1979

could be used in the winter, the article continued. One authority reported there were no obstructions except a few riffles to the successful navigation of the North Fork to the portage. A "good [10 horsepower] gas engine can make the portage from McGrath in 40 hours." But Major Gotwals of the Alaska Road Commission in the February 9th, 1921 issue reported the McGrath-Rainy Pass route was the shortest winter route from the railroad to the upper Kuskokwim at that time and must be maintained until replaced.

The next fall Major Gotwals completed a reconnaissance of the suggested route, coming up the Kantishna River by motor boat to Kammissgaard's roadhouse at Lake Minchumina, portaging to the North Fork and rafting down stream to the Swift Fork where he was taken by motor boat to McGrath (Kusko Times September 7, 1921).

On November 2nd, 1921, the paper mentioned a local petition had been circulated requesting that Minchumina be used for the summer mail route. With the exception of the portage, power boats could travel the entire distance from Nenana to McGrath, the article concluded. A few days later, in the November 5th issue, a similar request from the McGrath Commercial Company went to Territorial delegate Dan Sutherland, asking that the Minchumina route be used.

Hawley Sterling concluded a three-month trip in April of 1922 that took him from Lignite (on the railroad) through Glacier, Minchumina, Telida and McGrath in an effort to map the new trail (Kusko Times April 19, 1922). Delegate Sutherland reported to the Kusko Times on September 9th that same year the recommendation of the road inspectors to use the Minchumina trail for the winter mail route. This evidently was initiated that year, as on December 6th the newspaper mentioned the new trail and listed each roadhouse and the mileage in between; and three weeks later, December 27th, six and a half days traveling time from Kobe to Big River was reported.

Early the next year, Mr. Aitken arrived over the trail, this time using part of the original Native trail between Minchumina and Telida which saved ten miles from the usual route (Kusko Times February 7, 1923). A week later the Alaska Road Commission was reported to be marking the complete trail beginning at Kobe (Kusko Times February 14, 1923).

One year later, just as the first experimental airmail service was initiated to McGrath, an article appeared stating that the use of the new mail trail the previous year was successful and that it would be used again (Kusko Times February 16, 1924).

Although usage of the new winter trail seemed to be firmly established, a summer route using the Kuskokwim portage was still under investigation. Information about the feasibility of such a route came from Kammissgaard at Minchumina, whose letter to Mr. Widman of McGrath was published January 24th, 1925. Kammissgaard had a boat which he ran from Lake Minchumina to Nenana. Mr. Widman also reported that Art Berry of Berry's Landing always seemed to be able to make the trip up the North Fork to the portage, even at low water with his propeller-driven boat, although he felt a stern-wheeler could do a better job.

## KANTISHNA RIVER DRAINAGE

Lake Minchumina, situated at the geographical center of the state, drains into the Muddy River and thence into the Kantishna, which merges with the Tanana River at mile 94. The Kantishna flows 250 miles and drains an area of about 6,800 square miles (Grumman Ecosystems Corporation 1975). Tributaries of the Kantishna that are of concern to this study are the Toklat, Bearpaw, Muddy, and McKinley rivers, Birch and Moose creeks, and John Hansen Lake. The area lies within the Intermontane Plateaus physiographic division and the Tanana-Kuskokwim Lowlands province:

The Tanana-Kuskokwim Lowland is a broad depression bordering the Alaska Range on the north. . . . Coalescing outwash fans from the Alaska Range slope 20-50 feet per mile northward to flood plains along the axial streams of the lowland. Rivers from the range flow for a few miles at the heads of the fans in broad terraced valleys 50-200 feet deep. . . . The flood plains of the . . . Kantishna . . . are incised 50-200 feet below the level of the lowland. Several nearly level projections of the lowland extend into uplands on the north. Large fields of stabilized dunes cover the northern part of the lowland and lower slopes of adjacent hills between Nenana and McGrath. . . . The central and eastern parts of the lowland are drained by the Tanana River. . . . Braided glacial streams rising in the Alaska Range flow north across the lowland at intervals of 5-20 miles. Outwash has pushed the axial streams--the Tanana, Kuskokwim, and Kantishna Rivers--against the base of hills on the north side. Tightly meandering tributaries of low gradient flow into the section from the north. . . . Thaw lakes abound in areas of fine alluvium. Thaw sinks are abundant in areas of thick loess cover. . . . The lowland contains no glaciers. The entire section is an area of permafrost. (Wahrhaftig 1965:29)

Lake Minchumina is separated from the Kuskokwim River drainage by a ten-mile portage that connects to the upper North Fork. The Titna River, tributary of the Nowitna, heads against the North Fork a few miles above the portage. Slightly above that, the North Fork headwaters nearly coalesce with the northward flowing Zitziana and Cosna river headwaters, southeast of the Bitzshtini Mountains.

### Native Usage and American Exploration

The Lake Minchumina region has been inhabited for a least 5,000 years according to archeological investigations by Holmes during the 1970s (Charles Holmes 1979, personal communication). The Natives of the Kantishna area, since historic times, have been Koyukon Athapaskan Indians of the Inner Koyukon linguistic grouping. According to Krauss, Inner Koyukon includes Indians at Tanana and Stevens Villages with a few speakers at Rampart, Beaver and Allakaket, another segment at Cosjacket and Manley Hot Springs, and an extinct group from the area under study: Roosevelt-Minchumina, and Bearpaw (1972:906-8).

FF 9461 1

Apparently the Kantishna River became the dividing line between the Tanana Indians, who are found eastward to the Canadian border and who previously probably inhabited all of the Kantishna area, and the Koyukon Indians who are found west of the river and who in fairly recent times extended their territory through Tanana country along the Kantishna drainage. This intrusion is apparent through Hosley's studies of the the Kolchan of the upper Kuskokwim. Hosley reports a cultural affiliation of the Kolchan with the Tanana Indians (1968:9), and linguistically Krauss relates them to the Tanana dialect also, even though they are spatially separated by Koyukon territory (1972:908). Alfred Starr, former Birch Creek resident, reports the Kantishna River area was previously occupied by a large Native population and that there was frequent warring between the Tanana and Koyukon groups who lived there. Shifting ethnic boundaries for much of interior Alaska are evident not only linguistically, but in Hosley's delineation of the Kolchan's bi-directional origins (1961:97; 1968:8). Archeologically the same pattern occurs; Holmes reports a strong Norton stylistic influence (generally associated with western Alaska sites) at Lake Minchumina dating from 2,000 to 1,500 years ago.

Even today Nenana informants report on their own migrating habits and those of their parents. Tom Albert, who grew up on the Wood River, says his father was from the Susitna River area. Dinah Albert was raised on the Toklat River, while her father was from farther down the Tanana River. David Esau was also born on the Taklat, but his father was from the Cosna River. Paul Esau moved to Nenana from the Tolovana twenty-three years ago. Celia Peterson was raised on the Kantishna, at Minto and Tolovana, but her father was from Tanacross. Nina Minano's father was from Holikachuk. Frank Minano is from the upper Koyukuk River area and Margaret John's father was from below Ruby, on the Yukon.

Population figures and settlement patterns of the Kantishna Koyukon are hinted at through early explorers' accounts and recent census reports. Herron listed Lake Minchumina as being a camp of fifteen Indians in the winter of 1899 (1901:67). Brooks did not meet any Natives in 1902 in the Alaska Range foothills and incorrectly reported there were no permanent inhabitants there because the streams were too swift to navigate with Native canoes, and that the area was above the point where salmon spawned (1911:215-6). When James Wickersham traveled the Kantishna the next summer he encountered three camps: Nachereah's at the mouth of the Toklat, Koonah's camp twenty-five miles above the Toklat on the Kantishna, and one at the mouth of Moose Creek called Anotoktilon. The summer home of the Indians at this last camp Wickersham reported to be at Lake Minchumina--the middle of their hunting grounds. Wickersham remained in camp here due to weather and talked with the chief and another Native, Old Ivan. He learned the "location of the various streams in that direction [Mt. McKinley] and [it was] pointed out [to him the] gaps in the hills through which . . . [he] must go to reach the great glacier which [the Indians told him] comes down from its summit. . . . [They] also traced the course of the Kuskokwim to its source in the Nuchusala, or Bull Moose Mountains" (1938:256). Of the Indians at the Toklat, he reported that this band of Tena would leave their Tanana camp in late February and go to their old Toklat

camp, "which their ancestors had thus visited time out of Tena mind." After the spring hunt, they would return to their fish camps at the Tanana-Yukon junction (1938:223-5).

Four years later the Gordon brothers did not mention seeing any Natives on their trip up the Kantishna until arriving at Lake Minchumina. There they met seven Minkhotana Indians who reported their winter camp was on the southwest side of the lake and consisted of about twenty-five people (1917:65, 69, 74). The next year, 1908, naturalist Charles Sheldon was traveling in January along the Toklat, and at a place called the "cutoff," the beginning of a native trail to the Nenana River, he encountered a tent camp of six Indian families from Lake Minchumina who were, according to Sheldon, "nearly all the survivors of this tribe, which at one time was large and powerful" (1930:281-83). The Toklat at this point is open all year and ducks stay there all winter feeding on the dead salmon.

When Brooks passed the mouth of the "Toclat" (Kantishna or Cosna river) in 1898, he mentioned that the village there was one of the two largest along that part of the Tanana--the other being near Nenana (1899:491). The 1910 census for the Kantishna district, which does not discern between Native and non-Native population, was listed as sixty-eight. In 1930 the Toklat village had a population of forty-four, while in 1940 it was sixteen (Rollins 1978).

Early explorers' accounts often mention in passing something of the customs of the Natives and of the waterbodies. The Russian explorer Zagoskin traveled the Yukon River nearly to the Noggoyya (Nowitna) in 1843 and reported on what is perhaps the first reference to Lake Minchumina. Native informants and traders said the Nowitna came from a large lake which connected with many others and flowed into the Yukon from the south. It was reported to be up to 115 yards wide and that there were many Native winter houses at the river's exit from the lake and around the lake itself. The lake was said to contain many fish (1967:174-5).

When Schwatka made his 1883 reconnaissance along the Yukon, he made one of the earliest references to the Kantishna River and its Natives. The Tanana Indians, he reported, "unite for war only with those living on the 'Koskoquien' [Kuskokwim?] and a band called the 'Too-clok' who live on a river of the same name, which empties into the Tananah from the west, about 150 miles from its mouth" (1885:95).

Lt. Allen also made passing reference to the Minchumina portage and "Toclat" (Kantishna) River in 1885 on his descent of the Tanana River. As he passed the mouth of the river, which was twenty to twenty-five yards wide, he stopped at the summer fish camp of the Natives who had just arrived there from the upper Kantishna area, and learned the river was "partly the means of communication between the Natives of the lower Tanana and the upper Kuskokwim" (1887:85). He further suggested that any exploration of the upper Kuskokwim would be feasible from the "Toclat" portage.

