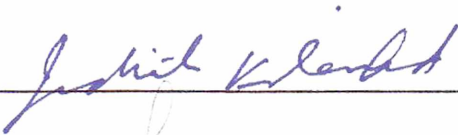
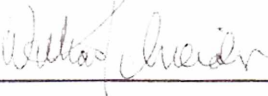


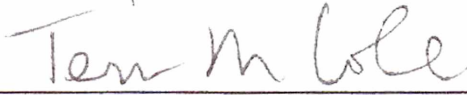
A STORM LIKE NO OTHER: CHANGES THAT SHAPED SEWARD
PENINSULA COMMUNITIES AT THE TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY

By
Amy Russell

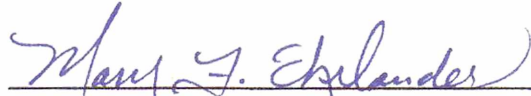
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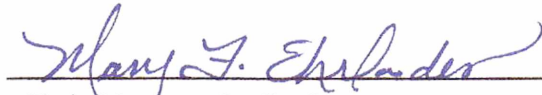




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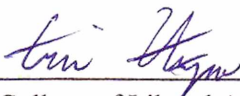


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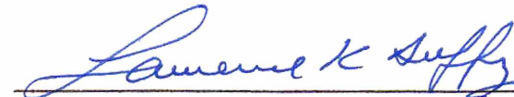


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Dean, College of Liberal Arts



Dean of the Graduate School



Date

A STORM LIKE NO OTHER: CHANGES THAT SHAPED SEWARD
PENINSULA COMMUNITIES AT THE TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY

A
THESIS

Presented to the Faculty
of the University of Alaska Fairbanks

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By
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Fairbanks, Alaska

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Abstract

This thesis explains how four events at the turn of the twentieth century—the start of an American administration, the introduction of schools and missions, the introduction of reindeer, and the 1918 influenza epidemic—brought sweeping changes to Inupiat on the Seward Peninsula, and contributed to the decline of two formerly-prominent Seward Peninsula communities: Kingegan and Kauwerak.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The largest communities on the Seward Peninsula in the early twenty-first century are Nome, Shishmaref, and Buckland. At the turn of the twentieth century, the two principal villages on the Seward Peninsula were Kingegan and Kauwerak. Within a few decades of Euro-American colonization, Kingegan and Kauwerak had dwindled to nearly a quarter of their former size and lost their standing as the most powerful communities on the peninsula. Kingegan and Kauwerak owe their decline to four particular developments in Seward Peninsula history: 1) the introduction of American authorities; 2) the introduction of missions and schools; 3) the introduction of reindeer; and 4) the devastation caused by the 1918 influenza epidemic. The Seward Peninsula that we know today was substantially and uniquely shaped by these events that took place over a century ago.



Figure 1: Map of 20th Century Seward Peninsula Communities, created using *Google Earth*.

Prehistoric Cultures of the Seward Peninsula

The Alaska Native group that has lived in the Seward Peninsula region for thousands of years is the Inupiat, an ethnic group found throughout Northwest and Arctic Alaska that is related to the Inuit of Northern Canada and Greenland. Beyond the title of Inupiat, which broadly refers to “the authentic people,”¹ Inupiat distinguished themselves by the specific parts of Northwestern Alaska from which they came. Ernest Burch, who conducted ethnographic research in Northwest Alaska between 1969 and 1970, reconfigured the cultural landscape of communities, or “nations,” that existed there before contact with Europeans. Burch’s research revealed that the Inupiat of Northwestern Alaska were divided into socioterritorial units (or “nations”) that had ownership of specific lands and observed distinct territorial boundaries.² Much of Burch’s information has been corroborated by the research of Dorothy Jean Ray, Kathryn Koutsky and Susan Fair.

The Inupiat who lived in the southwest region of the Seward Peninsula near a large village called Kauwerak³ or Qaviaraq were known as the Qaviaragmiut.⁴ Northwest of Kauwerak near a cape that is now called Wales was Kingegan,⁵ the largest village on the peninsula. The people from Kingegan, which was actually made up of two villages, Kiatanamiut to the north and Agianamiut to the south, were known across the peninsula as the Kingikmiut.⁶

¹ Burch, Ernest S., Jr. *Eskimo Kinsmen: Changing Family Relationships in Northwest Alaska*. New York: West publishing Co., 1975, 1.

² Burch, Ernest S., Jr. *The Inupiaq Eskimo Nations of Northwest Alaska*. Fairbanks, Alaska: University of Alaska Press, 1998, 11.

³ An alternative spelling for this village was Kawerak, the name now used for the region’s non-profit Native corporation, whose headquarters are in Nome. The Inupiaq alphabet includes characters not found on English language keyboards, so the spellings I’ve chosen are not assumed to represent the most accurate Inupiaq spellings.

⁴ Burch, 1998, 261.

⁵ Also spelled Kingigin, Kingikmiut, and in some historical sources as “King-a-ghee.”

⁶ Cited in Burch 1998; Ray, Dorothy Jean. *The Eskimos of Bering Strait, 1650-1898*. 1st paperback ed. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992; and Cohen, Kathryn Koutsky. *Early Days on Norton Sound and Bering Strait: An Overview of Historic Sites in the BSNC Region. The Wales Area*. Vol. II, Occasional

North of Kingegan along the Northwest coast of the peninsula lived the Tapqagmiut, who were Shishmaref, Cape Espenberg & other coastal people. The Inupiaq word *tapqaq* means “sandy shore,”⁷ making the Tapqagmiut the people who lived along the long stretch of the Northwest Seward Peninsula coastline. According to Dorothy Jean Ray, the Tapqagmiut were the people of the Cape Espenberg region, while the people between present-day Shishmaref area and Kingegan were called the Kigiqtaamiut.⁸ To the east of Burch’s Tapqagmiut were the “least known of all the historic Inupiaq nations of Northwest Alaska,”⁹ the Pittagmiut or Pittaqmiut, whose territory was between those of the Tapqagmiut and the Kanigmiut of the Buckland River drainage. Below the Kanigmiut of Buckland River, near Koyuk, Shaktoolik and Unalakleet were Inupiaq-speaking people who were called the Malimiut¹⁰ by Yupik speakers of Norton Sound and the Yukon River.

Paper No. 29. Fairbanks: Anthropology and Historic Preservation, Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, 1981.

⁷ Fair, Susan W. "Inupiat Naming and Community History: The Tapqaq and Saniniq Coasts near Shishmaref, Alaska." *The Professional Geographer* 49, no 4 (1997):467.

⁸ Former villages near Shishmaref (which was known by the Inupiaq name Kigiqtaq or Qikiqtaq) were Ikpek, Qividluaq, and Aguvik; these were closely culturally affiliated with the Shishmaref tribe. Wisniewski, Josh. ""We're Always Going Back and Forth": Kigiqtaamiut Subsistence Land Use and Occupancy." Fairbanks, Alaska: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 2008, 1.

⁹ Burch, 1998, 285.

¹⁰ Other spellings include Malemute, Mahle’mute, Malegmiut, and Malemiut.



Figure 2: Map of Kingegan and Kauwerak territories from Cohen, Kathryn Koutsky, *Early Days on Norton Sound and Bering Strait: An Overview of Historic Sites in the BSNC Region: The Port Clarence and Kauwerak Areas*. Vol. III.

Wars between these and other villages on the Seward Peninsula indicate that a strict system of territorial boundaries was in place on the Seward Peninsula in prehistoric times. Generally speaking, the Imuruk Lake area was known to be Kauwerak (or present day Mary's Igloo) territory, areas around Wales were Kingegan territory, and areas along the coast north of Ikpek Lagoon were the Kigiqtaamiut and other Tapqaq people's territory. While smaller villages existed throughout the area, these were the main winter settlements with which people culturally identified.

Inupiat on the Seward Peninsula today still identify themselves through traditional Seward Peninsula placenames associated with where they are from (i.e. the Kingikmiut people from Wales, the Qaviarmiut of the Kauwerak/Mary's Igloo area and the Kigiqtaamiut from Shishmaref), signifying that these are still very important places for Inupiat on the Seward Peninsula. Yet the sweeping changes that Seward Peninsula Inupiat experienced at the turn of the twentieth century thoroughly altered the power structure of former territories and weakened the prominence of the former leading communities of the peninsula, such that there are more residents of Shishmaref than either Wales or Mary's Igloo today and the latter are no longer the most politically significant places on the Seward Peninsula at present. One indication of this is that after the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971, while a great number of traditional and historical sites were claimed in the Wales and Mary's Igloo areas, the Joint State Federal Land Use Planning Commission only held scoping meetings in Shishmaref and Nome.

Very little research has addressed what happened to these two formerly-prominent places on the Seward Peninsula. This thesis will demonstrate that the changes that occurred through the introduction of American colonization, American education, the reindeer herding program and a devastating epidemic were so revolutionary for the Inupiat at the turn of the twentieth century, and brought so many new situations to adapt to, that the Inupiat had little time to counteract the decline of these formerly-prominent places. Those Inupiat who would have maintained the power structure of the pre-American Seward Peninsula had likely died, begun to create a new power structure, moved to different communities, or were busy adapting to a whirlwind of changes at this time. Cultural contact and change was a dizzyingly rapid process on the Seward Peninsula. The story of how the Seward Peninsula communities of the early twenty-first century came to be is wrapped up in the story of four major upheavals that occurred in rapid succession in the early years of American colonization on the peninsula.



Figure 3: Village of Kingegan overlooking the Bering Sea, ca. 1905. Photo from the Gertrude Lusk Whaling Album, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska Fairbanks. UAF-1959-875-3.

CHAPTER 2: KINGEGAN AND KAUWERAK

Early European explorers of the Bering Strait recorded observations of Kingegan and Kauwerak that are useful for reconstructing how these villages appeared in former centuries. On August 9, 1778, British Captain James Cook passed and named Cape Prince of Wales, where the village of Kingegan was located. At this site he observed several people on the shore and a conglomeration of “elevations like stages and others like huts.”¹¹ On July 30, 1816, Otto von Kotzebue passed within three miles of Kingegan on his way north, searching for the Northwest Passage. About this village he wrote:

we observed many jurtes [yurts] and frames built with whalebones, to dry fish on . . . We could plainly discern a number of people standing together in groups, to admire the wonderful large ship, but without making the least preparations for coming on board. I therefore took advantage of the wind . . . and sailed along the coast . . . The whole low ground is covered with a luxuriant green: there are no trees at all, but some low bushes; and only a little snow on the summits of the mountains in the interior of the country. Many habitations, which cover the coast, indicate a numerous population. A baydare which we saw under sail, had by no means the intention of approaching the ship, but took its course to the north.¹²

In 1826, British explorer Frederick Beechey met a large group of Inupiat who claimed to be from the village of “King-a-ghee” on Chamisso Island in Kotzebue Sound. All of the other Inupiat he met on the island appeared to him to have been of a lower standing than the people of

¹¹ Beaglehole cited in Willis, G. Frank. *"It Is a Hard Country, Though": Historic Resource Study of the Bering Land Bridge National Preserve*, 1986, 8.

¹² Kotzebue, Otto Von. *A Voyage of Discovery into the South Sea and Beering's Straits, for the Purpose of Exploring a North-East Passage Undertaken in the Years 1815-1818*. Vol. 1. 1967 ed. New York: De Capo Press, 1821, 199.

“King-a-gee.” In 1827, Beechey steered his ship toward Tooksook Channel, of which the Kingegan people had told him the previous summer. He surveyed the deepwater harbor there and named it Port Clarence, then passed inside the narrow channel into Imuruk Basin approaching Kauwerak. Here he encountered several other men he had met on Chamisso Island the previous year. He made observations on the sod houses of what he construed to be three villages in the area, “the population of the whole amounted to about four hundred persons.”¹³ He also met people from Kingegan there, about which he remarked, “King-a-ghe—a place which, judging from the respectability of its inhabitants, whom we had seen elsewhere, must be of some importance among the Esquimaux establishments upon this coast.”¹⁴

In 1853, British captain Henry Trollope of the *Rattlesnake* noted that Kingegan, a village of roughly 350, was “sort of a capital in these parts . . . [had] four dancing houses,” and was divided into an upper village and a lower village. The people of the lower village were reputed for their “bad character” and pilfering and Trollope acknowledged that during his stay with the lower village, “we certainly suffered some losses.”¹⁵ Also in the Bering Strait at that time, British Commander Moore of the *Plover* remarked that the people living in the vicinity of Kauwerak, “are numerous, certainly not so trustworthy, and more independent in their manner than the natives of Kotzebue Sound.”¹⁶

¹³ Beechey, Frederick W, ed. *Narrative of a Voyage to the Pacific and Beering's Strait, to Cooperate with the Polar Expeditions: Performed in His Majest's Ship Blossom, under the Command of Captain F.W. Beechey, R. N. In the Years 1825, 26, 27, 28.* New York: Da Capo Press, 1968, 265.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 267.

¹⁵ Quoted in Ray, 1992, 151.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 145.

Whalers and American Explorers

In 1848, commercial whalers began venturing to the Bering Strait. The first whaling ships came from prominent port cities in New England, sailing halfway around the world to reach the waters of the Western Arctic. In 1849, at least 50 ships ascended on the waters of the Bering Strait. In 1850, there were more than 130. In 1851, at least 170 ships sailed north into the Western Arctic and 220 ships came back in 1852. According to whaling historian John Bockstoce, the three years between 1849 and 1851 were the industry's high point. During the American Civil War a Confederate ship called the *Shenandoah* ventured into the Bering Strait to wage an attack on Yankee industry, captured and burned twenty-four Arctic whaling ships. After the Civil War, ships continued whaling north of the Bering Strait but more whaling operations were increasingly based out of San Francisco or Hawaii. After 1880, whalers also began traveling to the Bering Strait by steamship. It is during this period that historian Dorothy Jean Ray believed that whalers and Seward Peninsula Inupiat had the most interaction.

Steamships permitted whalers to arrive earlier and depart later in the whaling season. Some steamships were used in whaling, and others brought supplies for the whalers, who were at sea for several years on some cruises. All steamships burned coal and had to replenish their coal supply on these voyages. Many Arctic whalers began using Port Clarence, the only deep-water harbor on the Seward Peninsula, as a stopping place for meeting supply ships, obtaining freshwater, and acquiring more coal for steamships. There was also a custom of "smoking ship," or sealing the lower decks of a ship and filling them with smoke to kill rats, that was often practiced at Port Clarence.¹⁷

¹⁷ Bockstoce, 1998, 224.



Figure 4: Photo showing Inupiat drying fish at Grantley Harbor in 1885. Photo courtesy of USGS Photographic library, RIC00646.

One episode in the history of Western Arctic whaling had a dreadful significance for the people at Kingegan. This became known as the Gilley Affair, whereby, a large group of Cape Prince of Wales traders reportedly attacked Captain George Gilley and the crew of the whaleship *William H. Allen* and were all murdered in the ensuing confrontation. Historians Dorothy Jean Ray and John Bockstoce have provided versions of the story recounted by Euro-American sources.¹⁸ As

¹⁸ Ray's account (Ray, 1992, 191) was taken from Revenue Service captain George Bailey's report: United States Revenue-Cutter Service, and George W. Bailey. *Report upon Alaska and Its People*. Washington: GPO, 1880; and the account Gilley told to journalist Herbert Aldrich: Aldrich, Herbert L. *Arctic Alaska and Siberia, or, Eight Months with the Arctic Whalers*. Chicago, New York: Rand, McNally & Company, 1889. Bockstoce's account (Bockstoce, John R. *Whales, Ice, and Men: The History of Whaling in the Western Arctic*. 1st ed. Seattle: University of Washington Press in association with the New Bedford Whaling Museum, Massachusetts, 1986) is derived from Gilley's 1887 statement about the incident and the impressions reported by the Revenue Cutter *Corwin*'s captain C.L. Hooper in 1888. Details in Gilley's accounts differed substantially from Bailey's and Hooper's stories, and Ray found that Gilley's version was altogether different from the stories told by Inupiat in the 1960s, which were never published.

all recorded accounts depict the whalers' side of the story, the accuracy of this rendition is questionable.

The Gilley Affair

The conflict began in July of 1877 when Gilley anchored his ship between Cape Prince of Wales and the Diomed Islands. Allegedly three umiaks of Cape Prince of Wales people approached Gilley's ship waving a skin on a pole indicating an interest to trade. The "chief" from one boat came on board and asked the whaler for gifts of ammunition. Gilley claimed that this man was already under the influence of alcohol when he came on board. His kinsmen and women and a secondary "chief" from another boat also came on board. After being refused some of his requests, including a request for rum, the "chief" apparently became angry and seized Gilley by the throat. Gilley threatened him with his revolver and ordered his men to weigh anchor and set the ship in motion. Meanwhile the "chief" ordered the women from his party to leave the whaling ship and retreat in their umiak.

From here, events turned ugly. Making another advance on Gilley, the "chief" was repelled by a blow to his head from a "hand-spike," which killed him. The men from Kingegan began firing on the crew with their muzzle-loading pistols and attacking them with large knives. Gilley and his crew fired back with better firearms, killing several of the men. When those who had not been shot attempted to retreat, they could not locate their umiaks, having drifted too far from them. They did not surrender but continued their attempt to ambush Gilley's men, and seek cover on the deck of the ship. Gilley's story is that each of the Kingegan men was either clubbed or dragged out of his hiding spot with gaffing hooks and thrown overboard. He estimated that all of the Cape Prince of Wales "warriors" that approached the *William H. Allen* that day were killed, figuring their number to have been about twenty. Two of Gilley's men were killed and one was wounded in the fray. Other accounts indicate that thirteen Inupiat were killed on the *William H. Allen* that day.

This event led other whalers and the first U.S. officials in Alaska to regard Cape Prince of Wales people as particularly dangerous and hostile. They were consequently avoided for several years afterward.¹⁹ Cape Prince of Wales traders already had by far the worst reputation of any Inupiat on the Northwest Coast. A well-respected trader at Barrow, John Kelly, accused them of “possessing a large share of brazen effrontery,” while Revenue Service Captain Hooper called them, “great bullies” and “the worst on the coast,” not only for their conduct with whalers but also referring to the strong-arm tactics that they used toward other smaller bands of Inupiat.²⁰ The anthropologist Edward Nelson recorded that Kingegan people often took control of other tribes’ smaller boats and robbed them. They were also reported to have attacked two other trading ships that summer of the incident on the *William H. Allen*. As Kingegan was the largest Inupiaq settlement on the Seward Peninsula, its residents would likely have considered themselves the dominant people of that area. Although whalers probably assumed they were exempt from the political hierarchy of cultures living in the Bering Strait, it is unlikely that Kingegan people would have agreed.

While Euro-American portrayals of Cape Prince of Wales traders as drunken marauders may have had some basis in reality, this was not necessarily what provoked the Gilley Affair. Although Kingegan people had a reputation for being exceptionally aggressive prior to this conflict, no one knows who bore responsibility for starting this fight. There was just as dark a stain on the reputation of whalers in this region for drunkenness and exploiting Native peoples to satisfy selfish ends. Most of the crew on the *William H. Allen* were Hawaiian Islanders, a group that was also well-known for toughness and warrior-like behavior. At any rate, more than a dozen Inupiat died at the hands of one Arctic whaling crew, and sentiment toward Arctic whalers in Kingegan was not improved by this incident. In the 1880s commercial shore whaling

¹⁹ The famous naturalist John Muir, who traveled on the Revenue Cutter *Corwin* in 1881, documented the prevailing attitude toward Wales people after the Gilley Affair: “In the afternoon, at Cape Prince of Wales, we lay opposite a large village whose inhabitants have a bad character. They started a fight while trading on board a schooner. Many of them were killed, and they have since been distrusted not only on account of their bad character, but also because of the law of blood revenge which obtains universally among these natives.” Muir, John. *The Cruise of the Corwin*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000, 120-121. Although it is ironic that those killed and not their killers should have been the ones mistrusted, an anticipation that Wales people would have retaliated for the offense seems well-founded.

²⁰ Quoted in Bockstoce, 1986, 189.

operations were established at Point Hope and Barrow, but not near Wales, likely because of lingering resentment and distrust.

Twenty-three years after the event, when Sheldon Jackson placed two missionaries at Wales, it was considered one of the most dangerous places in Alaska to start a mission.²¹ In advertising for the position in the American Missionary Association newsletter, Jackson characterized the Cape Prince of Wales population as a “turbulent crowd.”²² A chief who lived in Wales when the missionaries arrived was said to have lost his eldest son in the Gilley massacre. This man, called Elignok, reportedly caused trouble for the missionaries when they first arrived and fired a gun at one of the missionaries and his wife once.²³ Ellen Lopp, the wife of the other missionary wrote home to her family: “That is the custom here, a relative avenges a murder.” Another man she had met had lost three brothers in the Gilley affair “and his feeling toward white men wasn’t very pleasant.”²⁴ After residing there for over a year, her husband Thomas Lopp traveled up the coast, where a man he met said he was surprised the two missionaries hadn’t been killed yet. Although one of the first two missionaries, Harrison Thornton, was eventually murdered in Wales, the other formed several close relationships with people there. After several years of a peaceful residence in Wales, his wife, Ellen, wrote: “Some people think these cape people are so dangerous. They have been very pleasant to me.”²⁵

²¹ Marshall, John W. "A History of Protestant Missions in Alaska." Pasadena College, 1954. Lopp wrote that Jackson placed two men here because no white man had ever lived in Wales, whereas white men had lived at the Point Hope and Barrow whaling stations for several years. Lopp, Ellen Louise Kittredge, William Thomas Lopp, Kathleen Lopp Smith, and Verbeck Smith. *Ice Window: Letters from a Bering Strait Village, 1892-1902*. Fairbanks, Alaska: University of Alaska Press, 2001, 364.

²² Taliaferro, John. *In a Far Country: The True Story of a Mission, a Marriage, a Murder, and the Remarkable Reindeer Rescue of 1898*. New York: Public Affairs, 2006, 19.

²³ Ray, 1992, 215. The story of Elignok firing at Mr. and Mrs. Thornton is told by Ellen Lopp to her sister Susie in Lopp and Smith, 2001, 64.

²⁴ Ellen quoted in Lopp and Smith, 2001, 63.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 182.

Other than whalers, another group of Americans that arrived in the Bering Strait and encountered people from Kingegan or Kauwerak before the U.S. purchased Alaska was a telegraph construction crew hired by Western Union to string a cable across the Bering Strait. One crew of 40 telegraph men, under the direction of Daniel Libby, was deposited at Port Clarence in 1866, and instructed to build a telegraph line across the southern coast of the Seward Peninsula to Unalakleet. Libby's party erected four buildings, called the "Main Building", "Tower Cottage", "West End Hotel", and the "Smithsonian" at Port Clarence and named their settlement Libbysville. The crew had no guns, knives, ammunition, alcohol or beads to trade with the Inupiat and trading for raw furs was against Russian law, but they managed to procure some fur clothing and a few dog teams and sledges from the people at Port Clarence, who were likely Qaviarmiut from Kauwerak.²⁶ During the winter months, when no work could be done on the telegraph line, the group developed a newspaper called the *Esquimaux*. This paper, printed and distributed after their return to San Francisco, related many of the events of their expedition and contains numerous accounts of individual Inupiat from the Kauwerak area, consistently referred to as Kaviarzkhmute. This group abandoned the telegraph project in 1867, and returned home to find that Alaska had just been purchased by the American government. In this last glimpse of a pre-American Seward Peninsula, Kingegan and Kauwerak were still clearly the most powerful places there, but by the turn of the century new communities not far from where the telegraph men had set up their temporary camp of Libbysville would be taking over as the largest communities on the peninsula.

²⁶ Inupiat from Kingegan, the village at Cape Prince of Wales, expressed an interest in one trade item unique to the expedition. The officers blue overcoats were apparently well sought after, "They, wanting such a coat for most every article offered by them for sale." Harrington, John J. *The Esquimaux* 1866-1867. Jan. 6, 1867, 20.

CHAPTER 3: U.S. ADMINISTRATION AND THE SEWARD PENINSULA

Northwest Alaska Inupiat were never colonized by Russians, despite being closest to Siberia of all the mainland regions in Alaska. America's 1867 purchase of Alaska from Russia did not have immediate impacts on the people living in Northwest Alaska. Historians Dorothy Jean Ray and Frank Willis have pointed out that this period had little effect in general on the Seward Peninsula and Kotzebue Sound.²⁷ There were only seven Euro-Americans living north of St. Michael in 1880.²⁸ However, one observer at the time commented that Northwest Alaskan Inupiat were already more accustomed to Americans than other Alaska Natives because of their familiarity with American whalers.²⁹

The U.S. Revenue Marine Service started patrolling the Bering Sea in 1879. The Revenue Marine, which later became the U.S. Coast Guard, functioned mainly as a "Life-Saving Service,"³⁰ but assumed several other critical functions. They searched for lost ships, investigated and assisted ships and villages in distress, rescued shipwrecked sailors, monitored seal harvests, arrested perpetrators of serious crimes, put down mutinies, brought mail, transported U.S agents, shipped destitute miners back to the States, assisted scientific expeditions, and seized contraband along Alaska's coasts. Between 1886 and 1925, the Revenue Marine sent their most famous cutter, the *Bear*, to Northwest Alaska. The *Bear* and its captain of many years, Michael Healy, were involved in numerous incidents of rescuing whaleships and confiscating alcohol that had been sold or traded to Alaska Natives. The *Bear* was also feared by Alaska Natives along the coasts for its crews' actions in imposing American laws upon them.³¹ Although it enforced

²⁷ Ray, 1992, 187; Willis, 1986, 58.

²⁸ Ray, 1992, 187. This is according to Ivan Petroff's 1884 census figures for Alaska.

²⁹ Bockstoce, 1986, 203.

³⁰ "The Revenue Marine Service: It's Work During the Year in Alaska." *New York Times*, November 19, 1878, Wednesday, 1878, 2.

³¹ Lopp and Smith, 2001, 89.

American laws to a limited extent, the Revenue Marine Service was under no obligation to Americanize Alaska or its indigenous population.



Figure 5: Revenue Cutter *Bear* in the ice. Kathleen Lopp Smith Collection. Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska. UAF-B66-10-44N.

Yet, the Revenue Marine had much greater impact on Northwest Alaskans than early attempts to establish a civil government, which were initially focused on regions with Euro-American populations. One of the primary ways the Revenue Marine impacted the lives of Inupiat was by visiting villages along the Northwestern coast annually while working with the missionaries and teachers who came to this region under the direction of Sheldon Jackson. With the \$25,000 annual budget allotted to him to establish mixed-race schools throughout Alaska, and with the likely more significant contributions of various Christian congregations with missionary objectives, Jackson planted missionary men and women in several remote locations in Northwest

Alaska beginning in 1890. The singular individuals who came as missionaries brought profound change to Inupiat in consequence of their concentrated efforts to change aspects of Inupiaq life. The *Bear* not only brought these people to Inupiaq villages and promised them protection, it transported the reindeer which would later be used by the Bureau of Education to try to change the Inupiat into an agricultural people (discussed further in Chapter 5).



Figure 6: Captain Mike Healy of the Revenue Cutter *Bear*. Kathleen Lopp Smith Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska Fairbanks, UAF-1994-132-89.

The later years of American administration were more intrusive than those immediately following the U.S. purchase of Alaska. Later changes altered the Seward Peninsula in terms of education, health and welfare, land use, religion, settlement patterns and stress on Inupiaq culture and traditional social organization. American infrastructure came to affect the Seward Peninsula area the most through the introduction of religious missions, reindeer, schools, and mining, which are discussed in succeeding chapters. Later administrative changes such as the establishment of

military forts and the expansion of travel routes across Alaska also had significant impacts on the Seward Peninsula, but took place after an American infrastructure was already well established. The major forces of change—missions, schools and reindeer--which started in 1890, had the deliberate goal of Americanizing the population of the Seward Peninsula, and had substantial, lasting, direct and indirect impacts on it.



Figure 7: Image of umiaks (skin boats) headed out to meet an approaching revenue cutter near Cape Prince of Wales. Dr. Daniel S. Neuman Photographs, Alaska State Library Historical Collections. ASL-P307-0046.

CHAPTER 4: MISSIONS AND SCHOOLS ON THE SEWARD PENINSULA

Although revenue cutters were the main means of transporting federal agents to Alaska and assisted several government-sponsored initiatives, they were not responsible for implementing a colonial regime. The U.S. agency with this responsibility in the early years of U.S. administration was the Bureau of Education, which worked with various religious missions to bring an American education to Alaska. In 1884, the Organic Acts enabled the establishment of public schools in Alaska, and in 1885 Sheldon Jackson was appointed Special Agent for Alaska by the U.S. Bureau of Education.

