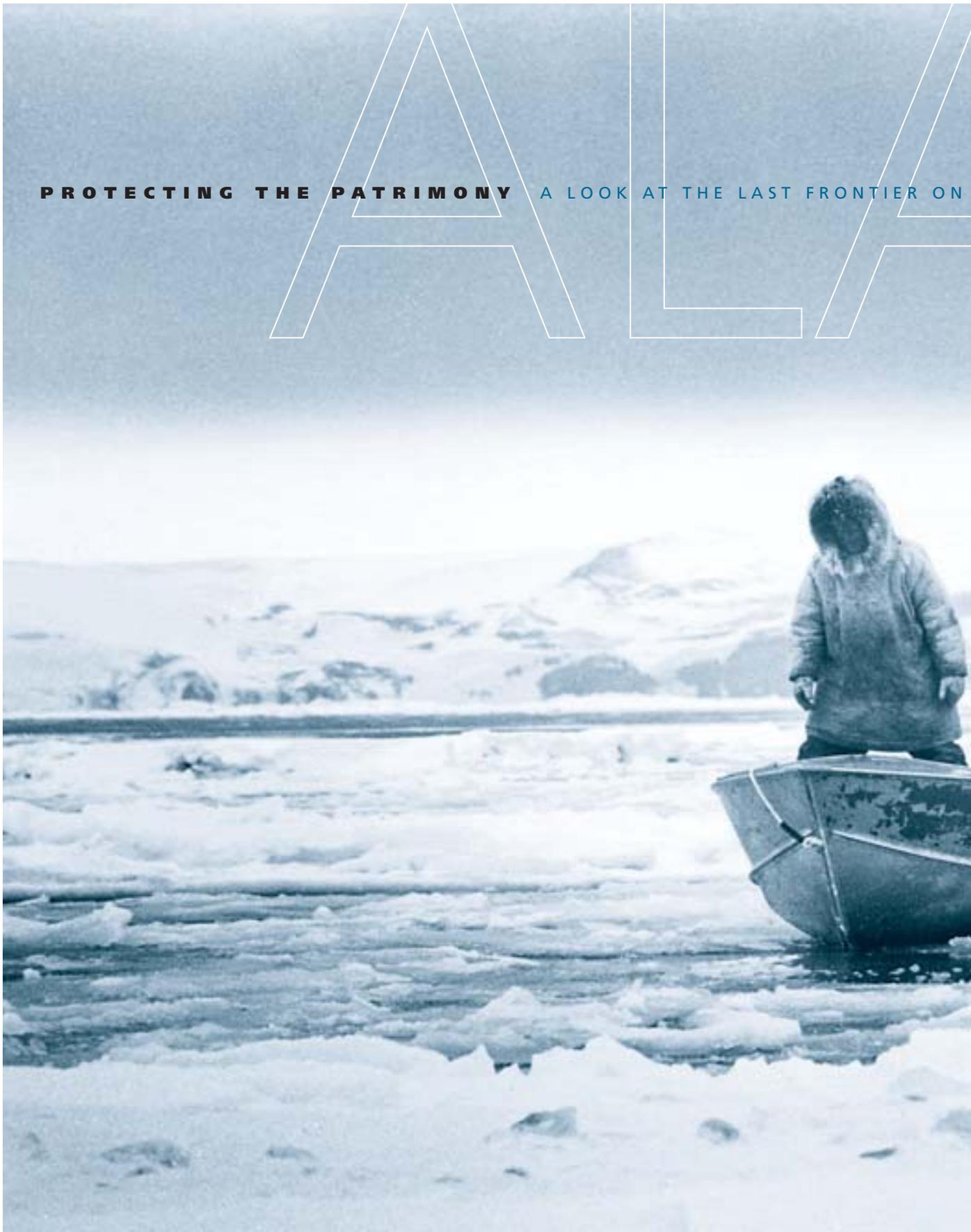


PROTECTING THE PATRIMONY A LOOK AT THE LAST FRONTIER ON

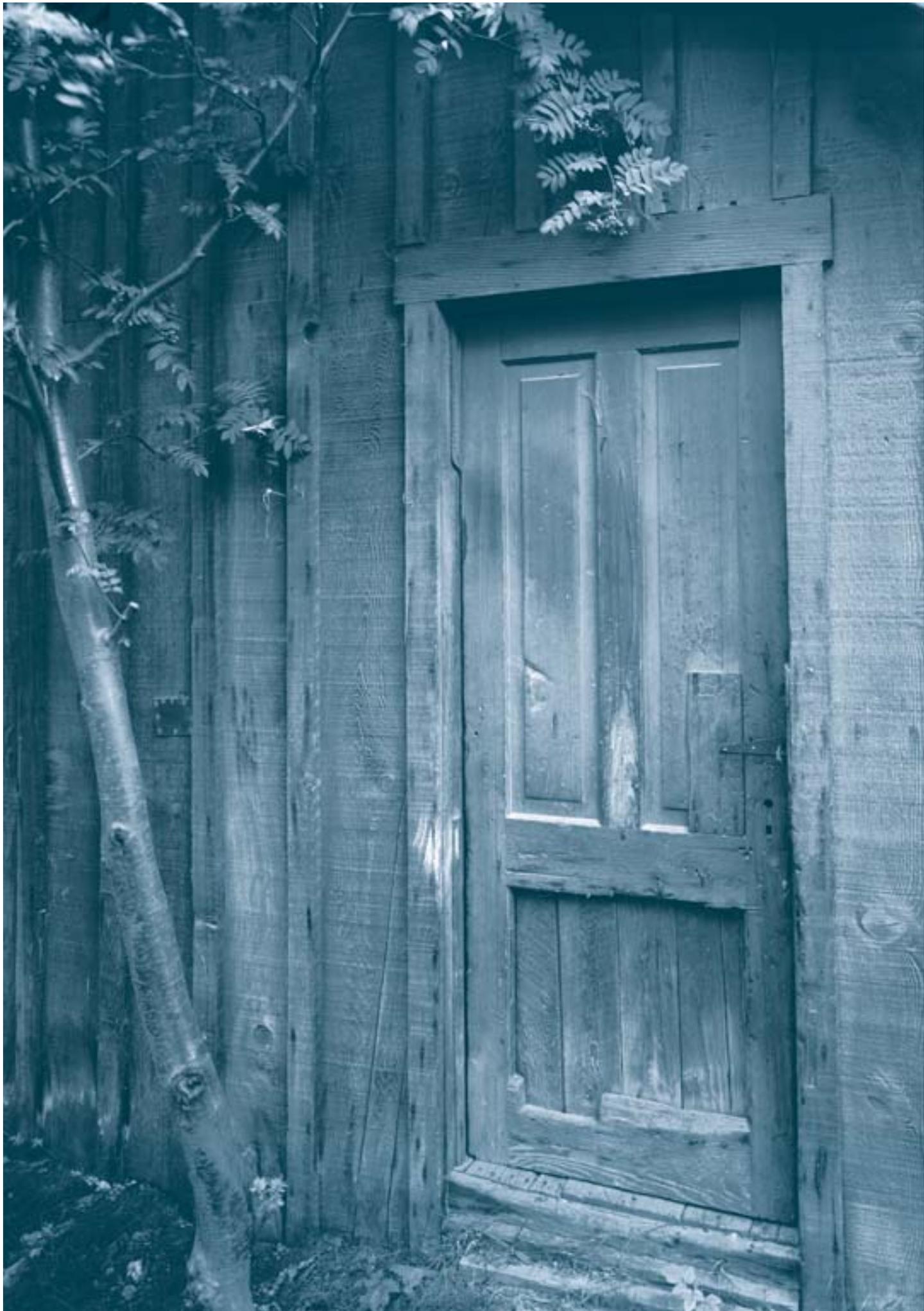


BELOW: SEAL HUNTERS NEGOTIATE ICE IN SEARCH OF OPEN WATER. © JAMES H. BARKER

ALASKA

THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ALASKA NATIONAL INTEREST LANDS CONSERVATION ACT





25_{years}

ALASKA NATIONAL INTEREST LANDS CONSERVATION ACT

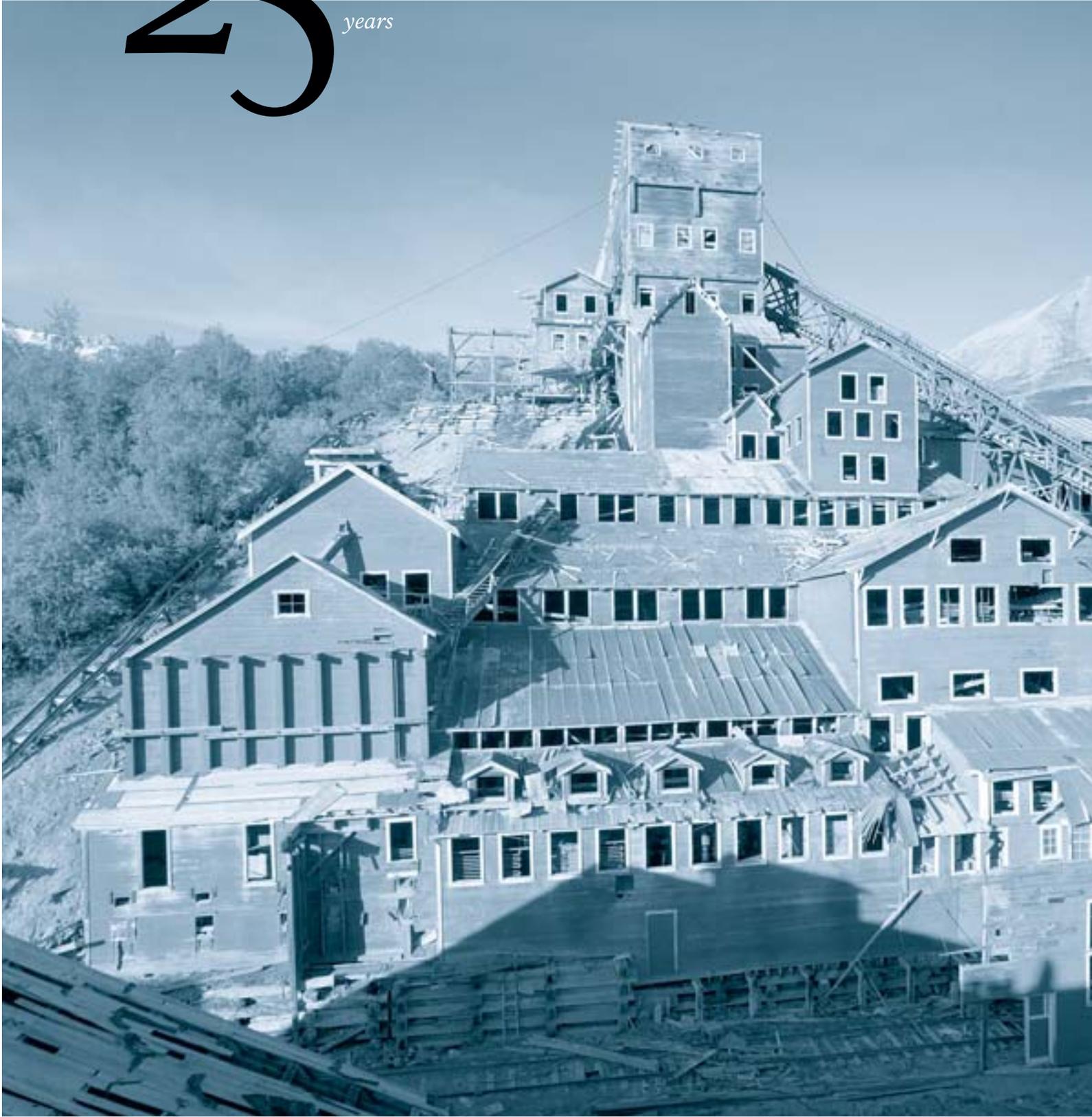
Alaska changed forever with the law that came to be in 1980, especially for native peoples. Ten national parks were established, and three old-line parks enlarged, doubling the size of the National Park System. The largest conservation act in American history engendered discontent, today less strident but not fully receded. “Having parks right in our back yard was very sudden,” says Herbert Anungazuk, a National Park Service cultural anthropologist and liaison with native communities. “People considered Alaska barren. Who would have thought that they would put parks in our traditional