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CULTURAL TIES

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ALASKA NATIONAL REGISTER PROGRAM



travelling
exhibit, p. 2



cover story
continues, p. 3



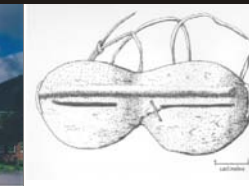
featured
nhls, p. 4-5



team
notes, p. 6



news briefs,
p. 6



artistic
artifacts,
back page

Fragile Treasures Linking Generation to Generation

By Amber Ridington

As an intern at the National Park Service Alaska Support Office during the summer of 2001, I worked on one component of a National Historic Landmarks (NHLs) educational outreach project, a traveling exhibit about the six prehistoric NHLs that will be taken to the Inupiat villages adjacent to the NHL sites. The sites are Birnirk site (Piqniaq)*, Barrow; Ipiutak Site (Tikigak), Pt. Hope; Wales sites (Kingigen); Iyatayet site Shaktoolik and Elim; Cape Krusenstern Archaeological District (Iltiptigvik), Kotzebue and Noatak; and Onion Portage archaeological district (Paatitaaq), Shungnak, Ambler, Kiana, and Kobuk.



Nelson Greist pictured with his granddaughter. NPS Photo by Amber Ridington, 2001.

The goal of the exhibit is to foster education and preservation by highlighting the fragile nature of the sites, and the vital connection between the communities today and these significant places of the past. Dr. Louis Giddings and, later Dr. Douglas Anderson, from Brown University, were pioneering archaeologists who led excavations at three of the NHL sites: Cape Krusenstern, Iyatayet and Onion Portage. These scientists developed close relationships with many Inupiat during their work that collectively spanned from the late 1930s through the 1960s.

From Dr. Giddings' and Dr. Anderson's reports, I compiled a list of 40 Inupiat individuals involved in their archaeological expeditions, and then contacted Jonas Ramoth, the NPS Subsistence Ranger with the Western Arctic National Parklands office located in Kotzebue. The Western Arctic National Parklands office is a management unit that includes Noatak National Preserve, Cape Krusenstern National Monument and Kobuk Valley National Park. I contacted Jonas, to see if any of these people were still alive and if they would

be willing to be interviewed about their experiences, memories and interpretations of the archaeological sites. Jonas proved to be an invaluable guide, interpreter, and also transcriber of the interviews, mostly recorded in Inupiaq.

Jonas Ramoth told me that 10 of the 40 people were alive and well. Jonas and I arranged to work

together and interview five people who had assisted archaeologists in the field. Those interviewed included Almond and Ruth Downey, Nelson Greist, and Wilson and Daisy Tickett.

**With Inupiat stewards of the sites in mind, I wanted to use the names that were meaningful to the local Inupiat shown here in parentheses.*

Continues on page 3

Illustrated Artifacts: Meet Mark Luttrell

By Kyliia McDaniel



This issue of *Cultural Ties* features Alaskan artifacts, a bear carved of ivory on page 7, an Aleut wooden mask possibly used in ceremonial dance pictured at left, and an Alutian Bidarka shown at the bottom right. They were drawn by archaeologist and illustrator, Mark Luttrell. Attracted to Alaska's wilderness, Luttrell has over twenty

years of archaeological experience. He recently returned from Aialik Bay in Kenai Fjords National Park, where he was working on his most current project: the excavation of an Alutiq village site. Luttrell began his career as an illustrator after a colleague discovered his drawings and suggested he continue his craft. The illustrations pictured here are part of a series of forty that will be used in an Alaska Native Cultures Board Game that the Alaska Anthropology Association's Public Education Committee has been developing for the last couple of years. The board game,

designed for fourth grade students who are learning about native cultures as part of their social studies curriculum, will be made available to teachers across the state. For these illustrations, Luttrell used photographs taken of the Alaska Native Artifact collection at the Heritage Library and Museum in Anchorage. The museum's collection of Native Alaska artifacts is one of the more impressive displays of our history and culture ranging from traditional to contemporary artifacts. Luttrell notes that illustrations are extremely valuable assets because they reduce distractions that are often visible in photographs such as a glare or obstructing object. Additionally, illustrations highlight attributes that are most important to archaeologists. For more about Mark Luttrell and his illustrations, visit www.artifactillustration.com



