Chapter 9
An Uncertain Future

With the end of sea otter hunting on the horizon, men from the three villages depended more and more on fox trapping during winter months to supplement their meager sea otter income. Trappers traveled to Unalaska to sell red and cross fox pelts. For a few years—while the two Unalaska stores, the AC Company and Nadir Kafoury's store, were in competition with the North American Commercial Company store at Dutch Harbor—there was the possibility of securing slightly higher prices. The NAC Company agent noted some of this activity in his log:

January 13, 1905: "Makushin and Cashega natives in today with a few baskets but no skins. They sold all their skins in Unalaska."

March 18, 1905: "Makushin natives in but sold all skins in Unalaska."

November 7, 1905: "The Makushin natives were over today, and we purchased quite a number of fox skins from them."

November 14, 1905: "There were two Biorka natives over today buying some things. They had some fox skins but they sold them to Kafourey; he paid them $3.00 for red fox."

December 6, 1905: "The Makushin natives were in today. They brought in quite a number of fox skins. We got a fine silver gray fox from them. It is almost black. We paid them $75.00 for it."

March 13, 1906: "The Biorka natives were here today; they evidently sold quite a lot of furs in Unalaska as they had plenty of money."

North American Commercial Company buildings at Dutch Harbor, UAA-hmc-1011-35a, McKeown Family photographs, Archives & Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage.

Unfortunately, extant records are insufficient to even estimate the total amount villages received from trapping. What is clear is that men from the three villages had little involvement in blue fox farming or trapping, a business that was developing during this period. It was most successful when an entire island was leased from the government and stocked with blue fox becoming, in effect, a self-sustaining fox farm thanks to previously unmolested bird colonies. Samuel Applegate of Unalaska had been attracted to the business in the early 1890s and by 1897 he had stocked Samalga Island, off the southern tip of Umnak, followed by Ogliuga and Skagul—two of the Delarof Islands east of Amchitka.[1] He employed Nikolski men to trap for him. A.B. Somerville was another early fox farmer, and he concentrated on Attu.

"Kashega, Biorka, and Makushin didn't have an island for the blue-fox trapping," said Henry Swanson when asked why these villages had disappeared while Nikolski on Umnak Island had endured.[2] The reasons were complex, as Henry acknowledged, but the lack of a fox island was certainly a major contributor. Despite their involvement in fox trapping, neither Nikolski nor Attu saw an improvement in living conditions, especially during the first two decades of the century. Securing an island required an application process that was difficult for non-English speakers unaccustomed to government bureaucracy. At Unalaska, men turned for assistance to Nicholas Bolshanin, the deputy U.S.

commissioner. He had arrived at Unalaska from Sitka in 1905. In 1910 he married Olga C. Reinken, the daughter of Adolph and Alexandra Reinken, and a 1909 graduate of Carlisle Industrial School in Pennsylvania.[3] Bolshanin was a controversial character with an inimical relationship with men connected to the AC Company. As he said to Donald Stevenson, a game warden at Unalaska, "The town is small; the factions here are many." If anyone did anything illegal "the whole town of Unalaska would know all of the facts and more, too, within one hour." Officials would be "about the last to hear about it, but it would be sure to get around."[4] As though to give credence to Bolshanin's statement, Albert C. Goss asserted that Bolshanin only agreed to submit fox island applications if he were taken on as a "silent partner" and received, according to rumors, one-fourth of the profits. Goss, a friend of Samuel Applegate and of the AC Company, reported that Emelian Berikoff had turned down Bolshanin's offer because the commissioner had "wanted too much."[5]

There are no records of men from Kashega or Makushin leasing islands prior to 1920. Their trapping continued in traditional ways on Unalaska Island itself. "They have hard work to make a living out of the few foxes they catch," Paul Buckley wrote about Kashega and Chernofski in 1917."[6] Kerik Popoff of Biorka secured a lease to Old Man Rocks and the Signals in 1916 although, according to Stevenson, they were "nothing but rocks and have no value as fox islands." Popoff stocked nearby Egg Island—either purchasing blue fox from Bolshanin for this purpose or taking them from Unalga Island (an island leased by Bolshanin and L.A. Lavigne). "They are reported to be a bunch of thieves," the warden wrote about Popoff and his unnamed companions.[7] Alexei Ermeloff of Biorka leased part of the Baby Islands in 1916 as did Alexei Yatchmeneff the same year. For practical purposes, fox trapping by men from all three villages remained a part-time occupation and provided minimal income.