lands?” A former whaling captain, Anungazuk witnessed the new world wrought by the law. “If you use our traditional concept of boundaries, we had vast acreage, but now it was owned and regulated in new ways. The process was very, very complicated. I, for one, didn’t understand it. Most everybody else didn’t either.” ¶ It was a new world for the National Park Service, too, says archeologist Jeanne Schaaf. “When I began working here in 1984, the parks were still very new. And even though the Act was years in the making—with people very aware that humans were part of the newly protected ecosystems—it came as a surprise to many. To those who’d always lived here, the rules and designations were confusing, even threatening. I clearly remember an elder saying: ‘They have money to go buy [things] and we do not . . . we have to hunt to survive.’” ¶ Today Schaaf is struck by the change in attitude—and the success in implementing the Act in partnership with native peoples. “Now many see the land as ‘locked open’ not locked up,” she says, with traditional activities and resource use protected. “The work of the agency underscores the intimate human presence in what many perceive as wilderness,” she adds. “It’s a matter of working out the bumps in terms of individual ideas of what wilderness should be.” ¶ Taking the research to the public can be challenging. “There are no roads to many parks—visitors don’t necessarily come through a gateway,” says Schaaf. “So we’ve got to be creative about catching them. If a cruise ship is on the way, we’ll try to get someone on board to give talks.” Adds historical architect Steve Peterson, “In a sense, we’re only 25 years old. That mirrors the growth of the cruise ship industry. Some communities have four or five ships a day. That may be a blessing or a curse, but it certainly is a challenge.” Here, John Quinley—Alaska’s assistant regional director, communications, for the National Park Service—talks with his three cohorts about the challenges of the last quarter century, and the opportunities ahead.