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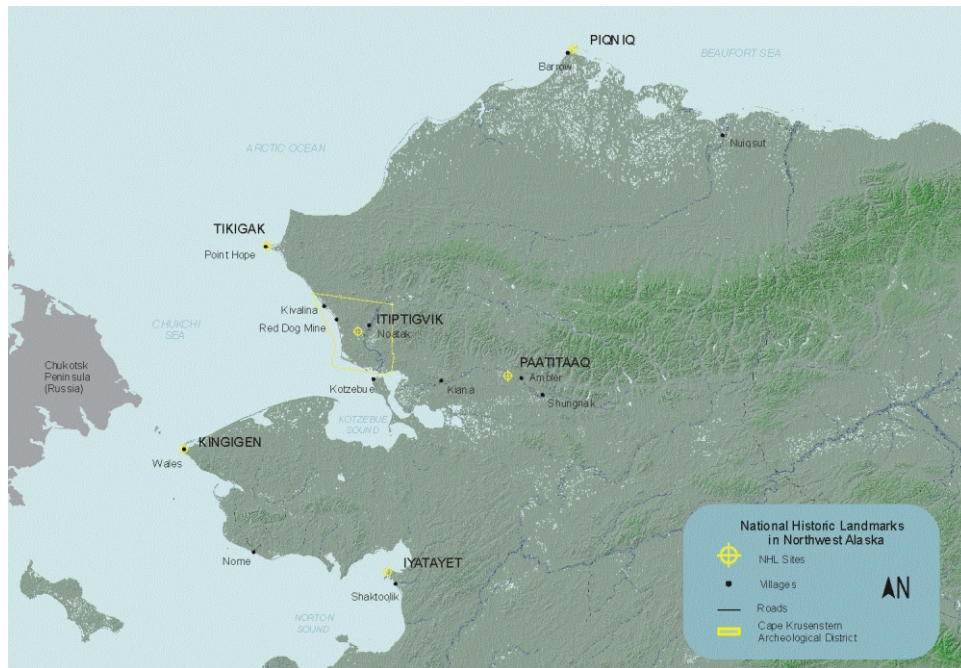
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National Historic Landmarks in Northwestern Alaska

By Becky Saleeby

The National Park Service (NPS) administers the National Historic Landmark (NHL) program throughout the country to identify and protect historic and archeological sites that have exceptional value in illustrating our national heritage. Although some of these landmarks are well known places, such as George Washington's home, Mount Vernon, most are not household names. In Alaska, these nationally significant places are found in virtually all regions of the state from Barrow to Kake, and from Eagle westward to the far tip of the Aleutian chain. Of our 48 National Historic Landmarks in Alaska, six are archeological sites or districts located in the northwestern part of the state. They include the Birnirk site (Barrow), the Wales sites, the Ipiutak site (Pt. Hope), Cape Krusenstern archeological district, Onion Portage, and the Iyatayet site (near Shaktoolik).