For the Seward Peninsula, the most prominent figurehead of early American administration was Sheldon Jackson. Jackson established schools all along the Alaska coastline, but focused most of his career on programs of change for the Inupiat of Northwest Alaska. He had built his early career as an educator in the American Indian schools of the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains. He had also become famous as a clergyman and an advocate of missionary work through his public campaigns to improve the welfare of certain indigenous populations. Because of his national influence and his interest in Alaska, he was tasked with creating an educational program for Alaskans. The education of Alaskans was unique in many respects from the system in place in the rest of the United States. Under the terms of the First Organic Act, Alaskan children were to be educated “without regard to race.” Compared with the placement of Native American students in Indian schools elsewhere in the US, this was a progressive idea. It also made sense logistically in Alaska where there were not enough resources to create Native and non-Native schools in each community.

Starting in 1885, Congress allotted Jackson \$25,000 annually to establish public schools in Alaska. With this budget, Jackson could only build a few schools and only serve a handful of coastal communities. Undeterred by his funding constraints, he encouraged churches to establish missions in Alaska and operate government, or “contract,” schools in their buildings. These missions were supported by charitable donations from diverse Christian churches throughout the United States. The missionary societies contributed money to build, supply and maintain facilities, and the Bureau often shared part of the expense. Jackson hired teachers who were

members of each mission's denomination, and while teachers worked under contracts with the Bureau of Education, they also wrote reports back to the missionary societies that supported them.³² Jackson assigned the missions to various Alaskan communities for various reasons. His first schools were created in South and Southeast Alaska, but he avidly sought funding to build schools up in the North. One mission came north of its own accord. In 1887, the Mission Covenant of Sweden started a mission at Unalakleet on Norton Sound.

Mission Schools in Northwest Alaska

The first three communities in Northern Alaska to receive schools were chosen because of advice contained in a government report. In 1889, Lieutenant Commander Stockton of the U.S. Navy surveyed the coast up to Point Barrow and reported that schools would be most beneficial at Point Barrow, Point Hope, and Cape Prince of Wales. Jackson convinced the American Missionary Association to build a Congregationalist mission at Cape Prince of Wales, the Episcopal Church to build at Point Hope, and the Presbyterian Church to build a mission at Point Barrow. The village of Kingegan, at Cape Prince of Wales, hosted the first school built on the Seward Peninsula and the first mission established in Northwest Alaska.

In 1890, Kingegan (referred to in all US government documents as Wales) was the largest Inupiat village in Alaska. According to missionary Tom Lopp, 537 Inupiat lived there.³³ It was considered one of the most dangerous places in Alaska to start a mission, as it was believed that the Wales people might seek retaliation for the deaths of their kinsmen in the Gilley Affair.³⁴ In advertising for the position in the American Missionary Association's newsletter, Jackson

³² Letters from the Congregationalist missionaries at Wales to the American Missionary Association were occasionally published in that organization's bulletin or as individual reports. See Thornton, Harrison Robertson, and William Thomas Lopp. *Alaska: Report of the Alaska Mission, 1892-93*. New York: American Missionary Association, 1894.

³³ Lopp and Smith, 2001, 364.

³⁴ Marshall, 1954, 191.

characterized the Cape Prince of Wales population as “a turbulent crowd . . . The worst people in that region.”³⁵ He asked for applicants who would be brave enough to work in such an environment and willing to leave from San Francisco within two months of the advertisement’s publication. Jackson received 24 applications, 12 of them from women. He decided to place two male teachers at Wales and one each at Point Hope and Point Barrow. For the two Wales teachers he selected Harrison Thornton and William T. “Tom” Lopp.

Jackson met these teachers for the first time at Wales while traveling on the *Bear* in 1890.³⁶ Perhaps because of the presence of the *Bear*, the missionaries were able to set up camp while ship’s carpenters built the mission building, where they would both live and conduct classes in the upcoming year, without harassment. Lopp later wrote that Wales was, “the summer rendezvous for the Eskimos of the region, for those living to the southward as far as Nome, and northward to the great Kotzebue Sound country. Here they would assemble with their great walrus-skin boats, or oomiaks, to make ready for their annual trading cruise to Siberia. Seventy to eighty of these canoes, manned by thirty to forty natives, would cross the stormy Strait to obtain from the Siberian Chuckchees furred reindeer skins for clothing, reindeer sinew for thread and Russian leaf tobacco.”³⁷

Shortly after the *Bear* left, most of the able-bodied men of Wales departed on hunting, fishing and trading trips, which gave the two a much needed “breathing spell.” Jackson and the *Bear* steamed north on July 12th.

On this trip, Jackson began brainstorming about what he saw as the poor living conditions of Inupiat in Northwest Alaska. Jackson was also concerned about stories of depravity. The influence of whalers and traders on Northwest Alaska Inupiat—the importation of alcohol and

³⁵ Taliaferro, 2006, 19; Strickland, Dan. "Murder at the Mission: The Death of H. R. Thornton at Cape Prince of Wales in 1893." *Alaska Journal* 16 (1986): 208.

³⁶ The teachers traveled on a schooner called *Jennie*. Ray, 1992, 215.

³⁷ Lopp and Smith, 2001, 365.

non-marital sex with Inupiat women—were not only scandalous in the eyes of Christian missionaries, but were deplored by an even larger movement of Christians and temperance-advocates in the States, mainly upper-class American women. This group was a large funding base for Jackson’s work, giving financial and public support for his efforts to provide schools for Alaska Natives. Since one of the *Bear’s* regular duties was to monitor American whalers for illegal commerce, Jackson surveyed the communities that Arctic whalers frequented most on his trip. He was very concerned about the alcohol trade taking place in the Bering Strait. Under Jackson’s management, the role of schools in Alaska was not only to introduce the English language, Western education, Western culture and Christianity, but to counteract some of the Western influences that had already been introduced.



Figure 8: Wales Inupiat on the beach. “Mrs. Allen Shattuck, A Summer on the Thetis, 1888” Collection. Alaska State Library Historical Collections. ASL-P107-0023.

The most prominent element of Jackson’s educational philosophy was its emphasis on assimilating, or Americanizing Native peoples. Although receiving an American education has had both positive and negative impacts for Seward Peninsula Inupiat, the detrimental effects of

being forbidden to speak their Native language in the classroom is one of the most often told features of this history. Jackson believed that these languages interfered with Alaska Natives' ability to learn English, which was necessary to their assimilation into American culture.³⁸ A pidgin form of English adapted from trading and working with whalers was spoken by some Northern Inupiat, but almost no English was known by Seward Peninsula people in 1890. Prior to the arrival of missions and schools in Northwest Alaska, the Seward Peninsula Inupiat had mainly been left alone.

Schools were a key tool in the effort to "Americanize" Alaska places and people. Mission schools worked even more aggressively to "Christianize" Alaska Natives. In different histories of the Seward Peninsula, many authors have discussed the ethnocentrism of the policymakers, missionaries and teachers of this area.³⁹ Several missionaries' and teachers' memoirs, describing their own attitudes and experiences, have also been published.⁴⁰ Missionaries not only brought

³⁸ See, for example, Jackson's statement in reference to the Alaska Natives of Southeast Alaska: "The children speedily acquire an English-speaking vocabulary when strictly prohibited from using their native dialects. . . The use of their vernaculars [Thlinget, Tsimpsean, Haida] seriously retards their progress and does them no essential benefit." United States Bureau of Education, *Report of the Commissioner of Education for 1896-97*, 1897. Ch. 35, 1618. Also described in Ellanna & Sherrod, 2004, 77.

³⁹ See Dauenhauer, Richard L. "Two Missions to Alaska." *Pacific Historian* 26, no. 1 (1982): 29; Ellanna, Linda J, and George K. Sherrod. *From Hunters to Herders: The Transformation of Earth, Society, and Heaven among the Inupiat of Beringia*. Fairbanks, Alaska: Department of Anthropology, University of Alaska, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2004.; Strickland 1986; Ray 1992; Henningsen, Victor William. *Reading, Writing and Reindeer: The Development of Federal Education in Alaska, 1877--1920*: Princeton UP, 1987; Burch, Ernest S. "The Inupiat and the Christianization of Arctic Alaska." *Etudes/Inuit/Studies* 18, no. 1-2 (1994): 81-108; Haycox, Stephen W. "Sheldon Jackson in Historical Perspective: Alaska Native Schools and Mission Contracts: 1885-1894." *The Pacific Historian* 28, no. 1 (1984): 18-27.; Tower, Elizabeth A. *Reading, Religion, Reindeer: Sheldon Jackson's Legacy to Alaska*. Anchorage, Alaska: Elizabeth Tower, 1988; Berardi, Gigi. "Schools, Settlement, and Sanitation in Alaska Native Villages." *Ethnohistory* 46, no. 2 (1999): 329-359; Doll, Jonathan. "'Come on in': An Epic Story of an Inupiat Couple in Northwest Alaska." University of Alaska, Anchorage, 2003; Hinckley, Ted C. "The Presbyterian Leadership in Pioneer Alaska." *The Journal of American History* 52, no. 4 (1966): 742-756; Hinckley, Ted C. *The Americanization of Alaska, 1867-1897*. Palo Alto, Calif.: Pacific Books, 1972; Marshall 1954; and Taliaferro 2006.

⁴⁰ See Thornton, Harrison Robertson. *Among the Eskimos of Wales, Alaska: 1890-93*, Edited by Neda S. Thornton and Jr. William M. Thornton. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1931; Greist, Henry W. *Seventeen Years with the Eskimo*. Hanover, New Hampshire: Special Collections, Dartmouth College Library, 1961; Almquist, L. Arden. *Covenant Missions in Alaska*. Chicago, Illinois: Covenant Press, 1962; Keithahn, Edward L. *Eskimo Adventure Civilization Transition Series*. New York: Bonanza

different religious beliefs, but different approaches to educating in their communities. The experience was not the same in every community. Perhaps the most interesting experiences among the missionaries were those of the earliest missionaries to arrive, for they were the pioneers who laid the groundwork for later teachers to establish themselves in communities on the Seward Peninsula.



Figure 9: Photo of the government school in Wales. James Wickersham Collection, Alaska State Library Historical Collections. ASL-P277-015-003.

Books, 1963; Hadley, Martha E. *The Alaskan Diary of a Pioneer Quaker Missionary*. Mt. Dora, Florida: Loren E. Hadley, 1969; Renner, Louis L., S. J. *Pioneer Missionary to the Bering Strait Eskimos: Bellarmine Lafortune, S.J.* Portland, Oregon: Binford & Mort for the Alaska Historical Commission, 1979; Corbin, William. *A World Apart: My Life among the Eskimos of Alaska*. Homer, Alaska: Wizard Works, 2000; Lopp and Smith, 2001; and Hidy, Ross F., ed. *Frost among the Eskimos: The Memoirs of Helen Frost Missionary in Alaska, 1926-61*. Concord, California: Lutheran Pioneer Press, 2001.

Role of Missionaries

Missionaries, in addition to teaching a public school curriculum and converting villagers, provided medical services, took censuses, taught lessons on Western sewing, cooking and hygiene, usually conducted Sunday school classes, housed and fed non-native travelers, acted as local district recorders, sometimes sorted the local mail and functioned as storekeepers, performed funerals, burials, weddings, and participated in many community events, such as feasts and hunts. Their first few years were spent trying to teach the English language and learn enough of the Native language to communicate in their new surroundings. Until they could communicate, their lives were very lonely. Schoolteachers in the North were stranded for the winter; their only means of leaving the villages was by dog team. Mail from back in the States came only during the summer season. The ships that sailed north were not always able to land mail and supplies at the villages, so missionaries sometimes had to retrieve these from miles away by smaller boat or dog team.⁴¹ Teachers had very limited contact with the communities from which they came. The life of the missionary was not an easy one. Jackson encouraged those who wished to teach and minister at Wales to consider the position as closely akin to martyrdom and be prepared to face several hardships.⁴²

Wales Mission History

Harrison Thornton and Tom Lopp arrived in Wales in July of 1890 and soon found that Wales, known locally as Kingegan, was actually made up of two separate villages: *Agianmiut* (on higher ground to the south) and *Kiatanamiut* (on lower ground to the north). Their first mission house was built between the two villages, so that they would not appear to favor either one. Tom Lopp was a twenty-six year-old from Indiana and Thornton was a thirty-two year-old from Virginia; both had teaching experience back in the States. After a month of getting to know the villagers,

⁴¹ The Lopps often described in their letters to relatives the difficulties involved in sending and receiving mail. For stories of dogsled trips to retrieve mail. See Lopp and Smith, 2001, 80, 98 & 305.

⁴² Taliaferro, 2006, 19.

they opened the school for instruction on August 18th. On their first day the teachers had 16 pupils. By day two, they had 32, not all of them children, for the elder generations also wanted to learn English to help their trading skills. Through the winter and spring of that first year, the men taught the spellings and pronunciations of English words while they learned some Inupiaq and became avid bird hunters. There were many alcohol-related incidents recorded in Wales that first year. The missionaries got along passably well with the local men and the eight recorded shamans in Wales, in spite of tensions over alcohol and despite the fact that, according to Lopp, Wales people considered them “too poor to trade, too stingy to marry, and too effeminate to hunt.”⁴³

By the next fall, Thornton had decided to travel back to Washington to lobby with Jackson and Captain Healy on matters pertaining to alcohol, unfair gun laws, reindeer, and the overharvesting of walrus by whalers. Lopp stayed behind and continued teaching through the winter. Of that second year, Jackson reported, “The average daily attendance was 106 . . . Many of the children mastered the alphabet, learned to spell and pronounce simple English words, read in the first reader, write a neat and readable hand, and sing gospel and patriotic songs . . . Lead pencils, paper, pictures, hard bread, combs, and soap were given as prizes for punctuality and diligence.”⁴⁴

While in the States, Thornton met and married social worker Neda Pratt. When he returned the next summer, he brought Mrs. Thornton and another young woman, Ellen Louise Kittredge, to Wales. Ellen Kittredge, a teacher from Minnesota who wanted to work at the Wales mission, met Tom Lopp and about seventy-five Wales people at Port Clarence on June 25, 1892. The teachers, accompanied by a Reverend McLellan, sailed back to Wales to prepare for the coming school year. Ellen wrote to her sisters about Tom Lopp, “Mr. McLellan is delighted with him,”⁴⁵ but clearly she was also delighted, for nearly two months later, Rev. McLellan formally married

⁴³ Lopp quoted in Jackson, Sheldon. *Report on Introduction of Domesticated Reindeer into Alaska, 1891-2*. Washington: GPO, 1894, 874.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Lopp and Smith, 2001, 28.

Tom and Ellen in Wales. Theirs may have been the first Christian wedding performed on the Seward Peninsula. To accommodate the two families, a larger mission building was constructed up the hill toward *Agianmiut*. The two couples split up the house and continued giving lessons in the old schoolhouse, the Lopps teaching in the mornings and the Thorntons teaching in the afternoons.⁴⁶



Figure 10: Wales with white mission house in foreground and white schoolhouse in the distance. From *Report on the Work of the Bureau of Education, 1898*.

The Lopps differed from the Thorntons in several respects. They were warm, compassionate, gracious, interested in and kindly toward their neighbors, who tended to drop by at all hours and often peeked in through the glass windows of the mission house. The Thorntons were more reserved, more concerned about propriety; Harrison was an academic who enjoyed formality, was

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 45.

prone to depression and frustration, and desperately needed his privacy. A strain developed between the two families when Thornton told the Lopps not to treat the Inupiat as social equals and not to keep going to their houses and inviting them over.⁴⁷ Lopp decided he would resign from his position the following year.

In 1892, Jackson successfully imported a large herd of reindeer to Port Clarence, and Lopp was very interested in the reindeer program. He hoped to develop reindeer herds in Wales and Shishmaref, and made trips to see the herd at Port Clarence. Jackson had installed a trader named Miner Bruce as the superintendent of his new reindeer station at Port Clarence, but fired him after hearing that Bruce had traded alcohol for reindeer in Siberia. Jackson offered the position to Lopp. Lopp accepted and he and Ellen moved from Wales to Port Clarence in July of 1893.

Shortly after the departure of the Lopps, Harrison and Neda Thornton became unnerved by the alcohol use that was occurring in Wales, and their concern was not unwarranted. While intoxicated, a “chief” had fired a gun at the couple earlier that year while they were walking on the beach. Siberian traders were bringing over barrels of whiskey. But Thornton’s greatest challenge was in trying to administer discipline to a small group of troublemakers. A young man named Titalk had been stealing from the school and from other villagers. When Lopp had confronted Titalk, he had decided to ban him and his friends from attending school. But when Thornton confronted him, he threatened to shoot the young man the next time he caught him stealing. Thornton didn’t realize that his threat would be taken as a promise to eventually kill Titalk.⁴⁸ Thinking more about the threat of violence from intoxicated villagers than about the threatening nature of his own behavior, Thornton started wearing his revolver at all times. In

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 67.

⁴⁸ Ellen wrote that threats were serious affronts in Wales, and that Thornton’s life had been endangered by similar behavior before: “It is thought right if a man threatens another’s life for the one who has been threatened, to kill the one who threatened him. That was all Eluksuk killed Ing’-i-zing-ya-hok for. Once, the first year, Mr. Thornton pointed his revolver at Eluksuk because he wouldn’t go out of school when Mr. Thornton sent him out for another disobedience. He went quickly when he saw the revolver; but the Natives say that if they had not persuaded him not to, he would have shot Mr. Thornton.” Lopp and Smith, 2001, 65.

July, Thornton asked Healy to warn the leaders of Wales that there would be terrible consequences if anyone harmed the missionaries. Thornton seemed obsessed that someone might try to do them harm. By August, Thornton was preparing to leave on the *Bear's* southward sailing. Neda was six months pregnant.⁴⁹

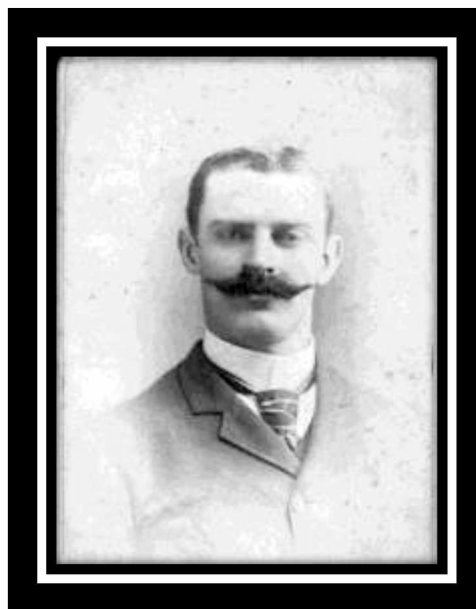


Figure 11: A portrait of Harrison Thornton a few years before he came to Wales. Kathleen Lopp Smith Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska Fairbanks. UAF-2004-84-404.

⁴⁹ Taliaferro, 2006, 115.



Figure 12: Portrait of Neda Thornton. Kathleen Lopp Smith Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska Fairbanks. UAF-2004-84-431.

On the evening of August 19, 1893, a few days before the *Bear* was due to arrive, a knock came on Thornton's door around midnight. Thornton took his gun downstairs to see who it was, but never had the chance to answer the door. Hearing his steps in the hallway, Titalk and two of his friends fired a whaling bomb gun through the door of the mission house and directly into Thornton's body. He had only enough time to holler to his wife that he'd been shot before he died. Neda passed the night in grief and terror, not knowing what would become of her. In the morning a neighbor came to help and knew instantly who had shot Thornton. By mid-day the bodies of two of the attackers, who had been executed by the villagers, were brought to the doorstep of the mission house for Neda to see. Titalk was still at large. Some villagers offered to take Neda to Port Clarence by umiak, which she accepted. Fear spread through the village at what kind of retribution Captain Healy would seek when he arrived on the *Bear*. He arrived shortly after Mrs. Thornton's departure and buried Thornton's body in a grave on the hillside, marked with a wooden cross. Healy did not exact retribution toward Wales' leaders because they had performed some measure of justice, but he wanted them to turn Titalk over to him unharmed when he was found.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Taliaferro, 2006, 116.

Titalk had fled that morning for the mountains, but when he later returned to Wales, his uncle asked him how he would like to be executed. A grave site was prepared for him next to Thornton's, where his choice to be shot was dutifully performed. The Lopps had been gone only three months. When the news reached them, Ellen wrote to her family that she had no fear of the villagers in Wales and would be happy to return there. Mrs. McLellan wrote to Ellen's Minnesota family that "to a few who knew how matters stood, Mr. Thornton's murder was not a surprise."⁵¹ For the fall and winter of 1893, there was no school taught at Wales, and fear of retribution permeated through Wales and up the coast.⁵²

In December 1893, Ellen wrote home that a new school had been opened on the Seward Peninsula. The Swedish Covenant Mission had built another mission, fifty miles north of Unalakleet at Golovin. The only schools on the Seward Peninsula in 1894 were at Golovin, Teller, and Wales. The Lopps were encouraged by the presence of more Christians and interested to see what methods they used to convert Inupiat to Christianity. At Unalakleet, the missionary Axel Karlson had succeeded in converting one Inupiaq boy named Uyaraq, who came to be known as "Rock" and was very effective at converting other Inupiat throughout the region.⁵³

Jackson approved the Lopps' return to Wales in August of 1894. They returned with a herd of 118 reindeer and the five Wales apprentices who had gone to Port Clarence to learn reindeer herding. The American Missionary Association supplied \$130 to support a herding program at Wales, and the government, in turn, loaned the mission a herd of 100 deer. By this time the Lopps had one little girl and a newborn baby boy. In addition to his duties as teacher, Tom was now also the manager of the Wales herd and the apprenticeship program there. With Ellen's help,

⁵¹ Lopp and Smith, 2001, 75.

⁵² Ellen noted, "Two of the murderers belonged, not at the cape, but at a place north of it; so the people north are scared too. At one time we heard from the Natives that two large vessels were coming with the *Bear* to help kill the people. At another time there was talk of Mr. Thornton's brothers coming to do it." Lopp and Smith, 2001, 90.

⁵³ Marshall, 1954, 220.

he was also responsible for all of the teaching duties and providing the village's religious services.

Spread of Christianity on the Seward Peninsula

When the first three missions in Northwest Alaska were established in 1890, there were no recorded Christians in any of the three locations.⁵⁴ Some ethnographies have discussed the religion and rituals that were traditionally practiced on the Seward Peninsula.⁵⁵ In the larger communities of the Seward Peninsula, religious authorities in the form of shamans or angukuts, and an intricate system of taboos and rules governed behavior of Inupiat. The Inupiaq worldview was populated with many good and evil spirits. Initially, the Lopps and Thorntons made no headway in convincing Inupiat to adopt Christianity. The Lopps invited Lutheran missionary David Johnson from Unalakleet to perform a revival in Wales in March of 1895. Ellen wrote that the event was very successful: "Mr. Johnson . . . has been here a week. He is on a missionary tour, and we have been having meetings instead of school. The people are very much interested. Many say they believe the Bible and what they have heard preached. Today about forty said they would like to be Christians. They have never before heard the gospel preached in correct Eskimo and, I suppose, have learned more in this week than they had learned before, in all."⁵⁶

In 1895, Tom Lopp announced that 30-40 new Christians in Wales had "gone to settlements to the north and south of our own settlement and have taken the good news"⁵⁷ By 1902, when the Lopps retired from teaching in Alaska, at least 100 people in Wales had been converted officially

⁵⁴ Burch, 1994, 81.

⁵⁵ See Ellanna, 2004; Fair, 2001; Burch, 1994; Ray, 1992; Oquilluk, William A. *People of Kauwerak*. 2nd edition ed. Anchorage: Alaska Pacific University Press, 1981; Nelson, Edward William. *The Eskimo About Bering Strait*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983; Spencer, Robert F. *The North Alaskan Eskimo; a Study in Ecology and Society*. Washington: GPO, 1959; Hughes, Charles Campbell. "Under Four Flags: Recent Culture Change among the Eskimos." *Current Anthropology* 6, no. 1 (1965): 3-62+63-69.

⁵⁶ Lopp and Smith, 2001, 106.

⁵⁷ Cited in Burch, 1994, 85.

to Christianity.⁵⁸ Although the Lopps focused more on the welfare of the community than on religious transformation, this was a marker of success for them. As very popular missionaries, they might have had more success, had they not experienced a profound setback in the addition of the Hannas to the Wales mission.

By the winter of 1895, the Lopps were relieved to take a furlough in the United States, so that their children could meet their grandparents. The Kittredges had never even met Tom Lopp by this point. To fill the Lopps' role in Wales, the American Missionary Society hired Reverend and Mrs. Thomas Hanna from California. When they first met the Hannas, the Lopps liked them. But when the Lopps returned in late August of 1896, they heard several rumors about Thomas Hanna's base conduct. Allegedly, while Hanna's wife was away at Teller, Hanna had coerced three young Inupiaq women who worked at the mission to drink alcohol with him, and had made advances on two of them. One of the girls named Konok was labeled throughout Wales as "Hanna's wife." When approached by a whaling captain to accompany him as his mistress, she apparently chose to go rather than be continually disgraced about Mr. Hanna. Tom Lopp encouraged Hanna to confess to him, but when Konok left, Hanna became angry and malicious toward Lopp.

Ellen was particularly offended by the damage done to the image of trustworthiness that the missionaries had labored to secure. She wrote: "Instruction on the seventh commandment [adultery] was so needed here, and took so little vocabulary in Eskimo to explain, that it was thoroughly given in the years before Mr. Hanna came. That and drunkenness were the first two sins attacked here. That and the example of those who taught, different from so many of the other white men they saw, made an impression on these people that they won't forget soon. Whether or not they took the commandment for themselves, they thought they knew what a missionary or teacher ought to be."⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Jackson, 1902, *Report on Education in Alaska, 1890-1*, 1475.

⁵⁹ Lopp and Smith, 2001, 152.

Ellen wrote home about a girl named Woodlet, the first girl on whom Hanna had made advances, who had worked in the Lopps' household for many years, "They say that after that, she didn't try to be a Christian anymore."⁶⁰ Jackson removed the Hannas in August of 1897. Although they vacated the mission house, the Lopps had since built their own log cabin down the hill, and continued to live there and work in Wales until 1902. There were others mentioned in the Lopps' letters who had adopted Christianity at one point, but given it up, such as an early herder named Netaxite.

By the end of the Lopps' time in Wales,⁶¹ they had been blessed with five children and had been busy with reindeer, medical and missionary duties. Tom Lopp was also frequently occupied with printing a serial newsletter for Wales and the reindeer herders called *The Eskimo Bulletin*. Many changes had occurred in Ellen's family life following the move of her father, sister Frances and brother Charlie to the Seward Peninsula. Frances lived with Tom and Ellen in Wales to assist with their duties until they left. Charlie was briefly a teacher at Wales and then at a new nearby mining settlement called York. Many changes had deeply affected the people of Wales by this time as well. In their letters the Lopps mention an intermittent stream of miners and deserting whalers who would show up in Wales. From a missionary's and many historians' perspectives, the impacts of conversion to Christianity and a rigid American education were minor compared to the deleterious effects of contact with other types of Euro-Americans, who did not have the welfare of Inupiat at heart. With little to offer in return, Euro-American vagrants and passers-through were generally a burden on the Inupiaq communities that gave them shelter. With the arrival of ever more miners in the area, there were also horrific epidemics of disease. A terrible measles epidemic swept through Wales (and most of Western Alaska) in 1900, causing many deaths. Ellen's sister noted at least 50.⁶² The Lopps' assistance to the community during this

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ 12 years for Lopp and 10 for Ellen, not counting their time spent at Port Clarence and in the States.