LEFT, RIGHT: VIEWS OF SKAGWAY, A RESTORED FRONTIER TOWN IN KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK.

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O: *Let's take a look at the big picture. Can we give readers an idea of the breadth of resources the Park Service is challenged to care for?*

PETERSON: They range from very remote yet very living resources to a wealth of historic structures and cultural landscapes—an emerging area of study in Alaska fostered by the 1980 law.

One of the most noticeable impacts came with the establishment of a Park Service central office. Prior to that, our presence was pretty much unknown, except for a few parks. We began to grow a full complement of expertise in history, museum work, archeology, anthropology, ethnography, and historic architecture. We also began to support the “external” side, in terms of, say, working with communities to nominate sites to the National Register of Historic Places.

Historic preservation in Alaska predates the law by only a few years. One early example is the restoration of the Bishop's House at Sitka National Historical Park, one of four buildings that remain from the Russian colonial era and now a national historic landmark. That park has a difficult balancing act—it interprets the 1804 Battle of Sitka, a major confrontation between colonial Russia and the region's Tlingit-Kiksadi people.

In the historic town of Skagway, which commemorates the Klondike gold rush of 1898, the Park Service acquired a number of buildings right on the main street, since beautifully restored. We assist private owners with preservation, too. Then we have a scattering of more humble resources—like the patrol cabins at Denali National Park established to protect against poaching in the 1920s, which are being refurbished.

On the cultural landscape side—unlike, say, the East, where there is a variety of designed landscapes—Alaska's resources typically are vernacular remains of frontier settlement or ethnographic landscapes that tell a story of how native peoples lived and subsisted. Understanding these places is difficult.

Our latest acquisition, in the heart of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, is the Kennecott Copper mining town. As an architect I'm embarrassed to say what an archeologist pointed out to me. Here you are surrounded by this 11-story mill, by the magnitude of development. There's just a hugeness when you're in and amongst it. But when you fly in, the country is so vast and Kennecott is only a freckle. You're between two scales. You're so impressed by the endeavor of man, yet man's work is so insignificant compared to the magnificence of the landscape.

The Park Service evaluated the site, acknowledged the significance, did a national historic landmark nomination, but decided not

LEFT: REMAINS OF KENNECOTT COPPER MINE, WRANGELL-ST. ELIAS NATIONAL PARK.

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to acquire it due to lack of local support, among other factors. We did assist the owners, who were struggling to preserve the place. Over time, the locals became aware of the importance, realizing it would soon be lost. As a result, the community—initially very skeptical about a park, very skeptical about more land in federal ownership—came together with a strong grassroots advocacy to purchase the site, which the Park Service did in 1998.