When winter trapping ended, men from the three villages occasionally found employment at Unalaska, coaling ships, sacking coal for shipment to the Pribilof Islands, working at construction, and helping with pile-driving timbers for new docks. Again, when both large companies were in operation, there was a bit of competition. Before Father Kashevaroff set off on a trip by baidarka to the villages on Unalaska on June 22, 1903, he asked the NAC Company agent if he wanted any laborers. "I told him to send us ten of the best he could find," the agent wrote, "and to tell them we would give them a place to live here while they were working." Thirteen men from Makushin arrived seven days later and were put to work. When they learned that a white man was getting 25¢ an hour, they went on a temporary strike demanding the same. He was, in fact, getting $2.00 a day, but he boarded himself.

> Their Chief in Unalaska told them not to work here unless we paid them the same. We told the Natives what we had paid the white man; and also told them we would not pay them anymore

> than they had been getting. I guess what the Chief told them did not cut much figure, for we had all the Natives we wanted today.[8]

Or else, the agent's explanation made sense. At times the NAC Company was unable to get enough workers as they were employed by the AC Company or working at the mine that was being developed at Huntsville, a few miles out of the village in Captains Bay. "Have seven natives sacking coal for St. George Island," wrote the NAC Company agent on April 23, 1906.

> I didn't want to have it sacked yet, but I was afraid if I waited until next month we might not be able to get men, as the A.C. Co. will have a coal ship some time during May and I think it is quite likely work will commence in the mine above Unalaska next month, and if it does, it is quite likely most of the Unalaska natives will be employed there.[9]

On May 8, 1906, news of the great San Francisco earthquake arrived. The AC Company headquarters building was consumed in the subsequent fire. On June 6 word arrived that because of the disaster the company was unable to continue support for the Huntsville mine. A week later the owners decided to press on even without the company's backing. By June 20 with 15 Unangax̂ employed at the mine and others out subsistence fishing, the NAC Company agent had "considerable trouble in getting natives to coal" a ship for them. Most of the Unalaska Natives were working for the AC Company unloading freight or coaling a revenue cutter. He was able to hire men from Makushin. To make matters worse, six prospectors arrived in July to investigate sulfur deposits on the volcano.

Whether they received money for furs or earned it by working for one of the companies at Unalaska, the allure of goods in the store often meant the money went as quickly as it was received. In August 1903, however, after they had been paid for work done at the NAC Company, the Makushin men "put their money back in the safe for us to keep for them." They kept it there until they returned home a few days later.[10]

Commercial fishing, although initiated by outsiders, held the promise of economic improvement for Makushin and Kashega. As early as 1904 sites were claimed at Volcano Bay for "Canning, Trading and Manufacturing Purposes." In 1909 Nicholas Bolshanin had recommended that the government send two schooners to train Native men in catching, salting, and marketing cod and other fish. He said that at the present time, one white man with the apparatus at his command could do as much as six Native fishermen.[11] In January 1912 a cannery or salting site, along with water rights to the creek, was claimed at Makushin Village by W. B. Hastings, the deputy U.S. marshal at Unalaska. He did the same for a location at "old Makusin village" at Volcano Bay. James J. Osmund of Astoria, Oregon,

appointed Hastings his attorney for a similar claim at Volcano Bay, next to Hastings' own claim.[12] A year later Thomas Snow filed for a trade and manufacturing site at Kashega, with Cornelius Kudrin as his witness.[13]

Nothing actually developed, however, until Pacific American Fisheries entered the picture. PAF had operated salmon canneries in Puget Sound and Alaska since 1899. In 1914 Robert Forbes became the general manager for Alaska, and in December 1915 he submitted a petition to the Department of Commerce seeking permission to establish a salmon cannery "within the Aleutian Islands Reservation." The petition was signed by 109 men from several villages including Kashega, Makushin, and Biorka. It appears to have been drafted by Alexei Yatchmeneff, "Chief Aleutian Islands," and Leonti Siftsoff, reader at the Holy Ascension church. "Our means of earning a livelihood is limited to such an extent that at times we barely have enough to live on," the petition began before acknowledging support for the planned cannery.[14] It was dated September 29, 1915, but, of course, it took several weeks if not months to secure all the signatures.

Forbes had been in communication with Nicholas Bolshanin who enthusiastically supported the idea of a salmon cannery in the Makushin area and arranged for the petition. In his further attempt to discredit Bolshanin, A.C. Goss described how the commissioner quietly went "about among the natives asking them to sign same. Whenever he saw a native in town from any of the outside villages he would call him into his office and have him sign the paper and then caution him to say nothing about it. None of the white people in Unalaska knew of this petition being circulated at the time. It is said that for the signatures and for obtaining the consent of the Department he was promised to be put in charge of the cannery as manager if enough fish were to be had to make it a success."[15]

Bolshanin traveled to the Makushin area to locate the best site and chose Makushin Village itself, with its wide stream. It was a central location between Kashega to the south and Wislow, located on the north side of the island at a fine salmon stream. A secondary location was found inside Makushin Bay at a site that was "almost land locked and with all the good qualities desired." He attempted to estimate the amount of available fish by calculating from what Makushin villagers dried for their own use. He was told the fish were "as thick as kelp." People at Makushin fished in the local stream using a small seine and took about 13,500 fish per year, or about 1,500 for each of the nine families. "At Kashega," he wrote, "where it is claimed are more salmon and more of a population 20,000 fish is generally put up." He figured that with good equipment over twenty-five times that amount could be secured. Bolshanin thought that utilizing local labor would be sufficient. Villagers were knowledgeable about salting and using a drag seine; however, he thought they would need supervision in the use of purse seines.[16]

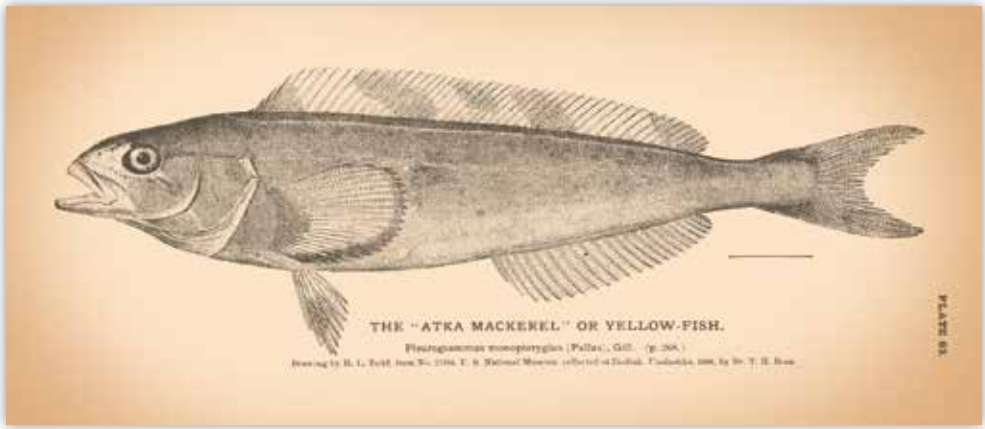
On October 4, 1915, Bolshanin claimed a saltery site at "New Makushin Village" along with a claim for water from Makushin creek. The

claim was witnessed by the same Emelian Berikoff who had supposedly objected to Bolshanin's dealing relative to fox permits. Bolshanin also claimed a second site at the head of Makushin Bay in an unnamed cove that he called Bolshanin Cove; this was witnessed by Alex Tutiakoff. The following year, on April 5, Bolshanin sold the two sites and water rights to the Pacific American Fisheries for $75.00.[17] (In 1916 Bolshanin, on behalf of the Lucky Strike Mining Claim, filed a mining claim in Anderson Bay, "in a westerly direction from the right arm of Anderson Bay, in Makushin Bay, near a creek, about 1 mile from the beach." He enlisted Vasilii Petikoff and Peter Petikoff, along with Paul Buckley, as locators.[18])

In the summer of 1916 the Pacific American Fisheries had three vessels fishing at Kashega for a cannery that they had established deep inside Makushin Bay at a location known as Cannery Point. "The people [at Kashega] appeared prosperous," wrote Captain B.L. Reed of the *McCulloch* that summer, "and there was on hand a large supply of salmon. It is reported that nine men from the village were employed at the Makushin Bay cannery."[19] At the same time, Chernofski was described as "a poverty-stricken place" where people had neither flour nor tea nor ammunition. A sack of flour was given to each of the seven households and the sailors contributed old clothing. A year later, Chernofski residents reported that white fishermen from PAF were catching salmon in the stream at Kashega with nets and traps. F. G. Dodge, captain of the cutter *Unalga*, investigated and found a vessel from the cannery anchored off the village. As far as Dodge could discover, however, the only illegal fishing was being done by residents of the village who had constructed 30 box traps across the two streams entering the bay where they caught salmon, primarily red. This was a widespread technique that was used also at Nikolski and at Attu. At both Kashega and Attu Dodge told villagers to secure fish only by drift and gill nets in the bay, away from the mouth of any streams. If they fished in the rivers or lakes, it had to be with spears only.[20]

By 1917 the cannery in Makushin Bay was closing down. Applegate employed 14 Nikolski men that year while other men from the village went to Makushin, expecting to work in the cannery established there. Instead, they were taken to a cannery on the Alaska Peninsula. "At Makushin they were employing as few men as possible," Applegate reported, "as it was the intention to dismantle the plant if the season again proved a failure, which it did, and they have already taken apart much of the machinery with a view of moving the plant up somewhere in Bristol Bay next year."[21]

While the cannery at Makushin provided minimal employment for Makushin and Kashega men, even that was not available to men from Biorka. The Union Fish Company of Seattle briefly operated a saltery on Tigalda in 1916, but their labor was all imported. The business was located at the site of an old village, about 200 feet from an old cemetery. Men at the cod station shot young fox during the summer months, seriously jeopardizing the trapping that Akutan men did on the island during the winter months.[22] This saltery was operating without a permit,



The "Atka Mackerel" or yellow fish, Pleurogrammus monopterygius (Pallas), Gill. (specimen collected at "Illiuliuk, Unalashka," 1880 by Dr. T. H. Bean). NOAA.

however, and before long it was moved to Nagai Island in the Shumagin Islands where the company's station had recently burned down.[23] Six Biorka men fished for the Alaska Fishing Company in the summer of 1918 at Wislow, northwest of Unalaska. However, "after they caught 200 barrels they quit because they thought they had enough."[24]

In November 1916 when Paul Buckley sought permission to establish a cod station on Unalaska Island and a salmon cannery in Pumicestone Bay, he provided a petition from residents of Kashega and Chernofski. "We have had a hard struggle for years to get the necessities of life," the petition stated, "and will gladly give permission to anyone to fish in the waters around our villages, if they will give us employment and an opportunity to sell the fish that we catch."[25] Again, the petition was headed by the signature of Alexei Yatchmeneff, "Chief of Unalaska Island Natives." Buckley was initially denied the salmon cannery but after further lobbying, the salmon cannery was also allowed. H. F. Moore, acting commissioner, wrote that "it is with some misgiving that this permit is granted" as it "may result in drawing too heavily upon the supply of salmon." However, it is granted "to further the interests of the natives in every way possible" even though the number of permits that have been granted may well mean that "native labor will be inadequate to meet the demand already created."[26] As of February 1917 there were ten active permits for the "Aleutian Islands Reservation" assigned to Buckley, Somerville, Applegate, Goss, Pacific American Fisheries, and the Sockeye Salmon Company.

In August 1918 Buckley wrote that his codfish operation at Akutan had been successful and that he had encouraged others to get into the business of salting cod and salmon. "This year every able bodied native in this section has had all the work they wanted," he wrote, "—in fact, there has been a scarcity of labor here".[27] In 1918 his company, the Unalaska Atkafish Company, received a permit to establish a saltery at English Bay. He had filed a trade and manufacturing site on the north shore of the bay in September 1916 (with Carl O. Angell).[28] Vasilii Shaiasnikov was to be his manager and ten men from Biorka were to do the the cod and salmon fishing for "Atkafish."

"Oonalashkan Natives Cod-Fishing. An Aleutian Fisherman and Bidarka hooking 'Treesca' in Oolachta Harbor, Oonalashka Island." E. H. Elliott, 1897. NOAA.

Ownership and operation of cod and salmon plants shifted. The Bering Sea Fisheries Company, out of Seattle, had salteries at Station Bay, Boulder Bay, and Dory Bay, all at the south end of Unalaska Island. Lars Mikkelsen had established these after consultation with Captain Dodge of the *Unalga* and following encouragement from Father Hotovitsky at Unalaska.[29] The priest's interest in economic improvement for his parish would continue for decades after he had moved to King Cove around 1920. The company anticipated opening another plant at Kuliliak Bay, on the Pacific Ocean side of the pass from Kashega, in the spring of 1921.[30] Applegate, in a final volley as he sold his Nikolski holdings to A.C. Goss, objected to Mikkelsen's ventures. The company's use of local men as fishermen did not succeed and most of its fishermen were Scandinavians. In 1919 it employed sixteen Unangax̂ men, but the following year only about five Chernofski men were hired and assigned jobs of unloading freight at Station Bay.[31]

With little income from either fox trapping or fishing, men continued to rely on traditional sealing to secure food. Young migrating fur seals continued to be preferred, but hunting them was illegal. Following hearings and inspections at Akutan related to illegal seal hunting, Lieut. Comdr. J. F. Hottel, the commanding officer of the *Haida* wrote, "The natives are a poor lot and the whaling station, from employment at which they derive their main revenue[,] not having been in operation last year, they had a hard time getting through the past winter and it seems safe to presume that their hunting which, according to all accounts, was very limited, was prosecuted mainly for purpose of obtaining food, the skins being used for boat top covering (these natives use skin boats almost exclusively) and was a matter of self preservation."[32]

While sea lion skins were the preferred covering for baidarkas, any sea mammal skin could be utilized and consequently, as Hottel noted, hunting seals was a continuing necessity for any village that depended on skin boats. The reliance on skin boats varied from place to place as Stevenson reported in 1923. People at both Attu and Atka employed the vessel while at Nikolski its use continued although people "are not so proficient" in its use and stayed near the island. The kayak was not used at Unalaska, Morzhovoi, or Belkovski.[33] Consequently, its dominance at Akutan in 1922 is noteworthy and suggests its continuation at Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega.

Harry J. Christoffers, an agent for the Fish and Wildlife Service stationed at Unalaska, tried to ascertain the amount of illegal fur seal hunting. The skins were sold to men aboard various vessels and occasionally smuggled to British Columbia in barrels aboard codfish schooners. He implicated N.E. Bolshanin, O.K. Quean, and Hugh McGlashan, the trader at Akutan, with Bolshanin as the ringleader. Even Father Hotovitsky was said to have purchased seal skins from local men. Bolshanin used his vessel, the schooner *Lettie*, that he had purchased in the winter of 1915-16 and hired E.L. Larson to operate. Taking the vessel as far as Attu, Larson would stop at various villages to trade. "The amount of trading which can be done, however, is very small as there is a government store and a trader at Atka and two traders at Attu," wrote Christoffers who heard that Larson had returned to Unalaska that winter with "two bales of seal skins on the *Lettie* from Atka, Makushin and other places" that he later disposed of at Akutan.[34] He heard that O.K. Quean had purchased about 60 fur seal skins from men at Unalaska and villages to the west during the winters of 1913-1914 and 1914-1915.[35] Christoffers was frustrated and recommended various undercover ploys to secure proof needed for prosecution. Seal hunting continued but with little impact on what families earned.

"There is no question but that there is or has been a sort of dry rot or decay of all industries within the Aleutian Islands since the advent of the Americans," wrote Donald H. Stevenson, Reservation and Fur Warden for the region, in 1924. "It is my sincere wish that some permanent industry will be developed in the near future which will give the native residents as well as others…a steady solid means of livelihood as compared to a hand to mouth existence as is now the case."[36] Sheep ranching promised to be that "permanent industry."[37] Its history is as tangled as the venture was tangential to the economic well being of Chernofski and Kashega.[38] In 1915 Paul Buckley, deputy U.S. marshal, made a trip around Unalaska Island on behalf of the Department of Justice. He noticed the excellent grazing land on the south end of the island and in 1917 he applied for a long-term lease for all of Unalaska Island, from Kashega to the end of the island for cattle raising. "There are two villages in this tract of land, one at Kashega and the other at Chernofsky and they have hard work to make a living out of the

few foxes they catch." He had the endorsement of Alexei Yatchmeneff and Father Hotovitsky. He was hoping for nominal rental "as it would take some time before we would have an income producing industry."[39]

Serious work began with A.L. Macintosh, a Scotsman living in Bend, Oregon, who had been in the sheep business in the Falkland Islands for five years. Suspecting agricultural parallels with the Aleutians, he made a visit to the Chain that confirmed his optimism. He returned and organized a company.[40] His principal investor and partner was Dr. Andrew C. Smith, president of the Hibernian Savings Bank of Portland, Oregon. Smith and Macintosh formed the Umnak Livestock Company with the intent to do more than harvest wool: they would salt cod and deliver mail. On Sept. 20, 1917, the company received a permit to "engage in preserving cod and salmon at Nikolski."[41] In 1918 the company was awarded the mail contract from Kodiak to Unalaska and up to the Nushagak region.[42] Henry Swanson remarked that the first boat they used to deliver mail was the schooner *Eloise*. It was one of "all kinds of funny boats" that salesmen in Seattle had sold "the shepherds." Swanson noted that "they were good boats but none of them were fit to be a mail boat." He described the *Eloise* as a "real old sea-going yacht with a big keel." Men who knew ships called it the *E-louse*.[43]

Early in the spring of 1918 the Umnak Livestock Company shipped several hundred ewes to Amaknak Island.[44] These were probably destined for Umnak Island.[45] However, transportation problems altered the plan. It's not clear exactly what happened next. Two-hundred twenty were left on Amaknak Island. The remaining 440 were to be divided equally between Umnak Island and Chernofski. The sheep intended for Chernofski did arrive because an inspector visited in November and met the herder in charge (Sam Vaughn). It is not known if those intended for Umnak made it there or not. They may have remained on Amaknak because records suggest there were 500 sheep at the beginning of the 1918-1919 winter. The following months were severe with snow drifting until some of the houses were completely covered. About half the stock died.[46] Despite this loss, the number of ewes, with lambs, was back at 500 by summer. Half were placed at Chernofski and half at Nikolski.[47] Although Macintosh was recognized as being "neither an efficient or economical manager," it was felt that to "displace him entirely from the management would be doing him a decided injustice."[48]

Soon Smith and Macintosh had a falling out and the Umnak Livestock Company broke into two separate operations. Smith established the Western Pacific Livestock Company headquartered in Portland, Oregon. Macintosh initiated the Aleutian Livestock Company based in Los Angeles. In 1925 the Aleutian Livestock Company decided to establish herds on Umnak Island that would be managed from Chernofski. Three thousand three hundred rambouillet and delaine sheep from Montana left Seattle on the *Oduna* on May 29 and arrived at Nikolski on June 6, 1926.

The Western Pacific Livestock Company had not been as active as the Aleutian Livestock Company. Both firms still had land at Chernofski and this remained a "subject of considerable controversy" as both firms sought to fulfill the terms of their permits.[49] When the Aleutian Livestock Company was granted temporary use of six square miles at Chernofski, including four square miles regularly used by the Western Pacific Livestock Company, Western Pacific felt this "would cut the heart out of their range." Aleutian Livestock insisted this land was needed as headquarters for their Umnak operations. Western Pacific eventually transferred its headquarters north to Kashega Village.

Sheep at Kashega, Alice Moller Collection, courtesy AB Rankin.

The worldwide influenza rampage struck the Aleutian Islands in May 1919. Between May 23 and June 13, 44 deaths were recorded at Unalaska. Among those who died were former Makushin residents Oustinia Petikoff and Nicolai Lekanoff, Elisha Basaroff from Biorka, and Nicolai Kudrin from Kashega. The number of deaths at Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega is unknown and anecdotal information conflicts with the scant records. In 2004 Nikolai Lekanoff commented on the disastrous result of an epidemic at Makushin that decimated his family. His father's first wife and 10 of their 14 children died. Exactly the same story has been transmitted through the family of Constantine Lekanoff, Nick's older half-brother who helped transport bodies for burial.[50] Although Andrew Makarin remarked on the high mortality Biorka experienced, no inspection was made of the village until November 1920 when only one death during the previous 12 months was reported.[51] Biorka, lying between Unalaska and Akutan, may very well have seen a number of deaths.

The whaling station at Akutan reported being "considerably hampered by the epidemic of influenza, which was very severe among the Aleutian Island natives, and thus prevented the catch from being even larger."[52] An inspection of Akutan in late June 1920 reported that during the previous 12 months three men and eleven women had died from influenza (all but three over 50, and most in their 60s or 70s).[53]

As the epidemic was winding down at Unalaska, the *Lettie* arrived from a trip to Atka and Attu. A.C. Goss reported that "there had been a

very severe winter, but no sickness of any of the islands or at any other villages to the westward of Unalaska."[54] In early July 1919, the *Unalga* made a trip west as no word had come from the villages. On July 6 Kashega and Chernofski reported no sickness during the winter and that all residents were well.[55] The day before Makushin Village had been found deserted, suggesting people were at their fish camp at the old village site. An inspection of Makushin in early October 1920 reported five deaths from influenza during the preceding 12 months, but this would not have included the period when the epidemic was active at Unalaska and Akutan.[56] Nick Galaktionoff had specific stories about an epidemic that struck Makushin. People had just started constructing wood frame homes when the illness struck. It was preceded by an unusually large number of dead birds being washed ashore and people were cautioned not to eat them. His account suggests people were at the old Volcano Bay village, probably in preparation for summer fishing. He heard how somebody would be chopping wood on the beach and suddenly fall down ill. Elia Borenin and his mother, Matrona Krukoff, and one other person were the only people not ill. Philip Galaktionoff, Nick was told, hiked from Volcano Bay to Makushin Village and removed wood from the new homes in order to construct coffins. The dead were placed on large grass mats and pulled up to the cemetery. So many died that they were left in their homes for 10 to 15 days before burial. After that, people started to recover. After all the illness at Volcano Bay, people were afraid to return there and so they caught fish in the river by Makushin Village for the winter. [57]

Nick Lekanoff credited the 1919 epidemic with hastening the end of Chernofski.[58] Chernofski Village had been a community with 60 residents in 1897. It had dropped to 44, divided among twelve families, in 1910. There were 25 residents in six families in March 1920 and by November the village was down to 20.[59] Sophie Kudrin was at Chernofski visiting her sister, Lucy, the wife of Alex Gordieff at the time the 1920 census was taken. In 1923 Aman Moore, the treasurer and financial backer for Macintosh's Aleutian Livestock Company, had shipped about $25,000 worth of general merchandise to the village on the *Oduna*.[60] He planned on opening a store where everything from children's toys to medicines and fancy goods were to be displayed in eight glass show cases. Donald Stevenson was dumbfounded. "They had everything," he wrote, "except customers."

"The Chernofski people didn't benefit from the codfish salteries near Chernofski," Henry Swanson said.[61] "The sheep ranch that had been established there wasn't doing them any good so far as making a living went," Swanson continued. "There were just so few of them left they figured they might as well move."[62] Stevenson had commented in 1925 that "one or two of the Chernofski boys have got so they are pretty good men about the sheep…."

"Rex" Sproat, who worked at the Chernofski ranch for three years beginning in 1924, wrote that "there was a native village across the bay, but all had moved to Kashega or Unalaska except two families and they,

Dorofey Kastromitin and his wife. Photograph courtesy Ray Kranich.

too, moved while I was there."[63] "Chernofski was completely abandoned in 1928," Henry Swanson said.

> I happened to come through there with my boat the *Alasco-4*, and the Chernofski people jumped aboard. They were waiting for any boat to come along. They had the church torn down already. It was a real small church, but anything they had there they took to add on to the Kashega church….Alex Gordaoff was chief there at that time. There were only about a dozen people left counting the children. There was one blind man. Some came here to Unalaska. Alex Gordaoff was one of those….Some stayed in Kashega, and George Yatchmenoff went to Biorka.[64]

The population of Chernofski had been in flux for years as families, and especially men, shifted residences for employment. Yatchmenoff and his wife and daughter had been living in Kashega at the time of the 1920 census and so it was natural that he should return there. Eventually, however, he and his family moved to Biorka. Alex Gordieff with his wife had been at Unalaska in 1920, but after Chernofski dissolved he seems to have divided his time between Unalaska and Kashega. Dorofey Kastromitin appears to have settled permanently in Kashega.

Although economic ties among villages on the west end of Unalska Island had effectively been severed with the termination of sea otter hunting, the abandonment of Chernofski signaled the final dissolution of the mutual dependency that had lasted for generations. From now on, Makushin and Kashega—like Biorka—would survive as separate entities. Their stories, in effect, became separate stories.

Moss berries. Photograph by Ray Hudson. Watercolor tint by Mary C. Broderick.