⁶² Describing the aftermath of the epidemic Frances wrote, "Now that the measles and influenza epidemics are mostly over, hardly any Eskimos over fifty years old and only a few under five are left. There is hardly a family where someone is not gone! In some cases only one parent is left of a whole family, in others only a part of the children. Everyone is feeling very sad...All the children under three years died." Lopp and Smith, 2001, 285.

time may have been a factor in local conversions to Christianity. Because medical crises which local shamans could not avert tended to undermine their authority and draw people to Western medical remedies, some scholars have speculated that epidemics may have benefitted the spread of Christianity in Inupiaq communities.⁶³ In Frances' account:

During the worst of the epidemic, the Natives were constantly coming to the Lopps for medicine and food. Many of the sick ones simply could not eat the pickled walrus meat which was most of the food that they had. The sickness came at the time the Eskimos would have been hunting walrus. Thus they were unable either to get them for a present supply of food, or to store to use during the coming year. Almost one-fifth of the people have died, but that is a lower rate than the other villages, some losing half their people. That is probably because the Wales peoples have some care and advice from the Lopps. The assurance that the disease was common in the States prevented panic. The fact that the Lopps did not catch it proved their word in the matter.⁶⁴

The *Bear* also landed provisions at Wales and other villages in response to the epidemic. Unlike miners and whalers, the teachers and government officials offered some assistance to the Inupiat in times of hardship. Because missionaries were more familiar with and impervious to new diseases that could decimate Inupiaq populations, many Inupiat turned to the missionaries for guidance in this and other aspects of their lives.

⁶³ Burch, 1994, 8.

⁶⁴ Lopp and Smith, 2001, 285.

New Teachers and New Missions on the Seward Peninsula

Jackson appointed new government teachers to Wales in 1901. The Bureau of Education was no longer allowed to fund religious schools in Alaska, and was trying to establish full-time government schools among the larger populations in Alaska. In 1901, Susan Bernardi arrived in Wales. Bernardi is featured in some of the Bureau's first photographs of the school and schoolchildren in Wales. According to Frances Kittredge, Mrs. Bernardi preferred the society of Teller over Wales, and resigned her post after a couple years. O. J. Rognon was listed as a government teacher in 1903. Mr. and Mrs. Hugh J. Lee replaced the Lopps in overseeing the Wales Congregationalist Mission and its reindeer program in 1902.

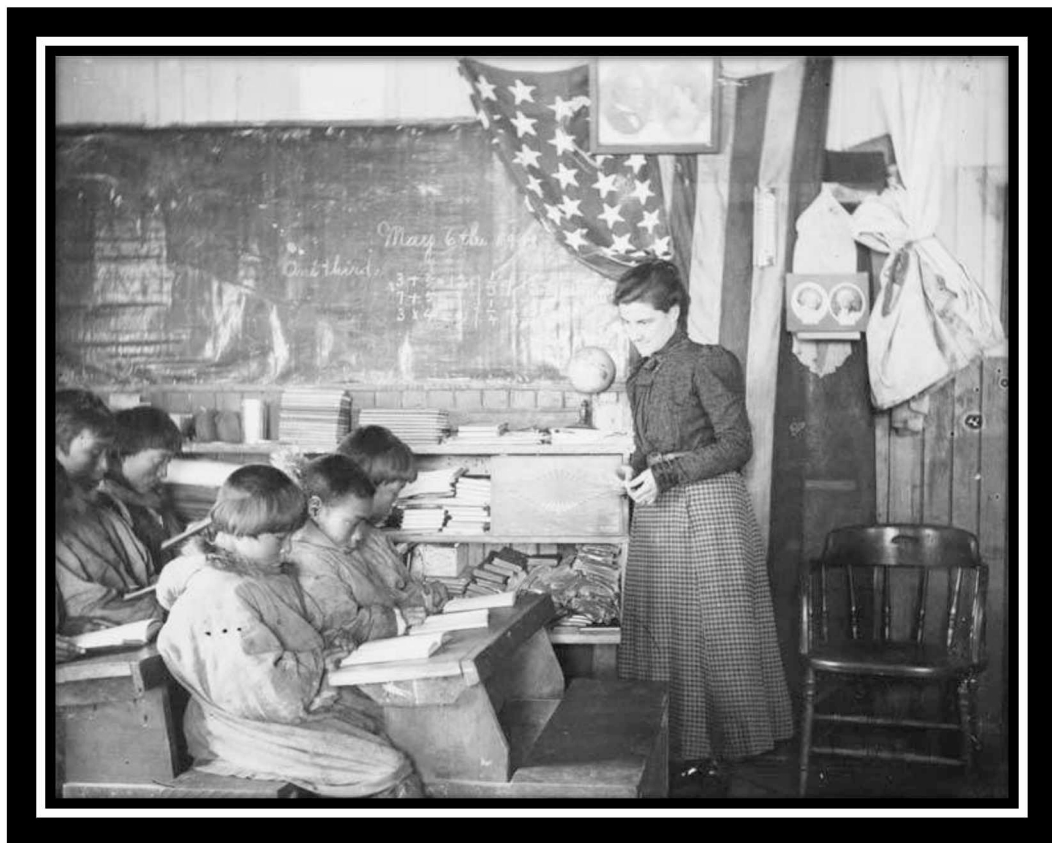


Figure 13: Teacher Susan Bernardi and Wales Schoolchildren, Gertrude Lusk Whaling Album, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska Fairbanks Alaska. UAF-1959-875-4.

By the time the Lopps left Wales, many more changes had occurred to the overall social environment of the Seward Peninsula. A gold rush to Kotzebue had occurred before the Lopps arrival and by 1898, when Tom Lopp took part in an expedition to Barrow, a gold rush in Interior Alaska had begun trickling onto the peninsula. By 1900, there was a torrent of miners on the peninsula, and almost immediately, a large city named Nome came into existence. Closer to Wales, another mining city named York was established. Although Ellen's family did some prospecting at York, she and Tom focused on their missionary work and never struck riches like the early prospectors of the Nome Gold Rush. The missionaries from many other villages abandoned their religious work for the gold fields, a factor which may have hindered the spread of Christianity in their areas.⁶⁵

Because of the efforts of two other missions, one in Unalakleet and one in Kotzebue, a major portion of the Seward Peninsula had become Christian by the time the Lopps resigned. Ironically, the greatest conversion of Inupiat to Christianity happened in a part of Northwest Alaska where no missions had originally been installed, the Kotzebue Sound region. The northeastern part of the sound, site of a huge annual trade fair, had strategic advantages for missionaries over other parts of Northwest Alaska for the volume and diversity of Inupiat who congregated there. David Johnson and Uyaraq, of the Swedish Covenant Mission, sailed to Kotzebue Sound in the summer of 1896 to convert the Inupiat there and were very warmly received. Jackson learned before long that the people of Kotzebue Sound were requesting a mission of their own. Instead of placing another Swedish Covenant mission at the sound, he invited the California Yearly Meeting of Friends, a Quaker society, to build there. Miss Anna Hunnicutt arrived with Mr. Robert and Mrs. Carrie Samms near the present-day location of Kotzebue in July of 1897. There they met Uyaraq, or "Rock," who had already established a small church on the Selawik River. The Samms and Miss Hunnicutt originally planned to locate their Friend's church on the Kobuk River, where the forests would provide wood to build a house and church, but Uyaraq convinced them to stay at the location of present-day Kotzebue, where they built an extremely tiny mission house.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Burch, 1994, 3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 6.

The Friends Mission discouraged Inupiat from following taboos, respecting the authority of shamans, believing in devils, practicing polygamy, drinking, gambling, smoking, dancing, and observing their traditional burial practices; nevertheless this group had tremendous influence in the region. The Friends were very successful in converting individuals to Christianity who would then travel to other areas, converting other Inupiat. Within 10 years, this Christian denomination, started in a very small room, had spread all the way to the Colville and MacKenzie River Deltas. Arctic explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson was dumbfounded to discover that the people, who had known no other beliefs than their traditional ones when he had visited them in 1907, had all converted to Christianity when he visited them again in 1908.⁶⁷ Stefansson identified the origin of this Christian movement as Kotzebue Sound.

Uyaraq was perhaps even more influential in the conversion of Inupiat to Christianity than the Friends, as historian Ernest Burch has pointed out. An Inupiaq preacher could have had more influence among other Inupiat for ministering to them in a language they fully understood, and having more in common with them in general. But another factor that made Uyaraq so influential, as Burch states, is that: “Uyaraq did one thing that no White missionary could do convincingly, and that was deliberately and blatantly break powerful taboos without ill effect. Whites had been intermittently present in Arctic Alaska for at least 80 years before the Friends arrived, and it must have been clear to the Inupiat for most of that time that they could break taboos with impunity. One logical interpretation of this fact would have been that Whites were subject to a different set of rules than Inupiat. The same could not be said of Uyaraq.”⁶⁸

Some authors have pointed out that the version of Christianity adopted by most Inupiat at this time was altered to conform to many traditional Inupiaq beliefs. The Inupiat were very interested to see, for example, whether a Christian God could protect them from sickness and give them good luck on whaling and hunting trips. Uyaraq’s application of local beliefs to promote

⁶⁷ Stefansson, Vilhjalmur. *My Life with the Eskimo*. New York: Collier Books, 1966, 45.

⁶⁸ Burch, 1994, 89.

Christianity may have helped him to win converts. For example, he often showed people his Bible and explained that the Bible contained the teachings of an all-powerful spirit which protected him from all the other spirits known to Inupiat.⁶⁹ The Lopps noted that the printed word in book or magazine form was held in awe by most Wales Inupiat. Specific aspects of Quaker beliefs that were in harmony with Inupiaq beliefs, which Burch has described, probably also encouraged the high conversion rate of this religion. The Samms and Miss Hunnicutt were replaced by Miss Martha Hadley and Mr. Dana and Mrs. Otha Thomas in 1902.

The Kotzebue Friends Mission became a religious hub for all of Northwest Alaska and the Seward Peninsula as far west as Deering, where California Meeting of Friends missionaries Mr. Z. E. and Mrs. Anna Foster established another mission in the early 1900s. The Deering mission was operated out of the Fosters' own house, with instruction performed by an additional teacher named Bertha Cox, until the Bureau of Education hired W.D. Wentworth and Charles Lockhart to construct a school building in 1905.⁷⁰ That same year Wales herders Keok and Karmun brought the Deering Mission its first reindeer herd, which was kept 14 miles from the school. The Deering Mission apparently operated until 1914 when missionary Charles Replogle relocated the mission, and most of the Inupiat at Deering, to Noorvik.

The Friends' beliefs did not spread throughout the rest of the Seward Peninsula after reaching Deering. An incident in 1913, documented by Walter Shields, shows that Quakerism was not successful in competing with other Christian beliefs already held at Shishmaref by that time. In his report after inspecting the Shishmaref school Shields wrote,

No teacher was sent from the States last year so upon my recommendation a native from Wales, who had been assistant there for some years, Arthur Nagozruk, was sent to take charge. Arthur has done extremely well . . . The best work done by Nagozruk was with the village at large . . . Some natives had come to Shishmaref from Deering to proclaim a

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 8.

⁷⁰ Lopp quoted in Jackson, *Report on the Introduction of Reindeer to Alaska*, 1905, 52 & 55.

new Gospel they thought they had received. The main features of the doctrine were that all Christians would have to give up smoking and dancing if they wished to get to Heaven. (This is the idea current among the natives of Kotzebue Sound.) The people at Shishmaref were being much worked up over these ideas until Nagozruk took hold of the matter. In telling me about it he referred to the Deering people as “the Deceivers.” He preached a sermon on the verse from Revelations regarding those who add to or take from the words of the Book. Then he told the people that there was nothing said in the Bible about smoking and no prohibition against dancing. He then left the people to draw their own conclusions. The “Deceivers” left the village.⁷¹

The primary Christian influence in the Northwestern Seward Peninsula was Congregational throughout the tenure of the Wales Congregational Mission. The Wales Congregationalist Mission operated until 1920 when it was converted to a Presbyterian church.⁷² An Evangelical Lutheran Church was then built by Reverend Elmer Dahle in Shishmaref in 1931, and Lutheran beliefs became common in this part of the Seward Peninsula.

Because of the large number of Norwegian settlers on the Seward Peninsula, including the Sami herders who immigrated there, the Lutheran Evangelical influence was widespread on the peninsula. Tollef L. Brevig played a strong role in the early development of this denomination in the Teller area. Following the 1900 epidemic, Brevig quit working for the Bureau of Education and obtained funding to start a mission and orphanage that was originally known as Teller Mission, and is now the site of a village known as Brevig Mission. The Catholic “Our Lady of Lourdes” Mission was established near Mary’s Igloo at Pilgrim Hot Springs in 1918. The Catholic Mission of St. Joseph’s, a Congregationalist, a Lutheran and an Episcopal church were also established in Nome and each gained additional followers in the region. Most of the

⁷¹ From Walter Shields’ “Report on Shishmaref 1913.” In United States, Bureau of Indian Affairs. Shishmaref Correspondence., Record Group 75, Education and General Files, 1897-1937., University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive. Fairbanks, Alaska.

⁷² Marshall, 1954, 193.

orphanages on the Seward Peninsula were Christian and as a consequence, the children raised in them were raised Christian, or often adopted Christianity.



Figure 14: Norwegian Lutheran Orphanage at Teller, Alaska. From Jackson, 1904, *Report on the Introduction of Domestic Reindeer into Alaska, 1903.*

The adoption of Christianity by Inupiat of the Seward Peninsula at the turn of the twentieth century was an event of great importance to the people of this region. While over a century later Baptist and other Christian religions can be found in the region, the Friends Church and the Lutheran Church have proven two of the most influential denominations in the area, with long histories of Inupiaq pastors, ministers and clergy.



Figure 15: Christian cross on an Inupiaq grave at Deering. Robin Dailey Collection, Alaska State Library Historical Collections. ASL-P112-013.

Bureau of Education's Medical Services

The Bureau of Education was also mostly responsible for the introduction of Western medicine into Northwest Alaska. Missionaries and teachers often served as the first practitioners of Western health care in Northwest Alaska villages. Reindeer stations also helped to secure the services of physicians near these communities. Prior to the introduction of reindeer (discussed in chapter 5) the only resident doctors in Northwest Alaska were Dr. Driggs in Point Hope and Dr. Marsh at Point Barrow, who both worked primarily as missionary teachers.

The United States Bureau of Education oversaw both the schools and the reindeer program in Alaska. Under this authority, the Bureau acted as the arm of the government that addressed all issues relating to Alaska Natives. Yet much of its work was focused on supporting the progress of the reindeer stations and the welfare of reindeer service employees. The first person hired by the Bureau of Education to serve as a physician was Dr. A.N. Kittleson, who came to Teller in

1896 and moved with the reindeer program's headquarters to Eaton Station in 1898. He abruptly quit the Bureau of Education to take part in the gold-mining frenzy near Nome in 1898, which was not uncommon among professionals sent to the Alaska at this time. Kittleson was replaced by teacher and physician Dr. Francis H. Gambell, who reported that Alaska Natives came seeking medical attention at Eaton Station from points far and wide: "The natives have applied for medical aid and medicine quite freely. Patients have come to me from long distances. The Yukon Indians have been in my office for medicine while natives from Kings [sic] Island, the Diomedes, and points along the shore have brought me their sick ones."⁷³ Gambell's account reveals that Bering Straits people were aware of his medical services, and were interested and willing to travel long distances to try them. Gambell was reassigned and replaced by Dr. Carl O. Lind the next year, during the tumult of the 1900 measles epidemic.

Inupiat and other Alaska Natives of this region were not without their own means of combating disease and seeking wellness. Healing rituals and shamanism had long been practiced within the villages of the Bering Strait and the Seward Peninsula. The Serpentine Hot Springs has especially been known as a place central to the practice of Inupiaq traditional medicine. But at the turn of the twentieth century, strong currents of social change were impacting the people of this area, who looked to new resources for help with the changes. Lethal epidemics, poor hunts and the influence of missionaries were a few of the factors which undermined the former influence of shamans, and corroded some of the traditional medical practices of people in this area. Near the end of the twentieth century, Seward Peninsula Inupiat became more reliant on Western medical care and medicines. Unfortunately, Western healthcare was not widely available.

Bureau of Education teachers and missionaries provided the bulk of Western medical attention on the Seward Peninsula, until travel to Nome or Kotzebue and air travel to Anchorage became the norm. Surgeons serving on the Revenue Marine cutters also provided valuable medical

⁷³ Caldwell, Jay E. *The Development of Health Services in Northwest Alaska: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*. Los Angeles, Calif, 1977, 169.

services to the sick and gravely injured when traveling in the area. Gold mining and military communities generally had the greatest access to Western medical care.

Nome provided a source of medical care for Inupiat on the Seward Peninsula starting in the early 1900s, but primarily served the white population of the area. Over several decades, pleas for funding to provide a Native hospital appeared before Congress.⁷⁴ The first makeshift hospital in Nome, the “Hospice of St. Bernard,” was constructed in 1899. The two-story Holy Cross Hospital, first converted to a hospital by Dr. Rininger in 1902, became a Catholic hospital when Rininger sold it to the four Catholic Sisters of Providence, who arrived in Nome in 1902. By 1918, the sisters had decided to be of use where there was a larger population so they closed the Holy Cross Hospital and moved to St. Joseph’s Hospital in Fairbanks. Another hospital had been built in Nome in the interim. Some of Nome’s most renowned doctors were Dr. Daniel S. Newman (1911-1919) and Dr. Curtis Welch (1917-1928), who participated in the traumatic 1918 flu epidemic (discussed in a later chapter).

In 1914, most of the Inupiat of Deering moved to Noorvik. In 1919, a 12-bed hospital was built in Noorvik, and Noorvik served as the main hospital for the Kotzebue Sound region. Fort Davis on the Seward Peninsula south of Nome and Fort St. Michael in Norton Sound also provided medical aid and relief during emergencies. But for the most part, medical aid was difficult to obtain for Inupiat, missionaries and teachers on the Seward Peninsula until the advent of the fixed wing airplane, which enabled transport to cities with medical care.

In times of epidemics caused by introduction of Euro-American diseases, access to Western medical treatment was critical to many patients’ survival. Communities exposed to these diseases but far from Western medical aid suffered overwhelming losses, sometimes losing all adult family members. Orphanages were formed nearby to cope with children who survived their parents during the major epidemics of this period. The largest orphanages were at Brevig

⁷⁴ Government inspector Frank Churchill recommended in 1907 that the Bureau of Education open a Native hospital on the Seward Peninsula and Alaska Territorial Governor Thomas Riggs lobbied for a Native hospital near Nome in 1919.

Mission, Pilgrim Hot Springs, Sinuk, White Mountain, and Nome. Communities lost many of their local youth when these children moved to the orphanages. In communities with better access to medical care, the reduction in numbers of young people was less severe.

For mental health, very few services were available. Starting in 1901, patients diagnosed with mental health illness were sent to a sanitarium in Oregon, later known as Morningside. In 1913 facilities for detaining the mentally ill were built in Nome and in Fairbanks, but Alaska Natives were also routinely sent to Morningside. For tuberculosis, the situation was equally as dire. Alaska had one main hospital for the treatment of tuberculosis in Skagway until after World War I. A sanitarium for tuberculosis patients was built in Seward in 1946, and at Mt. Edgecumbe near Sitka in 1947. Prior to this, tuberculosis patients were often sent out to Seattle for treatment.⁷⁵

The medical history of the Seward Peninsula affected life on the peninsula in numerous ways. In 1926, a terrible diphtheria epidemic broke out, which prompted a response from the national and territorial governments. The heroic effort to bring vials of a diphtheria cure to Nome by an emergency dog sled relay, often referred to as the Serum Run, evolved into the world famous Iditarod Sled Dog Race.⁷⁶

In 1931, the Bureau of Education transferred its responsibilities for health care in Alaska to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). In addition to seven hospitals with full-time physicians and a boat for transporting patients, the BIA stationed physicians at Cordova, Nome, and Unalaska. Nurses and a traveling medical program were instated to treat people in rural communities who were too ill to travel.

⁷⁵ Caldwell, 1977, 169.

⁷⁶ Salisbury, Gay, and Laney Salisbury. *The Cruellest Miles : The Heroic Story of Dogs and Men in a Race against an Epidemic*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2003.

Schools after the Missionary period

Other than linguistic and cultural assimilation, the other main characteristic of the Bureau of Education's early work in Alaska was a constant turnover in medical and teaching personnel. Doctors and teachers typically left within a few years of arriving in a community, working under only short-term contracts, which made it very easy for differences in their teaching and religious beliefs to undermine those of the group that had come before. This also caused Inupiat to question the validity of any missionaries' or teachers' knowledge. And it established a pattern of newcomers to a community who typically knew nothing of the place or people when they arrived. Relationships between Inupiat and transitory teachers were not often close; closer were relationships with missionaries who stayed in Alaska communities for longer periods of time. However, this pattern also led Inupiaq communities to become acquainted with a variety of personalities over the history of American education in their communities. With the exception of mining towns on the Seward Peninsula, teachers and missionaries were generally the only Euro-Americans to move into villages and live amongst the residents. This gave them a very different relationship to the local Inupiat than the more transient mining population.

In 1917, the Seward Peninsula received its first boarding school at White Mountain. Students from other villages were often sent here to complete their education, owing to the lack of secondary schools in the region. Students were sometimes sent Outside to Indian schools in Carlisle, Pennsylvania and Oregon. Until it was closed in 1953, the White Mountain School also played a role in Christianizing and Americanizing Inupiat on the Seward Peninsula.

End of Bureau of Education work in Alaska

In 1931, the federal Office of Indian Affairs took over the management of schools in rural Alaska and the school program was later renamed the “Alaska Indian Service.” Until 1931, however, the program retained much of the character of the school system put in place by Sheldon Jackson. After leaving Wales, Tom Lopp took over the position of Bureau of Education Superintendent of Schools in the Northern District in 1904, and served as Chief of the Bureau’s Alaska Division (essentially Sheldon Jackson’s job) from 1910 to 1925. Tom Lopp touched the lives of Inupiat not only in Wales, but throughout the Seward Peninsula and Northwest Alaska. From his new home in Seattle, he travelled often to Alaska to attend to the schooling needs and oversee the reindeer service. When he returned to Wales in his sixties, he was still remembered there as “Tomgorah,” or “Tom-the-good-man”⁷⁷

The work and the influence of missionaries and teachers are very difficult to separate from those of the reindeer program in Alaska, as the education and the reindeer programs were integrated throughout the Bureau of Education’s work in Alaska. More of the influence of missionaries on Seward Peninsula Inupiat is treated in the subsequent chapter on reindeer herding.

Teachers and missionaries brought major changes to the lives of Seward Peninsula Inupiat near the turn of the twentieth century. Trust relationships between Inupiat and the federal government were often determined by the early work of teachers in these communities. The greatest amount of culture change for Seward Peninsula Inupiat can be attributed to the time of Bureau of Education teachers and missionaries. Cultures in other parts of Alaska to the south, east and southeast had a different history of cultural change from contact with whites because of the influence of Russians, Russian Orthodox missionaries, and Euro-American settlers from the fur and fish industries in those regions. For Northwest Alaskans, colossal changes came about

⁷⁷ Lopp and Smith, 2001, 357.

nearly all at once, with the sudden arrival of missionaries, teachers, reindeer herds, miners and American colonists. In large measure, the Seward Peninsula's teachers and missionaries prepared Inupiaq communities for contact with miners who arrived in droves to the peninsula less than ten years after the first missionaries arrived. After teachers and missionaries, the gold rush city of Nome played the largest part in changing life for Seward Peninsula Inupiat by changing the social landscape and much of the physical landscape of the entire Seward Peninsula. When the gold reserves in the sands and streams near Nome could not sustain the nearly 40,000 residents, they encroached on other parts of the peninsula, claiming and disturbing land which had belonged to Inupiaq communities for generations.

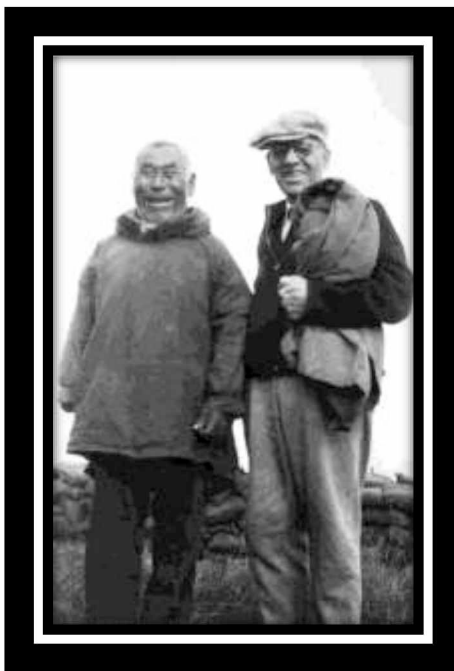


Figure 16: Tom Lopp and a man from Wales in the 1930s. Clarence L. Andrews Papers, 1890-1949, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska Fairbanks. UAF-1972-154-202.

Missionaries influenced local Inupiat through the adoption of Christianity, loss of power for Shamans, loss of traditional religious beliefs, and the adoption of several new values such as not working on Sundays, attendance of regular religious services, the necessity of Christian weddings, new burial and funereal rites, the end of arranged marriages, discouragement of drinking (and in some cases, dancing) the assignment of Christian names, and shelter for orphans. These changes would have broad and long ranging impacts.

The form of American education implemented by Sheldon Jackson tended to influence Seward Peninsula Inupiat through a loss of traditional language fluency; fluency or near-fluency in English; the introduction of the Western calendar and Western observance of time; encouragement to stay in communities year-round or move to larger communities; and encouragement to marry legally. School presented an interference with subsistence hunting schedules and brought the introduction of new medical services and new foods; the acquisition of new Western songs, Western clothing, Western craft and agricultural skills; new standards of hygiene; new village sanitation systems; the discouragement of drinking; eventual abandonment of traditional sod houses; the assignment of Christian or English names to Inupiat, who now had both first names and surnames; a source of jobs in communities; the recording of vital records and statistics of a community; and a preparedness for interaction with a new population on the Seward Peninsula and for entry into the Western, and relatively urban, culture and economy of Nome. And to the people of the Seward Peninsula, Sheldon Jackson's schools also brought reindeer.



Figure 17: Caption reads "Americanized Eskimos, Nome" Alfred G. Simmer Collection. Alaska State Library Historical Collections. ASL-P137-341.

CHAPTER 5: REINDEER ON THE SEWARD PENINSULA

Reindeer were brought to the Alaska mainland in 1892. The idea to introduce reindeer to Alaska stemmed from concern over reports that Alaska Natives were facing food shortages caused by the overharvesting of whales and walrus by commercial whalers and by the disappearance of regular migrations of caribou. Reindeer are very similar to caribou and belong to the same species (*Rangifer tarandus*). They are also fairly different from caribou in size, length, breeding season, and appearance, and their meat is often distinguishable from that of caribou, being softer and having a lighter flavor. Skin sewers have long prized reindeer hides for traits that caribou skins lack, such as a lighter color, characteristic spots, stronger skin, and less shedding of their fur.⁷⁸ Reindeer fawn skins were particularly desirable for making clothing. Records of indigenous trade in the Bering Strait show that Inupiat often sought to obtain Siberian reindeer hides, despite the availability of caribou in Alaska, and sought them more avidly after caribou vanished from the Seward Peninsula completely.⁷⁹ Sales of fur clothing to the Arctic Whaling Fleet also increased the demand for reindeer hides in the Bering Strait toward the end of the nineteenth century.

The most commonly observed difference between the two animals is that caribou are a wild species that has survived since the last ice age and reindeer have been domesticated in the northernmost countries of Europe and Asia for centuries. No herds of North American caribou were ever domesticated by North American tribes; therefore, all of the reindeer present on this continent are descended from Asian or European reindeer. As domesticated animals, reindeer have a slightly different temperament from caribou, and some reindeer have been bred to have a build suitable for towing heavy loads behind them. Reindeer also offer a valuable agricultural product that was virtually unobtainable in Alaska at the time: milk. For those who wished to

⁷⁸ Simon, James Johnson Koffroth. "Twentieth Century Inupiaq Eskimo Reindeer Herding on Northern Seward Peninsula, Alaska." University of Alaska Fairbanks, 1998, 79-80.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 76-92.

provide a stable food source for Alaska Natives, the meat, hides, similarity to caribou and agricultural potential of reindeer made them a highly appealing option.

In 1882, Henry W. Elliott, working for the U.S. Treasury, suggested that reindeer could be brought to the Pribilof Islands in the southern Bering Sea to provide an additional food source there. Similar proposals for importing cattle and sheep to Alaska were also under review at that time. Charles Townsend, a zoologist for the US Fish Commission was the first to suggest that herding reindeer in Alaska might benefit Alaska Natives. Captain Healy of the Revenue Marine Service strongly endorsed the idea that reindeer might give a stronger social and economic standing to Alaska's coastal peoples. It was Sheldon Jackson, however, who championed the cause of reindeer introduction and managed to procure reindeer, through charitable and government funding, and transplant them to Alaska.