We realized that the people of Kennecott are a vanishing legacy. We worked with the community, brought back the children of the mine managers, took down their oral histories, copied their photo collections at the local lodge, and published the results in a book called *Kennecott Kids*. Growing up in a mining town is a very different perspective than what you get of most mill operations. The “kids”—now in their 70s and 80s—were encouraged to bring pictures and scrapbooks, which inspired the design of the publication.

To document Kennecott, we worked with the Historic American Engineering Record and the University of Oregon School of Architecture. Right now the place is being stabilized and rehabilitated, an ongoing effort.

Q: *Let's talk about archeology.*

SCHAAF: There have been tremendous discoveries in all the parks, and all over Alaska. The Act enabled the Park Service and other agencies to spread research and documentation dollars across the state, which encouraged innovative, long-term research. We've dated sites in excess of 10,000 years in northwest Alaska, the Seward and Alaska Peninsulas, and the Brooks Range, whose Caribou Crossing Site offers extensive evidence of hunters intercepting their quarry in open valleys.

At the Bering Land Bridge, we've recorded a complex to drive the caribou as well as a host of fabulous stone monuments. It's a level of masonry—and concentration—not seen in any other hunter-gatherer society. On the Alaska Peninsula, we've excavated the remains of the earliest mariners, who stained their house floors entirely in red ochre. Thanks to the excavation of some well-

preserved sites in Aniakchak, we're beginning to understand the effects of catastrophic volcanic eruptions on people and ecosystems. The Kijik National Historic Landmark, in Lake Clark, protects the largest concentration of prehistoric Athabaskan settlements, with over 300 houses dating as early as 900 years ago.

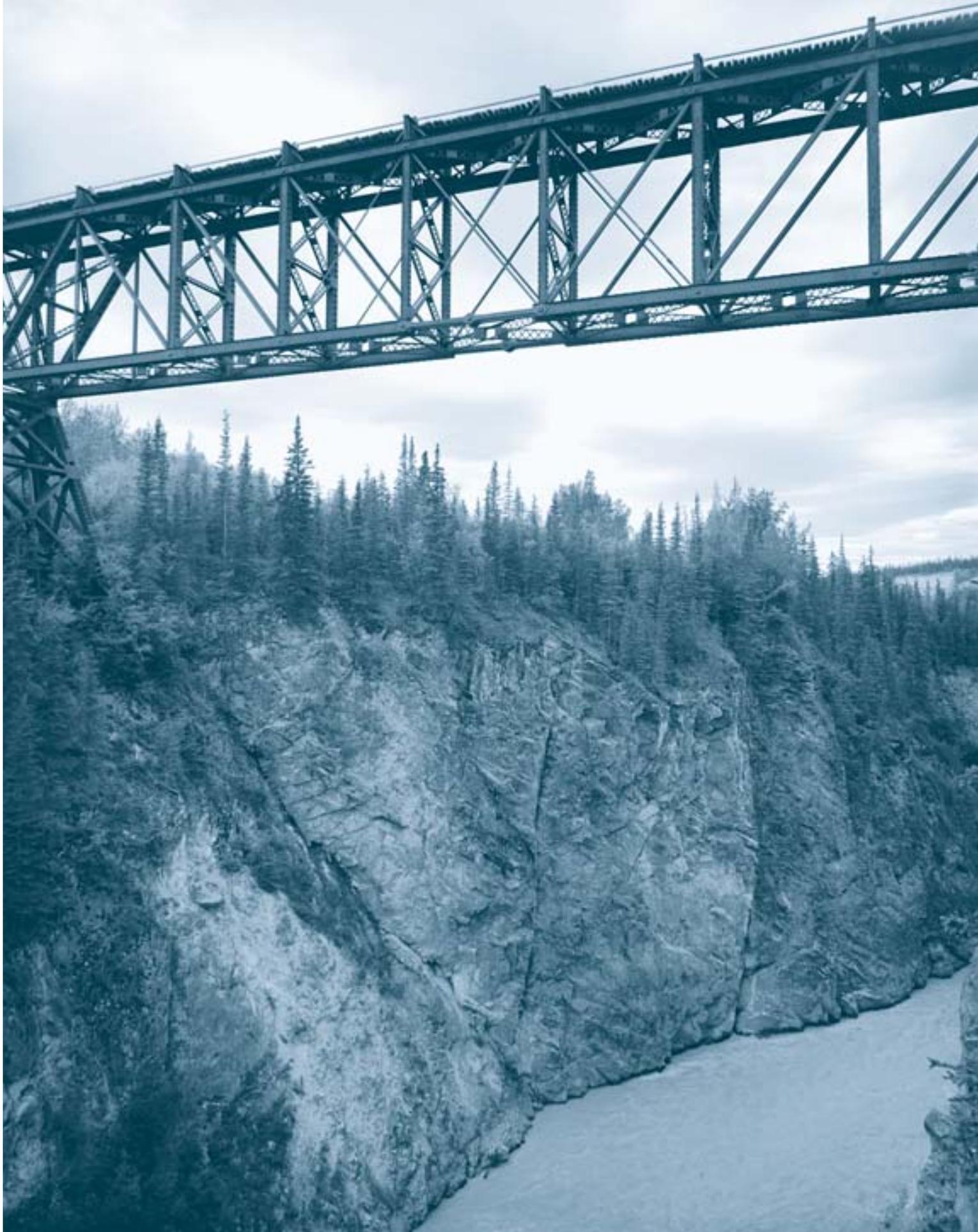
Other sites include rare rock paintings—the only two known in Alaska's parks—petroglyphs, ancient culturally modified trees, and burials. Preserving sites everywhere is a growing challenge due to increasing sea levels, storminess, and melt.