Research and interviews conducted during the summer of

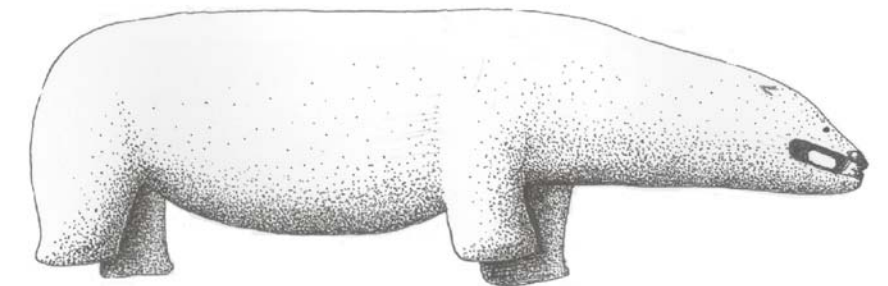
2001 (see cover article) by NPS Subsistence Ranger Jonas Ramoth and NPS anthropologist Amber Ridington, have been used to create a traveling exhibiting entitled, "Fragile Treasures Linking Generation to Generation: National Historic Landmarks in Northwestern Alaska." NPS archeologists Becky Saleeby and Susan Bender and anthropologist Eileen Devinney of Western Arctic Parklands will be bringing the exhibit, along with a slide show and information on grants available for historic preservation, to several villages in northwest Alaska beginning in September 2002. Contact Becky Saleeby at the NPS Alaska Support Office (Anchorage) for further information about scheduling the exhibit for your community (907 644-3205).

Preserving Your National Historic Landmarks

National Historic Landmarks are buildings, sites, districts, structures, and objects that have been determined nationally significant in American history and culture. Several criteria are used to select these landmarks, such as the quality of its significance; its exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States in history, architecture, archeology, technology and culture; and the degree of integrity of location.

The first two Alaska sites to achieve National Historic Landmark (NHL) status were the Ipiutak Site at Point Hope and the Iyatayet Site on Cape Denbigh. Over the years, the list of Alaska NHLs has grown to 48.

Diverse chronologically and geographically, Alaska NHLs are worthy of protection, but their integrity is threatened by the mining of artifacts, vandalism, or the natural processes of erosion. Some of the Alaska NHLs lie on federal or state



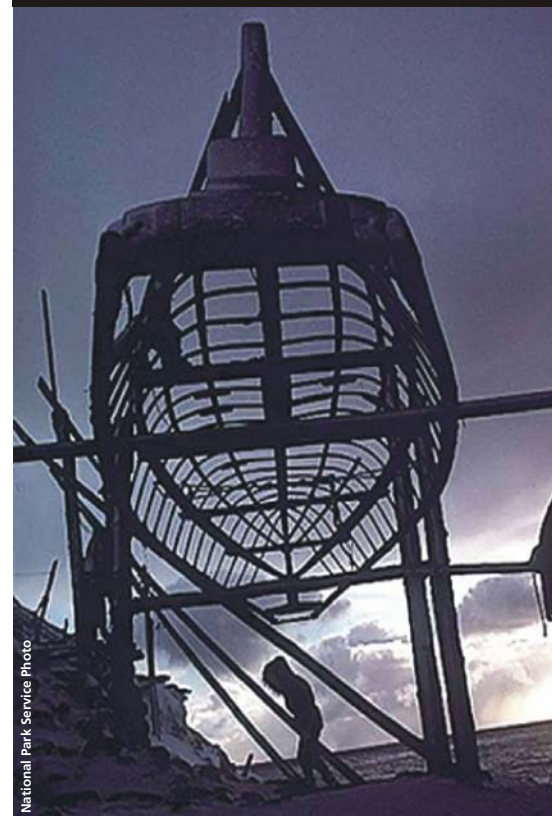
"Bear Carved from Ivory." Drawing by Mark Luttrell.

land, while others are in the hands of villages, native corporations, or private individuals. Regardless of ownership, the National Park Service acts as an advocate for the preservation of all NHLs in Alaska and across the nation.

Limited federal grants through the Historic Preservation Fund are available for preserving or protecting National Historic Landmarks. Often state and local governments have grant and loan programs available for historic preservation. Below is a list of

available grant money that specifically pertains to protecting sites, such as the six NHLs featured in this newsletter. More information about funding for National Historic Landmarks is available at the National Historic Landmark Program website <www.cr.nps.gov/nhl> or by contacting National Park Service-Alaska Support Office's Alaska National Register Team at 907-644-3200.

