

LOST VILLAGES OF THE EASTERN ALEUTIANS

BIORKA·KASHEGA·MAKUSHIN

by
RAY HUDSON
&
RACHEL MASON





As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally-owned public lands and natural and cultural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation.



The Cultural Resources Programs of the National Park Service have responsibilities that include stewardship of historic buildings, museum collections, archeological sites, cultural landscapes, oral and written histories, and ethnographic resources.

Our mission is to identify, evaluate and preserve the cultural resources of the park areas and to bring an understanding of these resources to the public. Congress has mandated that we preserve these resources because they are important components of our national and personal identity.

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During World War II the remote Aleutian Islands, home to the Unanga (Aleut) people for over 8,000 years, became one of the fiercely contested battlegrounds of the Pacific. This thousand-mile-long archipelago saw the first invasion of American soil since the War of 1812, a mass internment of American civilians, a 15-month air war, and one of the deadliest battles in the Pacific Theatre.



In 1996 Congress designated the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area to interpret, educate, and inspire present and future generations about the history of the Unanga and the Aleutian Islands in the defense of the United States in World War II. In a unique arrangement, the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area and visitor center are owned and managed by the Ounalashka Corporation (the village corporation for Unalaska) and the National Park Service provides them with technical assistance. Through this cooperative partnership, the Unanga are the keepers of their history and invite the public to learn more about their past and present.

This project was funded by the National Park Service, Affiliated Areas Program in support of the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area, in cooperation with the Aleutian Pribilof Heritage Group.

For information about the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area, visit www.nps.gov/aleu/ or contact:

Alaska Affiliated Areas	Ounalashka Corporation	Visitor Information
240 West 5th Ave	P.O. Box 149	(907) 581-1276
Anchorage, Alaska 99501	Unalaska, Alaska 99685	Visitor Center
(907) 644-3503		(907) 581-9944

Lost Villages of the Eastern Aleutians: Biorka, Kashtega, Makushin

Ray Hudson/Rachel Mason

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Three Storytellers. Note: All woodblock prints in this publication by Ray Hudson. © Ray Hudson. Reproduction in any manner prohibited without the artist's consent.

Front cover: Nikolai Lekanoff, Sr., and his daughter Okalena Patricia Lekanoff-Gregory, Makushin, August 31, 2009. Photograph by Lauren Adams.

Title page: Biorka, rain, fog, September 3, 2010. Photograph by Carlene Arnold.

Contents

Preface	V
PART ONE: THOSE OLD-TIME PEOPLE	1
Chapter 1	1
Chapter 3	29
Chapter 5	65
Chapter 6	83
Chapter 7	109
PART TWO: THE FINAL DECADES	131
Chapter 8	131
Chapter 9	141
Chapter 12	185
Chapter 13	195
Chapter 14	207
Chapter 15	219
Chapter 16	235
Chapter 17	243
Chapter 18	257
Chapter 19	275
Epilogue	283

*First and most importantly,
we want to thank the elders...*

"Helping George" at
Kashega. September
2, 2010. Photograph by
Roberta Gordaoff.



Preface



First and most importantly, we want to thank the elders who shared information about Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin. Without their participation, this project would have been, if not impossible, certainly less meaningful and detailed. In 2004 interviews were conducted with Nikolai Galaktionoff, Moses Gordieff, Nikolai S. Lekanoff, Irene Makarin, and Eva Tcheripanoff. By the time this book was begun, Irene and Moses had passed away. Nick Galaktionoff died a few weeks before it was completed. Special thanks go to Mary Diakanoff and George Gordaoff for conversations about their memories of Kashega.

All errors of fact and interpretation are due to our inadequate understanding. We would encourage descendants of people who lived in these villages to record the accounts that exist within their families, however brief, however insignificant they might seem, so that future historians from among Unangaꝰ themselves will tell this story with greater accuracy and depth.

Several individuals preceded us in this project and we have built on their work. They include Linda Cook, Yvonne Meyer, Bruce Greenwood, and Annaliese Jacobs Bateman. Janis Kozlowski at the National Park Service (NPS) has long championed the Lost Villages Project. The project was made possible by the enthusiastic support of the Ounalashka Corporation (OC), partners with the NPS and managers of the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area. The OC generously contributed a Russian Orthodox cross to plant at the site of each of the villages of Makushin, Kashega and Biorka.

Carlene Arnold's 2011 thesis on the evacuation, including interviews with Mary Diakanoff, Alice Petrivelli, and George Gordaoff, was of great help. Special thanks go to Marti Murray for her heroic genealogical work as a component of the Lost Villages Project. Her mini-biographies were especially valuable during the writing of the final chapters. We want to thank Mary Diakanoff for photographs of Kashega. The photographs from the Alice Moller Collection are courtesy of AB Rankin. Thanks also to Jennie Lekanoff for her photographs.

Many individuals contributed to this volume: Candace Beery, Anna Jean Bereskin, Shawn Dickson, Jeff Dickrell, Okalena Patricia Lekanoff-Gregory, Cora Holmes, Alex and Rena Kudrin, Frederick Lekanoff, Michael Livingston, Jane Mensoff, John Moller, Michael Swetzof, and Lydia Borenin Vincler. Thanks also to Millie McKeown, Cultural Heritage Director at the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association for making its library and archive available. Zoya Johnson provided translations from Russian material. Valuable late 19th century material was made available by J. Penelope Goforth's project, *Bringing Aleutian History Home: the Lost Ledgers of the Alaska Commercial Company 1875-1897*. We thank her for allowing the reproduction of a page from one of the ledgers. Debbie Corbett, Peat Galaktionoff, and Doug Veltre read the manuscript and made numerous helpful suggestions for which we are very grateful. Eileen Devinney skillfully edited and proofread manuscripts at several phases of this project. Francis Broderick of Archgraphics crafted the book with sensitivity, professionalism, and an eye for details. His persistence in rendering words in Unangam tunuu with accurate typography, locating historical images, and placing them so they enhanced the text are deeply appreciated.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to various archives. These include the National Archives and Record Administration in Washington, D.C. and Suitland, Maryland, along with its branch facilities in Seattle and Anchorage; Smithsonian Archives; National Anthropological Archives; Archives and Special Collections Department at the University of Alaska Anchorage; Alaska and Polar Regions Collections and Archives at the University of Alaska Fairbanks; Special Collections at the University of Washington; the Bancroft Library, University of California; and the Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries. Special thanks to Tatyana Stepanova at the Alaska State Archives for helping to resolve a difficult question about the evacuation.

Each of us is indebted to specific individuals.

Ray Hudson: AB Rankin invited me along on a trip to Kashega in 1994. The late Steve McGlashan made a 1970 visit to Makushin possible. Although I met Andrew Makarin and George Borenin in the early 1960s, I was unaware of the significant roles they had played in their villages. In the years prior to the Lost Villages Project, I benefited from conversations with Nicholai Lekanoff, Nicholai Galaktionoff, Dora Kudrin, Polly Lekanoff, Alice Moller, and Sophia Pletnikoff. Father Ishmael Gromoff and Matushka Platonida Gromoff provided translations during interviews with Sophia Pletnikoff, Nick Galaktionoff, and Andrew Makarin (this last was conducted by Dorothy Jones). I continue to be indebted to Flora Tutiakoff for sharing material from her late husband, Philemon Tutiakoff. It has been my honor to work from his copy of Kirtland and Coffin's *The Relocation and Internment of the Aleuts during World War II*.

Rachel Mason: All those who made the visits to Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin possible enriched this story. I would like to thank Debbie Corbett for making the boat charters possible. Many thanks to Captain Billy and the crew of the *Tigla* for their assistance, not only with the boat travel, but with events at the village sites, including digging holes to plant crosses. Thank you also to Lauren Adams of KUCB, Unalaska Community Broadcasting, as well as Laresa Syvertson and Alexandra Gutierrez, for recording the village visits on videotape. Thank you to Gregory Jones, Jane Mensoff, Patty Gregory, Josy Shangin, and Roberta Gordaoff for documenting our experiences in photographs. I am also grateful for the research and field assistance of Shannon Apgar-Kurtz in the early stages of the project, and for Marilyn Bost's help in the final stages.

Finally, a word about the spelling of family names. Contemporary spellings often differ from the transliterations used by scholars. For example, today's *Shaishnikoff* family finds its ancestors referred to as *Shaiashnikovs*. Even among close relatives, spelling may differ, as with the brothers Walter *Dyakanoff* and Cecil *Diakanoff*. When quoting 19th century material directly, that spelling was retained. This was often phonetically odd in Alaska Commercial Company documents. Generally, scholarly transliterations were used when referring to 19th century individuals. When writing about individuals in the 20th century, however, we used spellings preferred by contemporary families. Thus, Abraham *Yatchemenev* (active c. 1850) appears as do both Alexei *Yatchmeneff* and John *Yatchmenoff* (for 20th century individuals). The 19th century Petukhovs became the 20th century Petukoff and, later, the Petikoff families. Similar quandaries exist with given names. For example, Ivan Denisoff was known as *Ivan* to his village contemporaries, but generally referred to as *John* in English language records and by exclusively English speakers. To force consistency would suggest a misleading cultural continuity. *Aleut* and *Unanga* (with its grammatical and regional variations) are used somewhat interchangeably, but with a tendency to employ *Aleut* in contexts where that word was historically used and *Unanga* at other times. *Unangan*, although typographically convenient and easier to pronounce, is the eastern plural and not the collective noun.



Ruins of the structure protecting the altar site at the Chapel of St. Nicholas at Biorka. Photograph by Marie Lowe.