Q: *How would you explain the importance of this work to the taxpayers?*

SCHAAF: Well, Congress has said it's in the public's interest to preserve and understand the full gamut of human history. Prehistoric sites are not some foreign and distant curiosity—they're part of a shared identity. We've been hunter-gatherers longer than we've been industrialists.



ABOVE: THE MILLION DOLLAR BRIDGE—ONCE LINKED BY RAILROAD TO THE KENNECOTT MINE AT WRANGELL-ST. ELIAS—EXHIBITS THE MAGNITUDE OF RESOURCE EXTRACTION. RIGHT: A GHOST OF THE ECONOMIC MACHINE, THE KUSKALANA BRIDGE. THE SPANS ARE ONE OF MANY DOCUMENTED FOR THE HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE.





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LEFT: CHIEF SHAKES HOUSE, ONE OF A VANISHING BREED OF CLANHOUSES.

We need to remember that prehistoric sites are ancestral to all of us. Linguistic, cultural, and physical differences are very superficial and relatively recent in terms of human evolution. Archeological sites encompass the entire range of who we are, what we do, what we believe, and how we live.

Plus, archeological records are a treasure trove of climate data. Over the last 10,000 years, since the close of the last ice age, the planet's ecosystems have experienced dramatic change. How did they respond? How did the people respond? How did the landscape respond? This record is preserved largely in archeological sites.

Q: *With 21st century rules and regulations how have things changed in the traditional hunting and gathering areas?*

ANUNGAZUK: Native people didn't take outboard motors and rifles in hand quickly, but when they did the harvests increased without limit practically. Our only restriction was the weather. Today, as a result of the law, there are quotas, limits on the game.

In terms of land use beyond what was thought by researchers, these areas have existed for thousands of years in terms of place names. Maybe all you'll see is a little indentation in the earth indicating habitation before. Many times you'll see nothing more than a little pile of rocks.

Some of the names changed as the terrain changed. Maybe it was a little stream that you could jump across, now you can get a boat in it. The effort to document how people lived in the past is rather new. Previously, we shared information orally among ourselves. But then we had our legs chopped off—languages lost, new generations with new religions, mine included.

Initially, there was a flush of researchers. The elders, many now gone, shared freely. But when the results came out in print, they weren't mentioned. That really hurt the effort. In the last 10 years, this has changed. We don't just jump on a plane and fly into a community. We get with the traditional council. We explain why we want to come and when. Speaking the language is a plus, so I'm fortunate.

Q: *Jeanne, what's your experience?*

SCHAAF: At Glacier Bay, we did a series of archeological surveys, finding sites, then connecting them to oral history accounts about floods and forts and things like that. This grew into place names, researched with the village of Hoonah. Eventually, park staff took

the villagers to the sites, where they had potlatches and reconnected with a rich heritage.

It truly opened doors. The situation went from the Hoonah barely speaking to the park—not being able to gather eggs and do traditional things—to the wider realization by all of the landscape’s richness.