In 1890, Jackson travelled with Captain Healy on the *Bear* and surveyed villages in Northern Alaska for the first time. The villages in Northwest Alaska looked very unlike the ones Jackson had seen in Southeast Alaska. Adapted to a treeless and windy landscape, the coastal Inupiat lived through the winter in sod huts, built low to the ground, with underground entrances. These huts must have seemed primitive compared to the year-round wooden buildings of South and Southeast Alaskan cultures. The Inupiaq huts were not suited to year-round residence; they flooded as the ground water melted each summer, and the damp earth and other substances in them would rot and smell. Most Inupiaq families vacated sod houses during the summer and lived through the warm months in skin tents and umiak lean-tos. Driftwood caches, used for storing food above animals' reach, also surrounded the sod huts. As summer was a time when fresh meat could not be stored easily, Jackson saw little surplus meat on the caches and deduced that the Inupiat faced starvation from day to day.



Figure 18: Cape Prince of Wales Natives on the *Bear*. Pages from Jackson, 1895, *Annual Report on the Introduction of Reindeer to Alaska, 1894*.

Jackson also noticed that the Inupiat he met were lean. From what he had heard about the negative effects of commercial whaling on Bering Straits people, and what he witnessed, he concluded that a stable food supply was urgently needed in the region. In Siberia, Jackson made a study of Chukchi reindeer herders. While Inupiat relied exclusively on seasonal hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering, many Siberian peoples also herded reindeer. Jackson reported to Congress that the Siberians, compared to their Alaskan neighbors, were “fat.” “In Arctic Siberia the natives with their reindeer have plenty; in Arctic Alaska, without the reindeer, they are starving,”⁸⁰ he proclaimed. Reindeer seemed the obvious solution.

⁸⁰ Jackson, Sheldon. "In the Senate of the United States. Mr. Teller Presented the Following Newspaper Communication of Sheldon Jackson, Urging the Importation by the Government of the Siberian Reindeer into Alaskan Territory for the Benefit and Relief of the Inhabitants of That Territory." Washington: GPO, 1891, 4.

In addition to providing food for Alaska Natives, Jackson and his boss, Bureau of Education Commissioner William Torey Harris, liked the idea that reindeer could also be used as an educational tool for assimilating or, “civilizing,” Inupiat, meaning that reindeer herding could transform the Inupiat from a subsistence-based to a more agricultural society, teach them English, and instill Western values in them. Educators such as Jackson and Harris were proponents of the social evolution theory, whereby societies ranged from primitive to advanced, based on their similarity to Western culture. Under this view, hunter societies were on a lower rung of the evolutionary ladder than herding and farming societies, and it was thought that teaching these skills elevated a people from “barbarism” to “civilization.” This idea fit in well with the new national trend of enrolling Native American youth in agricultural or industrial schools. At this time, the federal government struggled with questions of how to change policies regarding Native Americans without repeating injustices of the past, and social engineering programs were considered a good and philanthropic solution.

In the 1880s and 1890s, the Bureau of Education and the Revenue Cutter Service were considered the premier experts on Alaska and the needs of Alaska Natives, and Jackson had the support of both agencies.⁸¹ Although there was some indication that the Inupiat of the Seward Peninsula were also interested in acquiring herds of reindeer,⁸² this was not one of the main motives for importing deer.

⁸¹ Jackson was not considered an expert by some of his contemporaries. Famous Alaskan geologist Alfred Brooks wrote about Jackson, “Above all, Dr. Jackson had been credited with a profound knowledge of Alaska. This is a great exaggeration, for at best his knowledge was very superficial. In fact, it was his ignorance of the physical conditions in the Northland and of its people which led him to make egregious blunders of administration. Another factor coupled with this was Jackson’s fondness for sensational statements, no doubt in part developed as necessary to the propaganda to which he devoted most of his life.” Quoted in Ellanna and Sherrod, 2004, 67.

⁸² Because of the interest in reindeer among some of the people in Wales, Lopp and Thornton had hoped to bring a small herd to Wales from Siberia in the summer of 1891. (Simon, 1998, 94.) Also in the winter of 1893, after deer had been brought to Teller, Tom and Ellen Lopp traveled up to Point Hope to discuss reindeer importation with coastal villages and found most villagers to be interested and enthusiastic about future reindeer herds in their area. (Lopp and Smith, 2001, 59 & 366.)

Together, Jackson, Harris and Healy proposed to Congress that the government fund the purchasing and transporting of reindeer from Siberia to Alaska, on the basis that: “just now it is specially important and urgent from the fact stated in the opening of this report, that the destruction of the whale and walrus has brought large numbers of Esquimaux face to face with starvation, and that something must be done promptly to save them. The introduction of the reindeer would ultimately afford them a steady and permanent food supply.”⁸³

In reality, the original motives for bringing reindeer to Alaska had less to do with feeding people than Americanizing them. Because policymakers were seeking ways to assimilate Native Americans into the mainstream economy and make them self-supporting, Jackson stressed the social engineering potential of a reindeer program, urging: “Instead of feeding and pauperizing them, let us civilize, build up their manhood, and lift them into self-support by helping them to the reindeer.”⁸⁴

But Congress did not agree on the reindeer idea in 1891, so Jackson took the proposal to a different audience, that of the charitable Christian movement. In newspapers and church bulletins, Jackson wrote sensational accounts of the deplorable conditions suffered by innocent peoples of the Arctic. Especially along the eastern seaboard, concerned citizens made contributions to improve the welfare of the Alaskan “Esquimaux.” Jackson secured \$2,146 that spring, enough to purchase and ship reindeer to Alaska independently. William Harris authorized Jackson to pursue reindeer importation as a Bureau of Education initiative.

Converting the donations into barter goods, Jackson traveled on the *Bear* to the Chukchi Peninsula to purchase a small herd of deer. As Siberians had never sold live deer to Americans before, the transaction did not go as smoothly as Jackson and Healy had hoped. In reality, neither man knew anything about reindeer herding or about the Siberian trading economy, with which

⁸³ Jackson, 1891, 4.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*

they were now creating competition by attempting to install reindeer on the other side of the Bering Strait. They eventually managed to buy 16 reindeer and transported them with little incident to Amanak Island. All 16 reindeer survived the trip and lived on Amanak Island until they died the following winter.⁸⁵ Although little more than a stunt, the event provided Jackson with proof that reindeer importation could be accomplished.

In the summer of 1892, Jackson returned to Siberia five more times with the rest of his private funding and purchased 175 deer. Along with four Siberian herding instructors, the deer were brought to Port Clarence on the tip of the Seward Peninsula. Alaska's first reindeer station was built on the southeastern shore of Port Clarence and Jackson named it Teller, after Colorado Senator Henry M. Teller, who presented and supported the reindeer proposal in Congress. With its first reindeer station and first mainland herd, the Bureau of Education recruited herding apprentices among the local Inupiat in 1892. Congress began funding the program in 1894.⁸⁶

Creation of the Alaska Reindeer Service

The Alaska Reindeer Service imported 1,280 reindeer from Siberia between 1892 and 1902. By 1902, the herds had multiplied to a total of 8,189 reindeer. Each year's efforts were documented in Jackson's "Annual Report on the Introduction of Domesticated Reindeer into Alaska." The reports, which were used to demonstrate the success of the program and justify continued government spending on it, are a valuable record of early herding conditions on the Seward Peninsula. They also record changes in government policy toward Alaska Native ownership of deer and development of the program into a commercial industry. The reindeer program evolved amid intervals of shifting priorities and significant conflicts, but reindeer herding overall became a very important part of the Seward Peninsula's cultural history and Inupiat still manage reindeer herds on the Seward Peninsula in the early twenty-first century.

⁸⁵ Willis, 1986, 74.

⁸⁶ In 1894 the federal budget for the reindeer program was \$6,000. It gradually increased to \$25,000 in 1900 and fluctuated in amount after that. Figures from 1894-1918 are provided in Simon, 1998, 97-98.



Figure 19: Landing the first batch of reindeer at Teller Station, July 4, 1892. The man facing the camera is Sheldon Jackson. From Jackson, 1895, *Annual Report on the Introduction of Reindeer to Alaska, 1894*.

“The Reindeer are the Schoolbooks”

The initial reindeer station at Teller became the headquarters of the Alaska Reindeer Service and maintained the nuclear herd, from which future herds were created and distributed throughout Alaska. The order in which other communities around the Seward Peninsula received herds was Wales in 1894, Golovin in 1896, Kotzebue in 1901, Deering in 1905, Shishmaref in 1905, Council in 1907, Igloo in 1907, Sinuk in 1907, Buckland in 1911, the Goodhope River area in 1911, Cape Douglas (between Nome and Teller) in 1911, Cape Espenberg in 1913, Nome in 1913 and Cape York in 1914.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ For a table of all community herds established through 1915, see Stern, Richard O., Edward L. Arobio, Larry L. Naylor and Wayne C. Thomas. "Eskimos, Reindeer and Land." *Bulletin* 59 (1980), 31.

As soon as community herds arrived, they were placed under the management of the nearest mission or government school. It was recommended that herds of one hundred deer be loaned to each institution, and the same number be returned to the government after a set time, each school keeping the increase.⁸⁸ As acting representatives of the federal government, schoolteachers supervised both the deer and the apprentices, in addition to their regular school duties. The apprenticeships began as five-year terms, only open to selected young men. The process of recruiting apprentices had no basis in perceived need, but on “civilizing” potential. “Select the trustworthy natives,” Jackson wrote, “those ambitious to learn the civilization of the white man, those ambitious to hold and increase property . . . They should be picked men—the ablest and best among the people—as that class alone will secure the best results from the introduction of the deer.”⁸⁹

In Teller, this meant that Inupiat who already had good relationships with government agents, such as Charlie Antisarlook, who had worked for the Revenue Service as an interpreter, became the first apprentices. In 1892, Lopp also brought five of his best male pupils from Wales to Teller to begin apprenticeships. Apprenticeship terms changed almost annually in the first years of the program, and contracts were not always followed to the letter. In general, though, after four or five years of service an apprentice would have earned a small herd of his own of about 40-60 animals.

Apprenticeships were structured as intensive trainings during which apprentices divided their time between school lessons, instruction in husbandry at the reindeer stations, hunting and fishing to supplement food provided by the government, and time spent out with the herds. The program also required apprentices to become proficient in English. Herds were often kept 20-40 miles away from the stations, so apprentices traveled long distances and camped outdoors in all kinds of weather while learning to tend reindeer. The first apprentices left their villages and their families to learn this new lifestyle. However, the government provided food, clothing, equipment and

⁸⁸ Jackson, *Report on introduction of domestic reindeer into Alaska*, 1893, 18.

⁸⁹ Henningsen, 1987, 178.

housing for apprentices and their wives, so long as the wives cooked and sewed for the herders. This lifestyle was demanding, and several apprentices quit the program after only a few months,⁹⁰ but those who completed their apprenticeships left with a small herd and a trade that they could teach others. Many taught herding to other members of their families.



Figure 20: Homes of the Wales herders, James Wickersham Collection, Alaska State Library Historical Collections. Album 9, Photo 106.

America's Commissioner of Education, W.T. Harris, wrote: "Reindeer are the schoolbooks . . . necessary for the education of northern and western natives."⁹¹ Although he had envisioned that the reindeer program would replace the Inupiaq lifestyle with a more American one, reindeer herding did not completely alter the general character of those villages that predated it. In Wales,

⁹⁰ From Lopp and Jackson's reports, quoted in Simon, 1998, 107.

⁹¹ Quoted in Henningsen, 1987, 174.

for example, reindeer herding became a new branch of employment for villagers, but hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering continued as before. Reindeer herding was often dependent on dog mushing and subsistence hunting for securing food and supplies. As current herder Clifford Weyiouanna recalls, a reindeer herder could not support his family without subsistence hunting. Young men learning the family trade often even had to miss a year of school to learn hunting and trapping skills.⁹² These skills differentiated the Inupiat herders from the Sami herders who later came to Alaska and who lacked the hunting, fishing and gathering skills, as well as knowledge of the land that the Inupiat had acquired over generations.

Over the history of herding on the Seward Peninsula, more herders learned the trade from other Inupiat herders than from teachers or Alaska Reindeer Service personnel. It should be noted the schoolteachers who were charged with teaching herding to Inupiat had absolutely no reindeer herding experience, and although Chukchi or Sami instructors were available nearby at Teller, Wales herders generally learned the trade from other Wales herders.

Some anthropologists have emphasized that Inupiat adopted reindeer herding and incorporated it into the social organization of their villages in ways which were uniquely Inupiat.⁹³ While the Bureau of Education's reindeer program introduced Inupiat to the method of "close herding"—or maintaining a constant, vigilant watch over a herd—and prepared them to take over their own small herds, the ingenuity of Seward Peninsula herders was responsible for adapting the practice to one which succeeded in virtually every landscape and virtually every Inupiat village on the Seward Peninsula.

Although reindeer herding made Wales Inupiat more familiar with American culture, the changes it introduced did not simply Americanize this village. Reindeer herding created a new

⁹² Weyiouanna, Clifford. 2002. "Clifford Weyiouanna Interview," *Project Jukebox. Reindeer herding: the present & the past.*, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Oral History Department. Oral History Interview, <http://jukebox.uaf.edu/reindherding/htm/cw.htm> (accessed September 18, 2009).

⁹³ Simon, 1998; and Ellanna and Sherrod, 2004.

occupation and new power role within Wales society⁹⁴ and initiated new, year-long, wide-ranging uses of nearby lands. Herding presented an alternative lifestyle and new means of achieving good social standing in Wales, and it redefined territorial boundaries with the introduction of a new land use. It seems probable that because Inupiat had authorship in these changes, and an active role in the development of reindeer herding in Wales in particular, that these changes were not considered damaging to traditional Wales customs and not met with hostile resistance. Reindeer herding was a strong and influential force in Wales' development and its adoption of new lifestyles.

Influence of Chukchi and Sami herders

The first year that reindeer were brought to Alaska, the Bureau of Education hired four Chukchi herders to teach their style of herding. The herders, three of whom were named Dantin, Anker, and Nootadl'goot, were each paid \$75 per year for training the new Inupiaq herders.⁹⁵ Nootadl'goot was married to a Wales woman named Nuvenok and may have lived with her and her two children Nowadluk and Karmun in Wales for a time after working as a herding instructor.

Unfortunately, the animosity between Chukchis and Seward Peninsula Inupiat was in no way diminished by a government contract, and the four men reported being terrified for their safety throughout their time at Teller Station. Their methods of lassoing and milking deer were also very rough and resulted in the deaths of some deer, making the Chukchi unpopular with

⁹⁴ See discussion of "reindeer aristocracy" in Simon 1998 and Ellanna & Sherrod, 2004.

⁹⁵ Names of three of these four were recorded in Jackson's reports from 1895. Lopp's mentions only 3 herders, named Darchlings, Pungen, and Darkus, so there is some confusion about the identities of the Siberian reindeer herders. (Lopp and Smith, 2001, 37) There may have been three Chukchi herders hired in 1892 who returned to Siberia and was replaced by three other Siberians in 1893, when Lopp was superintendent of the Teller Station.

apprentices and station staff.⁹⁶ After the first year there were only three Chukchi herders working at Teller, and Jackson dismissed them in 1894.



Figure 21: “Siberian herder and family,” in Wales. From left to right are Nowadluk (Alice), Nuvenok,⁹⁷ and Nootadl’ goot. The young boy on the right, called “Karmun” by the missionaries,⁹⁸ became a prominent reindeer herder in later years. Kathleen Lopp Smith Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska Fairbanks. UAF-2004-84-816.

⁹⁶ Jackson, Sheldon. *Report on Introduction of Domestic Reindeer into Alaska, 1894*, 1895, 10. Also described by Ellen Lopp, “Siberians throw the deer down to milk them. . . Our herders threw them down and held them while they milked them with their fingers, one teat at a time. They often tied their feet . . . The Lapps milk the cows standing . . . The man holds her while a woman stands and milks into a bag or a cup from the knot of a tree.” Lopp and Smith, 2001, 96-7.

⁹⁷ Alternate spelling: Nuv en ok. Simon, 1998, 101.

⁹⁸ Original name, according to Evans Karmun, was Qaamana. Outwater, Walter, Ruth Outwater, and Evans Avli Karmun. “Deering, Alaska: Ipnatchiaq.” In *Lore of the Inupiat: The Elders Speak*, edited by Linda Piquik Lee, Ruthie Tatqavin Sampson and Edward Tennant, Kotzebue, Alaska: Northwest Arctic Borough School District, 1989, v. 3, 224.



Figure 22: Cited in W.T. Lopp's photos as "Herders imported from Siberia with the first reindeer-1892." Kathleen Lopp Smith Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska Fairbanks. UAF-1994-92-190.

Teller Station had two other employees, a station superintendent named Miner Bruce and an assistant superintendent named Bruce Gibson. Healy fired Bruce and Gibson when he discovered that they had traded alcohol and rifles for reindeer in Siberia, and Jackson replaced Bruce with Tom Lopp in 1893. When Lopp returned to Wales in 1894, Jackson brought a Norwegian man named William A. Kjellman, who had worked with Sami (then known as Lapp) herders in Norway, up from Wisconsin to take the position. Kjellman was first sent to Norway to hire Sami families to be the new instructors. Kjellman and seven Sami families (16 Sami total) arrived at Teller in July of 1894. Jackson hired Lutheran Reverend and Norwegian-American Tollef L. Brevig to start a mission school and provide religious services for the Sami and Inupiat at Teller Station. In 1897, a Norwegian-American doctor named A.N. Kittlesen also started work at the main reindeer station.



Figure 23: First Sami Reindeer Herding Families in Alaska. From Jackson, 1895, *Report on the Introduction of Reindeer to Alaska, 1894.*

The seven Sami families that were brought to Teller were those of Samuel J. Kemi, Mikkel J. Nakilla, Mathias A. Eria, Per A. Rist, Johan S. Tornesis, Aslak L. Somby, and Frederik Larsen, all hired for three year contracts. At the end of their contracts only the Nakillas, Torneses and Larsen remained behind in Alaska.⁹⁹ In 1897, when Kjellman was escorting the other four families home, the U.S. War Department issued a disaster declaration that led to a vastly increased Sami presence in Alaska.

⁹⁹ Plaskett, David C. "A Lapp Reindeer Herding Colony in Northwest Alaska." Alaska Historical Commission, 1984, 76. For more information about these families see Vorren, Ornulv. *Saami, Reindeer and Gold in Alaska: The Emigration of Saami from Norway to Alaska*. Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 1994, 20.

The second wave of Sami herders who immigrated to Alaska was a much larger one. This group of 78 Sami, 25 Norwegians and 10 Finns (comprised of 19 families and 49 bachelors) was brought over on the Manitoba expedition of 1898. Reports of a stampede of gold miners entering Alaska's Interior by the tens of thousands in 1897 set off alarms in Washington about an imminent famine. Jackson was in Washington at the time, and the War Department summoned him to discuss his earlier proposal that a shipment of reindeer and Sami herders to Alaska could prevent the starvation of large groups of miners. The War Department authorized Jackson to import several Sami families and several hundred head of deer from Norway to Circle City in Interior Alaska. Bad weather, quarantines, long delays, government blunders, sickness and the starvation of many deer plagued this group's trip to Alaska. The end result was that, of the 539 deer that left Norway, only about 141 made it to Circle City, and they arrived so late that they could never have helped to alleviate starvation. This incident cost the War Department roughly \$1,000,000, for which the department was lambasted in national newspapers. *The Daily Alaskan* newspaper out of Sitka ridiculed the fiasco as one of the machinations of "Shellgame Jackson."¹⁰⁰

The 68 Sami, Norwegian and Finnish men whom Kjellman convinced to emigrate had signed two-year contracts with the Bureau of Education. Many came to the Seward Peninsula to be herding instructors but most broke their contracts to return home or take part in the gold rushes and other profit-earning schemes which arose during this period in Alaska's history.¹⁰¹ The 16 Sami men who honored their contracts and remained reindeer herders were set up at various reindeer stations and began teaching Sami reindeer handling techniques to Alaska Native herders. Their contracts with the War Department expired in 1899 and those that remained took on contracts with the Bureau of Education that enabled them to have loans of 100 deer for 5 year periods.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Tower, Elizabeth A. *Reading, Religion, Reindeer: Sheldon Jackson's Legacy to Alaska*. Anchorage, Alaska: Elizabeth Tower, 1988, 35.

¹⁰¹ Of the 113 people who came over on the Manitoba Expedition, 3 died, 86 stayed in Alaska and 17 became gold prospectors, some, like Jafet Lindbergh, striking it rich in the gold fields. Vorren, 1994, 67.

¹⁰² Vorren, 1994, 29.

The First Inupiat Herders

Four of the first herders who apprenticed with Tom Lopp—Thomas Sokweena, James Keok, Stanley Kivyearzruk (or Kauwerak), and George Ootenna—each became prominent reindeer herders on the Northern Seward Peninsula and instructed the next generation of apprentices in herding techniques. Jim Simon’s report on reindeer herding in the twentieth century gives a detailed account of these and other herders’ contributions to the formation of herds in Northern Seward Peninsula communities. All of these early herders followed a model of close private herding. Those who owned larger herds of deer were generally regarded as rich men by other Inupiat. Herders who obtained deer through the government apprenticeship programs usually obtained the largest herds.

The graduates of four or five- year apprenticeship programs were not completely at liberty to do what they wanted with their deer. Herders could only sell female deer to the reindeer stations and there were regulations on the slaughter of their male deer. In his dissertation on Jackson’s management of the reindeer program William Hennessey pointed out that: “this herd was actually on extended loan from the government, which would supervise his performance for a further seventeen to twenty years before he could claim the deer as truly his own. If at any time during the lengthy loan period, the deerman was “neglectful or dissipated”, he ran the risk of forfeiting all his deer to the government.”¹⁰³

Hennessey’s description of restrictions on apprentices and the punishments meted out to herders for unauthorized slaughter of deer implies that herders never fully managed their own deer, which is not representative of the overall reindeer program. Herders could sell or butcher male steers, so long as they filed reports about the number of slaughtered deer and accidental deaths among their herds. They could sell female deer back to the government, which usually

¹⁰³ Henningsen, 1987, 178.

paid \$30 per doe. Some herders acquired deer by purchasing them directly instead of becoming apprentices and some earned their deer as laborers for other herders.¹⁰⁴

In contrast, the Bureau of Education's policies toward Sami herders were much more generous than those for Inupiaq herders. The contracts for Sami herders allowed them a one hundred deer loan, with the condition that they return one hundred to the government after five years, keeping whatever increase remained. If they chose to continue working after their five years they could opt to be paid in reindeer or wages. This meant that the Sami could accumulate very large herds much more rapidly than the Inupiat. They were also authorized to use any of their surplus deer for food or clothing during their five year contracts, whereas Inupiat were not allowed unlimited slaughter of their surplus deer.¹⁰⁵

Influence of the Sami

Hugh Beach considered the Sami to be "instruments of white policy" in the reindeer program, while Ornulv Vorren considered Sami participation very beneficial to the herding program. Jackson's successor, the missionary Tom Lopp opposed the importation of Sami, insisting that Inupiaq herders were competent enough without them. Linda Ellanna, who lived and researched for many decades on the Seward Peninsula, suggested that the Sami experience taught Inupiat not to trust the government, because the contracts between Sami and the government represented substantial preferential treatment. Yet, as Peter Schweitzer has pointed out, there are no historical accounts that show how the Inupiat felt about the Sami and their role in the reindeer program. Jackson's annual reports remark how the distinctive pointed hats and shoes of the Sami people made several Inupiat think of the joker-like figures on decks of playing cards. No evidence of Sami influence on Inupiaq culture has been discussed at present. Yet, Sami technology has probably contributed to Inupiaq herding equipment and techniques. Reindeer sleds, harnesses,

¹⁰⁴ Simon, 1998, 129.

¹⁰⁵ Ellanna and Sherrod, 2004, 84-5.

lassoes, and other equipment introduced by the Sami may have been incorporated into Inupiaq herding practices, but this has not yet been studied. It is known that some Sami men married Inupiaq women and lived for many years on the Seward Peninsula or near Unalakleet.



Figure 24: Picture showing a Sami instructor and young reindeer apprentices, location unknown. From the Lomen Family Papers, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska Fairbanks, UAF-1972-0071-02535.

Moving the Reindeer Station to Eaton

In 1897 the Alaska Reindeer Service headquarters and 600 deer were moved from Teller to Eaton, about 7 miles above Unalakleet, for better grazing ground and access to Norton Sound. A small herd and a few apprentices with their own herds remained at Teller station. In 1899, Teller station was closed, but because there was still a sizable community in the area, reindeer herding continued, the government school at Teller was kept open and Brevig continued his work with the Lutheran mission there.

In 1898, gold prospectors from the Yukon began combing through the hills and streams near Golovin, after hearing reports that gold had been discovered there by members of the Western Union Telegraph crew. In that same year Jafet Lindberg, originally one of the Norwegians hired to be reindeer instructors, and his two partners made a gold discovery that sparked the creation of a new town called Anvil City which was later renamed Nome. It can be no coincidence that in 1900, a terrible disease, usually described as a measles epidemic, broke out in the villages near Nome and Teller. Over half of Teller's Inupiat died in the epidemic, and several Wales people also died.¹⁰⁶ Wales reindeer herder Thomas Sokweena lost his wife and two children in the 1900 epidemic.¹⁰⁷ To care for the orphaned children in Teller, T. L. Brevig built a small orphanage and moved his mission to the north of Teller. This became the village known as Brevig Mission.

Although the main reindeer station had moved to Eaton, the Seward Peninsula still had the largest number of herds and largest amount of deer in Alaska. By 1899 there were reindeer herds in nine Alaska communities stretching from Norton Sound to Barrow, and most of these were centered on the Seward Peninsula. By 1929, the Seward Peninsula was still the most prominent reindeer herding area in Alaska. By then, the number of deer in Alaska had grown to 599,825.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Wolfe, Robert J. "Alaska's Great Sickness: 1900: An Epidemic of Measles and Influenza in a Virgin Soil Population." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 126, no. 2 (1982): 91-121.

¹⁰⁷ Lopp and Smith, 2001, 285.

¹⁰⁸ Estimates provided in Stern, 1980, Eskimos, Reindeer and Land, 102-3.



Figure 25: Detail of a USGS map to accompany the Alaska Territorial Governor's Report of 1929, showing the prevalence of government reindeer herds (squares) on the Seward Peninsula. Lomen Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Reindeer herding was introduced to the Seward Peninsula concurrent with the later years of commercial whaling in the Bering Strait, and many of the major events that affected whalers also impacted the lives of missionaries and herders. One incident that deeply impacted both was the Whaling Disaster of 1898, which prompted the formation of a reindeer relief mission to feed over 100 stranded whalers. Seven herders from the Seward Peninsula took part in this U.S. government-sponsored expedition to drive 438 reindeer from Cape Prince of Wales on the Seward Peninsula to Point Barrow on Alaska's northern coast.

The Overland Relief Expedition to Barrow

In 1897, ice crushed the whaling ships *Orca* and *Jesse H. Freeman* and trapped the *Belvedere* and *Rosario* west of Point Barrow. It similarly trapped the *Newport*, *Fearless*, and *Jeanie* over

100 miles to the east. Almost 300 men were now stranded off the arctic coast near Point Barrow.¹⁰⁹

News that whaleships were trapped off Point Barrow reached San Francisco by November of that year. Several newspapers in San Francisco picked up the story and began to elicit public concern with headlines like, “Whalers in Peril on the Crushing Ice” and “Crews of Whaling Vessels Ice-Bound in the Arctic Have No Hope of Rescue.”¹¹⁰ The news was immediately telegraphed to Washington D.C., where President McKinley’s cabinet met to address it. Without wavering, his administration decided that the situation warranted immediate government aid. By mid-November Treasury Secretary Lyman J. Gage assigned a rescue mission to the Revenue Marine Service.

The expedition was the first reindeer drive of its size and scope to take place in Alaska. It was the first effort to bring reindeer north of Cape Prince of Wales. Herders and reindeer traversed over 500 miles of unfamiliar, unmapped terrain, with little hope of obtaining provisions along the way. The journey took place on the tail-end of the harshest months of winter. Yet the ordeal was successfully accomplished and in a remarkably short span of time. It was an astonishing achievement overall, conducted in the face of multiple unknowns and potential pitfalls. All of the men who joined the expedition returned home safely, having achieved something never considered possible by their kinsmen.