FF 94611

Although the prospector Frank Densmore, and later Al King, used the Kantishna River and portage in 1889, Brooks of the U.S. Geological Survey, on his journey down the Tanana nine years later, wrote the following:

Lower Tanana Indians are said to have a route that ascends the Toclat [Kantishna] River and thence by portage trail crosses to the waters of the Kuskokwim. It is rumored that this trail was used some by traders in the early history of Alaska; but this rumor has never been verified, and the region is one which is entirely unexplored. (1889:443)

The next year, 1899, an Army expedition headed by Joseph Herron was guided from Telida through Lake Minchumina to Fort Gibbon on the Yukon River. This journey took place during the winter and did not involve any of the Kantishna tributaries. However, this information of the area, and more, must have been available to Brooks three years later in 1902, when he crossed from the South Fork of the Kuskokwim along the western foothills of the Alaska Range to the Nenana River, because he mentioned seeing from a great distance the smoke of Indian fires at Lake Minchumina. Brooks touched on some of the headwaters of the Kantishna tributaries but did not descend any of them, yet his map delineates many of them. His publication, which did not come out until 1911, undoubtedly had the benefit of the increased knowledge of the area gained from the 1905 gold rush and subsequent geological reconnaissances.

The year after Brooks' trip Judge James Wickersham of Fairbanks attempted to climb Mt. McKinley. Knowledge of the area appears to have been scanty for outsiders, but local residents must have been familiar with the Kantishna as Wickersham and his party took the steamer Tanana Chief up river in May to the mouth of the Toklat. Along the way they met trappers, one of whom spent the winter near the Toklat and two more who, having crossed the Minchumina portage, were descending the Kantishna for Nenana. The river was high with remains of winter ice during Wickersham's ascent, but soon they entered more sluggish water and a wide lake-like expanse of water connected by rapid, narrow streams (1938:220-1, 235). At the Native camp situated on the Toklat the Indian Olyman Cheah was building a birch bark canoe and Wickersham described the process:

The ribs of stout birch wood have been carefully shaped with his knife and tied in place in the ways, with long tough spruce roots, to longitudinal strips of clear, split spruce, thus preparing the frame work for the birch bark covering. . . . The sheets of birch bark are stripped from the living tree as the sap is rising in the spring, and Olyman cuts them to fit the frame, allowing over-laps for sewing. . . . When the birch bark plates are cut and fitted by the master hand, the old women and their young ancestors gather alongside the craft, and squatting on the ground sew the sheets together and to the ribs with spruce root threads, using a bone awl to open the way for the insertion. . . . Olyman is carving and shaping the bow and stern posts. . . . He then runs some spruce pitch into the cracks and small holes, paints

**FF 94611**

KANTISHNA RIVER TRAFFIC TAKEN FROM NEWS ARTICLES

Newspaper*	Date	Boat/Captain	Passengers/Cargo	Destination	Comments
FWN	Aug. 9, 1905	<u>White Seal</u>	P/C	Fr: Bearpaw To: Fairbanks	Took people/cargo to diggings
FEN	Aug. 24, 1905	<u>Florence S.</u>	P		Purser sent telegram to office reporting passengers could not be landed at McKinley River & that next time to bill people to Bearpaw R.
NSWN	Oct. 28, 1905		Fred Noyes	Fr: Bearpaw R.	Is setting up a sawmill
FDT	Jly. 23, 1913	Henderson's launch	W. Taylor/C	To: Diamond	5 tons cargo to be taken to mines
FDT	Aug. 28, 1913	<u>Idler</u>		To: Lake Minchumina	Was seen on the 21st at Bearpaw mouth
FDT	Jly. 17, 1914	Henderson's launch	C	Fr: Fairbanks To: Lk Minchumina	4 tons of cargo
FDT	Aug. 11, 1914	<u>Doman/</u> <u>L. Heacock</u>	P	To: Toklat R. Fr: Fairbanks	Karstens to guide 3 hunters to mountains
NN	Spt. 28, 1918	<u>Elmer G/</u> <u>VanOrsdel</u>	C	Fr: Diamond To: Nenana	10 tons cargo delivered to Diamond
		<u>Blue Jay</u> & barge	C		Followed in wake of <u>Elmer G.</u>

\* FDT=Fairbanks Daily Times FWN=Fairbanks Weekly News NN=Nenana News  
FEN=Fairbanks Evening News NSWN=Nome Semi Weekly Nugget

Newspaper*	Date	Boat/Captain	Passengers/Cargo	Destination	Comments
NN	Spt. 22, 1919	Unnamed launch	C	To: Roosevelt	Supplies for Moose Creek
NN	Oct. 13, 1919	J. Moore & G. Moody			Due to ice, they had to leave their boats at Bearpaw R; returned overland
NN	Jly. 12, 1921	G. Moody's boat	P/C/Mail	Fr: Nenana To: Diamond/Roosevelt	
NN	Aug. 6, 1921	G. Moody's launch		Fr: Nenana To: Kantishna	
NN	Aug. 13, 1921	Idler/ F. Noyes	P	Fr: Nenana To: Lk Minchumina	Pleasure trip; barge accompanies boat
KT	Aug. 16, 1921	Pioneer/ G. Black	P/Horses	Fr: Nenana To: Lk Minchumina	Headed for No. Fk. Kuskokwim-prospctng
NN	Aug. 23, 1921	A. Morris' launch	Davis Party	Fr: Kantishna To: Nenana	Came from McKinley Pk; drifted down Kantishna to Morris'
NN	Aug. 27, 1921	Pioneer/ G. Black & Galatea			Steamers on the Kantishna run
KT	Spt. 7, 1921		Gotwals	To: Lk Minchumina	By boat to lake & on to McGrath via portage
NN	Spt. 22, 1921	VanOrsdel's launch		Fr: Nenana To: Kantishna	

\* KT=Kusko Times NN=Nenana News

FF 9461 1

Newsaper*	Date	Boat/Captain	Passengers/Cargo	Destination	Comments
NN	Spt. 29, 1921	Moody's launch		Fr: Kantishna To: Nenana	
NN	Jun. 24, 1922	Sutherland's launch		Fr: Roosevelt To: Nenana	
NN	Jun. 27, 1922	<u>Jolly Rover</u> C		Fr: Bearpaw R. To: Nenana	Freight to the mines
NN	Jly. 4, 1922	<u>Bertha/</u> G. Moody			New stern wheeler for Kantishna run
NN	Jly. 8, 1922	Moore launch		Fr: Roosevelt To: Nenana	To freight on Kantishna
NN	Jly. 20, 1922	<u>Bertha</u>		Fr: Roosevelt	
NN	Jly. 29, 1922	Olson's launch	J. Blick	Fr: Diamond To: Nenana	Mt. McKinley Gold Placers, Inc.
NN	Aug. 1, 1922	Rodman launch		To: Lk Minchumina Fr: Nenana	To spend winter at the lake
NN	Aug. 12, 1922	<u>Bertha</u>		Fr: Roosevelt To: Nenana	Return trip to be made to Minchumina with prospectors
NN	Aug. 17, 1922	Moody boat		To: Lk Minchumina	

\* NN=Nenana News

FF 9461 1

Newspaper*	Date	Boat/Captain	Passengers/Cargo	Destination	Comments
NN	Spt-Oct, 1922			Numerous unidentified boat arrivals from the Kantishna	
NN	Oct. 3, 1922	Moody boat		Fr: Kantishna	Last trip of season
NN	May 19, 1923	Mutt/ C. Neuser		Fr: Roosevelt To: Nenana	Side wheel boat to be operated by Kantishna Transportation Co.
		Moody launch		To: Kantishna	
NN	May 24, 1923	launch	P	Fr: Nenana To: Diamond	Mt. McKinley Gold Placers personnel
NN	May 26, 1923	<u>Pioneer/</u>	P	To: Kantishna	Ak Road Commission personnel
NN	May 31, 1923	Moody launch	F. de la Vergne, G. Erwin	To: Lk Minchumina	To investigate H. Bock's death
NN	Jun. 12, 1923	<u>Pioneer/</u> <u>G. Black</u>	P		
		<u>Mutt</u>	C/Mail	Fr: Roosevelt/ Diamond	To be making twice-monthly mail runs
NN	Jun. 26, 1923	<u>Mutt</u>	P/C/Mail	Fr: Kantishna	
NN	Jly. 5, 1923	<u>Pioneer</u>	C	Fr: Kantishna	With 9 tons galena ore

\* NN=Nenana News

FF 94611

Tom and Dinah Albert have been to the lake. Mrs. Albert went there as a child also. The creek in back of the lake was used at highwater for fishing. Mrs. Albert reports that Mr. Hansen had a small store at the lake.

Val Blackburn, long-time resident of Lake Minchumina, has a cabin on the lake that he has used as a lodge when he has guided hunting parties to the Muddy-Kantishna area.

Charles Holmes took a 17-foot canoe to John Hansen Lake in 1973 and went up the creek a few miles also. He could have gone further up the creek he reports. He was on an archeological survey.

Alfred Starr has been to the lake and up a ways on the creek also.

Lake Minchumina. Situated at 63°53' N, 152°19' W.

Tom Albert has been to Minchumina several times in a 24-foot wooden boat, the last time was in 1962. He was hunting for beaver and muskrat.

Dinah Albert, as a girl, went up to Birch Creek and Minchumina with her father in a wood boat with a gas engine.

Michael Carey lived at the lake with his family from 1946 to 1950. The family used the lake and surrounding waters summer and winter with boats and a plane. In the late 1940s his father, Fabian, went up Deep Creek in a 12-foot wooden boat to cut logs for house building. Michael reports that many others at the lake got their house logs from Deep Creek also.

Dick and Florence Collins have lived at the lake since 1952. The Collinses and their children use a riverboat, canoe, lake boat, a small sailing boat, and a float plane in their usage of local waters. They have made many trips by riverboat from the lake to Manley and Fairbanks. Ray, Miki, and Julie Collins used an 18-foot canoe in 1975 to travel from Fairbanks to the lake on a journey that took ten days.

Tom and Mary Flood have lived in the area for twenty-five years and use a riverboat and canoe in their summer travels of the waterways. They have fished and hunted on the lake and have fished commercially there also, primarily for dog food. They fished commercially on the lake and also down the Muddy River. They have also boated on the Foraker River but to a very limited extent due to its low and silty water.

Jens and Helen Forshaug have been living in the area since 1974, and were part-time residents from 1958. They used the waters with a riverboat and have been on the Kuskokwim portage with a Cushman trackster. They report that nearly everyone at the lake has used the portage at some time in the past, along with other recreationalists from urban areas such as Fairbanks. Since 1974 they have averaged about two trips a year on the portage for hunting and burl collecting. Deep Creek has been used by them to about fifteen miles upstream for hunting and berry picking for at least ten years. In 1975, twenty-five trips

FF 9461 1

the river twice on a round trip from Fairbanks to the lake in a 22-foot riverboat.

Alfred Starr was a resident of the Birch Creek and Muddy River area in the 1940s. He stayed there about ten years due to the death of Roosevelt John, well-known Birch Creek resident. His wife was related to Roosevelt John. Mr. Starr had a wooden boat and motor. He had a fish camp near the Muddy at a place called Fish Camp Lake and every July he was at Birch Creek, which he says is a shallow stream.

Toklat River. Also known as the Toclat and Tutluk River flows northwest 85 miles to the Kantishna at 64°27' N, 150°18' W.