Historic Preservation Assistance Links



National Park Service Photo

Alaska Association for Historic Preservation. Provides list of endangered properties eligible for grants the following year. Grant requests and nominations for the Alaska Association for Historic Preservation's (AAHP) Ten Most Endangered List should be addressed to Torgeir Robertson, Alaska Association for Historic Preservation, 200 W 34th, #1184, Anchorage, AK 99503.

Alaska Office of History and Archaeology. Includes the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) functions. Through this office, Historic Preservation Funds are available to assist Alaska owners of eligible historic properties. <http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/oha_web/index.htm>

The National Park Service Heritage Preservation Services. Includes links to the following: Grant and Tax Credit Information; Historic Buildings; National Historic Landmarks; and Tribal Preservation Program. <<http://www2.cr.nps.gov>>

National Trust for Historic Preservation. The country's largest non-profit preservation organization, that provides leadership, education and advocacy to save America's historic places and revitalize communities. <<http://www.nthp.org>>

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. The National Park Service, as part of this act, provides funding for a variety of projects, including research, repatriation of cultural materials, and training. <<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nagpra/>>

Efforts Underway to Preserve Unalakleet School Building

by Janet Clemens

Shown here is the Bureau of Indian Affairs Unalakleet School which was constructed during the 1930s. This two-story building remains in its original location and is a distinctive landmark within the community. Many residents attended elementary school here until its closure in the 1980s. The Native Village of Unalakleet is working towards acquiring and restoring the building for reuse as office spaces and community activities. The Village is looking for funding for hazardous materials remediation. Through the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, the National Park Service provides historic preservation technical assistance

to Alaska Native villages. To assist the Village efforts, the National Park Service prepared a condition assessment report and the National Register nomination. Recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the building has been on the Alaska Association for Historic Preservation's List of Ten Endangered properties for the past two years.



BIA School of Unalakleet, 1950. NPS Photo.

Preserving Historic Structures

by Grant Crosby

The Moore Block in Skagway may be one of the gold rush town's oldest and most significant buildings. It was built by Captain William Moore, circa 1897, as an office and personal residence. Today, the Block (a.k.a. the Portland House) contributes to the Skagway and White Pass District National Historic Landmark and Skagway's Historic District, a district exemplary of late 19th century architecture. Owners Virginia Long and Howard Smith are working with NPS historians, archaeologists, historical architects and structural engineers. This team has begun to study the layers of the building's history with the intent of rehabilitating it to its 1902 appearance. Current plans for the rehabilitated structure include commercial space on the ground floor with offices and one-room efficiency apartments on the second floor.

Continued from page 1, Linking Generations...

I flew to Kotzebue to meet Jonas and I worked out the details of our ethnographic fieldwork. There we interviewed Almond and Ruth Downey, and then traveled by boat up the Kobuk River to the villages of Ambler and Shungnak, where we interviewed Nelson Greist and Wilson and Daisy Tickett. By including the words of these local people and their photos in the exhibit, we hoped that it would forge a more personal connection to the sites for the people in each community. Although I was not able to visit all of the communities and collect oral histories related to the other NHL sites, I did make an effort to find pictures and information that involved the local community for use in the exhibit. Many of the Inupiat communities are active in preservation initiatives and were able to provide information about their preservation projects and collaborations with research groups

"NHLs help us understand the ways in which people have lived in northwestern Alaska for over 600

at the University of Alaska at Anchorage, the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission and others.

Herbert Anungazuk, Native Liaison and Heritage Specialist with the NPS in Anchorage, is from Wales and was very generous in sharing his knowledge and expertise. He provided us with access to his oral history work at the Wales (Kingigen) sites, pictures from recent excavations at Wales, and local Inupiat interpretations of artifacts and features for these sites.

While the sites are important in prehistory, they are also important in the living cultural landscapes of the Inupiat. Whether the Inupiat have a



Left, Wilson Tickett Above, Daisy Tickett, 2001.

direct link to the sites, or whether the sites represent a more distant heritage, the Inupiat live with the sites and are their protectors and stewards. The sites have the power to evoke stories about the past and past cultures.

As well as preservation, one of the goals of the exhibit is to tell people about the national significance of the landmark sites and to illustrate how these NHLs help us understand the ways in which people have lived in northwestern Alaska for over 600 generations. This is equivalent to over 11,000 years.

The exhibit entitled, "Fragile Treasures Linking Generation to Generation: National Historic Landmarks in Northern Alaska," emphasizes Inupiat connections to the six NHL sites with visual devices, as well as the recognition of Inupiat

involvement in archaeological work of national significance. By tying local faces and extant traditions to the NHLs it is hoped that the exhibit will engage the Inupiat stewards of the sites and promote appreciation and preservation of the national historic landmark sites.

Amber Ridington received her Master's Degree in Folk Studies at Western Kentucky University. She served as an intern with the Cultural Resources Team of the National Park Service in Anchorage from June through August 2001.



Ruth and Almond Downey in Kotzebue. All NPS Photos on this page by A. Ridington, 2001.

News Briefs

Alaska Archaeology Month
The National Park Service, one of the cooperating agencies within the Public Education Committee of the Alaska Anthropological Association sponsors Alaska Archaeology Month. It includes evening public lectures, slide shows, hands-on activities for kids, and museum displays and tours. Look for more information on Alaska Archaeology Month 2003 in upcoming issues of the newsletter.



History Day in Alaska
History Day in Alaska, which is sponsored by the National Park Service, is a key component of the National History Day program. It serves as a model for meeting national history standards for performance assessment. Over 2,000 students across the United States including Alaskan students participate each year. The next issue of *Cultural Ties* will feature information about the History Day



Program.
Alaska's Newest Landmark
On August 7, 2001, the Secretary of the Interior designated the Sheldon Jackson School a National Historic Landmark. This is the newest of Alaska's Landmarks (of which there are 48). Sheldon Jackson School is recognized for its role in the education of Alaska Natives during the 20th century. Construction of the formal campus plan took place in Sitka in 1910 and 1911, as a continuation of the Sitka Presbyterian

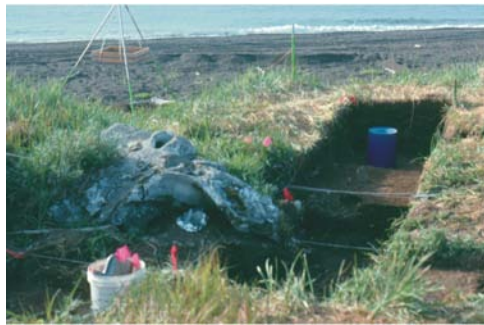


National Historic Landmarks of Northwest Alaska: Illustrating and Interpreting The Heritage of the United States



Onion Portage (Paatitaaq)

Streams of migrating caribou from the Western Arctic herd have crossed the Kobuk River at Onion Portage for thousands of years, and people have hunted them here for at least the last ten to twelve millennia. People of the village of Kobuk, a few miles upriver, still hunt caribou at the portage in the fall. The layered remains of the camps and villages of the past, preserved in an amazingly deep archaeological deposit at Onion Portage, originally discovered by J. Louis Giddings in 1941, have helped archaeologists piece together the story of prehistoric northwest Alaska. Eight different cultures, ranging from the Akmak complex (over 8,500 years old) through the Arctic Woodland Eskimo culture (A.D. 1000-1700) have been identified at the site by Douglas D. Anderson, who supervised intensive excavations at the site in the 1960s. Onion Portage was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1978.



Cape Krusenstern (Itiptigvik)

Several hundred sites compose this vast archeological district in northwestern Alaska. The sites are situated along a series of 114 beach ridges, horizontally stratified with the oldest sites found farthest from the present coastline and the youngest on the most recently formed beach ridges. The sweep of arctic prehistory, dating from about 5,000 years ago up through cultures ancestral to modern Inupiat Eskimo occupation of the area, has been documented on these ridges, with even earlier sites being found on the cliffs above. J. Louis Giddings and his crew, which included Inupiat from nearby villages, discovered this rich archeological district in 1960. This photo, taken in 1997 during a National Park Service archaeological project, shows the excavation of one of the more recent sites at Cape Krusenstern. The area is still a subsistence seal-hunting area today.



Iyatayet

Caribou and seal hunters of five thousand years ago camped during the summers on the terrace above this small bay, called Iyatayet, in Norton Sound. When archaeologist J. Louis Giddings found this ancient camp in 1948, it was the oldest known prehistoric site on the Alaska coast. This photo, taken by Giddings in 1950, shows his camp on the mouth of Iyatayet Creek. Composed of three separate prehistoric cultures--Nukleet, Norton, and Denbigh Flint Complex--the site preserves chipped stone tools reminiscent of the Ipiutak culture, but also ground stone tools, stone lamps, and well-fired pottery. The first appearance of pottery as well as the presence of a large prehistoric permanent winter village in the Arctic was noted during excavations at Iyatayet. It was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1961.



Wales (Kingigen)

Wales is on Cape Prince of Wales, the westernmost point of land on the North American continent, and the closest point to Asia. There has been a whaling and seal-hunting village here for the last 1,500 years. The excavations at the Wales Sites provided the first evidence of successive stages of prehistoric Eskimo culture in northern Alaska. The Landmark, designated in 1962, is composed of three prehistoric sites containing material that spans the period from the Birnirk culture (500 to 900 AD) to the present. The first discovery of the Thule culture in Alaska, which chronologically follows Birnirk, was made at the Kurigatavik site in Wales. In recent years, the National Science Foundation has funded a multi-year project focusing on whaling societies in the western arctic. As part of the project, a team of archeologists and local people excavated sites in Wales. It incorporated the artifacts that were found during the excavation into a display for the local school.



Birnirk (Piqniq)

Birnirk, located five miles northeast of Barrow, is the type-site for the Birnirk culture (500 to 800 AD), which represents the earliest recognizable manifestation of the historic Inupiat culture in northern Alaska. The site is composed of a group of sixteen well-defined mounds arranged roughly in three rows parallel to the beach. The mounds have surfaces pitted with depressions marking house pits and caches. Archaeological test pits were first excavated at Birnirk by James Ford in the early 1930s, and subsequently by Wilbert Carter in the early 1950s. A wide assortment of artifacts, including harpoons for whale and seal hunting, specialized ice-hunting tools, leisters for fishing, and traveling gear, such as toboggans, were found at the site. There is still a summer hunting camp at Birnirk today. It was designated as an NHL on December 29, 1962. Shown here is photo of a mound at the Birnirk site taken in 1953 by Wilbert K. Carter.



Ipiutak (Tikigak)

The Ipiutak site at Pt. Hope, designated as a National Historic Landmark on January 20, 1961, is the type-site for the Ipiutak culture that flourished in northwestern Alaska around the beginning of the Christian era. The site, first discovered in 1939 by Helge Larsen, Froelich Rainey, and J. L. Giddings, encompasses a series of shallow, rectangular house depressions on low beach ridges south of Ipiutak Lagoon. Some 575 house depressions were eventually mapped at the site, thus making it one of the largest known prehistoric settlements in the Alaskan arctic. The Ipiutak culture is also significant for its elaborate burial goods and for its early evidence for the use of iron. The Ipiutak site, along with the three other nearby sites (Old Tigara pictured here, New Tigara and Jabbertown) represent 2,000 years of continuous occupation of Pt. Hope.