In addition to providing relief for the whalers, the expedition also challenged the Alaska reindeer herding program and its early herders. The rescue effort deprived the Seward Peninsula of most of its reindeer during 1898, at a time when it was beginning to experience profound social

¹⁰⁹ Taliaferro points out that varying historical sources have put the total number of men stranded at Point Barrow between 130 and 150. (Taliaferro, 2006, 226) It’s not clear if these figures account for the crews aboard all ships. They may only consider the men at the refuge station and the crews hunkered down on the *Belvedere* and *Rosario*, west of Point Barrow, not accounting for the crews of the *Jeannie*, *Fearless*, and *Newport*, east of Point Barrow. Ducker estimates the likely total of men aboard all 8 ships was around 275. Ducker, James H. "Reindeer Rescue: The 1898 Reindeer Drive to Barrow." *Alaska History* Spring 2005: 2.

¹¹⁰ Taliaferro, 2006, 197-8.

change through a massive influx of miners to the region. It made people on the Seward Peninsula aware that the U.S. government had varying priorities for the future prospects of reindeer in Alaska and called its promises to provide reindeer for the benefit of Inupiat into question. On the other hand, the awkward timing of this ordeal made the expedition more of a triumph for the Seward Peninsula herders who accomplished it. The personalities, relationships and strengths of these men made the expedition a success and strengthened the reputation of the reindeer program.

Alongside the Inupiaq herders, one other individual was essential to this expedition's success and a crucial contributor to the security of the reindeer program. Tom Lopp, the missionary from Wales, was also instrumental to the success of the Overland Relief Expedition. Through his work with the reindeer program, missionary endeavors, government schools and government expeditions, Tom Lopp provided a foundation for good relationships between Northwest Alaska's Inupiat and the U.S. government, and built a trust relationship which was important to the continued development of reindeer herding on the Seward Peninsula. He became a key figure in the later development of the herding industry. The story of this expedition illustrates the character and conduct that earned Lopp influence over the reindeer program and on several important events in Seward Peninsula history.

Although other long reindeer treks have been made across the Seward Peninsula since the Overland Relief Expedition, this event was an important episode in the history of reindeer herding and was closely tied to the history of social changes taking place in the 1880s on the Seward Peninsula. This event occurred at the closing of the whaling age in the Bering Strait, and just ahead of the explosion of gold mining across the region. Inupiaq reindeer herding, which became such a facet of life on the Seward Peninsula, developed in contrast to other introduced livelihoods, partly as a result of the reindeer expedition. Initially established as an effort to create a stable herding economy for Alaska's "Esquimaux," the herding experiment was proven viable by successes like the relief expedition. After the expedition, members of Congress could not doubt the preparedness of Inupiaq herders to handle reindeer competently, and these herders became well known for their expertise throughout the Seward Peninsula.

On November 7, 1897, the Revenue Cutter *Bear* reached Seattle at the end of its summer cruise, ready for a restful winter, only to be turned around and sent back up to Alaska on November 27th. Tasked with sailing to the Seward Peninsula and launching an overland reindeer drive across Northwest Alaska, Captain Tuttle of the *Bear* doubtfully and wisely predicted, “Everything will depend on where we are stopped by ice, and that is something not to be calculated upon.”¹¹¹ It was no time of year for sailing into the Arctic, as Tuttle well knew. The *Bear* succeeded in sailing close to St. Lawrence Island, but could not reach Norton Sound because of impenetrable “mush ice” throughout those waters. Tuttle had to work the *Bear* south to secure a landing, which he finally accomplished at the tip of Nelson Island in Southwest Alaska. The overland portion of the *Bear’s* expedition began in Tununak, a Yupik village over 500 miles south of the Seward Peninsula.

Direction of the overland portion of the expedition was assigned to the *Bear’s* Lieutenant David Jarvis. The forty-five-year old Jarvis had served in the Arctic for several years, working on the *Bear* under Mike Healy for almost a decade and participating in ferrying reindeer to the Seward Peninsula several times. Under Jarvis’ direction, the Revenue Service assigned two other officers, thirty-nine-year old Samuel J. Call, the *Bear’s* surgeon, who was familiar with villages up and down the western coast, and the adventurous thirty-one-year old Second Lieutenant Ellsworth Bertholf, who had not yet cut his teeth on the Arctic. The three officers rode on dogsleds from Tununak to Saint Michael, obtaining guides and better clothing along the way. At Saint Michael the three split. Jarvis and Call continued up the southern coast of the Seward Peninsula and Bertholf followed a trail roughly 300 miles north from Unalakleet to Kotzebue Sound.

¹¹¹Tuttle, interviewed by the *Post-Intelligencer*, quoted in Taliaferro, 2006, 207.



Figure 26: From left to right: Bertholf, Call and Jarvis, from *Report of the cruise of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Bear and the Overland Expedition*.

The journeys of all three officers deserve their own adventure stories, as each one was uniquely action-packed. However, none of their efforts had any impact on the stranded whalers until they had secured reindeer for their expedition. On January 19th, Jarvis and Call reached the settlement at the mouth of the Sinuk River where Charlie Antisarlook had established his reindeer camp. A village had grown up around the Sinuk River camp and missionaries in the area called this village, north of present-day Nome, “Charlie’s place.” Visiting Antisarlook was the first essential step in Jarvis’ mission. His instructions were to ask Antisarlook, the reindeer program’s most successful reindeer herder, who had received his own herd of deer from the government just 3 months earlier, to loan all of his deer to the government for the benefit of American whalers. Owning over 100 deer, he was the richest private herder in Alaska, but the government was now asking him to loan back all of his hard-earned deer. He had not even enjoyed a full winter with them yet. Antisarlook and his wife Mary were not surprisingly disinclined to lend their deer. They had established a livelihood for themselves and others of their village that depended on

reindeer. Without the deer, their whole village faced poverty and hunger, and they were just then approaching the leanest months of winter.

Samuel Call recorded the comments of Mary Antisarlook, who would later become known as ‘The Reindeer Queen.’ She replied, “Tell Mr. Jarvis we are sorry for the people of Point Barrow, and we want to help them, but we hate to see our deer go, because we are poor and the people in our village are poor, and in the winter when we can not get seals we kill a deer, and this helps us through the hard times. If we let the deer go, what will we do?”¹¹²

Jarvis offered supplies at nearby trading posts and persisted in pleading for their help. In the end, Antisarlook agreed to loan his deer and to accompany Jarvis to visit Tom Lopp, missionary at Wales, who owned the other large herd on the Seward Peninsula.¹¹³ With the addition of Lopp’s deer, the expedition would become viable, and Antisarlook agreed to join on as herder at a salary of \$30 per month through the completion of the reindeer drive.¹¹⁴

¹¹²Samuel J. Call, quoted in Taliaferro, 2006, 235.

¹¹³ That same month, the reindeer station at Teller had been relocated to Unalakleet.

¹¹⁴ Boyd, William L. "Jarvis and the Alaskan Reindeer Caper." *Arctic* 25, no. 2 (1972): 79.



Figure 27: Photo of Charlie Antisarlook, his wife Mary, and their two adopted children. Kathleen Lopp Smith Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska Fairbanks. UAF-2004-84-935.

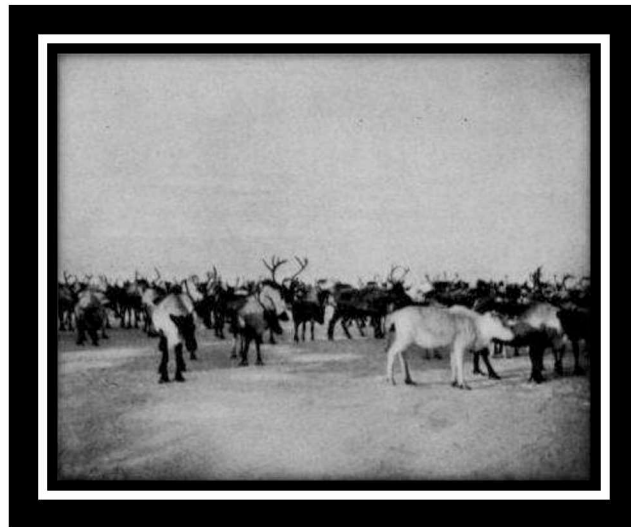


Figure 28: Antisarlook's herd, from *Report of the cruise of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Bear and the Overland Expedition*

On January 24, 1898, the Lopps were surprised by the sight of a tall white man dressed in Native fur clothing at their house. The man was Jarvis, who the couple knew well from his regular visits on the *Bear*. Visits from government officials during winter were unprecedented, indicating that something must be wrong. The trek that Jarvis and Antisarlook had just accomplished had been grueling. Jarvis had injured his shoulder, frozen one of his feet and blistered his face. The trip he asked Lopp to join promised to be over twice as long, probably colder, and would lead into completely unknown territory. Debriefed about the stranded whalers and the *Bear's* assignment, Lopp was asked to loan the mission's deer to the expedition and accompany them to Barrow. It was the second time that winter that Lopp had been asked to surrender the Wales herd for the benefit of white men in Alaska. The first had been a herd dispatched to Unalakleet to supply freight deer for newly arriving miners. Lopp had refused this first request, although it came from Sheldon Jackson himself. He assigned one Wales apprentice, Stanley Keok, to bring some of the Teller deer down the coast, but declined to participate otherwise.¹¹⁵

The Wales herd was owned by the American Missionary Association (AMA), not the government, so these deer were fully in Lopp's custody. However, the AMA had given Jarvis a letter authorizing Lopp to loan the deer, if Lopp considered it in the interests of the Wales congregation. The decision was not an easy one, as the entire reindeer program in Wales relied upon the mission's herd of 292 animals, and the herd provided a backup for the village when other foods were scarce. In addition to forfeiting all of the mission's deer, Jarvis asked Lopp to organize and conduct the reindeer drive. Jarvis and Call had no herding experience, and Lopp was the only available reindeer program superintendent on the peninsula. Out of the blue, he was being called upon to organize a government effort he had only just learned of and to supervise the transport of several hundred deer to Barrow, where he had never been, and no cross-country route was known to exist. None of the people then living in Wales had ever traveled to Barrow.

Joining the expedition in this role meant assuming great responsibility. Yet, Ellen wrote to her family that Lopp made up his mind quickly. "There was no question at all whether Tom had to

¹¹⁵ Taliaferro, 2006, 167-171.

go or not.”¹¹⁶ His absence meant that Ellen would be alone, with no other English-speaking adults nearby and four young children to care for through the remainder of winter and spring. She would have sole responsibility for feeding her family without a husband to hunt for food and with sole authority over school and mission concerns, including medical problems in the village. She and Tom would have no reliable way to contact each other in the case of emergencies or major events in the family. She was also aware that Tom was departing on a dangerous journey from which he might never return. The odds of a successful expedition were far lower than the likelihood of disasters. Yet, “believing it to be his duty,”¹¹⁷ Ellen urged Tom to go. Lopp, despite his dislike for whalers, also appreciated the humanitarian merits of the mission. He wrote in an article the following year, “You can imagine at what cost this decision was made— separation of family . . . loss of deer, and breaking our plans for this year and next. But it was an ‘errand of mercy,’ and we were glad to have an opportunity to show these people that our government cared . . . and would go to great expense to save a few in distress.”¹¹⁸

The sacrifice the Lopps made was similar to that of the Antisarlooks, except that Lopp now also had to lead the expedition to a place he’d never been before.

¹¹⁶ U.S Revenue-Cutter Service. *Report of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Bear and the Overland Expedition for the Relief of the Whalers in the Arctic Ocean from November 27, 1897* Washington: GPO, 1899, 56.

¹¹⁷ Lt. Jarvis in *Report of the Cruise of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Bear*, 1899, 56.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Taliaferro, 2006, 240.



Figure 29: Photo of Tom Lopp, from *Report of the Cruise of the Bear and the Overland Expedition*.

The next morning, Lopp agreed to join the expedition. Lopp's participation may have been central to the involvement of all Inupiaq members of the reindeer drive, Antisarlook included, as Lopp had established strong relationships with these men and a good reputation, the importance of which should not be underestimated. Lopp later divulged that Antisarlook would probably not have continued on the expedition had Lopp not organized the trip. Antisarlook had no close relationship with Jarvis and would not likely have risked his life with any other white man. The benefits and compensation for joining the expedition were also not attractive. To participate in the expedition Lopp was paid \$150 per month, Antisarlook was paid \$30 per month, and his apprentices were each paid \$1 per day, the pay not likely to arrive until later in the year when ships could return to that part of the world.¹¹⁹ Antisarlook and his wife were given credit for a

¹¹⁹ Mentioned in Taliaferro, 2006, 241, and in Lopp, William Thomas. *The Great Reindeer Drive* : [a Reprint of the Diary Kept by / William Thomas Lopp ; Compiled by Katharine and Don Johnson]. Rare Books Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Archives, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks. Entry dated February 14, 1898.

winter's worth of supplies at trading posts in Port Clarence and Golovin, which they would have to retrieve themselves. As the expedition got underway, and challenges intensified, Lopp used his authority to raise the men's pay. But the wages were unequal to the task before them, regardless. Jarvis estimated that the distance between Cape Prince of Wales and Barrow was at least 700 miles. None of the men or deer had ever made such a long trip overland. Even if the expedition succeeded, the pay was likely to be less substantial than the loss of deer and livelihood to these men.

To secure Antisarlook and Lopp's participation, Jarvis promised that the deer loaned for the expedition would be repaid. The combined herds at the start of the reindeer drive included 438 deer.¹²⁰ Antisarlook owned 133 of the deer, while 292 belonged to the Wales Mission, and some of these were already obligated to Lopp's herding apprentices when they completed their training. Jarvis signed contracts stating that the government would replace the number loaned plus an anticipated increase of 80 deer to Antisarlook (213 total deer), and an anticipated increase of 140 deer to the Wales mission (432 total). If these deer were not delivered by the following summer, the contracts stated that an additional increase would be added to compensate for the delay.¹²¹

In addition to the mission's and Antisarlook's deer, five deer were owned by herders who worked for Antisarlook. Jarvis purchased these deer outright for \$15 each.¹²² Another nine deer were owned by an unidentified herder in Wales.¹²³ He would not loan the deer, but sold them to Jarvis for supply credit at Brevig Mission and from the *Bear* when it next arrived at Wales. The

¹²⁰ One deer appears unaccounted for, but expedition records make no mention of this. A total of 441 deer were procured for the expedition, two died before the herds left Wales, and the whereabouts of the 439th deer remains unknown.

¹²¹ Taliaferro, 2006, 241.

¹²² *Report of the Cruise of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Bear*, 1899, 51.

¹²³ *Ibid*, 56.

apprentice Tautuk, who came from Teller to join the expedition, also brought two of his own sled deer, which he either loaned or sold to the expedition.¹²⁴



Figure 30: “Tautook and Reindeer” from Jackson, 1904, *Report on the Introduction of Domestic Reindeer into Alaska, 1903.*

Lopp enlisted the help of six Inupiaq herding apprentices to staff the expedition. The six young men were Tautuk, Ituk, George Ootenna,¹²⁵ James Keok, Thomas Sokweena,¹²⁶ and Stanley Kivyearzruk,¹²⁷ most of whom came from Wales. Tautuk was an accomplished herder at the Teller station, noted in one of Jackson’s annual reports as successfully lassoing the most deer

¹²⁴ Lopp, William Thomas. "Eskimo Boys on Drive of 1898", William Thomas Lopp Papers, 1890-1939, University of Oregon, Eugene.

¹²⁵ Another and possibly more accurate spelling is Otenna. Simon, 1998, 111.

¹²⁶ Other and possibly more accurate spellings include Sokenna, Sokweana, and Sokwena. Simon, 1998, 111.

¹²⁷ Another and probably more accurate spelling is Kawerak. Simon, 1998, 111.

that year.¹²⁸ He was four years into his apprenticeship program. Ituk, 19-years-old at the time, had been an apprentice for only one year. The rest of Lopp's apprentices had adopted Christian first names and worked under his supervision for a few years. Lopp had known Sokweena the longest, had worked with him at the school and traveled with him before the herd was started in Wales. Stanley Kivyearzruk was, according to Lopp, "a strong stocky boy . . . of much determination and will power." He described George Ootenna as "industrious, honest." James Keok was "a polite boy but never a yes, yes one. He was uncomplaining and always willing to do more than his share, and never shirked a difficult task as a deerman . . . He was a boy of unusual good judgment & was thrifty without being stingy . . . He was the most likeable human being . . . that I have ever known."¹²⁹ Keok had recently participated in the reindeer drive to Unalakleet and returned to help the relief expedition.

¹²⁸ Jackson, Sheldon. *Report on Introduction of Domestic Reindeer into Alaska, 1896, 1897.*

¹²⁹ Lopp, William Thomas. "Eskimo Boys on Drive of 1898", William Thomas Lopp Papers, 1890-1939, University of Oregon, Eugene.. Also quoted in Taliaferro, 2006, 245.



Figure 31: Photo of James Keok as a young man. Kathleen Lopp Smith Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska Fairbanks. UAF-2004-84-227.

Sokweena, Kivyearzruk, Ootenna, Keok, and Ituk were five of Lopp’s six apprentices at the time. The sixth, Netaxite¹³⁰ agreed to stay behind to assist Ellen Lopp at the station while the others were away. As much as he had taught these five skills in English and reindeer herding, Lopp had learned just as much from them. These young men had taught Lopp the local geography and skills in subsistence hunting. They were known to be amicable young men, with a “mutual confidence, respect and faith between them.”¹³¹ Lopp had nicknamed his five Wales apprentices “the Quints” and said of them, “They were five jolly jokers, but hard and willing

¹³⁰ Also possibly spelled Netuxite. Simon, 1998, 111.

¹³¹ Lopp, William Thomas. “Important Reindeer Drives in Alaska, 1894-1935” May 26, 1936, William Thomas Lopp Papers, 1890-1939, University of Oregon, Eugene.

workers.”¹³² Lopp recruited these six young men because of his confidence in their handling and trekking skills. They were accustomed to moving reindeer herds far out into the country, and living out on the land with them for long periods of time.

The only gear they brought with them consisted of two tents, sleeping bags made of reindeer hides, two sheet-metal stoves, a few cooking pots, spare mittens, socks, boots, and boot soles. They also brought lassoes and harnesses for training sled deer along the trip. Their foods were bread, flour, butter, lard, dried fruit, sugar, tea, coffee, cocoa, cans of condensed milk, and cans of maple syrup.¹³³ If they ran out of food along the trip, they had food on the hoof with them and could kill one of the weaker deer. They brought only a little moss for the deer, planning to find grazing lands along the route. At the start of their expedition they had amassed eighteen sleds to carry their supplies. There were not yet eighteen trained sled deer, but the deer they harnessed to the sleds would have to learn fast.

¹³² Quoted in Taliaferro, 2006, 246.

¹³³ Lopp, Great Reindeer Drive, 1898.



Figure 32: Stanley Kivyearzruk wearing a labret. Kathleen Lopp Smith Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska Fairbanks. UAF-2004-84-1155.



Figure 33: Thomas Sokweena and his wife Elubwok. Kathleen Lopp Smith Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska Fairbanks. UAF-2004-84-1035.

Their first challenge was to cross the northwest coast of the Seward Peninsula. On February 3, 1898, around noon, the men and their combined herds—438 reindeer— started the journey north. The weather was a very favorable 20 degrees above Fahrenheit.

The only extensive reindeer drives accomplished by this point were Lopp's transfer of the mission herd from Teller to Wales, Antisarlook's move of his herd from Teller to Sinuk, and the drive of deer from Teller to Unalakleet, which Keok had participated in. The first two had only covered around 100 miles and involved around 100 deer. The men used these experiences to coordinate their drive to Point Barrow. Jarvis and Call had no experience with driving herd animals so the reindeer drive was primarily managed by Lopp.

Among the 438 deer, eighteen were chosen to pull the expedition's sleds. Lopp and three other herders rode four of the sleds and moved along the edges of the herd, spurring them on. Three dogs (one a small Sami herding dog belonging to Tautuk) ran on either side of the herd, keeping the deer on track. The other four herders were sent ahead and tasked to keep the supply trains under control. The supply trains were made up of the remaining fourteen sled deer. Two trains had five deer in them and the third train had only four. Each train started with a lead deer and the less-well-trained deer were each tied behind the sled of the deer in front of them. Jarvis and Call rode in the backs of these sleds.¹³⁴

The first day the party moved only 7 miles northwest before they pitched camp. The crew had risen early but harnessing the deer took a long time, and the deer seemed unimpressed by any sense of something new or urgent about their situation. They moved in fits and spurts, distractedly grazing, and stopping to rest constantly. It took the group three days to cover 28 miles and reach the Nuluk River. While camping there (probably at the Tuvigtugvik reindeer herding site), a blizzard blew in and temperatures dropped to 10 degrees below zero. The herders and deer remained at their camp to wait out the blizzard and discuss the progress they were making.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Taliaferro, 2006, 243.

¹³⁵ Taliaferro, 2006, 247.

Their goal was to reach Point Barrow before the roughly 300 men who had been stranded in September starved or died from scurvy. Having set out in early February, they also wanted to reach Barrow before the spring calving season, when all the pregnant cows in their herd would give birth. Not only would the birthing halt the expedition for a considerable period of time, but the addition of fawns would substantially slow their progress. They were all eager to get their deer up to Barrow within the next three months. At this part of their journey the men began to make critical revisions to aspects of the plan that were slowing them down. The cuttermen Jarvis and Call decided to part with the reindeer team and move ahead on dog sleds. Mushing up the coast, they could inform villagers of the approaching expedition, and ask them to tie up their dogs and not shoot the deer, which would have appeared to be an approaching herd of caribou. This change would benefit the reindeer drive and relieve them of some of the weight packed into the eighteen sleds. This relieved the herders of three sled loads of gear. The wooden sleds could be burned for firewood, which now became very scarce.



Figure 34: “Deer train showing sleds and harness” from *Report of the Cruise of the Bear and the Overland Expedition*.

The herders left the Nuluk River camp on February 8th. Temperatures plunged to 30 degrees below zero as they fought their way toward Shishmaref Inlet, which was protected by the surrounding barrier islands and the tundra lowlands. Lopp decided to drive the reindeer across the ice of the inlet, across which the deer made no attempts to take breaks and moved at a steady trot. Compared to their rough time moving deer up and down steep valleys, the trip along the coast seemed a breeze. This prompted Lopp to revise their route so that they moved predominantly along the coast for the rest of their journey across the Seward Peninsula. On the ice the deer spent the entire day running, resting and feeding only in the evenings, when they were brought back to shore. Moving this way, the group forged ahead. Neither men nor deer had much rest over the next 5 days, averaging 20 miles per day. The herders reached Cape Espenberg at the northern tip of the Seward Peninsula on February 13.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Ducker, 2005, 10.

From Cape Espenberg the herders could follow the coastline of Kotzebue Sound going around and up to Point Hope as planned, or attempt to cross the ice within the sound from shore to shore. The former option required about 200 miles of travel, which the herders could have accomplished in 7-10 days if the deer kept up their current pace. The latter route required around 40 miles of ice to cross, which the herders estimated they could complete in 1-2 days. Jarvis and Call had departed across the sound on February 12. Lopp had crossed the sound this way five years before when he and Ellen had driven a dogsled to Point Hope. But crossing the ice with a large herd of deer was a different matter. After a brief reconnaissance of the rough hills and gorges along that route, Lopp had reservations about crossing the sound. Although temperatures had been cold, the ice out in the sound was subject to the whims of winds and sea currents, and a recent wind from the southwest gave Lopp reason to suspect that the ice in the sound would be rough. The ice had in fact been smashed, stretched and compressed into giant ridges, uplifted boulders and uneven layers toward the far end of the sound. Lopp could see the challenges but did not wish to underestimate his men. Their skills as sea mammal hunters in winter and spring gave his herders and the nearby villagers superior experience in dealing with the vagaries of sea ice.¹³⁷

Among the Inupiaq herders and the villagers at Cape Espenberg there was consensus that a good route across Kotzebue Sound could be found. The herders were concerned that the deer were now very tired and the females were already starting to slow from the weight of their unborn calves. They could not keep up such a fast pace and they might not make it to Barrow before the births unless they could somehow speed their progress. The herders unanimously opted for the expedited route across the sound and Lopp acquiesced, promising a bonus to all herders should they reach the whalers before the calves arrived. He hired two Inupiat from Cape Espenberg to accompany them on dog sleds, working as guides and carrying moss for their deer. The expedition continued on February 15 with fourteen reindeer sleds and two dog sleds. It was 34 degrees below zero, with a light wind from the north that intensified the cold but made the herders more confident that they would find solid ice across the sound.

¹³⁷ Taliaferro, 2006, 249-250; Ducker, 2005, 10.

Prodded by the herders to move northeast, the reindeer stepped reluctantly off the shorefast ice of Cape Espenberg onto the uneven drift ice of the sound. They moved forward, zigzagging to avoid ridges of ice and aiming for the mountains on the northern shore. They ran throughout the day and attempted to travel through the night, but the jagged ice soon wore out their sleds, their sled deer and even the men's own legs. Although out in the middle of the sound, they broke camp at around eleven that night. They tied their sled deer to boulders of ice, fed them moss, and pitched their tents, confident that rising early, they would be on the northern shore sometime the next morning, and that their herds could graze freely there within 24 hours. Sleeping only 4 hours, they roused themselves ready to round up the herd and push onward. The men found deer tracks heading north and knew immediately that the deer had strayed. They did not realize until daylight that the deer had actually gone south, retreating part of the 30 miles that they had just conquered on the previous day. Thinking that the deer were only a few miles away, four of the herders—Tautuk, Ootenna, Keok and Kivyearzruk—sped off on sled deer to capture them, anticipating a quick return. Lopp, Antisarlook, Ituk, Sokweena and the two Cape Espenberg guides continued north with the other sled deer and all of the supplies.

Lopp's party found the route north to be their toughest yet. The sled deer hauling the supplies were exhausted from pulling heavy loads, and four deer that could not keep up, including Lopp's favorite sled deer, Moses, were left behind. This group struggled slowly over the ice ridges and seemed to make no progress toward the mountains. When they gained a vantage point they looked back and saw no trace of their companions who had left without taking any food. The herders fed the sled deer the rest of the moss and left a supply sled with food and wood back on the ice, hoping the other herders would find it. By nightfall, they pitched another camp, no longer confident that they would reach the northern shore before their sled deer wore out. Not knowing the fate of Lopp's four best herders or the overall herd that was supposed to feed almost 300 starving miners, they prepared their camp in a thick gloom. "We were all glum. There was not the

usual joking and hilarity.” Lopp wrote. “We sat around our grub box to eat our supper with long faces.”¹³⁸ While tensely eating, they began to hear the sounds of deer hooves in the distance.

Tautuk, Ootenna, Keok and Kivyearzruk and the whole herd were not far behind. “We rushed out to greet them and there was great rejoicing,”¹³⁹ Lopp recalled. To their relief, all four herders were safe, and the story of their day even more astounding than their friends had imagined. The four had sped off, hoping to intercept the herd in less than an hour, and instead found them nearly thirty miles away, about to cross back over to Cape Espenberg. The herders sped forward to surround them before they could reach the edge of the ice. Then with no food and the knowledge that their camp was now ever farther north than they had travelled the previous day, the herders turned the deer around and drove them aggressively back across the ice. They kept up that pace, pushing and spurring the deer onward until they reached Lopp’s party’s camp, forcing the deer to run not just the same distance that they had just covered twice, but also across the trail that Lopp’s party had spent all day carving out to the north. Now all the deer were overly tired, nearly injured, dehydrated, hungry, and without any food or place to rest. More dangerous than their hunger was their thirst. The snow on the sound was salty, making them thirstier when they tried to eat it.¹⁴⁰ Lopp and the herders agreed that they must get the deer to the northern shore that night. They unharnessed all of the sled deer, parked their supply sleds on the ice and took just the two dogsleds that carried their tents and a small store of food, leaving the remaining supplies to be retrieved later. Already weary, the deer, men and dogs set off on foot (and hoof) across the remaining span of ice.

After a hard day with no sleep, the ridges of ice ahead of them brought further struggle. A sled broke and had to be repaired. Herders took turns riding atop the dog sleds for quick naps. By daybreak they had passed through most of the rough terrain, and saw a black streak ahead which

¹³⁸ Information from Lopp, William Thomas. *The Great Reindeer Drive* : [a Reprint of the Diary Kept by / William Thomas Lopp ; Compiled by Katharine and Don Johnson]. Rare Books Collection., Alaska and Polar Regions Archives, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks. Fairbanks.