Dinah Albert was raised at the mouth of the Toklat. In the mid-1920s her family moved to Nenana. Her father was John Evan and her grandfather was Chief Evan. Mrs. Albert reports that they did not go up the Toklat very far, maybe about ten miles. Her father used all the creeks and waters in the area. Her grandmother walked from the Toklat to what is now the McKinley Park and on to the trading post near Anchorage (Susitna?) before Dinah was born. Her grandmother lived to be 104 years old, and was still alive during World War II.

David Esau has an allotment at the mouth of the Toklat. He was born on the river twelve miles above Knight's Roadhouse. As a boy he used the Middle Fork of the Toklat for sheep hunting to a crooked canyon at Crooked Creek, near the present park boundary.

Margaret John lived on the Toklat after her marriage in 1927, and reports the river is shallow and dries up. In the fall there are sweepers.

Gil Ketzler went up the river two to five miles once in the 1940s. He was also trapping for beaver near Knight's Roadhouse in the 1950s with Ed Lord.

Hank Ketzler has been up the Toklat a few miles above the mouth, usually in the fall. He reports that the area is shallow with snags.

Celia Peterson was raised on the Kantishna. Her father fished on the Toklat and they used to hunt up the river in the fall by walking up to Heart Mt. (unidentified). Mrs. Peterson reports there used to be a big Native village on the upper river, three miles below Knight's. Many people died during the 1919 flu epidemic, however.

Helen Simpkin reports that the streams around Knight's Roadhouse do not freeze in the winter and the bears stay out. Her father, Tom Stand, known as the "Savage" trapped at Knight's about 1925.

Alfred Starr reports that the Toklat cannot be used with a boat.

#### Winter Usage Minchumina Area

Michael Carey's father, Fabian, trapped the Minchumina area in the 1940s. His line went to Carey and Dull Ax lakes. His father would

also land his plane at Carey Lake to supply his cabins for the winter. Michael has since landed on the lake in the winter of 1962 with a Super Cub on skis, and with a Cessna on floats in the fall of 1975.

Bill Burk, Sr., reports that his father used to carry the mail from Nenana to McGrath in the 1920s and that he used the Telida route. His father would sometimes meet another carrier at Lake Minchumina.

Tom and Mary Flood have trapped the Lake Minchumina and Muddy River area for twenty-five years. They have used the Foraker River and some of its tributaries for trapping also.

Jens and Helen Forshaug use skis and a snowmobile for their winter travel in the area.

Kenneth Granroth has trapped in the area since 1941. He has one line that goes from the lake across the Kuskokwim portage to the Sethkokna River, tributary of the Nowitna. He used his line with a dog team for about ten years and with a snowmobile since the early 1960s. He guided a CAA cat train over the Kuskokwim portage in March of 1944 to obtain 200 spruce poles for their transmission lines at the lake. The trail that was used went very close to the original Native trail across the portage. Mr. Granroth is very knowledgeable about the portage due to his frequent and long-term use of it.

Bill and Fran Holmes have used the area in the winter for recreational purposes since 1952. They have used dog teams and snowmachines. Fran reports that last March, Mark Smith and Rod March traveled over the portage.

Jim Sims in years past has trapped on the Muddy River towards Birch Creek and also from the lake across the Foraker River to near the head of Birch Creek. Near Birch Creek's head, however, the water does not freeze so he can not go all the way to the creek. Mr. Sims reports that old Slim Carlson had a line on Birch Creek, and that Fabian Carey and Val Blackburn also had a line along the Foraker near his (Jim's). The line started at old man Bartlet's place on the south part of the river. Bartlet left the Minchumina area in about 1947.

#### Winter Usage Bearpaw River

Tom and Dinah Albert have used a winter trail on the Bearpaw.

Jerry Riley has run his dog team from Nenana to the Bearpaw a few times.

#### Winter Usage Toklat River Area

Dinah Albert spent her early years on the Toklat. She used to go by dog team and later snowmobile on the winter trail to Nenana. She would go down the east side of the Toklat. Her husband, Tom, has also used this winter trail.

FF 94611

**Subject:** [Fwd: [Fwd: NA @Hooper Bay Scammon Bay F-14696C]]  
**From:** Rebecca Peltz <rebecca\_peltz@dnr.state.ak.us>  
**Date:** Tue, 20 Sep 2005 13:38:29 -0800  
**To:** Doreen Sullivan <doreen\_sullivan@dnr.state.ak.us>  
**CC:** Debi Knapp <debi\_knapp@dnr.state.ak.us>  
**X-UIDL:** 14338-955179392  
**X-Mozilla-Status:** 0001  
**X-Mozilla-Status2:** 10000000  
**Return-path:** <rebecca\_peltz@dnr.state.ak.us>  
**Received:** from smtpa.state.ak.us (localhost [127.0.0.1]) by ancm11.state.ak.us (iPlanet Messaging Server 5.2 HotFix 2.04 (built Feb 8 2005)) with ESMTP id <0IN400I82XCTDC@ancm11.state.ak.us>; Tue, 20 Sep 2005 13:36:30 -0800 (AKDT)  
**Received:** from dn.state.ak.us ([146.63.110.178]) by smtpa.state.ak.us (iPlanet Messaging Server 5.2 HotFix 2.04 (built Feb 8 2005)) with ESMTP id <0IN400G2DXCS3R@smtpa.state.ak.us>; Tue, 20 Sep 2005 13:36:28 -0800 (AKDT)  
**Message-ID:** <43308155.4020307@dnr.state.ak.us>  
**MIME-Version:** 1.0  
**Content-type:** multipart/mixed; boundary=-----090805010200040707080201  
**X-Accept-Language:** en-us, en  
**User-Agent:** Mozilla/5.0 (Windows; U; Windows NT 5.1; en-US; rv:1.0.2) Gecko/20030208 Netscape/7.02

Doreen, I started to research this back in August and had requested a copy of the original application from BLM just to have an actual paper trail for our file on the U & O date.

Because nothing has shown up from BLM yet, I will place this request in our "Pending file" (awaiting research results from PAAD), and let you take over the research. I do have a copy of the state's protest, and will send it up just in case you don't have it. (The protest is not complete - i.e. no dates or signatures).

In short, go for it!  
Thanks, Becky

----- Original Message -----  
**Subject:** [Fwd: NA @Hooper Bay Scammon Bay F-14696C]  
**Date:** Tue, 20 Sep 2005 13:07:56 -0800  
**From:** Debi Knapp <debi\_knapp@dnr.state.ak.us>  
**Organization:** Realty Services, DML&W, DNR, SOA  
**To:** Rebecca Peltz <rebecca\_peltz@dnr.state.ak.us>

--  
Debi Knapp  
Native Allotment Coordinator, Realty Services  
State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources  
550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1050A  
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Phone 907.269.8509 Fax 907.269.8935

Email <debi\_knapp@dnr.state.ak.us>

--  
Rebecca Peltz  
Native Allotment Coordinator, Realty Services  
State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources

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Phone 907.269.8573 Fax 907.269.8935  
E-mail: <rebecca\_peltz@dnr.state.ak.us>

**Subject:** NA @Hooper Bay Scammon Bay F-14696C  
**From:** "Doreen Sullivan, ANCSA Easement Coordinator" <doreen\_sullivan@dnr.state.ak.us>  
**Date:** Tue, 20 Sep 2005 11:10:55 -0800  
**To:** Amanda A Tuttle <amanda\_tuttle@dnr.state.ak.us>  
**CC:** Debi Knapp <debi\_knapp@dnr.state.ak.us>  
**Return-path:** <doreen\_sullivan@dnr.state.ak.us>  
**Received:** from [127.0.0.1] (localhost [127.0.0.1]) by ancm11.state.ak.us (iPlanet Messaging Server 5.2 HotFix 2.04 (built Feb 8 2005)) with ESMTP id <0IN400GJCQM8D9@ancm11.state.ak.us>; Tue, 20 Sep 2005 11:10:57 -0800 (AKDT)  
**Message-ID:** <43305EBF.4030901@dnr.state.ak.us>  
**Organization:** DNR/MLW/Public Access Assertion & Defense  
**MIME-Version:** 1.0  
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**Content-transfer-encoding:** 7bit  
**X-Accept-Language:** en-us, en  
**User-Agent:** Mozilla/5.0 (Windows; U; Windows NT 5.1; en-US; rv:1.7.3) Gecko/20040910

Did you send this to Debi? this is the one we were discussing yesterday. Not sure about the log procedure. Perhaps in future I should put your initials first when I give it to you/or Debi's?

I would like to use this one as training on ALIS when we get clearances; to check the surrounding native allotments U&O & means access, time of year etc. [will have to look at field reports]

Debi are you working it? the first letter I sent re: 1934 DOT trail and 1930 U&O  
:Doreen

NA @Hooper Bay Scammon Bay F-14696C.eml Content-Type: message/rfc822  
Content-Encoding: 7bit

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REPORT ON NAVIGABILITY

of

STREAMS TRIBUTARY TO THE TANANA RIVER, ALASKA

**GRUMMAN**

PT 94011

REPORT ON NAVIGABILITY

of

STREAMS TRIBUTARY TO THE TANANA RIVER, ALASKA

Prepared for

U. S. Army Engineer District, Alaska

by

GRUMMAN ECOSYSTEMS CORPORATION

April, 1975

3.1.2 (Continued)

Tanana River is followed to the mouth of the Kantishna, and small launches are taken up that stream to the mouth of Bearpaw River, and up the Bearpaw to the deserted village of Diamond, at the head of launch navigation, a total distance of 143 miles from Tanana River to Diamond.

Some river boats have plied the Kantishna River since the early days of settlement of the Territory, carrying supplies and equipment to mining camps near the headwaters. Within recent years, the Federal Aviation Administration has used the river to supply an airfield on Lake Minchumina. The annual volume of freight that is carried on the river is unknown, but probably amounts to a few hundred tons. The cargo is carried on barges with shallow draft equipment.

Among the Tanana's affluents, the Kantishna has been navigated about 100 miles, while the Chena, Tolovana, and lower Volkmar are likewise practicable for light steamers, and most other tributaries for small boats.

The period of navigation on the Yukon is exceeded in duration by that on the Tanana. For three years between Fort Gibbon (Tanana post-office) and Chena or Fairbanks, its usual duration was five months. The average date of opening was May 14 and of closing October 14. A boat has reached Fort Gibbon from Chena as early as May 8, and as late as October 17.

# NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

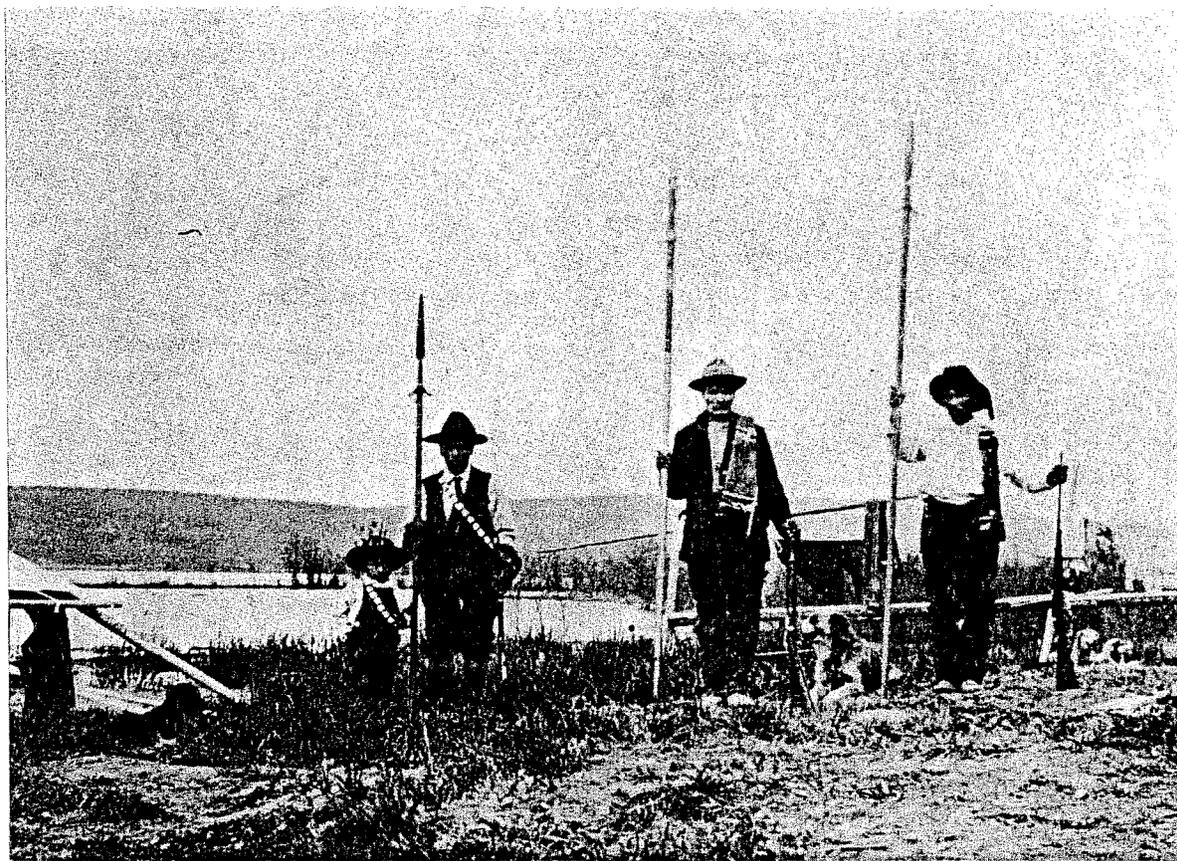
## RESEARCH/RESOURCES MANAGEMENT REPORT AR-9

### Land Use in the North Additions of Denali National Park and Preserve: An Historical Perspective

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Alaska Region

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LAND USE IN THE NORTH ADDITIONS OF DENALI NATIONAL PARK

AND PRESERVE: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

by William Schneider, Dianne Gudgel-Holmes and John Dalle-Molle

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE - Alaska Region

Research/Resources Management Report AR-9

1984

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



FF 94611

areas of Alaska under Russian control, but those who could not or would not be vaccinated (such as Cook Inlet, Prince William Sound and Bristol Bay) lost from 40 to 60% of their population. One observer estimated 3,000 Natives (in Southeast) died before vaccination controlled the disease (Aronson 1940:29). Another estimated 4,000 out of 10,000 died from Kaigan to Yakutat (deLaguna 1972:117). Few explorers, however, had ventured to the interior at that time, so the record of mortality is unknown.

After the turn of the century, when explorers and gold seekers became more frequent in the Kantishna and upper Kuskokwim drainages, the Native population was already severely reduced. Yet diseases continued to take their toll and by the late 1920s places such as Minchumina were almost void of Athabascans largely due to diseases (Bishop 1978:8). Commenting on his observations from a 1911 visit to Lake Minchumina, Stuck (1914b:307-8) stated: "The Minchumina people are a very feeble folk, some sixteen all told at the time of our visit, greatly reduced by the epidemics of the last decade, living remote from all others on the verge of their race's habitat. They trade chiefly at Tanana, a hundred and thirty miles or so away, walking an annual trip thither with their furs...The measles in 1900 slew most of them, and diphtheria in 1906 destroyed all the children and many of the adults that remained." Influenza in 1920, 1923 and 1930, along with hideous forms of tuberculosis, further depleted the region of Natives (Aronson 1940:31; Brooker 1984; Hosley 1966a:11; Nenana News May 31, 1923, Oswalt 1980:13). The epidemic about 1920 is often mentioned by older people.

Hosley (1966b:170) mentioned that in the 1900-1910 period Birch Creek Village was severely decimated. Percy Duyck (1982) described a burial site along the Bearpaw River north of Diamond where victims of a flu outbreak in the early 1920s are buried, including his father's first wife. Percy also recalled his dad digging graves up the Toklat River near the salmon spawning area (Knight's Roadhouse). Both he and Celia Peterson (1980) stated that at the time of one epidemic some residents of the Kantishna River area were removed to the new railroad line at Rex and taken by train to Nenana for burial. An epidemic in the spring of 1923 at Birch Creek left dozens of people dead. Not only was the Birch Creek population reduced to one or two families, but Coschaket suffered nearly the same fate because many families had gone to Birch Creek for spring muskrat hunting. Eli Charlie (1983) and Lee Edwin (1983) were boys at this time and recall the great number of dead, including Eli's mother. Many people were buried at Birch Creek cemetery, while others were subsequently removed to Coschaket by boat for final burial. An interesting observation was made by Eli that only people above the age of 15 became ill. As late as 1940, measles wiped out the whole village at Healy Lake near Delta Junction. A measles epidemic the same year on the Kuskokwim reached at least as far upriver as the Stoney River

FF 94611

to town with snow up to their waists (Duyck 1980). Travel along the trails had diminished and they had to break trail, whereas before they had waited for the mail carriers with their large dog teams to do it.

The roadhouse keepers weren't very happy, either. They depended upon the overland travellers for their livelihood. With airplanes, many of the stopping places weren't needed. The people employed at the roadhouses also felt the effects; no longer were large quantities of dry fish necessary to feed the dog teams, and there were fewer opportunities for wage labor in their home areas. Some villagers must have experienced a type of isolation very similar to life before the turn of the century.

The development of air service is closely tied to the establishment of support services in the way of airstrips and communication sites. As noted, a major airstrip was built at McGrath about 1942 and the site increased in importance as the "air cross-roads of west central Alaska." Jefford (1981:76) wrote: "Since the community was right on the river, the fuel suppliers were able to barge in large stockpiles of aviation gasoline. Plentiful gas coupled with its central location made McGrath a good checkpoint, and refueling stop for bush flyers."

The site of Farewell on the South Fork of the Kuskokwim was built in the early 1940s by the Civil Aeronautics Authority (CAA) as a communications site. Fuel for this site was transported by tractor from Pitka Fork where presumably it had been barged up the Kuskokwim (Brown 1980:85). The building and maintenance of this site may not have provided economic opportunities for the upper Kuskokwim people because it was out of the area they were then using and a considerable distance from the villages of Nikolai and Telida. However, at least one Nikolai resident, Bobby Esai, worked in the early war years freighting oil up the river and overland to Farewell. It may well be that further research can provide evidence other Natives also shared in this economic flurry.

Another CAA site was established at Lake Minchumina in 1941-42. Long before then, old Abbey Doddia, the last permanent resident Athabaskan at the lake, had left for Telida and there were but a few white trappers in the area. Athabascans from the Kantishna and Kuskokwim drainages occasionally visited the area but the lake came to play less of a role in their lives and more of a role in the lives of white trappers and CAA employees.

A discussion of the building of the CAA station, and subsequent barging efforts, taken from Gudgel-Holmes (1979), follows:

In the summer of 1941 the CAA began to build their station and airfield at Lake Minchumina. Two planes, an amphibian and pontoon ship, made a total of eighteen trips bringing

FF 94011

freight to the forty workers at the lake. George Black was also reported to be hauling freight by water that year for the station (Fairbanks News-Miner, July 23, 1941). During the winter a cat train with equipment for the partially completed station ran from Nenana along the winter trail to the lake. There were three or four cats in the train and one fell through the ice at the lake, but was later recovered. The next summer, fuel for the new station was barged from Nenana, up the Kantishna and Muddy Rivers. Two "J" boats, about twenty-five feet long and twelve to sixteen feet wide, were used. One pushed while the other pulled the barge that was between them. According to Warren Lindsay, a former FAA river transportation employee, the boats pushed the barges up-river to beyond Roosevelt where they then switched places and pulled them, using birch trees tied to the barges' rear corners for better control up the tortuous Muddy River. Three or four trips were made per season bringing in fuel and other heavy equipment until 1954. Among the operators of the boats were Einer and Emil Hansen, brothers to the Hansen of John Hansen Lake fame. The Hansens were experienced rivermen who displayed much skill in maneuvering their crafts on the tight corners of the Muddy River. At times, reports Dick Collins of Lake Minchumina, the boats would be brushing the outside banks of the river while the barge would be up against the inside bank, yet the Hansens' coordination and cooperation (which did not extend to their land activities) were so expert they did not have to back up and fill in around the corners. There were a few times during the years of barging when the freight had to be double tripped at shallow spots on the Kantishna. Part of the cargo would be unloaded, the boat would proceed over the shallow spot, deposit its remaining freight and return for the first load.

In 1954 a PT boat that had been used in barging fuel to the Bettles station was taken off that run and used for Minchumina. This larger and more powerful boat was able to push a barge twice as big as the "J" boats and much faster also. The usual ten to twelve day trip was reduced to three. The "J" boat operators predicted the PT boat would not be able to navigate the route to the lake, but the water was high that year and several trips were made before the close of the season (Dick Collins 1979, personal communication). The next year the FAA awarded their barging operations to YuTana Barge Lines of Nenana, but before the first run was made, it was discovered the fuel could be flown in cheaper than it could be barged. Thereafter, until the FAA shut down the station in 1969, planes were used to bring fuel to Minchumina.

One of the first people to work at the Lake Minchumina site was Kenny Granroth, an old-timer who is still living there and is a

source for much of the history reported in this document. Jimmy Sims (1980), who now lives on the Parks Highway, also recalled his experiences working on the barges with the C&A Navigation Company. He and the Hansen brothers were only a few of the many Kantishna River area residents who combined summer employment with winter trapping. This pattern of seasonal employment was common even before the CAA station was built, as gold seekers augmented their prospecting with trapping, especially in the marginal to poor gravels of the Kantishna and upper Kuskokwim (J. Brooks 1982; Dice 1912:69). Today this pattern still occurs in communities in and near the north additions of Denali. Some people still combine winter trapping with seasonal employment, often having to leave home for 3-5 months for employment. The seasonal pattern is reversed in Kantishna where most miners and lodge operators work during the summer but leave the area in winter. A major difference today, compared with the early days, is that now there are other forms of gaining a livelihood besides trapping and mining. Now among subsistence users of Denali there are also a number of retired people, while in a few areas some subsistence users have full time jobs and others seasonal jobs in construction, guiding and community development projects such as airfield and school maintenance.

The airplane not only revolutionized transportation systems and employment potentials but also provided easier access to trapping areas for some trappers. Tom and Mary Flood (1980), residents of Lake Minchumina, noted that Fabian Carey used an airplane for access and to supply his trapline cabins, in the 1950s and probably earlier. Since that time, this method of access has continued to varying degrees among some trappers, especially those who reside primarily at Lake Minchumina, Nenana and Fairbanks.

#### The Development of Big Game Guiding

Across the state, one of the most important applications of the airplane has been its use in big game guiding operations. The airplane permits the guide to quickly get his clients into and out of camps, thus increasing the number of clients that can be served in a given season. The airplane is also used to spot game and greatly facilitates the transport of trophies and meat.

A few Natives at Nikolai have been involved in guiding as assistant guides, packers and (perhaps) as guides. Philip Esai (1980), who lives in Nikolai, noted that Bob Curtis started guiding in 1956 and that was when the villagers started working for guides. Mishka Deaphon (1981) said that guiding started in the 1940s on the northwest flank of Denali. To the best of our knowledge, none of the operations involving residents of Nikolai or Telida are or were within what are now the Park or Preserve boundaries.

FF 94611

### Knudson's Cabin

The "Trappers Cabin" at mile 132 on the Nenana to McGrath dog sled trail, listed in the Kusko Times, June 15, 1929, may have been the same one described by Brandt (1943:30) as his party's next stop after Lake Minchumina in 1924:

After crossing a series of beautiful lakes we came upon a trapper's cabin, which was so beautifully situated that we decided to camp. The door was unlocked, although the trapper had gone away; but he had left everything prepared for any traveler who might happen along. A verbatim copy of his sign read as follows:

THO THE TRAVELING PUBLIK. Make your silw at home. You vil find some grub ind the cabin, and some more ind the chas (cache), take what you wondt, and live hvat silver you tink es righth. Plase bi carefuld ved fire. Live kendeling under the stove, the es always sombody behind you. Sign your name and amaunt of monny you living. Plase be carefuld ved fire.

Ed Knudson

A Knudson is mentioned by Beech (1931:78) as prospecting with Giles in 1925 in the Tonzona watershed. Karstens (1924) described Giles and Knutson as "good prospectors," and Whitehead (1984) said Giles' partner was Knutson or Knudson. (Also see Fish Lake.)

The exact location of this cabin has not been determined. A possibility for the location may be at Lake Snohomish (see Bishop 1978: map), since that would fit in with the mileages between roadhouses (see page 26). However, that does not seem to fit Brandt's description of "crossaing a series of beautiful lakes" before reaching the cabin.

### Lake Minchumina

While the present population of the Lake Minchumina area consists predominately of whites, there is an historic and prehistoric record of use by Athabascan Indians and their predecessors.

According to C. E. Holmes (unpublished notes 1982), the archeological record at Lake Minchumina documents 2,500 years of settlement. Numerous archeological sites exist around the lake and nearby area. Investigations began in the 1960s and have continued throughout the 1970s and into the 80s. Extensive work (excavations) has been done at three sites: two at the east end of the lake near White's Roadhouse, and one at the west end of the lake. The earliest occupations are probably related to a late phase of the Northern Archaic

FF 94611

tradition, circa 400 B.C. Evidence of contacts to interior northwestern Alaska (middle Koyukuk River drainage) is found from earliest times in obsidian, a raw material for making stone tools. Copper of natural origin, used to make tools and ornaments, appears in the 9th century A.D. at one site. The origin of native copper is probably to the southeast of Minchumina in the Copper River country, indicating trade or influence from that quarter. Two small villages (8th and 6th century A.D.) contain remains of semisubterranean winter houses that may relate to early interior (boreal forest) adaptations by groups related to the Norton/Ipiutak culture. Later occupation can be related to Athabascan culture.

Some of the old-timers, like Al Bartlett and Kenny Granroth, took a keen interest in the Native history and their observations are incorporated in this report. The Starrs, a Native family now living primarily in Nenana, maintain strong family ties to the region, and Alfred Starr and other former residents have a vast knowledge of local history.

During the latter 1800s and early 1900s, the Native population was depleted by epidemics. Previous to that a fairly large population lived at the lake but was nearly destroyed by a war with Indians from up the Yukon River. After that, the remaining population scattered among the other nearby groups (Joseph 1982). Other Natives used the lake occasionally, such as a group from Nenana fishing for whitefish near the outlet in November 1923 (Whitehead 1984). Among the last Indians to live at Lake Minchumina were old Andrew Evan and his wife Abbey Doodia. Their cabin still stands in back of the house occupied by Kenny Granroth. Old Andrew died of cancer in the 1920s and Abbey sold out to Jim Sillib, a well-travelled prospector. He arrived, so the story is told, having been directed to the lake by Natives who told him it was a good source of whitefish (Granroth 1980).

While it is likely that many prospectors travelled by the lake on their way to or from gold mining camps, those who stayed made their living at trapping and fur farming and seasonal wage labor when it was available (see Bishop 1978). The lake's central location between major drainages made it a natural transportation and communication center and many of the people who settled there worked seasonally at roadhouses, for the CAA/FAA, at barging, or more recently at the BLM firefighting station. The community will probably be remembered historically for its strategic position in the development of transportation and communication, but these are only part of the reasons why people chose to stay there. The primary reasons for settlement were the opportunities the area provided for people to live on the land, trapping, hunting and fishing.

FF 94611

ARTIS

Before 1923, a common route of winter travel from Seward/Cook Inlet to the Upper Kuskokwim was over the Iditarod trail; a rough and arduous trip across the Alaska Range. With the completion of the Alaska Railroad there was an easier alternative (Oswalt 1980). A mail contractor E. Coke Hill (no relation to the Coghills of Nenana who were early settlers) was successful in establishing a winter trail from the railhead at Nenana to McGrath which at times followed an old Native trail, and the Alaska Road Commission made improvements along the trail (Brown 1980). The trail crossed Lake Minchumina and a roadhouse was located east of the lake. This trail remained an important travel route and traffic was reported heavy until the advent of airmail service in the 1930s (Brown 1980:89)

With the advent of aircraft, the FAA and its predecessor the CAA, established communication sites throughout the state; in 1941 they built a station at Lake Minchumina. Kenny Granroth was part of that project. Supplies for the CAA station were barged up the Kantishna River each summer until 1955. Jim Sims was one who worked for C & A Navigation early in the 1940s. He freighted in the summer and trapped in the winter (Sims 1980). According to Dick Collins, who came to the lake to be station manager in 1952 and then retired there, the FAA had their own boats. Among those who worked on the boats were the Hansen brothers, who wintered at Hansen Lake and Roosevelt. Barging on the Kantishna was not an easy job, for low water was a recurrent problem.

When aircraft replaced the barges, the long runway at the lake made it possible to supply the FAA station as well as trappers with their winter outfit. Continued federal involvement was marked by the establishment of a BLM firefighting station at the lake, which provided seasonal employment for some local residents.

The current population spans the years back to the 1940s and by direct association with the previous old timers the oral historical record extends to the 1920s. In one case, that of Abbie Joseph, the record extends directly to before the turn of the century.

Within the last couple of years, state and federal land disposal programs, new federal classifications and private land subdivisions have brought more newcomers to Lake Minchumina. Significant changes are occurring (see discussion of trapping) as the community adjusts to new opportunities and constraints, but many seem to have an earnest desire to continue a way of life that combines living on the land with seasonal wage labor.

AKLIS

WATER BODY HISTORICAL DATA

06/10/79 2024

8519 WATN LAKE NANCY 922  
 REFN LAKE NANCY  
 STOR 00792  
 MOUT N614100 W1495900 S180N 0040M 04  
 LUPR 52 LITTLE SUSITNA RIVER  
 KEYW NO TRAFF, PHOTO-VEGETATION  
 ABST CAPTION OF PHOTO: "LAKE NANCY, ONE OF THE MANY BEAUTIFUL LAKES ALONG THE ROUTE OF THE GOVERNMENT RAILROAD - (P238-239) TELEPHONE POLE IS IN FOREGROUND; MANY TREES ALONG BANKS; BANKS ARE NOT STEEP; NO BOATS ARE ON LAKE. PUBLICATION DATE IS 1922.

8520 WATN LAKE NARVAKRAK 966  
 REFN LAKE NARVAKRAK  
 STOR 02728  
 MOUT 1602  
 LUPR 21 KUGURUROK RIVER  
 KEYW NO TRAFF, EXPEDITION, UNSPECIFIED TRANSPORT  
 ABST ASSORTED ARTIFACTS WERE RECOVERED NEAR THE NE SHORE OF LAKE NARVAKRAK. DATE AND CULTURAL AFFINITIES ARE UNKNOWN. (LOCATION NUMBER 52) REFERENCE IS MADE TO OTHER SITES IN THE AREA WHERE ARTIFACTS SUCH AS SPALLS, MICROBLADES, BIFACE FRAGMENTS AND FLAKE KNIVES WERE RECOVERED. THIS INCLUDES SITES WITH THE LOCATION NUMBERS OF: 538 54, 55, AND 56. DATE FOR THESE SITES IS NOT GIVEN. IN 1966 HALL CONDUCTED AN ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION IN THE LAKE NARVAKRAK AREA. (TABLE 5 BETWEEN PP 21-22)

8521 WATN LAKE NARVAKRAK 964  
 REFN LAKE NARVAKRAK  
 STOR 1602  
 MOUT N680100 W1614500 K300N 0130M 18  
 LUPR 21 KUGURUROK RIVER  
 KEYW LAND GEOLOGY, EXPEDITION, NO TRAFF  
 ABST LAKE NARVAKRAK IS SHALLOW AND HAS A MUDDY BOTTOM. ANDERSON CONDUCTED AN ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY AROUND THIS LAKE IN 1964. (P84)

8522 WATN LAKE NARVAKRAK 973  
 REFN 03841  
 STOR 1602  
 MOUT N680100 W1614500 K300N 0130M 18  
 LUPR 21 KUGURUROK RIVER  
 KEYW FISHING, NO TRAFF  
 ABST FISH SAMPLES WERE TAKEN FROM NARVARAK IN SUMMER, 1973. (P216)

8523 WATN LAKE NERKA 965  
 REFN 01982  
 STOR 1605  
 MOUT N592959 W1585726 S080S 0570M 10  
 LUPR 42 NUSHAGAK RIVER  
 KEYW NO TRAFF, DIMENSION  
 ABST WAHRHAFTIG SAYS THAT LAKE NERKA IS 29 MI LONG AND IS ONE OF MANY LONG, NARROW GLACIAL LAKES IN THE OKLON MOUNTAINS. (P333)

8524 WATN LAKE NERKA 964  
 REFN 02754  
 STOR 1605

STOR 1603  
 MOUT N635403 W1521303 F120S 0240W 30  
 LUPR 35 TANANA RIVER  
 KEYW TRAFFIC,PAST USAGE,WATER-LAND CRAFT,COMMUNITY,ICE  
 ABST NOEL WIEN TELLS A STORY OF FLYING TO NOME IN DEC. 1927. HE LANDED ON LAKE MINCHUMINA, PLANNING TO STAY AT A SMALL ROADHOUSE THERE. HE PARKED THE PLANE IN DEEP SNOW AT THE EDGE OF THE LAKE A WIND CAME UP AND HE DECIDED TO GO OUT AND TIE THE PLANE DOWN. ALL THE SNOW HAD BLOWN OFF THE ICE AND THE PLANE HAD TOO, COMPLETELY ACROSS THE LAKE. HE FOUND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO WALK ON THE GLASSY ICE IN THE 40 MI/HR WIND, SO HE GAVE UP UNTIL MORNING. THE NEXT DAY HE SAW THE PLANE ABOUT A MILE OUT ON THE LAKE. (P136-7)

8514 WATN LAKE MINCHUMINA LAKE MINCHUMINA  
 REFN 05176 903  
 STOR 1603  
 MOUT N635403 W1521303 F120S 0240W 03  
 LUPR 35 KANTISHNA RIVER  
 KEYW NO TRAFF,COMMUNITY,ROUTE,RIVER  
 ABST JUDGE WICKERSHAM IN "OLD YUKON" ON HIS MCKINLEY TRIP OF 1903 MET SOME INDIANS ON THE KANTISHNA RIVER AT THE MOUTH OF MOOSE CREEK. THEIR SUMMER HOME IN THE MIDDLE OF THEIR HUNTING GROUNDS WAS LAKE MINCHUMINA, WHICH WAS THE BIG LAKE AT THE HEAD OF THE RIGHT FORK OF THE KANTISHNA RIVER. STANDING ON TOP OF CHITSIA MOUNTAIN, WICKERSHAM COULD TRACE THE PORTAGE FROM LAKE MINCHUMINA TO THE KUSKOKWIM RIVER. (P268)

8515 WATN LAKE MINCHUMINA LAKE MINCHUMINA  
 REFN 05179 889  
 STOR 1603  
 MOUT N635403 W1521303 F120S 0240W 03  
 LUPR 35 MUDDY RIVER  
 KEYW TRAFFIC,PAST USAGE,WATER CRAFT  
 ABST IN SUMMER 1889, HENRY DAVIS AND A FEW OTHER PROSPECTORS SAILED ACROSS IN SMALL POLING/ROWING BOAT ON WAY FROM KANTISHNA TO KUSKOKWIM RIVER. (P67)

8516 WATN LAKE MINCHUMINA LAKE MINCHUMINA  
 REFN 06791 928  
 STOR 1603  
 MOUT N635403 W1521303 F120S 0240W 03  
 LUPR 35 MUDDY RIVER  
 KEYW TRAFFIC,PAST USAGE,WATER-AIR CRAFT  
 ABST AROUND CHRISTMAS TIME OF 1928 NOEL WIEN LANDED ON LAKE MINCHUMINA ON SKIS. (P22)

8517 WATN LAKE MINCHUMINA LAKE MINCHUMINA  
 REFN 00660 930  
 STOR 1603  
 MOUT N635403 W1521303 F120S 0240W 03  
 LUPR 35 MUDDY RIVER  
 KEYW COMMUNITY,TRAPPING,NO TRAFF  
 ABST "LAKE MINCHUMINA IS A VILLAGE ON THE LAKE. TRAPPING IS IMPORTANT. POST OFFICE OPENED MARCH 24, 1930." (P-52)

8518 WATN LAKE MINCHUMINA MINCHUMINA LAKE  
 REFN 04701 937  
 STOR 1603  
 MOUT N635403 W1521303 F120S 0240W 03  
 LUPR 35 TANANA RIVER  
 KEYW NO TRAFF,RIVER  
 ABST "THE INCALIK MEET THE TANANA PEOPLE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF MINCHUMINA LAKE, WHICH IS DRAINED BY THE KANTISHNA

## LIFE AND TRAVEL IN INTERIOR ALASKA.

## LAKE HINCHUMINA

8509 WAIN LAKE HINCHUMINA  
REFN 04710 899  
STOR 1603  
MOUT N635403 W1521303 F120S 0240W 03  
LUPR 35 MUDDY RIVER

KEYW NO TRAFFIC, COMMUNITY, RIVER, EXPEDITION  
ABST A GROUP OF INDIANS LIVED IN THE AREA FROM THE TONZONA RIVER NORTH TO LAKE HINCHUMINA AND THE UPPER KANTISHNA RIVER. IN ADDITION, THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT A SMALL GROUP OF KOYUKUN INDIANS FROM THE YUKON RIVER SETTLED NEAR LAKE HINCHUMINA ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE LAST CENTURY. (P99) IN 1899, A SMALL PARTY OF SOLDIERS UNDER THE COMMAND OF LIEUTENANT J.S. HERRON, VISITED INDIAN VILLAGES AT LAKE HINCHUMINA. (P93)

## LAKE HINCHUMINA

8510 WAIN LAKE HINCHUMINA  
REFN 04806 931  
STOR 1603  
MOUT N635403 W1521303 F120S 0240W 03  
LUPR 35 MUDDY RIVER

KEYW TRAFFIC, WATER-AIR CRAFT, PAST USAGE, FREIGHT  
ABST SAM WHITE LANDED ON LAKE HINCHUMINA TO CHECK TRAPPER. IN SUMMER OF 1931 SAM STORED GASOLINE AT LAKE AND FLEW IN AGAIN IN WINTER. (P249)

## LAKE HINCHUMINA

8511 WAIN LAKE HINCHUMINA  
REFN 04812 930  
STOR 1603  
MOUT N635403 W1521303 F120S 0240W 03  
LUPR 35 MUDDY RIVER

KEYW TRAFFIC, PAST USAGE, WATER-AIR CRAFT, LAND WATER CRAFT, COMMUNITY, TRAPPING, PHOTO, FREIGHT  
ABST GOLDSTEIN CRASHED HIS PLANE ON THE ICE IN MID FEBRUARY. BLUNT LANDED ON THE LAKE WHEN HE SAW THE WRECK. THEN HE FLEW DOWN THE LAKE TO THE INDIAN VILLAGE FOR HELP. THE VILLAGES WENT TO THE WRECK WITH DOGSLEDS TO SALVAGE THE TRADE GOODS AND RECOVER THE BODIES. (P91-93) GOLDSTEIN WAS ON A TRIP TO BUY FURS, AND WAS CARRYING GOODS TO TRADE FOR FURS. (P90) THE INDIAN VILLAGE DEPENDED ON THE LAKE FOR ITS FOOD SUPPLY MUCH OF THE YEAR. (P91) BETWEEN PAGE 96&97 IS A PHOTO OF THE GOLDSTEIN WRECK ON THE LAKE.

## LAKE HINCHUMINA

8512 WAIN LAKE HINCHUMINA  
REFN 04832 927  
STOR 1603  
MOUT N635403 W1521303 F120S 0240W 03  
LUPR 35 MUDDY RIVER

KEYW TRAFFIC, PAST USAGE, WATER-AIR CRAFT, DIMENSION, VEGETATION, MISC TRANSPORT, LAND GEOLOGY  
ABST ON DECEMBER 23, 1927, NOEL WIEN, PIONEER BUSH PILOT, LANDED ON LAKE HINCHUMINA WHICH WAS 9 MI. LONG AND ALONG THE FAIRBANKS-MC GRATH DOG TRAIL 65 MI. NW. OF MT MC KINLEY. (P199) HE TAXIED OVER THE SNOW INTO A COVE SHELIERED BY SPRUCE AND BIRCH. STOPPING AT THE EDGE OF THE LAKE, HE DISMOUNTED AND CLIMBED ABOUT 200 FEET UP A GENTLE SLOPE TO KAHMISGAARD'S ROADHOUSE WHERE HE SPENT THE NIGHT. (P199) THE NEXT MORNING WIEN DISCOVERED HEAVY WINDS HAD BLOWN THE PLANE ABOUT A MILE OUT. "ALMOST IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LAKE." (P200) DUE TO THE WEATHER, IT WAS CHRISTMAS DAY BEFORE WIEN COULD GET TO HIS PLANE WHICH HAD BEEN BLOWN FURTHER STILL AND WAS "A PRETTY SAD MESS." (P201) HAVING REPAIRED THE PLANE, WIEN WALKED ALL OVER THE LAKE LOOKING FOR A SUITABLE PLACE TO TAKE OFF AND FINALLY PROCEEDED TO DO SO. (P202 AND 203) A PHOTOGRAPH ON PAGE 151 SHOWS THE PLANE ON THE LAKE. THE CAPTION READS: "THE STORM DAMAGED STINSON ON LAKE HINCHUMINA ON DECEMBER 26, 1927, AFTER HAVING BEEN BLOWN 2 MILES ACROSS THE LAKE DURING A GALE THE NIGHT BEFORE."

## LAKE HINCHUMINA

8513 WAIN LAKE HINCHUMINA  
REFN 05030 927

WATER BODY HISTORICAL DATA

06/10/79

2021

REFN 02726 794956  
 STOR 1603  
 MOUT N635403 W1521303 F1205 0240M 03  
 LUPR 35 MUDDY RIVER  
 KEYW TRAFFIC,PAST USAGE,UNSPECIFIED TRANSPORT,MISC TRANSPORT,EXPEDITION  
 ABST IN 1889 FRANK DUNSHORE CROSSED FROM THE TANANA RIVER TO THE KUSKOKWIM RIVER VIA LAKE MINCHUMINA. (P1) IN 1913, AN INDIAN CALLED "MINCHUMINA JOHN" TOOK HIS WIFE AND CHILD AND WALKED FROM THE LAKE ABOUT A HUNDRED MILES TO FIND THE STUCK-KARSTENS EXPEDITION OF 1913. HE FOLLOWED THEIR TRAIL AND FOUND THEM AT MCGONAGALL PASS. THE BASE CAMP FOR THE CLIMB UP MT MCKINLEY. (P12)

8505 LAKE MINCHUMINA LAKE MINCHUMINA  
 REFN 02892 927  
 STOR 1603  
 MOUT N635403 W1521303 F1205 0240M 03  
 LUPR 35 MUDDY RIVER  
 KEYW TRAFFIC,PAST USAGE,WATER-AIR CRAFT,COMMUNITY  
 ABST IN LATE DECEMBER, 1927 NOEL WIEN LANDED HIS STINSON ON LAKE MINCHUMINA, PARKING NEAR THE ROADHOUSE WHERE HE STAYED OVERNIGHT.