PETERSON: The story is two-edged. There was this perception of Glacier Bay as absolute wilderness, in the mythology of John Muir. But this sense denied the Hoonah their heritage.

Wayne Howell, who has spearheaded the project, started by simply developing an accurate place-name map. That began to show the broad reach of culture into the bay. He’s been doggedly sticking with it for years. You know, we’ve gotten away from people cycling in and out so much. They become a resource themselves—maybe they need a special designation! When you’re here a few years and gone, your success is limited. It takes time for people to put a face with what you’re doing.

Q: *There’s been a lot of work outside the parks.*

PETERSON: Perhaps more than in the lower 48, there’s a blurring between what we do in the parks and what we do outside. Plus, the Act requires us to help native communities with preservation when they ask for it. We’re very comfortable with both hats. As a result we’ve been very successful on all manner of projects.

One example is Chief Shakes House in Saxman, documented by our office using HABS standards. Clan houses were once found throughout southeast Alaska; now they’re vanishing, with probably no more than half a dozen—like this one—that survive from the early 20th century. These are humble places that are more about community than architecture.

World War II had a huge impact on Alaska. When the Japanese invaded the Aleutians, the U.S. Navy evacuated the native people, who were forcibly interred in southeast Alaska’s old canneries. They were given a matter of hours to pack a bag before they were taken away. Many died of tuberculosis. Their Russian Orthodox churches were burned or commandeered by the military, the icons ransacked.

The Aleuts received recompense as part of a 1988 bill that compensated Japanese Americans. The Park Service played a role in documenting the damage to six of the churches and their icons. We later assisted in the restoration of both. Three of the structures are now national historic landmarks.

The Aleutian Islands are a tremendous national resource, hidden in the fog from public perception, far removed from where everybody wants to go. Few people know that the Japanese invaded the United States here. The landscape doesn’t heal quickly, so the evidence is still there—the foxholes, the trenches, the bombing scars—though many of the structures are gone. In advance of a cleanup by the Corps of Engineers, we documented the place with the state preservation office and HAER.