¹³⁹ Information from Lopp, *Great Reindeer Drive*, Entry dated February 16, 1898.

¹⁴⁰ Taliaferro, 2006, 253.

they hoped might be land. Reaching it, they found it was a lead of open water. The lead spanned six to forty inches in width, which the men could cross without trouble, but which caused the deer to become anxious and to form a nervous crowd at the edge of the ice. The weight of roughly 400 deer crouching near the edge of the ice suddenly caused a large piece of it to capsize and plunged half of the herd straight into the icy waters of Kotzebue Sound. The same deer that had been through so much now astonished Lopp with their ability to survive this seemingly devastating disaster. For the deer, the accident seemed little more than a rude shock. With instinctual skill, they swam briskly to the northern shore, hooked their front hooves on the ice, and pushed themselves out of the water. Then they shook vigorously and trotted off, showing no visible signs of trauma, cold or injury. The deer now had at least one reason for relief; they were off the shifting ice of the sound and close to solid ground.

The expedition crossed quickly now to land at the top of Kotzebue Sound. They were all much the worse for wear, but not drastically reduced in numbers, and still ahead of schedule. Less than a few miles away they reached the village of Aneyok,¹⁴¹ where they enlisted the help of villagers to mush across the sound and retrieve their abandoned sleds.

While the praises of deer as northern pack animals were being sung by all advocates of the Reindeer Service, Lopp and his herding partners found that freighting over rough terrain was much easier using dogs. The ridges of ice on the sound were different from the smooth ice across Shishmaref Inlet, and the sled-deer had proven unable to pull in those conditions. The herders rested and fed their deer near Aneyok for four days. While there, Lopp took a dog team southeast to Cape Blossom to meet Bertholf, whom Jarvis had sent there from Norton Sound back in November.

¹⁴¹ Aneyok was 60 miles south of the Kivalina River. Ducker, 2005, 13. USGS maps show an abandoned site named Aniyak. Donald Orth's listing for "Aneyok" in the *Dictionary of Alaska Place Names* lists a population of 25 in the 1880 census. Orth, Donald J. *Dictionary of Alaska Place Names*. Second ed. Washington: GPO, 1971.

Bertholf had just completed a small reindeer drive of his own. With a reindeer herder from Norton Sound, Bertholf had transported sled deer and supplies across the eastern neck of the Seward Peninsula, and had reportedly had a much easier time of it. Lopp was pleased to find that Bertholf had brought a large supply of food for the expedition, and was delighted to purchase seven rested sled deer to replace his own.

During the herders' time at Aneyok, they decided they could make better progress with fewer men and supplies, so here Lopp released Keok, Sokweena, Ituk and the two dogsled drivers from Cape Espenberg to return home. The party, now consisting of Lopp, Antisarlook, Ootenna, Tautuk, Kiveyearzruk, Bertholf and two guides from Aneyok left on February 21, heading for the Kivalina River. After pausing for a snowstorm, they reached a spot four miles up the Kivalina River on February 27. Here they encountered a Seward Peninsula man named Avaluk, who happened to be living nearby and agreed to take them down to the village at the mouth of the Kivalina. Bertholf departed at this point for Point Hope to meet up with Jarvis and Call. Instead it was Lopp's party who met Jarvis, finding him camped at the mouth of the Kivalina River. Since they had last met, Jarvis had reached as far north as the Liebes & Company fur trading post at Jabbertown, near Point Hope. There he had learned from a visiting Barrow trader that the whalers faced no immediate threat of starvation. The Inupiat near Point Barrow had conducted a major hunting effort that winter and encountered an unusually large herd of caribou. They were also relying on Cape Smyth trader Charles Brower's storehouse of goods, with enough flour, tea and sugar to last them through May. The whalers' worst problems were cold and unsanitary lodgings.¹⁴²

This news greatly reduced the expedition members' fear for the lives of the whalers they sought to reach. Nevertheless there was little question of driving the deer back to the Seward Peninsula or postponing the reindeer drive. The cows in the herd were crucially close to their calving season, so a sense of urgency still prevailed. Jarvis renewed his instructions to push the deer onward to Point Barrow.

¹⁴² Ducker, 2005, 16.

For the remainder of their journey Lopp, Antisarlook the three other herders—Tautuk, Ootenna, and Kivyearzruk—the Seward Peninsula man Avaluk and a Kivalina man named Omruk cut a course through the lower western end of the Brooks Mountain Range. They left Kivalina on March 3. Jarvis, Call and Bertholf took a separate route along the coast hoping to warn villagers about the approaching herd. Avaluk set their course through the mountains until he fell ill, after which Omruk, although not familiar with these mountains, led the way, guiding them to the mouth of the Pitmegea River by March 7th. From the Pitmegea it was a straight shot along the northern coast to Barrow. Jarvis's party was now behind them, and would not catch up until March 23. This part of their journey was a constant battle with wind, cold weather, and storms, as several blizzards socked them in for days. But other than the threats of reindeer predation by villagers and wolves, this part of the trip was not treacherous. The herders reached Point Barrow at the end of March, welcomed by a large crowd of Inupiat, the local missionaries and traders, and nearly 100 American whalers.¹⁴³

Fate of the Reindeer

The herd, which was kept near Singaruak Creek to graze, drew the interest of several people at Point Barrow. The cows began giving birth on April 12, and continued through mid-June, adding some 254 animals to the herd, of which 190 survived. Some members of the herd were slaughtered to increase the whalers' rations and were shared with the Inupiat at Point Barrow, who had abstained from their regular caribou meals to help feed the whalers. Jarvis estimated the total slaughter at 12,481 pounds. Rapidly, the prospect of a reindeer herd for the Inupiat near Point Barrow became a topic of interest. Sheldon Jackson favored forming a Bureau of Education herd at Barrow, and there was no easier way than by using these deer. Jarvis reported that several Inupiat asked him to let their sons learn the new trade. Two herders, George Ootenna and Charlie Antisarlook, agreed to stay behind at Barrow to look after the herd and teach the new apprentices until the *Bear* arrived at the end of the summer. Four "boys" were taken on as apprentices; their names not recorded in expedition records.

¹⁴³ Ducker, 2005, 15.

The apprenticeships at Barrow were organized very differently than the ones at Teller and Wales. The first four Barrow apprentices earned their own deer within a year and a half, and were taught reindeer skills primarily in Inupiaq. Their participation was not combined with a compulsory American education. The supervisor of the deer was Barrow's missionary Rev. Richmond Marsh. Barrow, Wainwright and other villages along the North Slope acquired their own reindeer herds over the next 50 years thanks to the men of the reindeer expedition, particularly Ootenna and Antisarlook, who first introduced the practice of herding.



Figure 35: “Killing deer for the whalers at Point Barrow,” from *Report of the cruise of the Bear and the Overland Expedition*.

Return Voyage

After reaching Point Barrow, Lopp and the herders recuperated from the journey, as well as met many new people. Lopp left the herd to visit the whalers and villagers in the area, although his Wales' accent made it hard to communicate with the Point Barrow Inupiat. He could not stay long at Barrow while eager to complete the trip, reach home and know the status of his wife and children. While Lopp visited Barrow, most of the herders remained with the herd at a distance. Lopp noted that on April 2, Kivyearzruk and Tautuk were relieved from the herd to visit with people, and that they became embarrassed by some of the newly adopted Christian customs of the Point Barrow Inupiat, such as a new custom of very enthusiastically shaking hands. Their journey half over, the men were soon ready to head home.

While Ootenna and Antisarlook stayed to teach herding, Lopp, Tautuk, Kivyearzruk, and Omruk headed back to Wales on April 4. On their return trip they traveled exclusively by dog team, taking only two sleds. They made good time but took a longer route, tracing the coast the whole way down to Point Hope. Some days they made 30 to 40 miles of progress, traveling mostly at night to rest their eyes from the sun, which by this time of year, was already more present than absent. They arrived at Cooper's Whaling Station near Point Hope on April 18 with very sore eyes. Glare of the sun reflected off the snow can commonly cause snow-blindness, an extremely painful affliction, and the reason why coastal Inupiat often wore wooden goggles. The men had not brought any goggles and suffered terribly from the consequences. Moving down the coast the men visited several captains' whaling stations, then reunited with Bertholf at Point Hope. Bertholf had been busy performing the duties of a Revenue Cutter officer since the expedition had left him. He destroyed several whiskey stills and investigated reports of murders in the area, including one of a murder committed by Avaluk, which was possibly his reason for living away from the Seward Peninsula.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Taliaferro, 2006, 305.

Another shock to the party came when they met Keok and Ituk at Point Hope. Since Lopp had dismissed them two months earlier, these two herders had returned home. Reportedly, Keok, Ituk and Sokweena had heard rumors that a small reindeer herd had been spotted in nearby hills. These were lost from the main herd during a blizzard on February 22. Sokweena turned homeward with the two Cape Espenberg guides, but Keok and Ituk had traveled to the hills and recovered thirty-four deer, driving them to Point Hope to await Lopp's return. Keok had become ill with diarrhea on this trip and Ituk had accidentally asked for medicine for constipation for him, unintentionally prolonging Keok's suffering.¹⁴⁵ Lopp noted that Keok looked thin. He would need to get him home soon.

The expedition left Ituk to tend this small herd at Point Hope while the rest continued homeward. Before reaching Aneyok, however, both Lopp and Kivyearzruk went completely snowblind. Arriving at Aneyok, they found a friend and stayed inside this man's sod house for several days with icewater rags over their eyes, trying to numb the pain. On April 27, Lopp made a note in his diary of "indescribable pain." On April 28, he wrote, "Pain in eyes and head almost unbearable." The expedition was at a standstill while they tried to regain their sight. Meanwhile the sod house, which was poorly ventilated, had a leaky stovepipe and a sick, wheezy dog, which made it hard for them to rest and heal. On April 29, a day which started for Lopp with "could not open my eyes," the men returned to their sleds, and—helped by several Aneyok people—continued down to the shore of Kotzebue Sound. Part of their reason for hurrying on to Aneyok had been their concern for the conditions of the ice on Kotzebue Sound. Warm southwest winds meant that melting had taken place. Luckily the wind had pushed the Kotzebue Sound ice close to the shore by the time they arrived off Cape Krusenstern on the evening of April 29.

Still sorely snow-blind, Lopp hired an Aneyok man named Owkneeruk to help them across. They moved onto the sound at 5pm on April 29. In several places the ice was thin, bowing under their weight, and they found it safer riding on the sleds than crossing the ice on foot. After crossing a particularly hazardous "long smooth patch of new ice . . . it cracks and waves up and down as we travel over it," Lopp wrote that they kept to the rougher ice. Having led them to a

¹⁴⁵ Information from Lopp's Expedition Journal, "The Great Reindeer Drive," entry dated April 20, 1898.

familiar spot, Owkneeruk turned back toward Aneyok. The trip across the sound took two days, with the men being unsure of the correct route. When they reached the shore on May 1, instead of finding themselves at Cape Espenberg ahead of them they sighted a small village called “Kivuklouk,” about 25 miles southwest of the Cape. It was a good discovery, Lopp wrote, as, “we were 25 miles closer to home!” But Keok, who wasn’t feeling well, went lame, and with Kivyearzruk and Lopp still tormented by their eyes, they were forced to pitch camp and wait, a mile north of the village, eating cocoa, biscuits and dried fish. The next day they ate rice, fish, soup and flapjacks. They were still too tired and ill to forge ahead. Stoically Lopp wrote in his diary, “James has a cold.” To be back on the Seward Peninsula was a relief but the men were in a severely weakened state. They were now to face one last threat, one which almost cost them the success of their whole journey. Like so many disasters, it occurred only a short distance away from home.

On passing through Kivuklouk two days after crossing the sound, the group was approached by a man who claimed one of their dogs was one he had lent Jarvis on the condition that the dog would be returned to him. Lopp told him they could not return the dog then as they needed it to complete their journey. “He was rather persistent,” wrote Lopp, mentioning that the man followed them out of Kivuklouk to their camp that evening. They invited him to stay in their camp and share their supper, but still refused to give him the dog. Lopp told him he could retrieve the dog in Wales, if he accompanied them there, and gave him a few cans of gunpowder for the inconvenience. The next morning the man watched them pack their sleds without protest, but when they set off, he pretended to leave in the opposite direction, then stopped, held up his gun and aimed it at Lopp. He moved a few yards off to the side and made the same motion. Lopp had no idea this was taking place, and was told about it afterwards by the herders, who believed that had they not placed themselves between Lopp and the man, the man would surely have tried to shoot Lopp. So close to their final destination, Lopp shrugged off the incident, but it could have easily deprived him of the satisfaction of returning home alive. Had he been without the Inupiaq herders, or not had such good relationships with them, he might not have survived the expedition.

Escaping this last brush with disaster, the men had a rapid trip home, although for the last portion of their trek, the trails were a wet and dirty mess. Over the next couple days of snowshoeing and slogging, the men and dogs reached Wales on the morning of May 5, almost 32 days since leaving Point Barrow and 91 days since the start of their voyage. Lopp noted in his diary that their homecoming was attended with, “much excitement and rejoicing.”¹⁴⁶ Not a single man was lost or injured during the expedition, and their task to bring the deer to Barrow and return safely had been an unqualified success.

Impacts of the Expedition for Herders

Their success was not, however, a resounding victory. Thanks to more dramatic events that had taken place since the start of the expedition, such as the start of the Spanish American War, the Overland Relief Expedition was doomed to an obscure destiny. Though they had helped improve the whalers’ health and standard of living, they had not pulled them from the brink of starvation, which also made their achievements seem less heroic. And a concurrent reindeer expedition that the government had sponsored, to import 500 deer and 50 Scandinavian Sami families to Alaska to help hungry miners on the Yukon had failed dramatically, making the government loath to draw attention to its reindeer relief efforts. Their reception at home was great, but little thanks was paid to these reindeer men nationally from either the government or the whalers whose misery they had alleviated.

Captain Tuttle publically recommended the government reward Lopp and Antisarlook for their sacrifices to the expedition, but in subsequent years the government only officially recognized Jarvis, Call and Bertholf, their own official employees, as expedition heroes, awarding them congressional medals. The Inupiaq men from the expedition went unrecognized in the national press, and worse, the government failed to replace the deer on the timetable of Jarvis’ contracts. When the men returned home, they were without any deer, and all along the Seward Peninsula there was a shortage of fish and marine mammals during the following winter. Supplies to pay the

¹⁴⁶ Lopp, Great Reindeer Drive, 1898. Entry dated May 5, 1898.

men for their service took a long time to reach them, and were quickly used up in feeding the hungry people of their villages.

After finishing its trip to Barrow and retrieving the stranded whalers, the *Bear* made a stop at Wales on August 23rd, 1898, to drop off Ootenna and Ituk. Lopp came on board carrying Jarvis' contract with him.

The contract had promised 432 deer to be repaid to the Wales herd. That summer two Sami herders had driven 160 deer to them from Port Clarence. "Four died on the way from Port Clarence, about ten are so sick they are likely to die, and all of the rest that are not fawns are so old or bad that they are not worth much . . . Faith in the government won't procure deer,"¹⁴⁷ wrote Ellen to her family. Lopp was not about to let the government neglect their promises to the herders of the Seward Peninsula. He made arrangements with Captain Tuttle to retrieve deer from Point Hope and Point Barrow, if necessary. For the following year, Wales was short on deer.

The coming winter proved especially hard for Wales people, with an unusually small seal and walrus harvest. They subsisted instead on flour, molasses and tea. It was a hard year for health as well. With the onset of the Nome gold rush, over 20,000 westerners had arrived in the Nome area, bringing western diseases with them. In July, after Tom Lopp's return, all of the Lopp's fell ill and at least eighteen Wales people died that summer of an epidemic of a sickness described by Ellen Lopp as "similar to pleurisy."¹⁴⁸ The year 1900 brought epidemics of measles and influenza, which all the herders managed to survive except two of Sokweena's children. In 1900, the Wales herd was finally restored to a figure of about 700 animals, likely a result of Lopp's persistence in seeking repayment of their deer.

Antisarlook returned home to no herd. The government began replacing his deer in December of 1899, eighteen months later than his contract had stated, and had fully replaced his deer the

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in Taliaferro, 2006, 325 and Lopp and Smith, 2001, 199.

¹⁴⁸ Ellen Lopp's letter dated August 21, 1989; Lopp and Smith, 2001, 198.

next summer, but Antisarlook died a month later of pneumonia. His widow, Mary, took ownership of the herd, which now numbered more than 328 deer. “Reindeer Mary,” “Sinrock Mary,” or “The Reindeer Queen,” as she became known, became an institution of the reindeer herding industry in Alaska. The legacy of Antisarlook’s achievements earned her a place of renown among Seward Peninsula people, of which she was not one, being born to Russian and Siberian Yupik parents. Trouble with Nome miners stealing her deer later led Mary to move her herd to Unalakleet.

The other herders gained prominence on the Seward Peninsula for their achievements and eventually became leaders in their communities. Sokweena and his wife Elubwuk worked as missionary teachers at a school with sixteen pupils in a little village called Mitletok,¹⁴⁹ 20 miles north of Wales. In 1900, Elubwuk and their two children died. In the winter of 1904 Sokweena moved to Shishmaref, where he established a herd, and later to Buckland to continue herding there.¹⁵⁰

The year following the expedition, Tautuk graduated from the apprenticeship program and started a joint herd with two other herders of 186 deer.¹⁵¹ Five years after the expedition, he privately owned over 100 deer. In the 1910s, Reindeer Supervisor Walter Shields wrote of him, “When the paternal supervision at present exercised by the Government over the Eskimos is given up, it will be a few like Tautuk who will assume the burden of leadership of his own people.”¹⁵² Tautuk was well respected by the Sami herders who later emigrated to Alaska, who proclaimed of him “He is like a Laplander!”¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Alternate name, “Miisiktaavik” or “Miifiktaavik” in Inupiaq. Charles Lucier notes dated January 17, 1976, in Lucier, Charles V. Field Notes, Cape Prince of Wales Area, Charles V. Lucier Collection, Consortium Library University of Alaska, Anchorage, Box 1, Folder 22.

¹⁵⁰ Simon, 1998, 111; Taliaferro, 2006, 336; and Ducker, 2005, 20.

¹⁵¹ His two partners listed in Jackson’s 1989 report (p9-10, 12) were Sekeoglock and Wocksock. Ellanna and Sherrod, 2004, 90.

¹⁵² Quoted in Ducker, 2005, 19.

¹⁵³ Jackson, *Report on the introduction of Reindeer to Alaska, 1905, 1906.* 1514.

George Ootenna certainly came to fulfill a leadership role, marrying Nora, who lived with the Lopps, becoming a well-respected man in Wales, and living to be over 100 years old.¹⁵⁴ In 1901, Ootenna made another drive with James Keok and Stanley Kivyearzruk to bring 100 reindeer to the Friends Mission at Cape Blossom on Kotzebue Sound. In 1902 Ootenna owned 192 deer. By 1913, he owned approximately 1,000 deer.



Figure 36: Drawing of Inupiaq whaling by George Ootenna, Kathleen Lopp Smith Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska Fairbanks. UAF-2004-84-1286.

¹⁵⁴Simon, 1998, 111; Taliaferro, 2006, 358.



Figure 37: George Ootenna and his wife Nora. Kathleen Lopp Smith Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska Fairbanks. UAF-2004-84-806.

Kivyearzruk married Alice, another Inupiaq girl working in the Lopp's home, and also developed a successful herd.¹⁵⁵ By 1902 he owned 166 deer. Along with James Keok, and a herder named Karmun, Kivyearzruk established the Deering mission herd in 1905, when the men

¹⁵⁵ Alice was Karmun's sister, and step-daughter of the Siberian herdsman Nootadl' goot.

drove 365 deer to Deering from Wales.¹⁵⁶ In the 1930s, he maintained a large herd near Deering.¹⁵⁷

In 1902 James Keok owned a herd of 175 reindeer. Along with Ootenna and Kivyearzruk, he was considered one of Wales' best deerherders. He was established as the chief herder in Deering in 1905. By 1913, his herd had grown to over 1,500 reindeer worth over \$25,000.¹⁵⁸ Ituk, who had been instrumental in the establishment of the herd at Point Hope, was apparently urged by Lopp to retire after not getting along well with other herders. The main herders on this expedition came to be considered rich Inupiat, and started a precedent for owning large herds. Before long, they and the second generation of herders had formed what was considered a "reindeer aristocracy" on the Seward Peninsula.¹⁵⁹

Impacts of the Expedition on Reindeer Herding

The fact that reindeer were "borrowed" for the relief expedition indicated that the government was inclined to re-appropriate reindeer to meet its changing priorities. At the time of the relief expedition, only a small handful of Inupiat owned their own deer. Antisarlook had owned the largest herd before loaning it to the expedition. The first batches of five-year apprentices were just about to complete their service and become herd owners. The future of the reindeer program was in no way certain.

Had the expedition not demonstrated the competency of Inupiat reindeer herders to accomplish extraordinary herding efforts, the U.S. government might have made new priorities for the reindeer apprenticeship program, such as were suggested by Sheldon Jackson in

¹⁵⁶ Taliaferro, 2006, 351.

¹⁵⁷ Taliaferro, 2006, 341; Simon, 1998, 111; and Ducker, 2005, 20.

¹⁵⁸ Ducker, 2005, 19.

¹⁵⁹ See Lopp's successor Hugh J. Lee's report in Jackson, Sheldon. *Introduction of Domestic Reindeer into Alaska, 1904*. Washington: GPO, 1905, 65; Ellanna and Sherrod, 2004; and Simon, 1998, 112, for discussion of the Wales reindeer "aristocracy."

subsequent years. Jackson began to report to Congress on other perceived benefits of importing reindeer, such as use for freighting mail and supplies and providing food for booming populations of miners. The emerging situation in Alaska: stranded whalers, droves of miners, concerns over boundaries, reports of starvation, the need for more governmental oversight, and for a semblance of law and order had the potential to distract the government from needs of the reindeer program. No longer was food for Inupiat so pressing a need as assurance to the American public that the government could address the concerns of its own citizens in this new territory. Yet the reindeer program could now point to the success of the Overland Relief Expedition as a marker of its strength and of the excellence of its herders, and it had a strong advocate in Tom Lopp, who lobbied hard for more Alaska Native ownership of deer.

Unlike several other members of the reindeer program, Lopp never forsook herding for gold fever, and remained in Wales until 1902, when their continually growing brood led the Loppes to long for the conveniences of life in the States. From their new home in Seattle, Lopp continued working in Alaska until 1923, becoming Superintendent of the Reindeer Service in 1903 and replacing Jackson as head of the Bureau of Education in Alaska in 1910. Lopp spoke against policies that Jackson and others suggested that would have put more reindeer in the hands of Sami, missions and miners, and diminished the Inupiat's role as the primary reindeer herders in Alaska. Lopp remained active in reindeer politics following the expedition, always advocating for Native ownership of deer.

As mentioned above, most of the Inupiaq herders who took part in the expedition lived on to become prominent herdsman and role models to future generations of Native herders. Because of their travels, their relationships with U.S. government officials, and their success in the reindeer business, all were in some measure prepared to weather the extreme social changes that emerged at this time on the Seward Peninsula. With these skills these men grew their herds and established a standard for private ownership of deer that characterized the early years of the reindeer industry. In subsequent years the reindeer program underwent dizzying changes in policy and purpose. In the face of all these changes, the first generation of reindeer herders projected a strong image of Native herders, capable of excelling at herding, introducing herding to others and leading the way for more of their people to follow.

Changes in the Native ownership of deer

Antisarlook became the first Inupiat to own a large herd of deer in 1897. He moved his herd to Sinuk River, where he owned it for almost a full year of owning it before the government borrowed it back for the relief expedition. The Bureau returned the full number of reindeer owed to Antisarlook in 1899, but he died that same year. His herd went to his wife Mary Antisarlook, who became known as “the Reindeer Queen” and “Reindeer Mary.” Mary had trouble tending the large herd because of the interference of thousands of miners in the Nome region, not far from Sinuk. She transferred her herd to Eaton station around 1905 and paid the station 25 female reindeer per year for helping her to watch over it.

By 1902, ten years after Jackson had introduced reindeer in Alaska, only one Inupiaq herder had been entrusted with a large loan of deer, and only twenty-five Alaska Natives were serving in apprenticeships. The majority of the deer were collectively being held by government stations, missions, and the Sami herding instructors.¹⁶⁰ By 1906, Native herders still owned only 41% of the reindeer in Alaska. In 1907 an investigator named Frank Churchill reported back to Congress that,

For some thirteen years it has been argued that the introduction and propagation of deer for the Eskimo was both necessary and appropriate, and it is to be regretted that the deer are not to-day wholly in the hands of the Government or the natives . . . The rule should be made and enforced that the deer are for the natives only and to be put in their hands as rapidly as circumstances will warrant.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Henningsen, 1987, 181.

¹⁶¹ Churchill, Frank C. *Reports on the Condition of Educational and School Service and the Management of Reindeer Service in the District of Alaska*, 1906, 26 & 63.



Figure 38: Portrait of Reindeer Mary, Lomen Family Papers, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska Fairbanks. UAF-B66-10-30

Churchill provided a scathing account of preferential treatment and ulterior motives within the reindeer service. He noted that while serving as Special Agent on Education, Rev. Jackson also received a salary from the Presbyterian Board on Home Missions, and charged that religious missions were the real benefactors of the government's reindeer program. He also warned against the transfer of reindeer into non-native ownership, a problem that later came about as a direct consequence of the sale of one Sami herd.



Figure 39: Caption reads "Uncle Sam, heavy neck - short legs for freighting." Daniel S. Neuman Collection. Alaska State Library Historical Collections. ASL-P307-0068

Changes to the Reindeer Program under Jackson

At the helm of Alaska's education program for over a decade, Jackson was not as concerned with feeding and educating people as he was with seeing that the missions and the reindeer project thrived. Jackson wrote that the most important reason for sustaining reindeer herds in Alaska was really "First. The permanence of the mission."¹⁶² Hoping to make missions self-

¹⁶² Jackson, Sheldon. *Introduction of Domestic Reindeer into Alaska, 1902*. Washington: GPO, 1903, 12th Annual, 24.

sustainable through the sale of deer, Jackson wrote, “In a few years this revenue should be sufficient to entirely support the mission and thereby relieve the treasury of the central missionary society.”¹⁶³ For this reason many reindeer scholars have justly accused Jackson of caring more for the welfare of missionaries and Sami than for the Inupiat of Alaska.

Jackson deserves credit for the initial funding and efforts that launched the reindeer program, but as the herds in Alaska grew, so did his interest in converting Inupiaq herders to a labor class to serve the ever-expanding population of Euro-Americans in Alaska. For many years following the Nome Gold Rush in 1898, Jackson tried to make the reindeer program benefit miners, and provide wages and employment to the Inupiat. Jackson began to promote the use of reindeer as pack animals and for the transportation of passengers and mail. Jackson took out a contract with the US Postal Service¹⁶⁴ and established a mail route between Teller and Wales. In his 1903 report Jackson wrote, “Thus the Eskimo, trained as a herder or teamster, will prove valuable to the white man, and the white man in turn, as director and employer, will be valuable to the native.”¹⁶⁵ Eskimo herders and reindeer drivers were encouraged to sell live or dead steers to interested white men.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Henningsen, 1987, 173.

¹⁶⁵ Report on introduction of domestic reindeer into Alaska, 1903, 21.

¹⁶⁶ Murray, Keith A. *Reindeer and Gold*. Vol. 24 Occasional Paper. Bellingham, Washington: Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, 1988, 3.

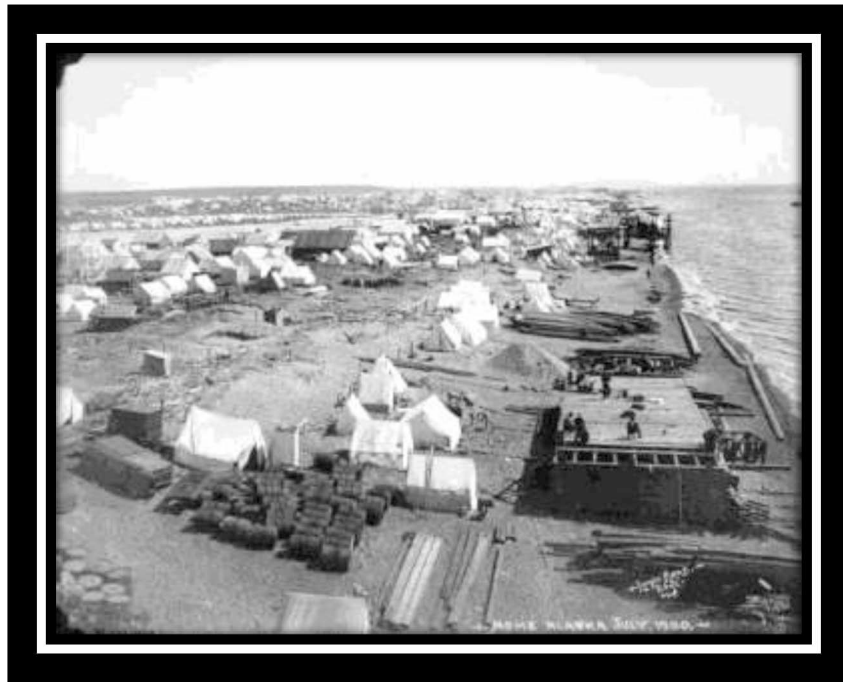


Figure 40: Nome, Alaska July 1900. Seiffert Family Photographs, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska Fairbanks, UAF-1985-122-409.



Figure 41: Caption reads, "Freighting with reindeer, Nome, Alaska" O.D. Goetze Collection, Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center. AMRC-b01-41-133.

The Bureau of Education, however, remained dedicated to the idea that reindeer were provided for the perceived benefit of assimilating the Inupiat into Western society. As the population of Euro-Americans on the Seward Peninsula exploded near the end of the nineteenth century, the Bureau of Education now had a larger populous to serve in the area, and more Western influences on Inupiat to consider. The Bureau was not responsible for schools in incorporated cities like Nome, but their presence influenced the Bureau's decisions regarding reindeer. At this period the reindeer program began to transition into an industry.

The Bureau appointed Tom Lopp to supervise the Bureau of Education and the reindeer program after Jackson. During Lopp's supervision, Nome was viewed as a prime market for sales of reindeer by an ever-growing number of private Inupiaq herders. The Bureau of Education obtained a ship named the *U.S.S. Boxer*, later replaced by the *U.S.S. North Star*, which was used for bringing reindeer from areas along the coast to markets. Under Lopp, the number of communities to acquire herds more than doubled, as did the number of Native-owned deer. From 1910 to 1927, when Lopp served as Chief of the Bureau of Education's Alaska Division, the number of reindeer in Alaska rose from 27,325 to 350,000.¹⁶⁷

As a result of Churchill's 1907 report on the use of government-purchased deer to support missions, a District Superintendents for the Bureau, with no ties to missions, were appointed in 1908. Northwest District Superintendent Walter Shields, much like Jackson, was more preoccupied with the management of the reindeer program than the education of Northern Alaskans. Unlike Jackson, however, he worked closely with herders and traveled often to villages and camps to survey the welfare of herders and schools. His interest in expanding the reindeer industry for the benefit of Inupiaq herders was evident in his creation of the reindeer fairs, held on the Seward Peninsula from 1915 to 1918 and in the journal he started called "The Eskimo," devoted to the needs and concerns of Native herders.

¹⁶⁷ Stern, 1980, *Eskimo, Reindeer and Land*, 102-3.



Figure 42: Lopp in the Arctic, serving as Chief of the Bureau of Education in Alaska, Kathleen Lopp Smith Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska Fairbanks. UAF-1994-132-89.



Figure 43: Walter Shields and companion on a reindeer inspection tour. Daniel S. Neuman Collection, Alaska State Library Historical Collections. ASL-P307-0061.

Reindeer Fairs

The Bureau of Education organized reindeer fairs in Shields' district for four years between 1915 and 1918. For four years in a row fairs were organized at a site near Igloo (or New Igloo, which was slightly northwest of Mary's Igloo), an advantageous location because of plentiful reindeer moss that grew there. In addition to the annual Igloo fairs, the Northwest District put on fairs in Noatak in 1917 and 1918.



Figure 44: Reindeer Fair near Pilgrim Hot Springs (Igloo). General Photo File, Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center. AMRC-b81-36-22.

Events at the fairs included a full itinerary of competitions, games, races, meals, songs and discussions among Inupiaq reindeer herders. Participation ranged from 80 to 100 men at these events; women were also present, participated in reindeer clothing showcases, and took part in the women's category of reindeer sled races.¹⁶⁸ Travelers came to Igloo from all over the Seward Peninsula and as far away as Kivalina, sometimes traveling for several days to get there.

¹⁶⁸ Van Stone, James W., John A. Kakaruk, and Charles V. Lucier. "Reindeer Fairs on Seward Peninsula, Alaska 1915-1918." *Arctic Anthropology* 37, no. 2 (2000): 71.

The fairs also served as a reunion for the men who, by now, were veterans of the reindeer program. John Kakaruk, a herder living near Igloo at the time of the 1916 fair retold his memory of these original herders:

All of the big shots, the real Eskimo reindeer men were there. They came for the meeting to pick five judges who'd supervise the second reindeer fair. We did that and picked these men for judges: Willie Appiaqtunna, one of the oldest herders, and there were Ootenna and Allagiaq [Allockeok] and one more that I've forgotten and one more . . . We drove the Igloo herd in close to the lassoing place. Those who wanted to try lassoing got ready. The first man to try was Tautaq [Tautuk], that old herder. Tautaq lassoed the untrained deer himself, threw it down, put on its harness and made it pull a sled on the river ice. Sure enough he did it and was the first one to do it. My, those fellows could work fast.¹⁶⁹



Figure 45: Photo showing a reunion of herders who took part in the 1898 overland expedition at the 1915 Igloo reindeer fair. From left to right are 1. Kivyearzruk, 2. Keok, 3. Tautuk, 4. Sokweena and 5. Ootenna. Kathleen Lopp Smith Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska, Fairbanks. UAF-2004-84-1137.

¹⁶⁹ VanStone, et al, 2000, 70 & 72.

The fairs fostered a good feeling of fraternity between reindeer herders of different ages, in a time when conflicts were known to occur between herders and their apprentices. The fairs also established the Reindeer Men's Association. How this association would have impacted Inupiaq reindeer herding will never be known, because the 1918 flu epidemic put an end to the reindeer fairs. The fairs brought men together who rarely had a chance to meet because herders, by the nature of the herding lifestyle, were usually out on the land and stayed at a distance from villagers and other herders for the sake of their deer. At the reindeer fairs, their deer actually brought the reindeer men together.

A Burgeoning Industry

In the decade of 1910-1920, more reindeer were owned by Alaska Natives than white men, but changes during this decade were about to upset that balance.¹⁷⁰ In 1914, a prominent Norwegian family in Nome took interest in the reindeer business. The Lomen family, brought to Nome by their father Gudbrand, was involved in several local businesses. Gudbrand Lomen began as a lawyer in Nome, and his sons all did well in the photography, mining, banking, newspaper, drugstore and clerking businesses. In 1914 the Sami herder Alfred Nilima sold his herd of 1,200 reindeer to Carl Lomen, with the permission of Bureau of Education Superintendent Walter Shields.

In Carl Lomen's autobiographical account of running the reindeer business, he writes,

Shields saw my interest in reindeer, and believed that if whites could play a part through the investment of capital, the reindeer industry would benefit. So in the fall of 1913 he explained that Alfred Nilima's contract with the government was going to expire and, should Nilima see fit to sell his holdings to whites, there would be no government objection.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ By 1915, two-thirds of the roughly 70,000 deer in Alaska were owned by Alaska Natives.

¹⁷¹ Lomen, Carl J. *Fifty Years in Alaska*. New York: Van Rees Press, 1954, 207.

The legality of this purchase was dubious, as it was the Bureau of Education's policy that female reindeer could only be sold to Alaska Natives or the government. Nilima's was not the only Sami herd the Lomens acquired. Their reindeer business, Lomen & Company, bought 8,693 reindeer from Sami herders in Kotzebue, Egavik and Buckland between 1917 and 1921, and also purchased 1,000 reindeer from Brevig Mission in 1915.¹⁷²



Figure 46: Herders and Lomen Co. investors in Nome, 1915. George A. Parks Photographs, Alaska State Library Historical Collections. ASL-P240-596.

The Lomens did much to expand the industry; they created a market for reindeer meat in the continental United States and developed the packing and shipping components of the industry. They built slaughtering houses, cold storage lockers, bought refrigerated ships for shipping meat to the States and employed several local Inupiat in herding and butchering reindeer and sewing reindeer products. They marketed several lines of these products, including gloves, flight suits

¹⁷² Vorren, 1994, 78.

and a brand of “White Rover Dog Food.” The Lomens shipped live reindeer to the States for Christmas displays.¹⁷³



Figure 47: Lomens and herders (Thomas Sokweena in plaid shirt) at Elephant Point Processing Plant, 1938. Harold Ickes Collection, Anchorage Museum at the Rasmuson Center. AMRC-b75-175-166.

After the devastating influenza epidemic of 1918 and throughout the 1920s, the Lomens started monopolizing the industry, swallowing up other herders’ reindeer within their own herds, coercing Native herders to sign away their rights to their deer, purchasing reindeer for abnormally low prices, and using their influence in Washington to secure the best grazing lands, forcing other herders to relinquish their long-standing use of those lands.¹⁷⁴ The Lomens had influential friends

¹⁷³ Postell, Alice. *Where Did the Reindeer Come From: Alaska Experience, the First Fifty Years*. Portland, Oregon: Amaknak Press, 1990, 84.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 83.

such as explorer and reindeer visionary Vilhjalmur Stefansson, entrepreneur Jafet Lindberg, and several politicians. Carl Lomen was clearly devoted to the reindeer business throughout most of his life.



Figure 48: Lomen men with Rasmussen and Stefansson, From left to right front row: Rasmussen, Stefansson, and Carl Lomen. Back Row: Ralph Lomen, Cal Gonzoles and Earl Rossman. Lomen Family Papers, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive, University of Alaska Fairbanks. UAF-1972-71-62.

Following the 1918 Flu Epidemic

The loss of over 900 people from the Seward Peninsula as a result of the 1918 influenza, many of them herders, created large ambiguities about how deer should be inherited and whether or not inherited deer could be sold. There were now approximately 100,000 reindeer in Alaska, over 50,379 of them on the Seward Peninsula, but fewer herders to tend them.¹⁷⁵ Close herding had created difficulties for some families since herders often needed the assistance of their children out on the land while the school year was in session. Reindeer herding was a full-time occupation, and not all the heirs of deer were willing to adopt that lifestyle. For these and other reasons, Lopp recommended that the herders of the early 1920s form herding companies, through which they could manage their deer collectively.

This began the process of open herding, by which herds were combined and tended by staff of the reindeer companies who each owned certain shares of the overall herds, and their portion of deer would increase each year with increases in the herd, based on their number of shares. The corporate structure vastly changed the reindeer program. Now chief herders were leaders of the companies and hired hands worked with deer in which they had no vested interest. But for many Seward Peninsula herders, this was a much more convenient lifestyle than the close herding that had been practiced for over 25 years, and it freed them up to take larger roles in village life. The U.S. Biological Survey recommended open herding on the basis that larger herds would create a better breeding stock. Larger companies also made life easier for the new District Superintendent, who generally travelled to inspect the herds and resolve range issues each year.

With large herding companies in the picture, business became nearly impossible for herders with small individual herds. Competing for rangeland and meat sales with larger companies put the smaller herders at a disadvantage. Also where Lomen Company deer ranged nearby and became mixed with the Native company herds, the Lomens always managed to secure an unproportionate number of each year's increase. The companies had difficulty competing for

¹⁷⁵ Figure was Walter Shields' estimate of reindeer on the peninsula in 1917. Reindeer Report, p28. Box 23, Folder 390. Lomen Family Papers, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska & Polar Regions Archive.

laborers with the Lomens also, because the companies did not have revenue and paid workers in deer, while the Lomens paid in wages or supplies. Companies also had to compete for workers with the mining operations on the peninsula at the time, which paid in wages. Thus, the new system had flaws but appeared to be the best way to deal with the damage wrought by the 1918 epidemic.

Reindeer Industry in the 1930s

Had Shields survived the flu epidemic, he might have eventually sided with the Lomens' critics, such as teacher Clarence Andrews and General Supervisor of the Alaska Reindeer Service from 1928 to 1933, Ben Mozee. Shields, after all, had cautioned Carl Lomen that the government had invested in reindeer in an effort to elevate the Eskimo, not to subsidize Euro-American industrialists. The Lomens entry into the industry had been intended to augment the reindeer industry, not to dominate it. But by their efforts to expand the industry, they had turned reindeer herding into a capitalistic venture in which they had the upper hand. Protests among the Inupiat and their advocates caused Congress to revisit the issue in 1931. Congress would find that there were several problems with the industry now that the reindeer population had grown so large.

The Alaska Reindeer Service was placed out of the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior and into the hands of territorial governor, George Parks in 1929. Parks had shared Churchill's belief that the reindeer should be Native-owned by now, and overseen by only a federal advisory board. The Great Depression dealt another blow to the industry when few Americans could afford meat. Cattle ranchers in the States lobbied to have reindeer meat labeled as game, which would make it illegal for sale. In the face of these economic and political challenges, the outside markets for reindeer collapsed in the 1930s, and large quantities of meat that could not be sold went to waste. Also, most herders supplemented their income by trapping so when the overall fur market crashed in the Great Depression, it became even harder to make a living as a reindeer herder.

The 1930s were a chaotic period for reindeer herders in other ways, too. The new rules for marking deer and apportioning the increases out to their respective herders was nearly impossible to do with the large mixed herds that had developed. Open herding had led to difficulty in finding and counting the deer and the majority of Inupiaq herders no longer knew exactly how many deer they owned and could sell for income. The amount of pasturage on the Seward Peninsula was also in decline due to overgrazing, and the tundra lichens that reindeer feed on take an average of 25 years to regrow.¹⁷⁶

In 1937 Congress passed the Reindeer Act, signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, which made the ownership of reindeer herds by non-natives illegal in Alaska, and stipulated that all such herds would have to be sold. The Act was fully implemented by 1940, and with a modest budget the government began buying back these reindeer at an average price of \$3 per head.¹⁷⁷ With the sale of their 87,000 deer and their equipment to the government, the Lomens were out of the business. Sami herders were also compelled to sell their herds by 1940.

Major Impacts to the Reindeer Industry following the 1940s

After the Reindeer Act was passed the population of reindeer on the Seward Peninsula and plunged dramatically. Often cited reasons for this were poor herd management, the intermingling of reindeer with migrating caribou herds, heavy wolf predation and lack of good rangeland. In the late 1940s reindeer were virtually absent from the upper Seward Peninsula around Shishmaref. Deering, Igloo and Golovin still had herds, but it took herds on the rest of the Seward Peninsula a long time to recover from the reindeer drama of the 1930s.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs took over management of the reindeer service in 1937. Under the BIA herds were reorganized and redistributed to certain families with a longstanding tradition of

¹⁷⁶ Lawrence Palmer of the US Biological Survey, quoted in Lantis, M. "The Reindeer Industry in Alaska." *Arctic* 3, no. 1 (1950): 33.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 35.

herding. The reindeer herding industry has changed management schemes several times since then, but those that herd on the Seward Peninsula in the early twenty-first century generally have strong family ties to those who herded reindeer before the Reindeer Act and before the policies of open herding.

Influence of Herding on Inupiat

Reindeer herding was not directly responsible for the decline of Wales and Kauwerak, but contributed to changes to those communities, and to their role among other Seward Peninsula communities. Once the trading center of the entire peninsula, Wales transformed into the homeland of many of the peninsula's premier herders, who were now widely spread across the peninsula, bringing the Inupiaq model of reindeer herding to other communities. Thus, reindeer herding did not diminish the significance of Wales, but gave the village a new significance as propagators of a new economic lifestyle. Similarly, the herders at Teller, located less than 50 miles from the former site of Kauwerak, also worked to fashion and promulgate an Inupiaq model of reindeer herding. As the first headquarters of the reindeer program, Teller was the birthplace of Inupiaq herding, and residents of it and the nearby village of Brevig Mission could claim a long herding heritage by the mid-twentieth century. The impact of herding on communities is likely unique to each community, but several communities achieved new overall significance as a result of acquiring reindeer herds. The communities of Teller and Brevig Mission began to absorb the populations of Kauwerak, Mary's Igloo and Igloo in the early 1900s. Reindeer communities that also had schools such as Shishmaref, Deering, Golovin, and White Mountain became year-round villages on the Seward Peninsula. Initial changes to the cultural landscape of the Seward Peninsula were housed within the school and reindeer programs of the late nineteenth, early twentieth century.

Some information about impacts of herding on Inupiaq culture is available in writings of teachers from that period. For example, William Van Valin, who worked from 1912 to 1914 as a schoolteacher in Sinuk, north of Nome, wrote this of reindeer's usefulness to Inupiat:

It is difficult to conceive how the Eskimos could get along without this now apparently indispensable animal. The entire deer is utilized for one purpose or another. The principal clothing of the Eskimos and certainly the warmest they wear is made from reindeer skins. Skins from the legs of two deer make the upper for their warmest winter *kumiks* (boots). The meat is sweet, juicy and tender; steaks can be cut with a fork, and, fried in their own fat, they are delicious. The blood is saved, frozen in vessels, and chunks of it are dropped into soup and dog food. The marrow bones are cracked and boiled, and the fat is used in the mixture dubbed "Eskimo ice cream" . . . A slab of sinew taken from the back makes the Eskimos their strongest and best thread. Rims for ice-hole fishing scoops are made from the antlers, also knife handles, dog harness swivels, and even bows for boy archers. Footballs and handballs for games are stuffed with the hair.¹⁷⁸

Reindeer clearly filled the gap left by the disappearance of caribou on the Seward Peninsula. It is unclear how else they might have affected Inupiaq economies. Dean Olson wrote that "Reindeer ownership has not basically altered Eskimo society, but instead has been fitted to it."¹⁷⁹ What is known for certain is that herding impacted the families of the men who became reindeer herders, and these families were usually held in high esteem in their communities. Families passed down the herds and herding skills to their relatives, and reindeer herding often involved every able-bodied member of the family.

¹⁷⁸ Van Valin, William B. *Eskimoland Speaks*. Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1941.

¹⁷⁹ Olson, Dean F. *Alaska Reindeer Herdsmen: A Study of Native Management in Transition*. College, Alaska: University of Alaska Fairbanks, Institute of Social, Economic and Government Research, 1969, 139.



Figure 49: Reindeer herder's family. James Wickersham Collection, Alaska State Library Historical Collections. ASL-P277-015-042.

Daniel Karmun remembered participating in herding as a child:” So when the herds continued to grow in the area that I was born in, at Deering, they built corrals out of Deering up in the timberline. That’s about 60, 70 miles kind of southeast of Deering, and they built their corrals there. A place called Theresa Creek . . . I remember, we younger people, once the reindeer were put in the corral, probably about 3,000 or 4,000 head of reindeer at a time, the young people

would be placed in the pockets to make sure the reindeer didn't go out. That was a good time for the young people. They'd get a deck of cards and play cards all night and watch the reindeer."¹⁸⁰

Herders have also commented on the pride and fondness associated with reindeer herding experiences. Along the Tapqaq coast, Gideon Barr Sr. talked about three of the reindeer herders he most admired:

There was my father, Makaiqtaq, at Espenberg, Allochkeok at Shishmaref, Olarruk from Ikpik . . . They were like chiefs. People didn't mix in with them too much, but they would rather listen to what they had to say, to their advice. They weren't called chiefs, though. They always had enough money to buy something. They always had a dollar in their pocket. Whenever they wanted to buy some equipment, well, they weren't stuck. They could buy it right now . . . All of those three men . . . died around the same age [close to 80 years], and they worked hard all their lives. As hard as they worked to make a living and yet they lived that long! That means it's a clean way of living, which is true.¹⁸¹

Although men were historically the herders, women were also active participants in the industry. One story told by Tom Lopp of Keok and Karmun's drive to Deering shows that a herder's wife led an arduous lifestyle as well: "One hundred and ninety miles was a long, cold trip for Keok's wife and bottle-fed babe. We prepared a covered sled which gave them some protection against the winds and blizzards, but at the expense of being tipped over several times."¹⁸²

Lucy Avinnaq Hadley, who grew up near Deering, wrote the following about the herding life:

¹⁸⁰ Karmun, Daniel Sr. 2001. "Dan Karmun Interview," *Project Jukebox. Reindeer herding: the present & the past*, University of Alaska Fairbanks Oral History Department. Oral History Interview, <http://jukebox.uaf.edu/reindherding/htm/dk.htm> (accessed September 18, 2009).

¹⁸¹ Gideon Barr Sr. quoted from Simon, 1998, 175.

¹⁸² Jackson, Sheldon. *Introduction of Domestic Reindeer into Alaska, 1905*. Washington: GPO, 1906, 51.

I got married in 1915 and then there was a reindeer fair at Noorvik. When we became reindeer herders, it meant living away from the village. We stayed out in the country even in the dead of winter when it was bitterly cold or even though there were snow storms. We stayed and watched the deer constantly. Yet, when my husband decided to take us along to a desolate looking camp, he made sure that all the provisions were taken along. For example, he prepared the wood and ice, loaded them in the sled, got everything else we needed and then he took us to the reindeer camp. That is how we lived. We rarely went to the village when the children were small. We were comfortable even if there was a snow storm. It was so good to live in a tent. In the spring, the herders took the reindeer close to the coast for the calving season. We then spent the spring there. They branded reindeer. In those days, the reindeer herders tended the deer closely. One person watched during the night and someone else would relieve him in the morning. They took turns. They also had laws that said no gambling, no drinking and no card playing. If the herder did not follow this law, he could easily lose his herd. Today, there is no such law.¹⁸³

One of the original founders of the Nome Skin Sewers Cooperative, Emma Willoya, was a herder's wife for many years. Sewing garments from reindeer hides was a strong industry between the first and second world wars, providing employment to many Inupiaq women. Photos from Golovin and White Mountain show women involved in the butchering and dressing of reindeer. And the first large reindeer herd owned by any Inupiaq person in the early 1900s belonged to a woman.

¹⁸³ Outwater et al, 1989, 191-193.



Figure 50: Women skinning reindeer at Golovin, Harold Ickes Collection, Anchorage Museum of History and Art. AMRC-b-75-175-175.

Reindeer herding has become a defining feature of the Seward Peninsula. Unlike in other regions, this activity which began in 1892 has been practiced continuously in the region for over 100 years. Reindeer herding has helped some Seward Peninsula communities transition to a more Western economy. Herding has helped some families achieve high economic status during lucrative days in the industry and high social status as accomplished herders. Seward Peninsula Inupiat adopted herding lifestyles at an amazingly rapid pace. This occurred concurrently with the adoption of Christianity and the introduction of a Western education in these communities, and was part of an effort to adapt and be resilient in the face of multiple threats to the peninsula's Inupiaq way of life. What is interesting about herding is that we do not know what effects herders might have had on fortifying or rebuilding traditional Inupiaq communities because the next major event in Seward Peninsula history profoundly devastated the herding community. Although herding continued following the 1918 flu epidemic, the herding program had been hurt by the losses of so many herders, and it took herders until 1937 to regain primary ownership of

Alaska's reindeer. Yet reindeer herding has been practiced in every Seward Peninsula community present in the early twentieth century. Its introduction has clearly shaped the development of these communities, and its widespread practice has possibly helped to distribute power throughout the communities somewhat evenly, making Inupiat-style reindeer herding accessible to all Inupiat regardless of their location, and making dominant or traditional reindeer herding communities unnecessary.



Figure 51: Corraling reindeer using sheets of cloth, Theresa Creek Reindeer Camp. Evelyn Butler and George Dale Photographs, Alaska State Library Historical Collections. ASL-P306-0712.

CHAPTER 6: DEVASTATION OF THE 1918 INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC

The final and most dramatic change to have a transformative effect on Seward Peninsula Inupiat was an event that took place in 1918. In October of 1918, a serious threat to the lives of all Alaskans arrived off the western coast of the Seward Peninsula. That threat had already wrought devastation across the rest of America, and was spreading at terrifying speeds across the globe. A particularly lethal virus had appeared during the final year of World War I. Within one year that virus killed more people than the war itself.¹⁸⁴ More than a quarter of all Americans caught the virus, and at least half a million Americans died. It was a virus more devastating than anyone had ever seen, an epidemic deadlier than any other of the century, and it almost caused the extinction of the Inupiat on the Seward Peninsula.

The virus was mysterious. Little was known about it other than that an early outbreak in San Sebastian, Spain, had earned it the nickname, “Spanish flu.” The first outbreaks in the spring of 1918 were brief and non-lethal. The virus was a pest, which laid troops low in the trenches for about three days of incapacity and a two week “hangover.” The only cause for alarm was that the disease was highly contagious, infecting whole cities and armies within weeks. By March, when the virus surfaced in Spain, it had also already appeared in America. Reports of the flu in France started in April and by May it had made its way to England. In June, it appeared in China and Japan. And then, for a few months, it vanished. The worst seemed over. But suddenly in September, a new version of the virus emerged, this one more vicious, more merciless, and deadly. Within 48 hours its victims could go from healthy, to feverish, to gasping for breath as their lungs filled with froth and blood until they suffocated. Or it could kill its victims within a week, causing the patient to succumb to a particularly severe case of pneumonia from infected

¹⁸⁴ Low estimates of the worldwide death toll from the 1918 influenza place the number above 20 million people. High estimates venture as many as 100 million. The total number of World War One-related deaths rests around 15 million people. Kolata, Gina. *Flu: The Story of the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and the Search for the Virus That Caused It*. Epilogue edition ed. New York: Touchstone, 2005, 7.

fluid in the lungs. What was most shocking was that the virus left the largest death toll among those who should have been the most healthy, young adults aged 20 to 40.¹⁸⁵

The moment the new virus appeared, it created alarm. It was killing faster than health officials and governors could respond. Hospitals lacked the staff and room to accommodate the sick. In September, bodies were piling up in one Boston hospital at a rate of 100 per day. News of the contagion headed west, but facts about the epidemic were not well known. There was no known cure. The best that one could hope for was not to catch it. Public health campaigns encouraged open windows and drafts to dispel the germs. The virus was air-borne, but people believed it could be transmitted through the mail. People kept their windows open believing drafts would cause the virus to dissipate. Public services and attendance at public functions came screeching to a halt all across the country.¹⁸⁶ The disease reached Alaska in mid-October. Because Alaska's communities were so remote, influenza did not spread continuously throughout the territory. In Alaska, the virus was introduced to specific towns by specific ships and spread wherever the infected carried it.

Influenza reaches Alaska

The virus arrived in Nome on October 20th, onboard the *S.S. Victoria*, a luxury steamship that brought mail, passengers and provisions at the end of the summer season. Nome townspeople eagerly awaited the arrival of this ship, as it brought food necessary for the winter months, and was the last connection with the outside world that they would have until spring. The *Victoria* was beloved as a symbol of the civilization that many Nome citizens had left behind. The ship anchored in front of Nome and requested permission to land its freight and passengers. Nome officials were aware that an epidemic had been raging through Boston, Philadelphia and New York since September, and they knew that Territorial Governor Thomas Riggs had ordered a maritime quarantine for all of Alaska. Word by telephone alerted them to the presence of the

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁸⁶ Barry John M. *The Great Influenza: The story of the deadliest pandemic in history*. New York: Penguin Books, 2005, 347.

virus in Ketchikan and Juneau, but the *Victoria* had come straight from Seattle, and each passenger had received multiple medical inspections. Still, they knew that contact with these passengers could be dangerous, so they reopened the Holy Cross Hospital building and kept the *Victoria*'s passengers quarantined there for five days. But because of the town's eagerness to obtain their winter supplies, Nome officials also allowed people to retrieve their goods as they were unloaded from the ship. Bureau of Education Superintendent Ebenezer Evans explained the reasoning for this in his report to Governor Riggs: "To prohibit the landing of freight and supplies on which Nome and the north depended entirely for the fast approaching winter would be to bring about a famine and probably precipitate a riot, or at least a very strong protest from the citizens of this section; therefore, in the landing of freight and supplies we were brought into close contact with those who had become carriers of the pestilence."¹⁸⁷

As Evans guessed, contact with crew members who did not appear ill was probably all that was needed to transmit the disease. Winter mail carriers who sledged the mail to far-off villages were also one of the first points of contact with the disease. Although the mail itself was fumigated, the virus moved from person to person as they passed the mail between them.

¹⁸⁷ Evans, Ebenezer. Letter from Bureau of Education, Northwestern Division (Alaska) Acting Superintendent Ebenezer Evans to Alaska Territorial Governor Thomas Riggs Dated June 21, 1919. Lomen Family Papers, 1850-1969 University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive.



Figure 52: “Close of Navigation Season 1909, the S. S. *Victoria* discharging freight at Nome, Alaska on last trip.” Clarence Andrews Collection, Alaska State Library Historical Collections. ASL-P384-95.

Although one of the *Victoria*'s passengers fell ill during the quarantine, all were released on October 25. Nome residents started showing symptoms by October 29th. One of the virus's first victims was territorial health officer, Dr. Daniel S. Neuman, who came very close to dying. Less fortunate was Walter Shields of the Bureau of Education, superintendent of both the schools and the reindeer program in Northwest Alaska, who died in less than a week. Shields appointed Ebenezer Evans, a Nome teacher, to be the acting superintendent, but Evans also fell ill while trying to coordinate an emergency response. At least 300 of the town's nearly 600 white residents contracted the disease during November and December, just as temperatures dropped below 0 degrees Fahrenheit. When the virus reached the Native residences on the outskirts of Nome, the numbers of sick, and then dead, exploded. The scene as reported was ghastly: “As the toll of deaths grew a silent horror fell on the people for it seemed as though the whole country was doomed; as one walked thru [sic] the streets of Nome it seemed a city of the dead . . . From ten to twenty natives were dying each day on an average in Nome and the dead wagon was in use constantly, going around to hunt for them and remove them. Many were frozen to death during the night, their fires having gone out and not having sufficient strength to get up and replenish

them.”¹⁸⁸ One man had died clinging to his stovepipe for heat, and had to be buried in that posture.

As the Holy Cross Hospital was full and its medical staff already made up of “volunteer nurses,” a building belonging to a fraternal order called “Sons of the North” was converted to a hospital for Nome’s Alaska Native residents. With over half the town ill and almost no doctors or nurses available, medical attention in Nome, the largest city on the western coast of Alaska, was severely limited. As one historian put it, “Spanish influenza did to Nome and the Seward Peninsula what the Black Death did to 14th Century Europe.”¹⁸⁹ The virus deprived Nome of an ability to provide basic services, catapulting it back from an organized city to a crowded mess, and it robbed the city’s residents of a sense of hope. Horrified by the deaths of loved ones and the scenes of death around them, some patients at the “Native hospital” committed suicide. The final death count in Nome after two harrowing months of cold and sickness was 190 people, almost a third of its total population.

Health Officer Daniel S. Neuman ordered a “rigid quarantine” be put into effect on November 4th, stopping all traffic in and out of Nome and other towns down to Saint Michael, including the mail service. But for some outlying communities the stricter quarantine came too late. With travelers and mail carriers the virus had already spread eastward to Safety, Solomon and Golovin.

¹⁸⁸ Evans, Letter to Thomas Riggs, 1919.

¹⁸⁹ Crosby, Alfred W. *America's Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 249.



Figure 53: Northwest District Health Officer Dr. Daniel S. Neuman on a health inspection tour in 1916. Clarence Andrews Collection, Alaska State Library Historical Collections. ASL-P307-0718.



Figure 54: Holy Cross Hospital before 1913. Goetze Collection, Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center. b01-41-93.

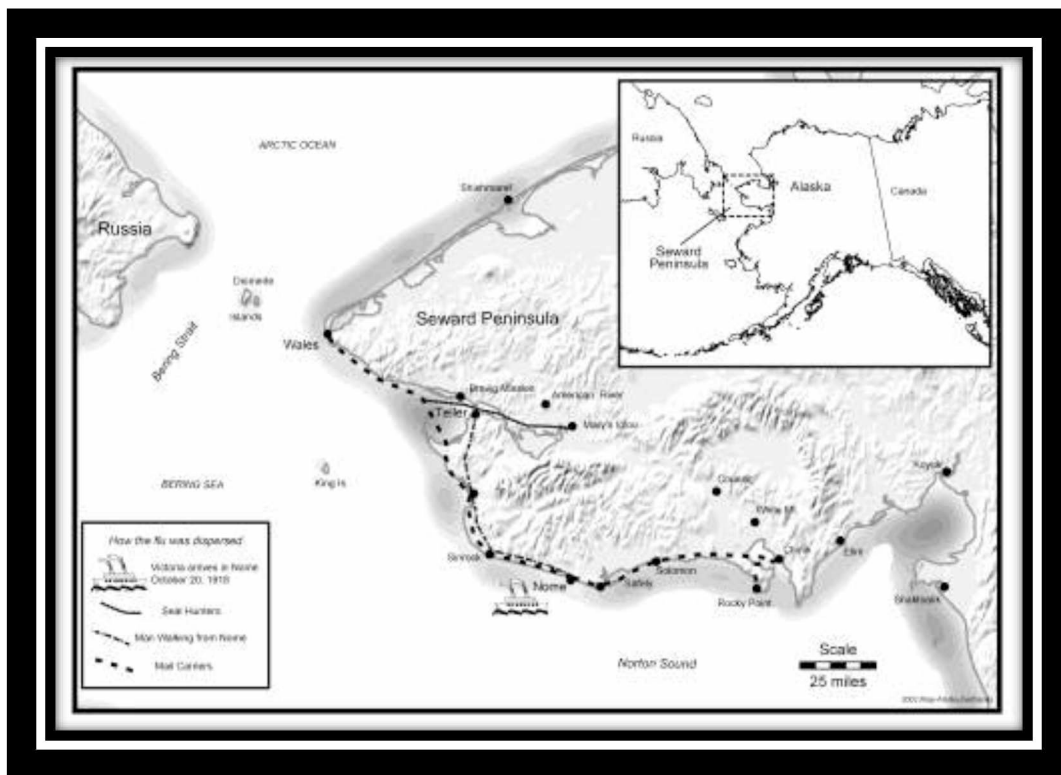


Figure 55: Map of the 1918 spread of influenza along the Seward Peninsula, courtesy of Matt Ganley.

Influenza Decimates Villages on the Southern Half of the Seward Peninsula

By the time influenza surfaced in Nome, mail carriers had already left for Teller, a three-day's journey away. As lethal as it had been in Nome, the virus swept through Mary's Igloo, Teller, and Wales with even deadlier force. A relief party sent to Teller arrived too late to save any of the ill. "There had been but one white death," Evans wrote, "but at the native village a few miles beyond [Brevig Mission] it had taken practically all of the natives, a few adults and children being saved."¹⁹⁰ The death toll between Teller and Brevig combined was 72 people. Most of

¹⁹⁰ Evans, Letter to Thomas Riggs, 1919.

these were from Brevig Mission, which only had a population of about 80 people at the time.¹⁹¹ Although some survived, their lives were forever altered. Some were frozen so badly that they were never physically the same. Evans wrote of “a little girl at Teller who was cared for by her sister, everybody else in the house having died. When relief came it was found that both her feet were badly frozen and so she was brought to Nome for treatment; one foot had almost dropped off, hanging by a small piece of tissue; the doctor, on her arrival at the hospital, removed this foot by cutting the tissue with the scissors. She survived but both legs have been removed to the hips.”¹⁹²

Years later this story was recounted by that girl herself. Staying with her grandparents near Brevig Mission at the time, Eva Pinson (nee Bernhardt) had seen every member of their household perish, and given herself over to the same fate, until her brother came over from Teller to find her.

There had been no fire built in the stove for several days. To Tommy it must have been like walking into a deep freeze. Near the stove was a pail of water turned to solid ice, so Tommy, putting two and two together, figured I had been without heat in the hut for three or four days. When he went over to look at the grandparents, they were frozen as solid as stone . . . The nearest doctor was at the Holy Cross Hospital one hundred miles away over the winter trail. There were no airplanes, of course, and with the sea frozen over, navigation was nonexistent. We had to go by dogsled . . . I have no memory at all of the last twelve hours on the trail . . . Immediately, of course, Doctors Welch and Neuman began to tend to me. They told my father that I would surely not have lasted another day.

¹⁹¹ Mortality statistics from this time cannot be relied upon for 100% accuracy, as the record keepers, the missionaries, teachers, relief workers and government agents, were preoccupied with taking care of orphans and burying bodies before they had the opportunity to count them. Some of the sick were also visitors and travelers, such as a man from Shishmaref who went to be with his family in Wales and died there, and not all the bodies were accounted for. Jones, John P. *Annual Report of J. P. Jones Government Teacher at Shishmaref on the Arctic Ocean for Year Ended June 30th, 1919*. Bureau of Indian Affairs, Shishmaref Correspondence, Record Group 75, Education and General Files, 1897-1937, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive.

¹⁹² Evans, Letter to Thomas Riggs, 1919.

The doctors said, as they bared my little body of its clothing and saw the condition of my feet and legs, “They must come off.” And Papa said, “Then take them off!”¹⁹³

Since 1900, Brevig Mission had housed a shelter for orphans of former epidemics. The 1918 influenza epidemic left the orphanage there filled to overflowing.

Mary’s Igloo near the traditional village of Kauwerak was also hit hard, with 88 of its Inupiat killed by the virus. Emma Willoya, who had married a reindeer herder and moved their herd near Mary’s Igloo in 1917, described the scene there:

They died just like feathers falling down – that’s all. There was no cure for it at that time. They didn’t know how to take care of themselves. If they happened to go to a funeral where a person had died, they’d all come out sick. They’d go to their homes and probably not wake up the next day. That’s how strong that flu was, the Spanish Influenza . . . Villages came to be very small, even the small village close to where we had moved – there had been thirteen families, but there was only three women left. Anybody who was out of town and kept away from the sickness, they were lucky to take care of themselves and pull through.¹⁹⁴

No village was hit harder than Wales in numbers of Inupiat who lost their lives. “The scenes at Wales,” Evans wrote to Gov. Riggs, “were beyond description.”¹⁹⁵ Most stories of how the virus reached Wales tell how a mail carrier went to retrieve his sick son from York, a mining town south of Wales, and brought his dead body back to be buried in Wales. Almost the whole village attended the boy’s funeral. Within days, the virus was on a rampage in Wales. The mail carrier and his son were just two fatalities among a staggering death toll of 170 of Wales’s

¹⁹³ Pinson, Elizabeth Bernhardt. *Alaska's Daughter: An Eskimo Memoir of the Early Twentieth Century*. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2004, 38-43.

¹⁹⁴ Willoya, Emma. Kawerak Heritage Program tapes, Oral History Department, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive.

¹⁹⁵ Evans, Letter to Thomas Riggs, 1919.

roughly 300 residents.¹⁹⁶ All five babies born that year died. When the relief party arrived there, in household after household they found only the children living, huddled close to their dead relatives. Loose and starving dogs added to the horror of the scene.

Evans wrote, “it was found at Wales that live dogs, taken into the house for comfort, had managed to reach the bodies of the natives and had eaten them, only a mass of bones and blood evidence of their [sic] having been people in the igloo.”¹⁹⁷ In the 1950s, a Wales man told the new government teacher of his frightening experience during the epidemic:

Here in Wales many people were sick and dying all over the village. Mostly the older people died. In some houses all were sick, even the younger ones. Some of them died too At that time all my folks were sick too. I was the only one able to work, and when I went to lake for ice to melt for water –on the way—I noticed that lots of dogs were loose. I met my cousin. He was sick and crawling. He said all his family were dead. He said he was going to his uncle’s house. When I was out at the lake getting the ice I heard louder barking of dogs. On the way back, I saw the dogs were eating my cousin. I saw mostly just his clothes were left I lost both my parents, one grandmother and one younger brother.¹⁹⁸

The rescue party that arrived in Wales tried to help the survivors by bringing them food (with the cold weather and no open water that year, the seal hunt had been particularly poor), helping to keep homes warm, hauling away the bodies of the deceased and killing about 45 loose dogs that had no owners and were feeding on human corpses.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Cited as 396 residents by Kolata, The death toll in the Wales area is also cited as 176 in some sources, and as 200 in a Bureau of Education report from February of 1919.

¹⁹⁷ Evans, Letter to Thomas Riggs, 1919.

¹⁹⁸ Corbin, 2000, 81-82.

¹⁹⁹ Hopfinger, Tony. "Gone with the Wind: A Virus Decimated an Eskimo Village Eighty-Four Years Ago - but Did the Epidemic Ever End?" *Anchorage Press*, December 19, 2002-January 1, 2003, 15.

In 1918, the government teacher in Wales was a local Inupiat named Arthur Nagozruk. There were no white teachers or missionaries living there at the time. Nagozruk lost his wife and his two sons, and remarried the mail carrier's widow. There were three families all of whose members died.²⁰⁰ At the end of the ordeal, there were multiple remarriages and adoptions to try and restore family life in Wales.

Shishmaref and Deering saved

Shortly after the situation in Wales became known, a separate relief party reached Shishmaref and established a complete quarantine there. Armed guards prevented any travelers from the south and east from entering the village. Shishmaref's remoteness was a blessing, and its vigilant efforts to shield the village from infection protected villages to the north and east of it. A borderline, called "Wallawalla" marked the boundary between infected and uninfected villages in Northwest Alaska. The northward spread of the deadliest disease in Alaska's history was checked here at Shishmaref.

In 1919, the government teacher in Shishmaref, John P. Jones, reported:

During the latter days of November a messenger came from Deering with a notification of the death of our Superintendent Walter Shields at Nome and also stated the native villages were being depleted by deaths caused by Influenza and that the village of Wales which is nearer to us than any other, had been about wiped out of existence . . . On December 12th a relief party arrived from Deering, composed of Mrs. Ada Evans, a trained nurse, and J. G. Brown with a driver who had been sent here under the supposition that our village like many others had disappeared from Influenza. We immediately established a rigid quarantine of our village by erecting an outpost some eight miles down the coast toward Wales where native men were stationed day and night

²⁰⁰ Hopfinger, 2003, 18.

to prevent travel in either direction, also having others watch the trails to the east and southeast.²⁰¹

Mrs. Evans lived in Candle, where Acting Superintendent Evans had contacted her by telephone and hired her to go to Shishmaref.²⁰² She and Brown traveled west by dog team to Deering and then Shishmaref, where she stayed to assist should the virus reach them. The virus spread into the northwest corner of the Seward Peninsula, but went no farther into Northwest Alaska.



Figure 56: Picture of Wales and the sand dunes where victims of the 1918 influenza were buried, 1929. Alaska Road Commission Collection. Alaska State Library Historical Collections, ASL-P61-8-183.

²⁰¹ Jones, 1919, 2.

²⁰² This telephone access was also recalled by Lela Oman in an oral history interview in 2007: “What saved us up north was Nome had already put up telephone wire from here to Council and from Council to Dime Creek and from Dime Creek to Candle. Those were big mining places at one time...In Candle, when they received that message, dogteams went to Deering and to Shishmaref telling everybody up there not to come down this way.” Oman, Lela, 2005. Memories of Nome Project Jukebox.

Aftermath

The Bureau of Education had no means to finance the food, labor and medical services expended during the flu epidemic on the Seward Peninsula. The Territorial government was supposed to respond to public health problems, but it mainly addressed issues pertaining to Alaska citizens. Before the influenza had finished spreading through the territory, Governor Riggs was in Washington DC, lobbying for federal emergency funding. But many other parts of the country with higher populations were similarly in need, and World War I had just ended, leaving much of the federal budget already obligated elsewhere. Severe scrutiny was applied to the charges and reimbursements that Evans had authorized. "My action in sending a nurse to Shismareff has been criticized," he wrote, although this act had probably saved hundreds of lives. Who was to pay for the crisis?

In 1918, responsibility for Alaska's residents was divided among various territorial and federal agencies. Alaska's territorial government was responsible for the welfare of its citizens. Nome had a delegate in the territorial legislature, or it was supposed to, but an election had been scheduled for that fall in the midst of the crisis, leaving results of that election in limbo. Responsibility for Alaska Natives, who were not citizens of the territory but considered wards of the federal government, fell to the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Education. The Territorial Health Officer for most of Western Alaska, Dr. Neuman, had authority to impose quarantines and enforce the territory's public health laws. Military regiments stationed at Fort Davis and Fort St. Michael followed orders from the U.S. War Department, and operated the military telegraph and telephone system. They were also instructed to provide relief to local people in times of emergency. St. Michael was also a supply station for villages throughout the western coast of Alaska. It would prove instrumental in providing food to people along the Western coast, most of whom had not yet been infected with the virus. But St. Michael was also bound by Dr. Neuman's strict quarantine. The management of public health in this region caused considerable confusion throughout the influenza crisis.



Figure 57: Fort Davis on the southern coast of the Seward Peninsula. Goetze Collection, Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center. AMRC-b01-41-272.

Shortly after the virus had taken an estimated 75 percent of the Inupiaq population of the Seward Peninsula, the greatest need after administering aid to the living, was interring the bodies of influenza victims. According to Inupiaq tradition, bodies were immediately buried above ground in a specified sacred area, with tools, garments and implements that had been important to the deceased. Digging into the tundra, which remained frozen below a shallow depth of a few feet year round, had never been an option as it was nearly impossible to do. Bodies left above ground deteriorated rapidly and were unprotected from birds and animals that could potentially become contaminated by them. Western tradition and the highly contagious nature of the disease dictated that the bodies be buried under ground. In Wales, a new burial ground was made using dynamite to blast two pits out of the sand dunes a mile north of the village. What was left of the bodies of at least 173 victims was interred there in the sand, with a large wooden cross to mark the spot. In Teller, a group of hydraulic miners was hired to inject steam into the ground to thaw out a large rectangular area, into which the bodies of its 76 victims were placed. This grave was marked by crosses at either end.

Effects of the Influenza

It is almost impossible to overstate the devastation wrought by this global influenza epidemic on the Inupiat of the Seward Peninsula. The influenza epidemic devastated people in the area, perhaps more than any other event of the twentieth century. The epidemic left survivors “destitute.” While sick and grieving, people had not been able to work, or to trap so they had no means of support. It had also been too difficult to gather wood, and people were short on seal oil, so houses were cold; men were too ill to hunt, so food supplies were depleted. Several reindeer herders and whaling captains had died, new ones who may or may not have been prepared had to take their place. In Wales, where families were re-established and all the village’s children were adopted, there were now extra mouths to feed. Some whole families perished and some villages had been abandoned.

The effects of the influenza would be multigenerational. Many children from south of Wales, now parentless, would go to live at the Brevig Mission orphanage. Raised by teachers and missionaries, they would grow up without speaking their parents’ language; speaking, reading and writing English and Norwegian instead; and would not learn traditional skills in hunting, fishing, sewing, carving, cooking, boatmaking, etc., from their families. Thus they could not pass along these skills and values to their children. With the deaths of many elders, much of the historical knowledge for this area was lost in 1918.

Wales never rebounded to its former glory in the twentieth century. The missionary teacher Henry Greist moved to Wales in 1920 and wrote the following about the epidemic’s legacy: “Nor did the people of Wales recover from the shock until after our arrival in 1920, three years subsequent to the pandemic, nor has Wales ever become the very splendid town it once was, a village second to none in all Alaska as to hunters of prowess of polar bear, walrus and whale.”²⁰³

²⁰³ Greist, Henry W. *Seventeen Years with the Eskimo*. Hanover, New Hampshire: Special Collections, Dartmouth College Library, 1961, 3.

These deaths also took an immense toll on the reindeer herding program. The program lost its popular director of ten years, Walter Shields, who had been instrumental in organizing the reindeer fairs on the Seward Peninsula. While a few reindeer congresses, conferences and competitions were held in later years, there was never another reindeer fair; the fairs were abandoned entirely after 1918.

There are no statistics for the number of herders killed in the 1918 epidemic. A report from 1923 regarding the Teller herd provides a glimpse of the influenza's bleak impacts, in its roster of dead herd owners' nearest kin. Excerpts from this list show how the flu diminished their ranks, and how the herder's relatives who would inherit their deer were identified:

Cockalalik: --Died in flu 1918, has 1 girl, Dora. 1 boy Frank Kakok, 18.

Neesak: --King Island, died in flu 1918. Sister used to live at Nome- Katak.

Punyuknuk: --Died in flu 1918. Wife also died 1918. 1 girl some place, half breed adopted, maybe outside.

Anakartuk: --Dead, flu 1918. 2 children dead. 2 sisters dead. 1 nephew at Cape Eugene, Apagena, 23.

Henry Elarnuk: --Died in flu 1918, mother at Wales. 1 brother dead.

Geo. Elakshak: -- Died in flu 1918, 1 girl at Mission, 15.

Seytot: -- Died in flu 1918. Elmer age 14 at the Mission. Mrs. Seytot now Mrs. Robt.

Etuktitik.²⁰⁴

Another affect on the reindeer program was how it tipped the balance of ownership from Native herders to white herders. In many cases, those who inherited deer were in no position to herd them, and therefore sold them very cheaply for credit at the Lomens' store in Nome. With a loss in herding labor also came an inability to practice close herding as herders had done now for over twenty years. By 1920, the Bureau was urging herders to form joint-stock companies for the management of their deer, which changed the character of herding dramatically.

²⁰⁴ [unknown]. Teller Herd Report 1923 [Unpublished] Lomen Family Papers, 1850-1969, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive. 1923, 52-54.

The 1918 flu epidemic took approximately 1,000 lives on the Seward Peninsula within a matter of months.²⁰⁵ Governor Riggs estimated in 1919 that it had taken the lives of 75% of the Seward Peninsula's Alaska Native population. A virus which began somewhere distant, and afflicted nearly the entire globe, had been particularly vicious to the Inupiat of the Seward Peninsula. After 1918, people of the Seward Peninsula could not presume to be immune from the influences of the outside world. The Seward Peninsula had been uniquely affected by the influenza, with perhaps the highest proportion of deaths anywhere in the world. For those who survived there was now a long process of recuperation from the loss of so many family and community members. For communities like Wales, there was a population decline that has lasted through the present-day. Shishmaref, which was spared the influenza virus, became the largest Inupiaq village on the Seward Peninsula after the 1918 epidemic. But in multiple aspects, the Seward Peninsula would never be the same.

²⁰⁵ Clarence Andrews estimated that the death toll between St. Michael on Norton Sound and Cape Prince of Wales was approximately 1,200 Inupiat. Quoted in Ellanna & Sherrod, 2004, 103.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

Without any prolonged periods of conflict or resistance to the changes ushered in with the dawning of the twentieth century, and without any record of a violent confrontation, the two formerly important communities of the Seward Peninsula, Kingegan and Kawerak, were reduced in size and influence by the first two decades of that century. The demise for Kauwerak occurred in the early 1900s, when its residents relocated to other villages closer to new Western settlements. An astoundingly lethal epidemic in 1918 delivered the final blows in Kingegan's decline, which was set in motion by the new opportunities for trade, wage-earning employment, and employment in the reindeer herding program that were introduced in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Without incidents of violence or commotion, the forces that demolished these communities and redistributed the population and influence of Seward Peninsula communities seem like the work of an invisible hand. These changes were not so mysterious, however, if viewed in the light of certain historic events that created a perfect storm of change for the Inupiat of the Kingegan and Kauwerak regions.

This perfect storm began with the introduction of the first American authorities to arrive in the Bering Strait after the United States purchased Alaska, the Revenue Marine Service. Because this part of Alaska had not been colonized under Russian rule, the Revenue Marine's ships, especially its most famous cutter, the *Bear*, provided some of the first contacts between Kingegan and Kauwerak people and Euro-Americans. The service facilitated later contacts between people of these communities and government agents, and enabled other Americans to settle in this part of Alaska and introduce change for the Inupiat who lived there. An American administration of this

part of Alaska followed in the wake of the Revenue Service, whose efforts among the Inupiat of Northwestern Alaska were primarily law enforcement and representation of the new American authority. The American administration's early efforts, which were primarily undertaken by the Bureau of Education, were to assimilate or "Americanize" the Seward Peninsula Inupiat.

The next agent of change to contribute to this perfect storm was the introduction of missions and schools to the Seward Peninsula. These institutions brought Western values, Christian faiths, the English language and Western medicine to the Seward Peninsula, to which the local Inupiat quickly adapted. Schools brought tremendous changes to Alaska Native communities in general; in Wales they introduced English literacy, the adoption of English names, the introduction of new foods, new dress and new customs, that were adopted within an amazingly short time. One of Kingegan's first missionaries, Tom Lopp, formed strong relationships with the people of that community, which may have led Kingegan's leaders to look upon these changes favorably. The new faiths undermined the traditional religious beliefs and created a new source of community for villagers. Kauwerak did not receive a school or a mission and consequently relocated closer to where both a school and mission were established at Port Clarence. The missions and schools prepared the people of these two regions for interaction and new opportunities with the immediate arrival of Western settlers, specifically with the miners who arrived during the Nome Gold Rush in 1900. Places that acquired schools and missions became the new communities of the twentieth century.

The introduction of reindeer and the program to introduce reindeer herding among the Inupiat, also sponsored by the Bureau of Education, was another key event and agent of change for this region. Because of the efforts of specific Inupiaq and Western individuals, particularly some of the early herders from Kingegan (now called Wales) and Teller, reindeer herding was successfully implemented as a new Inupiaq trade and was widely introduced on the peninsula, such that it redefined the Seward Peninsula as the birthplace of reindeer in Alaska. Reindeer herding quickly grew into an industry that focused on markets in the new gold mining settlements on the Seward Peninsula, changing the significance of some Seward Peninsula communities and introducing an income-based economy. The places that received reindeer herds became fixed on the Seward Peninsula as villages of the twentieth century, and reindeer herding introduced new land uses that redefined territorial boundaries and introduced a new concept of community, uniting herders throughout the peninsula.

A final and catastrophic event that most drastically heightened this storm of change for Kingegan and Kauweak was the 1918 influenza epidemic which almost obliterated the remnants of the Kauwerak population and severely reduced the population of Kingegan/Wales. The loss of traditional knowledge, population, self-sufficiency, and independence from the Western world that were caused by the 1918 influenza had profound effects on the people of both regions. Neither has been revitalized as an Inupiaq capital since the epidemic. While these communities have declined in number, communities that were not reached by the influenza, such as Shishmaref and Deering, have grown since the epidemic. Clearly the epidemic was the most damaging element of this typhoon of changes that challenged the traditional role of these two former capitals. Not all of the events were as harmful in nature as the 1918 influenza epidemic, but all

contributed to rapid cultural, economic, and sociopolitical changes that began affecting these two communities at the end of the nineteenth century.

These changes combined into a perfect storm which was both swift and silent, making it unique among storms. The people of this region were well accustomed to physical storms, having weathered storms of tremendous violence before this period in their history. The analogy of a storm is useful for this region, which was eventually toppled by a storm of social changes, some of which it had a direct hand in adopting in these two formerly prominent communities. The changes introduced by these four events—the introduction of American authorities, missions, schools, reindeer and the onslaught of the 1918 influenza epidemic—were revolutionary for Seward Peninsula Inupiat. The loss of two particularly influential Inupiaq communities is perhaps the reason why the recognized names of communities on the Seward Peninsula are predominantly Western ones. No other part of Northwest Alaska has so few Inupiaq community place-names recognized on USGS maps as the Seward Peninsula.

The gold mining history of the Seward Peninsula is an event that has also had immensely transformative impacts on the political and economic geography of the peninsula, and should not be ignored. The events that I have discussed in this thesis are all related to the development of mining on the Seward Peninsula and the development of Nome as a boom town and an important Alaskan city. However, I have not incorporated a full chapter on gold mining for this thesis because my focus has been on agents of change that were brought to Kingegan and Kauwerak and took effect within those two communities. American miners did pursue gold and tin prospects in

the Teller and Mary's Igloo regions, and a very small mining camp was established near the York Mountains south of Wales, but unlike the establishment of American authority, introduction of missions, schools, reindeer and the influenza, these events did not take place within the communities or did not seek to change either community's residents directly. Many Seward Peninsula Inupiat migrated to mining settlements, seasonally or permanently in the twentieth century, but mining did not directly compel the communities these Inupiat came from to change. Therefore, I have left exploration of the role of gold mining in shaping the communities of the Seward Peninsula to a wide range of histories that have been published on Nome and the Nome Gold Rush, and have only discussed mining's influence in connection to the four other events that directly impacted Kingegan and Kauwerak.

The events that this thesis explores—the introduction of an American administration, missions, schools, reindeer and the 1918 epidemic—which took place either simultaneously or in rapid succession, like the metaphor of a perfect storm, caused both the adoption of new Western customs and the abandonment of some aspects of Inupiaq traditional life. Together these changes had an overwhelming long term impact, ultimately transforming the Seward Peninsula's cultural and political landscape.

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