8506 LAKE MINCHUMINA LAKE MINCHUMINA  
 REFN 03496 926  
 STOR 1603  
 MOUT N635403 W1521303 F1205 0240M 03  
 LUPR 35 MUDDY RIVER  
 KEYW NO TRAFF,ROUTE,EXPEDITION,LAND TRANSPORT  
 ABST IN SAN JOHNSON'S "ROADS AND TRAILS IN ALASKA", A DISTRICT OPERATIONS REPORT, 1926, STATED THAT A TRAIL TO BETTER SERVICE MINES ON THE KANTISHNA AND DIXON FORK WAS TRAVELED IN A 1922 RECONNAISSANCE. IT WOULD BEGIN AT KOBIL ON THE RAILROAD, THROUGH DIAMOND, TO ROOSEVELT ON KANTISHNA "TO KANNISGAARD'S CABIN AT THE FOOT OF LAKE MINCHUMINA", THENCE TO BARRY'S LANDING ON THE KUSKOKWIM. THE 1926 REPORT INCLUDED A 1922 RECONNAISSANCE. TRAVELING BY DOG SLED FROM LIGHTITE, THE MEN WENT UP MCKINLEY FORK UNTIL THEY FOUND "A WELL BEATEN TRAIL. THIS PROVED TO BE THE TRAIL USED BY THOSE WHO TRAVEL FROM THE KUSKOKWIM TO THE RAILROAD VIA LAKE MINCHUMINA." (P50) LAKE MINCHUMINA HAD A LANDING FIELD 1500 FT LONG AND 600 FT WIDE. (P50)

8507 LAKE MINCHUMINA LAKE MINCHUMINA  
 REFN 04264 00912 912  
 STOR 1603  
 MOUT N635403 W1521303 F1205 0240M 03  
 LUPR 35 MUDDY RIVER  
 KEYW NO TRAFF,VEGETATION  
 ABST ON THE SOUTH HILL SLOPES BORDERING LAKE MINCHUMINA, AN EXTENSIVE WHITE-BIRCH FOREST IS FOUND. THE TREES OF THIS FOREST ARE VERY UNIFORM IN SIZE AND HEIGHT, BEING FROM 6 TO 12 INCHES IN DIAMETER AND ABOUT 50 FEET IN HEIGHT, WITH NO LARGE BRANCHES UNTIL NEAR THE TOP. A FEW RED BIRCHES AND YOUNG WHITE SPRUCE ARE ALSO FOUND. THE FOREST FLOOR IS COVERED WITH LOW CRANBERRY BUSHES, OTHER SHRUBS BEING NEARLY ABSENT. (P102)

8508 LAKE MINCHUMINA LAKE MINCHUMINA  
 REFN 04346 921931  
 STOR 1603  
 MOUT N635403 W1521303 F1205 0240M 03  
 LUPR 35 KANTISHNA RIVER  
 KEYW TRAFFIC,PAST USAGE,WATER-LAND CRAFT,TRAPPING,COMMUNITY,DIMENSIONS  
 ABST REFERENCE IS MADE TO EXTENSIVE FUR-TRAPPING CENTERED AT LAKE MINCHUMINA DESCRIBED AS AS "A BIG LAKE, ABOUT THIRTY FIVE MILES LONG." (P.97) FURS WERE ALSO BOUGHT ON A ROUTE THAT INCLUDED LIVENGOOD, TOLOYANA, KANTISHNA, AND KUSKOKWIM IN THE WINTER BY DOG TEAM. PERIOD WAS 1921-1931 IN A PIONEER ACCOUNT OF



## PUBLICATION.

8498 WATN LAKE MINCHUMINA  
REFN 00808  
STOR 1603  
MOUT N635403 W1521303 F120S 0240W 03  
LUPR 35  
KEYW TANANA RIVER  
ABST

## LAKE MINCHUMINA

899907

TRAFFIC,PAST USAGE,WATER-LAND CRAFT,MISC TRANSPORT,WATER CRAFT,WATER GEOLOGY,LAND

GEOLOGY,VEGETATION,DIMENSION,COMMUNITY,FISHING,ROUTE,RIVER  
GEORGE BRYON GORDON DISCUSSED LIEUT. JOSEPH H HERRON'S EXPEDITION TO LAKE MINCHUMINA IN 1699 WHEN COMPARING IT TO HIS OWN ROUTE OF 1907. HE SAID THAT HERRON'S MAP OF THE LAKE WAS VAGUE AND A ROUGH OUTLINE. IT DRAINS INTO THE TANANA. HERRON "CROSSED (THE LAKE) IN WINTER ON SNOWSHOES AND WITH DOG SLEDS." (P18) CHIEF HENRY DREW A BIRCKBARK MAP FOR GORDON IN 1905. HE SHOWED LAKE MINCHUMINA AND KANTISHNA FLOWING FROM IT. HE ALSO INDICATED A PORTAGE TO THE KUSKOKWIM FROM THE LAKE. (P24) GEORGE AND MACLAREN WENT UP THE KANTISHNA BY CANOE IN 1907 AND ENTERED THE LAKE AT THE KANTISHNA OUTLET. HE FOUND THE WATER PERFECTLY CLEAR." (P62) "THE SHORE AT THIS POINT WAS HARD AND PEBBLY AND COVERED WITH A THICK GROWTH OF WILLOWS AND ADLERS AND SMALL BIRCH. WE SAW A PROMONTORY WITH A HALF BLUFF TO THE SW ACROSS THE LAKE AND FIXED UPON THIS AS A LOOKOUT FROM WHICH TO TAKE OUR OBSERVATIONS." (P62) THEY CROSSED OVER TO THE PROMONTORY AND LANDED THEIR CANOE UNDER A HIGH BLUFF "WITH A SANDY BEACH AT ITS BASE." (P62) "THE PROMONTORY TERMINATES IN A SPIT ENDING IN A LONG SAND BAR THAT RUNS STRAIGHT OUT UNDER WATER AND FORMS A SHOAL. IT IS WELL, THEREFORE, FOR ANYONE CROSSING THE LAKE TO GIVE THIS POINT A WIDE BIRTH." (P62) "THE LAKE SEEMED TO BE ABOUT 12 MILES ACROSS AT ITS GREATEST WIDTH, AND THERE WERE PLENTY OF LITTLE BAYS WHERE A VILLAGE MIGHT BE HIDDEN." (P64) "ARRIVING AT THE OPPOSITE SIDE (OF THE PROMONTORY) WE ROUNDED A LONG NARROW POINT OF LOW LAND COVERED WITH TREES AND SAW AN ENCAMPMENT OF 3 BRUSH TENTS, THE SUMMER CAMP OF A BAND OF INDIANS." (P64-65) THE INDIANS TOLD GEORGE AND MACLAREN THAT 2 WHITE MEN HAD COME UP THE KANTISHNA AND HEADED N. ACROSS THE LAKE WITH A LARGE POLING BOAT 10 DAYS BEFORE THE GORDONS. ONLY OTHER EARLIER WHITE MEN WERE A PARTY OF 6 "WHO CAME FROM SW AND CROSSED TO N WITH DOG SLEDS IN THE WINTER SOME YEARS BEFORE." (P66) THE INDIANS DREW A MAP OF THE LAKE AND THE PORTAGE TO THE KUSKOKWIM. (P67) THE INDIANS CALLED THEMSELVES HINKHOTANA AND STATED THAT PREVIOUSLY THERE WERE MANY VILLAGES ON THE LAKE. (P69) NOW THERE WAS ONLY ONE VILLAGE. MOST OF THE INDIANS HAD GONE HUNTING IN THE MOUNTAINS BECAUSE THERE WAS NO GAME AROUND THE LAKE. IN THE WINTER THEY CAME BACK AT WHICH TIME THE POPULATION WAS ABOUT 25. (P74-75) THEY SPENT 1 WK ON THE LAKE AND CAUGHT FISH IN ABUNDANCE, ESPECIALLY GRAYLING AND WHITE FISH. (P82) THEY AND TWO INDIANS BACKPACKED ACROSS THE PORTAGE USING PACK DOGS. (P83-84) THE PORTAGE WAS FULL OF NIGGERHEAD AND MUSKIEG. (P84) THE PORTAGE WENT 2 MILES TO A SMALL LAKE AND THEN 4 MILES TO THE DIVIDE AND 4 MILE BEYOND THAT. (P84-91) "THE PORTAGE BETWEEN LAKE MINCHUMINA AND THE HEAD OF THE KUSKOKWIM IS ABOUT 10 1/2 MILES...WE WERE ALTOGETHER 7 DAYS ON THIS PORTAGE..." (P93)

8499 WATN LAKE MINCHUMINA  
REFN 01222 00010 970  
STOR 1603  
MOUT N635403 W1521303 F120S 0240W 30  
LUPR 35  
KEYW MUDDY RIVER  
ABST

## LAKE MINCHUMINA

TRAFFIC,PAST USAGE,WATER-AIR CRAFT,FREIGHT

IN THE THIRD PART OF HIS MEMOIR (JULY, 1970) TRAPPER SLIM CARLSON SAYS: ONE FALL WHEN I WAS OVER AT BIRCH CREEK, JUST A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE SEASON OPENED IN NOVEMBER (IT USED TO OPEN ON THE 16TH OF NOVEMBER) I SAW I DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH DOG FEED, SO I WENT IN TO NENANA BY CHARTER PLANE, AND BOUGHT 1,500 POUNDS OF FISH. I CHARTERED A NORSEMAN FROM FAIRBANKS TO TAKE IT OUT TO LAKE MINCHUMINA. I THOUGHT THE NORSEMAN COULDN'T LAND ON THE LAKE CLOSE TO MY CABIN. OF COURSE, IT COULD, BUT I DIDN'T KNOW IT AT THE TIME AS I THOUGHT IT WOULD TAKE QUITE A WHILE FOR IT TO STOP. IT STOPPED AT NENANA AND PICKED UP THE FISH (I PAID \$375 FOR THAT FISH). HE HAD A NORSEMAN FULL OF FISH. OF COURSE, THEY DIDN'T TELL ME THAT THE NORSEMAN WAS OVERLOADED, BUT WE MADE IT. IT WAS DARK BEFORE WE MADE IT INTO LAKE MINCHUMINA. AN OPERATOR THERE HAD A LITTLE PLANE SO I HIRED HIM TO HAUL IT OVER FROM THE LAKE TO MY LAKE, BEHIND MY CABIN ON BIRCH CREEK. HE WAS GOING TO DO THAT, SURE THING? I EVEN PAID HIM WELL, HE HAULED OVER TWO BALES. I COULDN'T GO ON MY TRAP LINE OR ANYTHING WITH ONLY TWO BALES BECAUSE THAT WAS ONLY TWO OR THREE DAY'S FEED. (P37)

## WATER BODY HISTORICAL DATA

STOR 1603  
 MOUT N635403 W1521303 F1205 0240M 03  
 LUPR MUDDY RIVER  
 KEYW 35  
 ABST TRAFFIC,PAST USAGE,WATER CRAFT,FREIGHT,RIVER-DIMENSION  
 THE ARTICLE "IDLER ENDS VOYAGE UP KANTISHNA" IS INCLUDED IN THE "FAIRBANKS DAILY NEWS-MINER" OF AUG 27,1941,  
 WHERE IT IS REPORTED THAT CAPT GEORGE BLACK RETURNED FROM LAKE MINCHUMINA WITH HIS "POWERFUL MOTORBOAT IDLER  
 AND BARGE". (P4) "SAILING FROM FAIRBANKS SHE TOOK 135 TONS OF CARGO FROM THIS PORT AND NENANA UP THE KANTISHNA  
 RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES INTO AND ACROSS LAKE MINCHUMINA TO THE SITE OF THE NEW C A A FIELD ON THE SHORES OF THE  
 LAKE." (P4) BLACK WENT UP THE KANTISHNA AND MUDDY RIVERS. (P4) "MATERIALS LANDED AT THE FIELD SITE THIS TRIP  
 AND ON PREVIOUS TRIPS THIS SEASON BY THE IDLER AND BARGE SUPPLEMENT SEVERAL HUNDRED TONS OF SUPPLIES AND  
 MATERIALS WHICH WERE TRANSPORTED TO THE PLACE DURING THE WINTER BY TRACTORS AND SLEIGHS, OVER SNOWS AND  
 FROZEN STREAMS, DURING THE WINTER." (P4) THE LAKE, WHICH IS FED BY TWO BRANCHES OF FORAKER RIVER AND OTHER  
 STREAMS FED BY MOUNT MCKINLEY AND ADJACENT PEAKS, IS A BEAUTIFUL SPRAWLING BODY OF WATER, THE MAIN PORTION OF  
 WHICH IS ABOUT TEN MILES LONG, WITH A NUMBER OF IRREGULAR ARMS. (P4) THE ROUND TRIP TOOK 3 WEEKS. (P4)

## LAKE MINCHUMINA

8495 WAIN LAKE MINCHUMINA  
 REEN 00108 94131 U 941

STOR 1603  
 MOUT N635403 W1521303 F1205 0240M 03  
 LUPR MUDDY RIVER  
 KEYW 35

ABST TRAFFIC,PAST USAGE,WATER-AIR CRAFT,FREIGHT,COMMUNITY,WATER CRAFT  
 IN AN ARTICLE IN THE FAIRBANKS "NEWS-MINER", JULY 31,1941, IT IS REPORTED UNDER THE TITLE "CAA FREIGHT IS  
 FLOWN TO MINCHUMINA", (CORRESPONDENCE) NENANA, JULY 27.-TWENTY-SIX C A A MEN ARRIVED IN NENANA ON JULY 15, ON  
 THEIR WAY TO BUILD A RADIO STATION AND AIR FIELD AT LAKE MINCHUMINA. THEY STAYED IN TOWN FOR FIVE DAYS,  
 WAITING FOR THEIR SUPPLIES TO BE FLOWN TO THE LAKE. TWO PLANES, AN AMPHIBIAN AND A PONTOON SHIP, WERE USED TO  
 TRANSFER THEIR SUPPLIES. EACH PLANE MADE THREE TRIPS A DAY FOR THREE DAYS, EACH PLANE CARRYING 1700 POUNDS OF  
 FREIGHT. THERE ARE FORTY MEN WORKING AT LAKE MINCHUMINA UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF ED KREIS. THEY ARE EXPECTED  
 TO FINISH THE WORK IN THREE MONTHS. JACK JEFFORD PILOTTED THE PONTOON SHIP. HERMAN OLSON, CARL HULT, AND  
 GEORGE BLACK ARE ALSO GOING TO HAUL FREIGHT TO LAKE MINCHUMINA FOR THE CAA. (P2) RESEARCHER'S NOTE: IT IS  
 OBVIOUS THAT "FINN" OLSON, CARL HULT, AND GEORGE BLACK PLANNED TO FREIGHT BY WATER. HULT AND OLSON WORKED FOR  
 BLACK DURING THE SUMMER WHEN HIS VESSELS PLIED THE WATERS OF INTERIOR ALASKA.

## LAKE MINCHUMINA

8496 WAIN LAKE MINCHUMINA  
 REEN 00546 924

STOR 1603  
 MOUT N635403 W1521303 F1205 0240M 03  
 LUPR MUDDY RIVER  
 KEYW 35

ABST TRAFFIC,WATER-LAND CRAFT,VEGETATION,EXPEDITION,ROUTE,PAST USAGE  
 THE AUTHOR, HERBERT BRANDT, MENTIONS MUSHING IN LAKE MINCHUMINA DURING HIS BIRD SURVEY EXPEDITION PASSED. IT  
 IN 1924 ON DOGSLED. THE SHORE IS IRREGULAR AND LINED WITH SPRUCE AND BIRCH. (P.29).

## LAKE MINCHUMINA

8497 WAIN LAKE MINCHUMINA  
 REEN 00605 947950

STOR 1603  
 MOUT N635403 W1521303 F1205 0240M 03  
 LUPR MUDDY RIVER  
 KEYW 35

ABST TRAFFIC,PAST USAGE,WATER-AIR CRAFT,FISHING,LAND TRANSPORT  
 IT IS REPORTED THAT LAKE MINCHUMINA HAS BEEN FISHED COMMERCIALY FOR WHITEFISH ON A SMALL SCALE IN THE  
 WINTER OF 1947-48. A LOCAL BUSH PILOT REPORTS HE HAULED 800 TO 900 POUNDS OF FROZEN WHOLE WHITEFISH FROM LAKE  
 MINCHUMINA TO FAIRBANKS. THE FISHING WAS DONE BY 2 LOCAL RESIDENTS WITH DRIFT GILL NETS THROUGH THE ICE. IT  
 IS REPORTED ON RELIABLE AUTHORITY THAT THE LAKE COULD NOT BE FISHED COMMERCIALY FOR MORE THAN ABOUT A FEW  
 THOUSAND POUNDS OF FISH PER YEAR. THIS FISH COULD PROBABLY BEST BE USED AT THE CAA BOARDING FACILITIES ON THE  
 NEARBY AIRFIELD AND AT PERHAPS ONE OR TWO VILLAGES IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY." (P21) END DATE IS DATE OF

FF 94611

ABST IN AN ARTICLE PUBLISHED BY THE FAIRBANKS DAILY TIMES ON AUGUST 28, 1913, IT STATED THAT THE BOAT IDLER WAS SEEN AT THE MOUTH OF THE BEARPAW, "ON THEIR WAY TO LAKE MINCHUMINA ON AUG 21". (P1)

LAKE MINCHUMINA

8491 WATN LAKE MINCHUMINA  
REFN 00076 91411 U 914  
STOR 1603  
MOUT N635403 W1521303 F1205 0240W 03  
LUPR 35 HUDDY RIVER  
KEYW AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY, TRAFFIC, PAST USAGE, UNSPECIFIED TRANSPORT  
ABST IN AN ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN THE FAIRBANKS DAILY TIMES ON JULY 11, 1914, IT DESCRIBES A FOX FARM AT MINCHUMINA, IN THE VERY HEART OF THE BIG VIRGIN GAME COUNTRY ON THE BANKS OF LAKE MINCHUMINA, WHERE WHITE MEN APPEAR BUT SELDOM, STEVE FOSTER AND NELS HENDERSON WILL OPEN A SMALL TRADING POST AND FOX FARM THIS YEAR, ACCORDING TO STATEMENTS MADE HERE WITHIN THE LAST FEW DAYS. THE MEN HAVE A GOOD-SIZED OUTFIT ON THE BANKS OF THE LAKE NOW, AND DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS IT WILL BE AUGMENTED IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT WINTER. THE LOCATION OF THE FARM WILL BE A SHORT DISTANCE FROM THE HEADWATERS OF THE KANTISHNA RIVER, IN A COUNTRY WHERE THE BIG GAME HAVE BEEN DISTURBED BUT LITTLE IN THEIR HAUNTS. THE MEN ALSO HOPE TO ACT AS GUIDES FOR BIG GAME HUNTING PARTIES, AND TO ENTERTAIN THE HUNTERS AT THEIR ESTABLISHMENT. ON THE NEXT TRIP TO THE LAKE, THE MEN ARE TO CARRY WITH THEM AN ESPECIALLY GOOD CAMERA, WITH WHICH THEY HOPE TO GET SOME VALUABLE PHOTOGRAPHS OF WILD ANIMALS IN THEIR NATIVE HAUNTS. ONE OF THE BIG ITEMS OF THE OUTFIT TO BE TAKEN TO THE HEADWATERS OF THE KANTISHNA IS WIRE FOR FOXYARDS. IT IS REPORTED THAT MANY GOOD FOXES ARE CAUGHT ALIVE EVERY YEAR IN THAT DISTRICT, AND AS THE LIVE ANIMALS ARE BECOMING MORE VALUABLE YEARLY, IT IS EXPECTED THAT A PAYING INDUSTRY CAN BE STARTED. (P4)

LAKE MINCHUMINA

8492 WATN LAKE MINCHUMINA  
REFN 00076 91417 U 914  
STOR 1603  
MOUT N635403 W1521303 F1205 0240W 03  
LUPR 35 HUDDY RIVER  
KEYW COMMUNITY, TRAFFIC, PAST USAGE, UNSPECIFIED TRANSPORT, AGRICULTURE, FREIGHT  
ABST IN AN ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN THE FAIRBANKS DAILY TIMES ON JULY 17, 1914, IT STATES THAT STEVE FOSTER AND NELS HENDERSON LEFT FAIRBANKS WITH A FOUR-TON OUTFIT IN HENDERSON'S BOAT. THEY WERE "BOUND FOR THE HEADWATERS OF THE KANTISHNA. THE OUTFIT IS TO BE FREIGHTED TO LAKE MINCHUMINA, WHERE THE MEN ARE TO RAISE FOXES DURING THE COMING YEAR, AND WHERE THEY WILL ESTABLISH A TRADING POST ALSO." (P4) THEY WERE ALSO GOING TO GUIDE.

LAKE MINCHUMINA

8493 WATN LAKE MINCHUMINA  
REFN 00079 92221 922  
STOR 1603  
MOUT N635403 W1521303 F1205 0240W 30  
LUPR 35 HUDDY RIVER  
KEYW NO TRAFFIC, RIVER, LAND TRANSPORT  
ABST AN ARTICLE ENTITLED "MAIL MEN TO USE OLD TRAIL" APPEARED IN THE "NENANA NEWS", OCT 21, 1922. (P4) THE ARTICLE SAID: "MAIL MEN TO USE OLD TRAIL." IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT THE NEW TRAIL CANNOT POSSIBLY BE MADE READY FOR USE INSIDE OF SEVERAL MONTHS, MAIL CONTRACTOR HILL HAS COMPLETED PLANS TO USE THE OLD TRAIL BY WAY OF TOKLAT, OPERATING OUT OF KOBE. HE WILL GO DIRECT TO DIAMOND, THENCE TO THE KUSKOKWIN BY WAY OF AN OLD INDIAN TRAIL MR HILL PLANS TO MAKE A TRIP OVER A PORTION OF THE TRAIL DURING THE COMING WEEK, FOR THE PURPOSE OF VERIFYING DISTANCE ESTIMATES, BUT HE WILL BE BACK IN TIME TO START THE FIRST MAIL OVER THE TRAIL ON THE FIRST OF NOVEMBER, ALTHOUGH USING KOBE STATION AS ONE OF HIS TERMINALS BECAUSE OF THE SAVING IN DISTANCE. MR HILL SAYS NENANA WILL DERIVE PRACTICALLY ALL OF THE BENEFIT FROM THE ROUTING OF MAILS BY WAY OF THE KANTISHNA INSTEAD OF RAINY PASS, AND IT IS POSSIBLE THAT HE WILL ROUTE THE MAIL DIRECT FROM NENANA LATER ON, IF THE ARRANGEMENT CAN BE MADE WITHOUT UPSETTING SCHEDULES OR ADDING TO THE COST OF CARRYING.

LAKE MINCHUMINA

8494 WATN LAKE MINCHUMINA  
REFN 00108 94127 X 941

FF 94611

LAKE HINCHUMINA

8490 WATN LAKE HINCHUMINA

REFM 00076 91328 V 913

STDR 1603

MOUT N635403 W1521303 F120S 0240W 03

LUPR 35 MUDDY RIVER

KEYW TRAFFIC,PAST USAGE,WATER,CRAFT