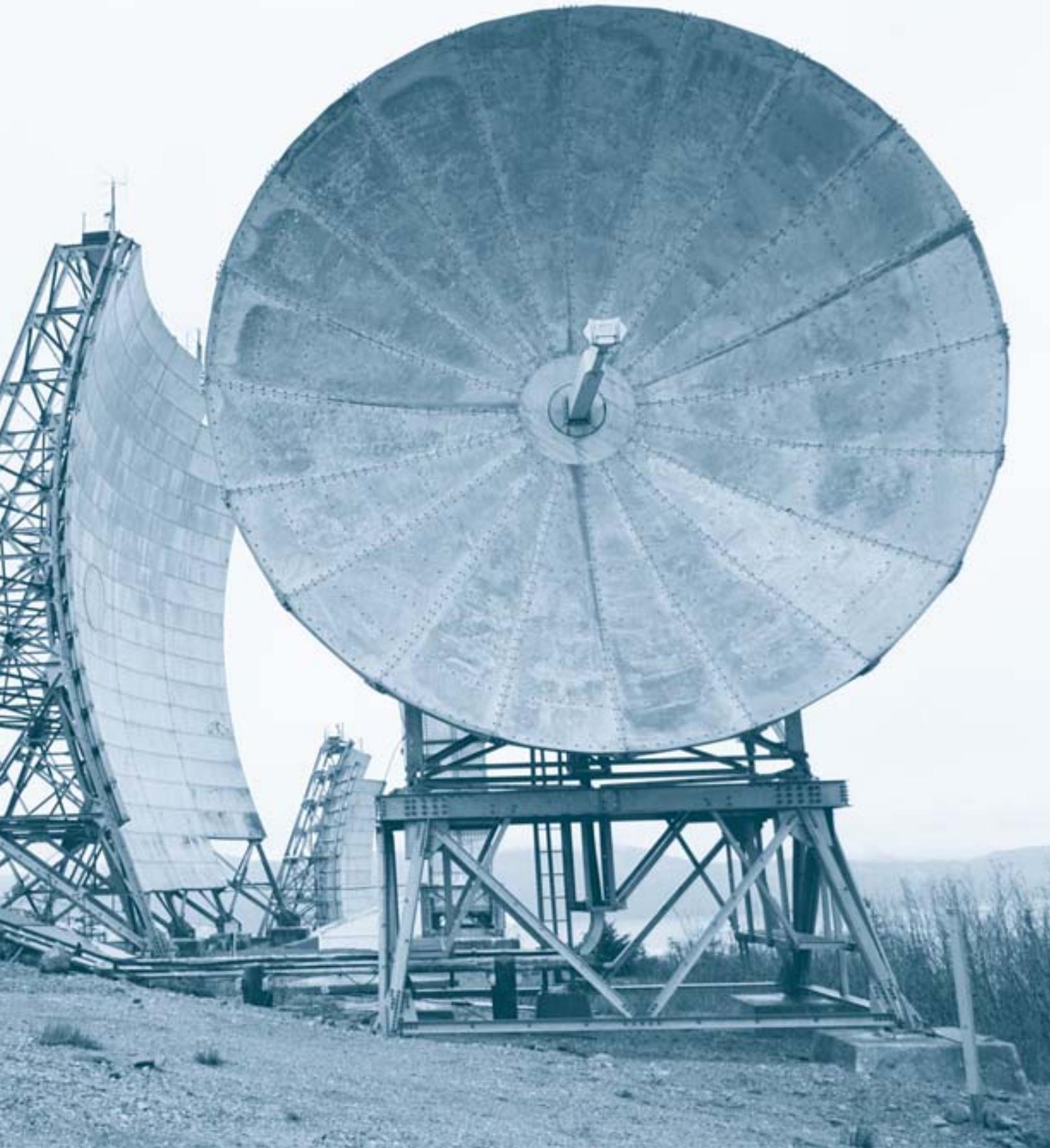


25 ALASKA NATIONAL
years



L I N T E R E S T L A N D S C O N S E R V A T I O N A C T

ABOVE: HISTORIC CHURCHES WERE DOCUMENTED ACROSS ALASKA.



ROB STAPLETON/NPS/HAER

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Q: *What's ahead for the next 25 years?*

ANUNGAZUK: Our biggest challenge is finding people to work with. We've lost considerable numbers of elders to old age and illness. Some anthropologists think people born in the 1930s and '40s are too young to say much about the traditional culture. Not so. These elders have lived the traditional way of life in its fullest, before monumental changes were wrought upon all the indigenous people of the north. It is most unfortunate that, as all people, this generation faces advancing age.

SCHAAF: I'd like to see partnering with other agencies to draw interns from the local communities, creating a pool of potential employees. Language preservation is obviously a priority among native groups. With global warming we face the incredible loss of archeological remains to sea-level rise. High-altitude sites in snow and ice fields are melting out; well-preserved artifacts are going to be lost at a great rate.

PETERSON: The Park Service is holding its breath right now. Given the workforce demographics, we're about to see a large number of retirements and loss of knowledge. Visitation, if it continues to grow at even half the rate, is going to be tremendous—along with new ways to visit the parks. How do we provide a quality experience? How do we handle the impact? Will we have places like Brooks Camp where we have to barge in fuel and barge out garbage? The logistics of remote sites are tremendous, and not cheap.

Historic sites and structures don't heal themselves. Once rehabilitated, they start to deteriorate. How do you keep up the care? That was a big question mark 25 years ago and still is.

In many regards, we've probably fallen short of projections, and in many regards we've astounded ourselves. The climate when we started was not the most congenial—there was great anger over the taking of these lands. But in recent years we've seen much broader support than I ever envisioned. We've made tremendous strides contributing to Alaska and what Alaska is. I hope we can stay the course.

For more information, contact John Quinley, National Park Service, Assistant Regional Director, Communications, 240 West 5th Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99501, (907) 644-3512, fax (907) 644-3816, john_quinley@nps.gov. Contact Herbert Anungazuk at (907) 644-3458, herbert_anungazuk@nps.gov; Steve Peterson at (907) 644-3475, steve_peterson@nps.gov; Jeanne Shaaf at (907) 271-1383, jeanne_schaaf@nps.gov. Or write to them care of the address above.



LEFT: RADAR SITE NEAR CORDOVA. RIGHT ABOVE: THE REMAINS OF WORLD WAR II AT DUTCH HARBOR IN THE ALEUTIANS. BOTH PLACES WERE DOCUMENTED FOR THE HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD.