

# Chapter Three: Park Management Begins, 1917-1924

Once President Wilson signed the Mount McKinley park bill, those who had pushed for the bill—Charles Sheldon, John B. Burnham, George Bird Grinnell, and others—were finally able to breathe a sigh of relief and congratulate each other for their role in protecting a large, valuable section of some of Alaska’s (and America’s) greatest gamelands. Thanks to their efforts, the magnificent foothills of the Alaska Range—which, remarkably, were immediately adjacent to North America’s highest peak—were now enclosed within the boundaries of a national park and would be managed by the newly-established National Park Service.

## Funding the New Park

Once one and all had offered their congratulations, however, a sober reality sunk in; while Congress and the President had provided a template for the area’s protection, that template meant little because no funds had been appropriated; thus there was no staff to patrol the park boundaries, educate visitors and residents, and manage the park’s numerous resources.<sup>1</sup> One and all were aware that the Alaska Engineering Commission’s railroad was already complete as far north as the farm town of Matanuska, with further progress sure to follow.<sup>2</sup>

Park advocates, therefore, dug in their heels and fought to provide an operations budget. Just one day after the park bill was signed, Interior Secretary Franklin Lane sent a letter to Treasury Secretary William G. McAdoo, asking for a \$10,000 supplemental appropriation to protect the park’s wildlife. “There is no intention of immediately improving this park or making it accessible to the public,” Lane wrote, “our deep concern is for the immediate protection of the wild animals and their preservation for the enjoyment of the people in future years.”<sup>3</sup> Lane’s message was soon forwarded to the Senate, and Senator Key Pittman agreeably submitted an amendment in the sundry civil appropriation act to obtain the \$10,000 startup funds. But perhaps because the bill had been pushed through “as an emergency measure in order, that the large herds of wild animals . . . might be protected from slaughter by hunters engaged in supplying the railroad camps. . .”, Congress was not immediately inclined to fund the park, particularly while war clouds were on the horizon.<sup>4</sup> An equally important reason, however, was related to the new agency’s gaunt budget; as Rep. Lenroot’s testimony had made clear, the amount of funds

allotted to the National Park Service—less than \$800,000 per year—was insufficient to fund the long-established parks, let alone any new additions. Given the fact that the nearest rail line, at that time, was fifty miles or more from the park boundary, Congress bypassed McKinley in favor of parks that had more pressing concerns.<sup>5</sup>

The bleak budget outlook, however, did not prevent the park’s proponents from making annual attempts to create a funding base. Charles Sheldon, John Burnham, and others representing various game protection organizations repeatedly contacted Interior Department and NPS officials; they, in turn, sent letters to House and Senate leaders. But for four years, those entreaties went unheeded. Alaska’s Governor, Thomas Riggs, did what he could in the meantime to protect the park’s game. But inasmuch as the entire Territory had only two game wardens, all parties recognized that NPS funding was the only practical way to provide game protection.<sup>6</sup>

In November 1920, John Burnham once again suggested that the NPS undertake an effort to obtain a park appropriation, and this time, budgetary conditions seemed more favorable. But the area’s game conditions were deteriorating; as Bureau of Biological Survey chief E.W. Nelson noted after returning from Alaska, “unless something is done promptly to protect the game in this park there will be no game to protect. . . . At present the park lines are absolutely ignored and during the past two years there has been great destruction of game and fur-bearing animals within its limits.” Given the looming crisis, James Good (R-Iowa) of the House Appropriations Committee invited several of the park’s principal advocates—including Charles Sheldon, Madison Grant, and George Bird Grinnell—to present testimony on December 16.<sup>7</sup> At that hearing, Sheldon sounded an ominous tone, noting that “Since the Park was created it has received no protection. Market hunting has continued, railroad construction has brought numerous people into the region, the game has been slaughtered recklessly.” He further stated that “Next summer [1921] large numbers of men will be working on the railroad line next to the Park. The rails will soon be laid there, and unless protection shall be granted, excessive slaughter of the game will take place.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, by this time, railroad building south from Fairbanks had already reached the Healy construction camp, not far from the park’s northeastern corner, and trackage north from



The Alaska Railroad provided access to Mt. McKinley National Park. Charles Sheldon Collection, 75-146-02, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Seward extended all the way to Gold Creek, which was just south of Chulitna Pass and less than 40 miles from the park's southern boundary.<sup>9</sup>

The speakers at the House hearing proved convincing, and by early the following February, the NPS was optimistic that funds would be available to operate Mount McKinley National Park for the 1922 fiscal year.<sup>10</sup> That optimism proved well-founded; the Sundry Civil Bill that Congress passed on March 4, 1921 (H.R. 15422) included \$8,000 for park operations in the NPS budget.<sup>11</sup> (See Appendix B.) Given the assurance of a budget, agency officials were then able to undertake two remaining key tasks: the writing

of park rules and regulations and the selection of a superintendent. Another activity that took place at much the same time, aided by the ease of access fostered by railroad construction, was the survey and marking of the park boundary; this was performed by the General Land Office, another Interior Department agency.

The park's first rules and regulations, which were largely an outgrowth of language in the recently-passed Congressional act, were written in early 1921 by park advocate John Burnham at Mather's request. After an agency edit of Burnham's rough draft, they were forwarded on to Mather, who issued the three-page screed and arranged for its distribution. Assistant Interior Secretary Francis M. Goodwin approved the regulations on June 21.<sup>12</sup>

The momentum to survey the park's boundary began in early 1920, when Congress allocated funds to the General Land Office for that purpose. No work took place that summer, however, so in December, representatives of various game protection organizations offered to underwrite "the printing of the notices in protection of the Mt. McKinley Park" and by February 1921, 400 wildlife-protection warning signs had been delivered to Mather's office. That summer, a party headed by the GLO's Woodbury Abbey marked the park's northern boundary from the Wonder Lake area all the way to the northeastern corner. GLO officials promised additional boundary survey work in 1922.<sup>13</sup>

#### Harry Karstens's Appointment

During this same period, NPS officials appointed Henry P. (Harry) Karstens as the fledgling park's first superintendent. Karstens, in many ways, was an ideal choice; he had been a north country resident since 1897 (he had long been known as "The Seventy Mile Kid" because he mined gold in the Seventymile Mining District), and he was also thoroughly familiar with the new park, having spent almost a year (between August 1907 and June 1908) camping with Charles Sheldon in the upper Toklat River basin. In addition, he had played a major role in the June 1913 expedition that had resulted in the first successful ascent of Mount McKinley. On the basis of those trips, Sheldon held the highest regard for Karstens, and perhaps as a result, John Burnham and other park promoters also recommended his appointment.<sup>14</sup> Karstens himself—perhaps at Sheldon's instigation—had broached the subject with NPS officials as early as 1918. But Thomas Riggs, who was appointed as Alaska's governor that year, favored another candidate: W.B. Reaburn, who had worked with Riggs on the Alaska-Canada Boundary Survey. For the next three years, a number of

others emerged as prospective superintendents. No applicant, however, could be selected until funding was in place. In February 1921, Mather asked Riggs to rank the various candidates; as expected, Riggs chose Reaburn, though he made it plain that he would have picked Karstens had Reaburn not been in the running. Of Karstens, he made the following keen observations:

Harry Karstens is an excellent man. . . . He is a good woodsman and thoroughly energetic, [but] he is very independent and would be apt to tangle up with the authorities the first time there should come a little disagreement. . . . [I]f Karstens should be appointed there might at times be friction not only with your office but with visitors to the park.<sup>15</sup>

Riggs, a realist, knew that Mather, and Mather alone, would make the final selection. The NPS Director fully recognized that Karstens might, some day, cause problems for the park and the agency. He had long ago promised Sheldon, however, that he favored Karstens for the job, and as soon as the agency was sure that the park appropriation had gone through, Mather offered Karstens the superintendency. In mid-April 1921, Mather sent Karstens (who was then in Seattle) a long letter detailing the park's rules and regulations along with his expectations of his conduct in the new position. The letter was part pep talk, part recitation of the recently-passed park bill, and part bureaucratic primer, and Mather left little doubt that as the chief of a remote park, he would have enormous flexibility and independence in his new position. He noted that "It is my purpose . . . to contribute as much as I possibly can to making your administration a success. [But] the rest is up to you."<sup>16</sup>

In that letter, Karstens was informed that while his role as superintendent would not take effect until July 1, he had already been "designated as Chief Ranger in the National Park Service at large, with salary at \$10.00 per annum." And, courtesy of two benefactors, Karstens was sent \$300 for "personal expenses for the three months to July 1<sup>st</sup>." Given that head start, Karstens soon boarded an Alaska-bound steamship, and by June he was already hard at work in his new position.<sup>17</sup> At that time, rails from tidewater had gotten as far north as the Hurricane Gulch, twenty miles by air from the park boundary, where a massive bridge was then under construction. From there, it was more than 70 miles before the "end of track" which was then just south of the "temporary construction camp" at Healy. Given the logistics of the situation, Karstens, in June 1921, established

his first headquarters in Nenana. Although it was more than 60 miles north of the park boundary, Karstens chose Nenana because of its relative ease of park access and because it offered both a post office and telegraph station.

Upon arrival back in Alaska, one of Karstens's first two tasks was to reconnoiter the right-of-way for the future railroad in order to ascertain a future headquarters location; the other was to take a trip along the park's northern boundary line in order to size up the game situation. Regarding a park headquarters site, there was little doubt; by mid-July, he wrote that "I firmly believe Riley Creek to be the most logical entrance to the park," in large part because the site "is beautifully situated for an entrance."<sup>18</sup> (The bottomlands of Riley Creek, at that time, had attracted little settlement, inasmuch as railroad work crews had not yet arrived; the only improvements were several small roadhouses and nearby residences.<sup>19</sup>) Later that summer, AEC Chairman Frederick Mears visited the area and backed Karstens's choice. As for the park's game prospects, he found two "trapper outfits" along the boundary between Savage and Sushana rivers. Karstens had cordial conversations with both groups of trappers, and noted that "they can hardly realize that provision has been made for the protection of the park and the game there in."<sup>20</sup>

During the summer and fall of 1921, work crews made considerable progress on the government railroad; the Hurricane Gulch bridge was completed on August 8, and tracks thereafter moved quickly northward. During this same period, crews laboring south from Healy were faced with the daunting challenge of the Nenana River canyon. As historian Ann Kain notes, "The steep walls of the canyon required considerable rockwork, including blasting to construct three tunnels and chiseling a level roadbed along the canyon wall. [But] by the end of 1921, the government railroad clung to the canyon wall two hundred feet above the rushing Nenana River."<sup>21</sup>

During September 1921, the AEC's Frederick Mears selected the site for a depot near the Riley Creek crossing. Recognizing that the site, in all likelihood, would be the home base for most trips into the new park, the site was named McKinley Park Station. Bridge-building crews began to filter into the area soon afterward, and by November, the construction of the massive, 900-foot-long Riley Creek bridge was underway. Concrete foundations for the bridge were poured during the brief, frigid days of December, and the bridge was complete by February 1, 1922. Inasmuch as work crews from the south, by this time, had laid tracks to the bridge's southern

edge, the completion of the Riley Creek bridge meant that the entire, 470-mile railroad from Seward to Fairbanks was now essentially complete. All that remained was the construction of a bridge over the Tanana River at Nenana.<sup>22</sup>

As noted above, Harry Karstens had decided in the early summer of 1921 that the Riley Creek area would be the major entrance area into the park, and by August, he had further decided that he would construct a park headquarters in the McKinley Park Station area.<sup>23</sup>

He “selected a sunny and sheltered spot on Riley Creek, for my Home Camp and Office near the Rail Road.” But soon afterward, he was informed that this parcel was on land that had already been selected by Maurice Morino, an Italian immigrant who had previously lived in Nome, Fairbanks, and Nenana. Sources have variously estimated that Morino located his site in 1910 or during the 1913-1915 period; he did not file for his parcel, however, until August 8, 1921. In September 1921, anticipating the coming of the railroad, he was “building a large road house or hotel of logs to accommodate local travel.”<sup>24</sup>

Morino, moreover, was not the only area claimant. The railroad claimed a broad band of land—100 feet in some places, 200 feet in others—on either side of the newly-laid railroad tracks.<sup>25</sup> In addition, two individuals had claims: Pat Lynch, whose land was just south of Morino’s, and Mary Thompson, whose small parcel was located along Riley Creek east of the railroad. Neither of the private parties, however, was a threat to the NPS; Lynch, by 1922, had already moved on to Healy River, where he was operating a roadhouse, and Thompson, who had moved onto a portion of Morino’s original claim, was a temporary presence and was never a hindrance to any NPS land claims.<sup>26</sup>

#### Laying Out a Headquarters Site

Given these claims, Karstens sought out an unencumbered site and chose one on Lynch’s abandoned claim; it was along Riley Creek, just upstream from the Hines Creek confluence. He liked the site because it was “sheltered from the winter storms” and because water was easily available.<sup>27</sup> In September 1921, he set to work on his “home cabin” just northwest of the creek; that cabin was “very nearly completed” by the end of November. Using materials that had



The Riley Creek railroad bridge was completed in February 1922. The Alaska Engineering Commission railroad construction camp can be seen on the right of the photo. AEC G 140, Anchorage Museum of History

been scrounged from recently-abandoned AEC construction camps, and little else,<sup>28</sup> he then began work on a ranger cabin, followed by an office. By the following April, he proudly noted that his “base camp is in pretty good shape and fairly comfortable.” He noted, however, that due to a lack of funds for building construction, “everything is crude and frontier style,” and “such furniture we have is home made.” Base camp, by this time, consisted of three wooden buildings, a large tent, a partially-completed corral and “the necessary outbuilding.”<sup>29</sup> These improvements were located along both banks of Riley Creek, just upstream from its confluence with Hines



Creek (then called Morris Creek).<sup>30</sup>

Throughout the summer of 1921 and on into the fall, Karstens was the park’s sole employee. The park budget, however, encompassed funds for a second employee, and Mather had instructed Karstens to “look around for a suitable man to act as your assistant.”<sup>31</sup> In late October, Karstens finally found “a man of sufficient capacity, ability, and experience, whom he felt he could trust as ranger to assist him in his patrol work.”<sup>32</sup> That man, Marcus V. Tyler, entered the park payroll on November 1. (See Appendix C.) He remained on the job, however, only until late December. Tyler’s brief tenure, unfortunately, set an all-

The first Mt. McKinley National Park headquarters was located on Riley Creek, just upstream from the Hines Creek confluence. It was used from 1921 to 1925. Karstens Library Collection

Superintendent Karstens was joined by his family at the first headquarters in late 1921. Harry Karstens, his wife Frieda Louise, a friend of the family, Helen Livingston, and their son Eugene are pictured here by the McKinley Park depot. Karstens



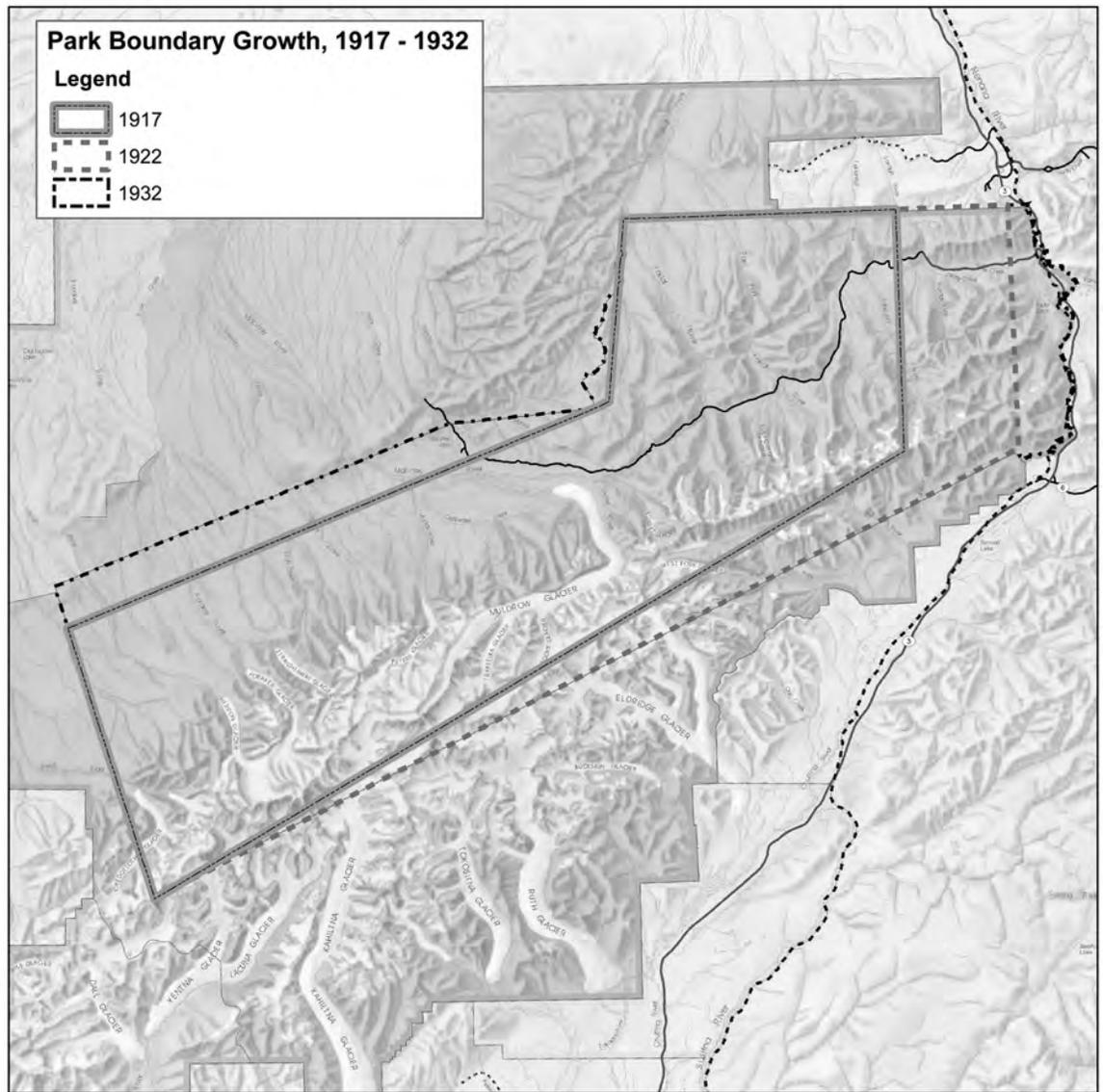
too-familiar pattern for rangers to come; during the next few years, almost all of the newly-hired rangers remained for less than a year, and many left after just two or three months on the job. The reasons for the high turnover varied, but for all too many, the job was too dangerous, too isolating, and demanding of too much physical effort in comparison to other jobs with similar salaries.

During his first few months on the job, Karstens became aware that one of the major shortcomings of the new park was the poor placement of its eastern boundary. Park proponent Charles Sheldon was also aware of this problem and worried aloud that if a permanent population resided just east of the park entrance, they might soon lay waste to the plentiful wildlife populations that lay east of the existing boundary. To reduce that threat, Sheldon in April 1921 discussed the idea of extending the boundary several miles to the east with Alaska Delegate Dan Sutherland, NPS officials Stephen Mather and Arthur Demaray, and various General Land Office representatives. Sheldon first suggested that the boundary line be moved east to the railroad right-of-way; Demaray, however, noted that such an attempt “would result in bringing local opposition which might defeat the extension then proposed.” He thus scaled his plan back several miles to the 149<sup>th</sup> meridian, a point to which all parties agreed. A month later, Sutherland submitted a House bill to effect the extension. The House passed the so-called “Sutherland Bill” on August 1 and sent it on to the Senate; almost six months later it eased

through the Senate, and on January 30, 1922, President Warren Harding signed the bill into law (see Map 3 and Appendix A.)<sup>33</sup>

Sheldon and his colleagues felt that the boundary extension would preserve the animal populations at the eastern edge of the park because the 149<sup>th</sup> meridian “could be effectively patrolled by guarding the few passes through which hunters would naturally pursue game.” Also, the erecting of a series of eastern-boundary survey posts, which had taken place in 1921 in anticipation of the bill’s passage, meant that “hunters could not plead ignorance as to the park boundary.”<sup>34</sup> As was hoped, Woodbury Abbey of the GLO returned to the park in June 1922, and he surveyed much of the park’s boundary (both old and new) that summer.<sup>35</sup> It remained to be seen, however, whether the newly-established eastern boundary would prove effective in preserving area wildlife stocks.

As noted above, the January 1922 boundary extension was largely the product of a series of discussions that had taken place in Washington in the spring of 1921, and the legislative process thereafter proved uncontroversial. In anticipation of that boundary extension, and recognizing that the park needed a substantial land base in the McKinley Park Station area, Interior Department officials prepared an executive order that withdrew portions of eight sections—a total of 2,440 acres—“for use in connection with the administration of the Mount McKinley National Park and to protect a right of way for a proposed road into the park.” On January 13, 1922—less



Map 3. Park Boundary Growth, 1917-1932

than three weeks before he approved the park extension bill—President Warren Harding signed the executive order into law (see Map 4).<sup>36</sup>

**Park Road Planning**

Virtually everyone involved with the park—including Sheldon, Karstens, territorial officials, and the NPS’s Washington brass—recognized that for Mount McKinley to be a viable park unit, a road needed to be built west from the railroad into the park. (The 1916 Congressional report that accompanied the various park bills, in fact, had noted that “The construction of wagon and automobile roads in such country would be very simple and economical,” and in his first monthly report, Karstens declared that “a main artery road through the upper passes is the park’s most urgent need.”<sup>37</sup>

NPS officials in 1921 recognized that while the park itself was bereft of maintained roads or trails, the area surrounding the park offered several well-established routes. They also recognized that the primary task of the Alaska

cross Savage River, Sanctuary River, Teklanika River, Igloo Creek, Sable Pass, East Fork, the Polychrome Pass, the “main Toklat,” and Highway Pass. The road would then proceed to “the mouth of Thoroughfare Creek” and on “to the meadows at the foot of Muldrow Glacier.” It would then cross the McKinley River on two bridges, “head southeast for a ways,” and then cross “the numerous tributaries of Clear [Clearwater] Creek” until it ended “about four or five miles from the base of the mountain [Mount McKinley]” at timber line along the “Muddy Fork” [Muddy River]. He declared this to be “a natural and interesting route for a purely park road.”<sup>39</sup>

ARC personnel, however, had other mandates. In September 1920, in response to a petition from several Kantishna-area miners, engineer Hawley Sterling (who headed the ARC’s Yukon District) made a reconnaissance for a wagon road to Kantishna; he left the railroad from Lignite via a “lower route” that skirted the park’s northern boundary and returned to lower Riley Creek via

Superintendent Karstens and his National Park Service dog team at the first headquarters, 1923. Karstens Library Collection

the “upper route” through the high passes. In addition, Major John C. Gotwals made a preliminary survey for an auto road during the winter of 1920-21. That survey, which mirrored that of Sterling’s eastbound reconnaissance, followed much the same route that Karstens had described to his superiors, but toward the western end of the route—beginning in the Thorofare Pass area—Gotwals’s route continued west rather than southwest, and it terminated at Kantishna post office rather than at the base of Mount McKinley.<sup>40</sup>



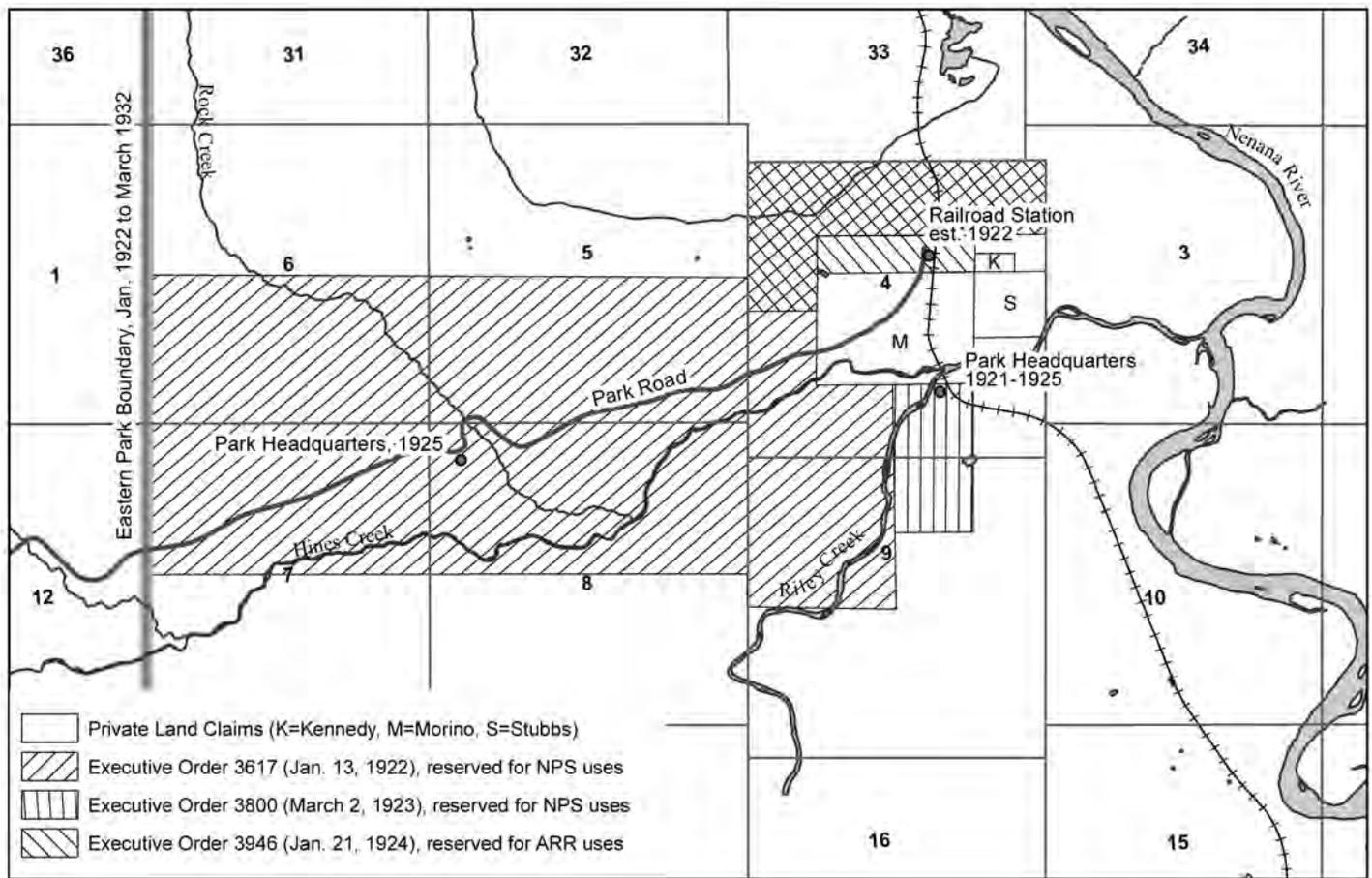
In a letter that fall, Gotwals explained that the Board of Road Commissioners had two mandates: first, to fund improvements for routes that could be used both in winter and summer; and second, funds should be spent on routes that were “the shortest possible distance from the center of the mining district to the Government Railroad.” (This was in line with the ARC’s general philosophy during the 1920s and 1930s, which was to construct road and trail feeders directly tributary to the railroad.) He noted that the route through the park was “admittedly the best natural mid-summer route to this mining district.” But he also noted that “the cost of construction of a wagon road upon this route would be very high due to the absence of timber and the consequent handicap upon winter freighting. . .” Therefore, for all-year purposes, “all of the extensive reconnaissances made to date indi-

Road Commission—at that time an arm of the U.S. War Department—was providing access for Alaska’s miners, prospectors, traders, and other permanent residents. To cater to the needs of those who lived and worked in the Kantishna Hills, the ARC maintained a “dog trail” (i.e., pack trail) that connected the railroad to Eureka Creek (Kantishna post office). And because mining in that area was undergoing a postwar revival, the ARC was also converting a sled road between the village of Roosevelt (at the head of navigation along the Kantishna River) and Kantishna from a winter-only route to one that “is gradually being improved to summer standard.”<sup>38</sup>

During the early fall of 1921, Supt. Karstens wrote to his superiors in Washington and, based on his considerable knowledge of the new park, laid out his vision for the “good road” that would be needed to serve the new park’s visitors. Karstens felt that the road should begin at the soon-to-be-built Riley Creek train depot and would head west along the drainages of Morris Creek [Hines Creek] and Jenny Creek; it would



The first depot at McKinley Park Station was a converted box car. Superintendent Harry Karstens is seated on the left. Charles Porter Collection, 79G-11F-69, National Archives



Map 4. Major Land Actions, McKinley Park Station Area, 1922-1925

cate as most favorable” the 85-mile-long “lower route” that started at the Lignite rail stop (just north of Healy) and continued to Kantishna via Savage, Crooked Creek, and Glacier City. (And based on that recommendation, the ARC in the spring of 1922 marked a trail along that route and established shelter tents along the way.) Gotwals, trying to address the NPS’s concerns, said that “there is every hope that at some time interest . . . will be such as to justify wagon road construction. In the meantime,” however, he suggested that a pack trail be constructed “from Lynch’s Roadhouse at the mouth of Morris Creek to McKinley River, south of Wonder Lake.” This project would cost an estimated \$26,000. He also suggested, at some later date, that the ARC might build “a wagon road from Lynch’s Roadhouse [at the future site of McKinley Park Station] to Middle River [Teklanika River] and from Kantishna Postoffice to Muldrow Glacier. . . . No further stages of the development of this route are included as they are believed to be premature at this time.”<sup>41</sup>

After Washington officials received the news of the ARC’s preferred route, they passed it on to Karstens. They noted that

This road, if built, would not only ser-

plans. It announced that during the summer of 1922, the 86-mile “Mt. McKinley Park Trail . . . will be brushed out and tripoded [sic] at confusing points, eight tents with small stoves will be erected at about ten mile intervals for shelter, mileposts will be erected and sign boards placed at the principal points.” As far as future plans were concerned, the ARC further noted that, once the initial funds had been spent on the 39-mile road upgrade, the NPS would submit estimates “for the improvement of successive sections to automobile standard as traffic conditions may demand.”<sup>44</sup>

Supt. Karstens, having been apprised of the April 1922 agreement between ARC and the agency’s Washington officials, knew soon afterward that ARC crews would be marking a trail route through the park during the summer season. And he may well have intuited that a road would soon be built along the trail’s right-of-way. The can-do superintendent, however, was apparently not a man to wait, and—not knowing what route the ARC crews might take—had his own ideas on where a road west from McKinley Park Station toward Savage River might go. As early as the fall of 1921, he had noted that “in the spring . . . it will be a good time to cut a road up Morris Creek Bench to its head . . . which will make it possible for a team and wagon to go Fourteen or fifteen

vice as a commercial road but would also give access by a short extension into the park to the Wonder Lake and Muldrow Glacier section. If Congress provides funds for the construction of this road, it will be an extremely difficult matter to secure Congressional appropriations for a road through Mount McKinley Park which will be purely a scenic one. Perhaps the largest park development that we can look forward to in the near future would be the construction of an outlook with rest cabins within easy walking distance of one another over the route you have in mind.<sup>42</sup>

Although the ARC was reluctant to commit to a wagon road through the park, NPS officials pursued the idea in face-to-face discussions. During those discussions the two parties made two major decisions; first, they agreed to cooperate on various trail and road construction projects in the McKinley Park area, and second, they agreed on a right-of-way for any proposed route into the park. On April 16, 1922, NPS Director Mather asked the ARC to prepare estimates for both a 110-mile marked trail between McKinley Park Station and the Kantishna Post Office, and a 39-mile upgrading of the trail to a road, designed “to automobile standard,” between the same two points. Four days later, the ARC’s James Steese replied that the pack trail—completed with bridges and shelter cabins—could be built for \$30,000, while the 39 miles of automobile road would cost an estimated \$390,000. Mather agreed to Steese’s proposal. By forging this “informal agreement,” the ARC and the NPS agreed to spend funds together on a road from McKinley Park Station to Kantishna. The ARC thus agreed to de-emphasize its interest in competing routes outside of the park boundaries, while the NPS agreed to abandon the plan—pushed by Supt. Karstens—that would have resulted in a road to the base of Mount McKinley. This agreement did not immediately obligate the NPS to underwrite road costs, nor did it set up a specific formula on how road construction expenses would be divided, but it did set the gears in motion.<sup>43</sup>

Mather soon submitted the roadbuilding estimate to Congress. In the meantime, the ARC went full-steam-ahead on interim

camp to Savage River,” so he “took horses and . . . cruised the upper and lower benches and found the lower easier for [a] temporary road.” Park staff apparently roughed out the road later that summer; in his August report, Karstens proudly noted that “our pioneer road into Savage River, though rough, is serving a good purpose.”<sup>46</sup>

That summer, as expected, ARC work crews forged the first routes into the park. Following the agreement between Steese and Mather, the ARC had an outfit in the park in July “erecting 7 by 8 [foot] tents with a stove in each, at 12 to 15 mile intervals, also putting up sign boards and blazing the trail.” By September, Karstens noted that “the trail leads along the higher benches, is well brushed out and blazed so it can be readily followed. . . . The balance of the trail through the park to Wonder Lake is blazed where it goes through short stretches of timber but very little of it is tripoded in the open.” The tents, “which are very well put up,” had “a sign telling the distance to the tent on either side of it, also the distance to Kantishna or McKinley Park Station.”<sup>47</sup> Karstens was doubtless disappointed that the ARC had not adopted the routes he had chosen—the ARC crew, for example, had shied away from his low-bench route west from McKinley Park Station, and it had also rejected his suggested route between the East Fork and Polychrome Pass in favor of one that clung high above the valley floor—but in his reports to Washington, Karstens remained a loyal soldier.<sup>48</sup>

If, in Karstens’s opinion, building “a main artery road through the upper passes was the park’s most urgent need,” then active steps toward protecting the park’s game ranked not far behind. In his first forays into the park after his appoint-



miles with very little trouble.”<sup>45</sup> The following June, he vowed “to brush out and construct some semblance of a wagon road from base

Superintendent Karstens roughed out a wagon road up Morris Creek (now Hines Creek) toward Savage River. Charles Porter Collection, 79G-11F-68, National Archives

This tent at Stony Creek was typical of those that the Alaska Road Commission erected in 1922 at 12- to 15-mile intervals along the newly-blazed park trail. Charles Porter Collection, 79G-



a ten-year permit, and he also proposed that Woodbury Abbey be his business partner. (Abbey was now residing in the McKinley Park Station area “pending the awarding of [the] hotel and transportation permit which he has applied for.”) Interior Department officials were willing to give him a three year permit—later raised to five years after Sutherland’s intervention—but they eschewed any partnership between Kennedy and Abbey. Kennedy, in response, dragged his feet in the matter, but on May 4, 1923, he finally agreed to the agency’s stipulations and signed the permit. He thus became the park’s first concessioner.<sup>58</sup> (See Appendix D.)

Kennedy had a good reason to hesitate before signing Mount McKinley’s first concessions permit, because he recognized that the NPS was under increasing pressure to have some sort of access and lodging arrangements for the waves of visitors who were expected to arrive that summer. The railroad, in 1923, had not yet begun widespread advertising and promotion campaigns to attract garden-variety tourists.<sup>59</sup> There were, however, three groups who had announced upcoming visits, and all three had a great potential to affect tourism to the park for years afterward. These were a Congressional party, which arrived on June 7; the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* party, which arrived on July 8-9; and the Presidential party, which arrived on July 15.

Once he signed the permit, Kennedy headed south to Washington state to stock his operation. But Karstens and others soon recognized that he was either incapable or unwilling to mount a reputable concessions service. For example,

he returned to Alaska with just 15 horses, and in Anchorage he purchased second-hand equipment to round out his operation. And as the summer wore on, Karstens found that Kennedy was habitually underfinanced, he was unwilling to delegate responsibility to his hired help, and he was constantly trying to borrow the NPS’s tools and equipment. At one point, Kennedy—sensing that Karstens was losing patience with him—accused the superintendent of “trying to run him out.”<sup>60</sup> Kennedy established a small, rude (and perhaps temporary) camp in the park that summer; perhaps as a result, only 32 recorded visitors entered the park out of some 217 that detrained at McKinley Park Station.<sup>61</sup>

Despite Kennedy’s failings, Karstens was forced to rely on the horse packer on more than one occasion that summer. When the 65-person Congressional party arrived, it made just a 90-minute stay at McKinley Park Station, but Karstens’ comments to the assembled crowd were so well received that James Steese (who was temporarily heading both the Alaska Railroad and the ARC) told the superintendent that because of “the many pleasant comments we have received concerning your [speech,] we may safely count upon receiving increased consideration at the hands of Congress next winter.”<sup>62</sup>

Plans called for the 70-person *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* party to ride on horseback from McKinley Park Station to the Savage River area in order to dedicate the park; in cooperation with the Interior Department and the NPS, representatives of this newspaper had dedicated several other

ment, Karstens “noticed well beaten horse and dog sled tracks on the old snow drifts” along the northern boundary, and he soon learned that “there had been two horses and several dog teams hauling game out of the hills very near all winter.” That discovery, along with earlier encounters with the two trapping parties (noted above), gave him the resolve “to build as many of the six or eight ranger cabins [in this year’s budget] as necessary for ranger night camps on their winter rounds.” Later that summer, Karstens repeated his interest in having “six cabins with barns and caches along the Northern Boundary.”<sup>49</sup> But the wherewithal to build the cabins was not immediately available, and for the next three years, rangers patrolling the park’s northern boundary were forced to bunk in a cabin at the mouth of Savage Canyon that was variously described as old, badly decayed, and with “ground squirrels [that were] becoming a nuisance.”<sup>50</sup> As late as the fall of 1925, Karstens ruefully noted that “the lack of sufficient ranger cabins, along the boundaries, makes it almost impossible for patrol.”<sup>51</sup>

Throughout 1921 and 1922, Karstens and other park staff had been able to work on the park’s most critical infrastructure needs, knowing that there would be few if any visitors interested in venturing into the park. In 1921, as noted above, the tracks of the government railroad were not yet complete, inasmuch as the Riley Creek bridge had not yet been completed. And the following year, tourists heading into the interior were forced to cross the Tanana River (at Nenana) on the ice in wintertime and by ferry during the summer, then shuttle over to equipment from the narrow-gauge Tanana Valley Railroad (TVRR).<sup>52</sup>

### **Concessioner Headaches**

Because access to and through the area remained difficult, the park staff recorded no tourist visits in 1921 and just seven in 1922. But in anticipation of growth that was yet to come, the NPS was already considering solicitations from potential tourism developers.<sup>53</sup> By January 1922, Karstens had already received three inquiries about “operating saddle trains into the park,” and by May of that year the agency was entertaining three serious proposals. Casey McDannel, the contractor of the Dining Car Department for the government railroad, applied for a permit to “hotels and roadhouses” in the park, including “a hotel as near to the base of Mt. McKinley as possible.” Woodbury Abbey, the GLO’s cadastral surveyor currently in the midst of the park’s boundary-marking project, proposed constructing six “log cabin hotels” between Savage River and the Clearwater Creek-McKinley River confluence, and for transport he planned to supply a

string of riding horses. A final applicant was I.E. Van Kirk, a Healy freighter. Van Kirk hoped to obtain a permit primarily “for operating a freight outfit through the park to the Copper Mountain Mining properties on the west side of the park.” However, he also hoped to handle “saddle trains into the park for taking visitors who wish to go on either long or short trips,” and for this purpose he planned to erect “shelter tent stopping places at regular intervals for the accommodation of these visitors.”<sup>54</sup> But as the summer wore on, interest in these proposals began to lag. McDannel abandoned his scheme, and Van Kirk “sold his packtrain and . . . is not attempting to do any freighting.” As for Abbey’s plans, Alaska’s GLO chief, George Parks, was openly skeptical of them. Parks noted that Abbey had made no plans for “a good modern hotel” at the entrance of the park; his plan “fails to provide a stopping place near the base of Mt. McKinley;” he was vague on his sources of financial backing; his estimates for hotel construction were far too low; he “has never had any experience that would qualify him to take charge of a proposition of this kind;” and he was openly antagonistic to Supt. Karstens, based on the conduct of the recently completed boundary survey. Abbey, in Parks’s opinion, had evidently “expected to get the concession without question,” but after he discussed the matter with Parks, Karstens took no action on Abbey’s application.<sup>55</sup> The park was therefore no closer to having a concessioner than it had been in May of that year.

During the course of these negotiations, the railroad was moving ever closer to completion, and beginning in the winter of 1922-23, the remaining hurdles to access were cleared away. Specifically, the Tanana River bridge was completed by February 1923, and the TVRR tracks were converted from narrow gauge to standard gauge in June 1923.<sup>56</sup> That summer, as a result, the park began to attract its first tourist groups. There to meet them was Dan Kennedy, a horse packer and game guide from Nenana, who had stepped into the vacuum created by the problems in Abbey’s application. Kennedy was by no means a stranger; his acquaintance with Karstens went back twenty years, and in the summer of 1922, he had taken Karstens and visitor W.F. Chandler of Fresno, California on a two-week pack trip into the park. He also had connections in Washington. Alaska Delegate Dan Sutherland, who apparently knew him, spoke to NPS officials about “pack and saddle train privileges in this park” in mid-December 1922.<sup>57</sup> Karstens sought Kennedy out and finally located him a month later. Kennedy promised to provide “35 first class saddle horses” and “[as] much camp equipment as necessary to handle [the] tourist trade.” But he demanded

“golden spike” that symbolically completed the Alaska Railroad. He continued on to Fairbanks and remained with the party until the presidential train, on its way back to Seward, passed the park headquarters in the wee hours of July 17.<sup>64</sup>

The “local people” with whom the Presidential party mingled were the residents at McKinley Park Station, and at that time, only two local residents—Karstens and Ranger Gustavus S. Buhmann—were NPS employees.<sup>65</sup> Most of the remainder were railroad workers or miners. As noted above, the first area residents had been roadhouse owners Maurice Morino and Pat Lynch, and the area was a bevy of activity during the winter of 1921-22, when the Riley Creek bridge was being constructed. (See Appendix E.) Lynch soon moved on, but Morino remained, operating out of a new, larger roadhouse just north and west of the newly-constructed bridge. The residents were a diverse lot; on the one hand, Morino’s roadhouse was a “center for the rough and drunken element in this section,” and during these initial days of Prohibition, the proprietor made no secret of both manufacturing and selling home brew.<sup>66</sup> But the civilized element was there, too; in the fall of 1922, a school opened up in a building that Karstens and others had constructed—with Mrs. Dave Firburn as the first teacher—and by 1924, meetings and dances were being held in a newly-renovated community hall.<sup>67</sup> Throughout this period, the AEC (later the Alaska Railroad) had been relying on a converted Tanana Valley Railroad box car to serve as its ad hoc depot, but in 1925 it was finally replaced with a “very attractive rustic depot.”<sup>68</sup>

### Initial Road Construction

Another element in town that summer, just beginning to make its presence known, was the Alaska Road Commission. As noted above, the ARC had been working with the NPS on a possible route into Kantishna since the spring of 1921; in April 1922 the two parties had signed an “informal agreement” that encompassed financing and route selection, and later that year a route was roughed out and tents were erected at several points along the way. By the spring of 1923, the ARC was getting ready to start construction work toward Savage River with “a small amount of money.” And thanks to a generous, \$700 donation from W.F. Chandler, who had been the park’s “first tourist” the previous summer, the NPS was able to share in the expenses. (See Appendix F.) NPS staff did the initial work that year, but in late June an ARC crew arrived. By September the road had been built to “first creek” (today’s Rock Creek), and a 126-foot-long “native timber bridge” had been completed across the creek. (See Appendix G.) The cost of the season’s work—both federal and private funds—totaled slightly less than \$5,000. Just \$500 of the \$4261 in federal funds came from NPS coffers; most if not all of the remaining funds came from the Alaska Road Commission.<sup>69</sup>

Road construction received a considerable boost when Congress passed the Act of April 9, 1924 (H.R. 3682), which provided for a three-year road program for the nation’s national parks. As it pertained to Mount McKinley, it authorized the expenditure of \$272,700 in NPS funds, which was judged sufficient to build 33 miles of road and 70 miles of trail. The passage of that act im-



Mount McKinley National Park was formally dedicated on July 9, 1923. Most of the people attending were tourists in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* Party. DENA 11407, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

Maurice Morino, pictured here, operated a roadhouse, store, post office, cabins for rent and gardens on his patented homestead at McKinley Station. Frances Erickson Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



western parks in recent years. In anticipation of that July 8 event, Kennedy and his men took a four-horse team to Savage “loaded with tents and horse feed.” Karstens and his ranger also hauled many goods to Savage, and by the evening of July 7, final preparations were commencing for the party’s arrival. Try as he may, however, Karstens had only a vague idea when the party could be expected. On the evening of the 7<sup>th</sup>, the head of the *Eagle* party, citing a late-arriving train, sent a telegram announcing that the group would be unable to ride up to Savage River. Karstens and Kennedy, in response, spent an exhausting night hauling the assembled goods back to McKinley Park Station. The train bearing the *Eagle* party arrived the following evening, and many visitors detrained to a “tents and shelter” that had been hurriedly erected near the train depot. The park dedication was held nearby at 11 a.m. on July 9. A barbecue followed, and at 6 that evening the party headed north to Fairbanks.<sup>63</sup>

Less than a week later, President Warren G. Harding’s 70-person party visited McKinley Park Station as part of a month-long Alaska tour. At 10:30 on the morning of July 15, the train pulled in, and for the next twenty minutes, “the President and party mingled with the local people” while Karstens spoke to various press representatives about the park and its needs. Karstens headed north with the party and continued to extol the park’s virtues. He was therefore at the north end of the Nenana River bridge that afternoon when President Harding drove home the

plied a promise that the NPS would underwrite the lion’s share of road-construction funding. But until Congress provided a specific appropriation, it was unable to provide financial help. To allow for construction during the interim, Steese agreed to appropriate ARC funds, to be repaid under the NPS authorization noted above.<sup>70</sup>

Because the road between McKinley Park Station and Kantishna would be located on NPS land, and because the NPS agreed to be the primary funding source, agency officials moved to ensure that the road would be located and designed to standards demanded by the NPS, not the Alaska Road Commission. As H.R. 3682 (above) wound its way through Congress, officials of the two agencies broached this subject to some extent, but on April 9, 1924, Acting Director Arno Cammerer specified the agency’s philosophy in a letter to Col. Steese of the ARC. Cammerer asked ARC engineers, in their route choice, to allow

the visitor going over the road the best possible views and vistas of the country, avoiding a straight line in road location and consequent cutting through hillside and forest growth merely to constitute it the shortest way between two points. [We believe] that the easy-curved roadways are particularly charming and pleasing in national park work. [We also ask that] care . . . be taken in clearing for the roadbed by protecting the trees



This was the second McKinley Park depot. In the background is a small octagonal structure that housed an interpretive display. The gateway arch and Morino's homestead can be seen in the left background. DENA 25-2.5, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

and shrubbery, springs, or beautiful rock formations; it is often possible, by switching the line of the road a few feet to preserve the particularly interesting bits of shrubbery, a spring, or even rock formations.<sup>71</sup>

Now that the two agencies were working together, and with a full recognition that work would continue on the road for several years to come, the ARC began to plan for a base of operations at McKinley Park Station. In May 1924, Hawley Sterling told Karstens that a warehouse and an office building were in the offing, and both buildings were completed by the end of June.<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile, two crews of ARC workers, totaling some 80 or 90 men, were extending the road to the west. By September 19, Karstens was able to report that the road had been “graded for 10 miles . . . Savage Camp should be reached with autos next summer, having the horses working from there on.” The last of the road crew did not quit work until November.<sup>73</sup>

In 1924, the Alaska Railroad orchestrated its first tourism campaign, of which the lure of Mount McKinley played a major role. Brochures published that year extolled the railroad as “the Mount McKinley Route,” a slogan that, for years afterward, was repeated on company letterhead and the line’s box cars. And in addition, tourists who arrived in 1924 were the first to benefit from a “gentleman’s agreement” that had been

worked out between Alaska’s major transportation companies. Such companies as the White Pass and Yukon Route, the Alaska Steamship Company, and the Copper River and Northwestern Railroad as well as the Alaska Railroad were becoming increasingly aware that tourists were an important part of their business. But until 1924, they had never coordinated their pricing structures or schedules to cater to the package-tour traveler, who constituted the large majority of Alaska visitors.<sup>74</sup> All of these improvements, however, had a scant effect on tourism to Mount McKinley. The poor condition of roads and trails, the necessity for park visitors to ride on packhorses for several miles, and the poor quality of accommodations all militated against park visitation.

Dan Kennedy continued to run the park’s concession operation in 1924, as he had the previous year. The NPS, disappointed at his inability to live up to the concessions permit—which called for the operation of three camps, not just the Savage operation—demanded greater compli-

The Alaska Road Commission (ARC) established their base of operations at McKinley Station by constructing an office and a warehouse adjacent to the Alaska Railroad track near the McKinley Station depot. The photo looks northeast. Charles Porter Collection, 79G-11F-43, National Archives



ance. In addition, the agency wanted “a better grade of saddle horses, and a reduction of rates as last year’s rates were too high for [the] general public to stand.” To these Kennedy reluctantly agreed.<sup>75</sup> And NPS officials, seeing that he now had an advisor (Fairbanks mayor Thomas Marquam) and a company name (Mount McKinley Tourist and Transportation Co.), were hopeful for greater success.<sup>76</sup> But Kennedy and Marquam soon learned that Alaska’s steamship companies were refusing to sell many tickets to Interior destinations, and also that passenger trains stopped at McKinley Park Station late at night.<sup>77</sup> As a result, the men refused to set up their camps until clients showed up. Thus it was not until late June that they finally got their Savage Camp into operation. The camp consisted of a 20’ x 60’ cooking and dining room, plus eight small (10’ x 12’) brown canvas tents, each equipped with “two iron cots, small stove, and a home made washstand.”<sup>78</sup> Kennedy, however, was able to entice only 62 visitors into the park that summer.<sup>79</sup> Trying to salvage a money-losing season, the fledgling company began to arrange for guided hunting trips out of the nearby community of Cantwell (see Appendix E); this caused Karstens considerable consternation, inasmuch as “the only good hunting country within a reasonable distance is along the Park boundary” and because the park had no easy way to patrol that area. Kennedy, at one point, even threatened to abandon his McKinley Park Station headquarters and relocate to Cantwell.<sup>80</sup>

By the close of 1924, Karstens had been on the job for three and a half years. He had accomplished much during that period, but he had done virtually everything by the sweat of his brow, with little help from others. He had established a headquarters, he had made a broad range of local residents aware of the park’s purposes and goals, he had coordinated road planning and construction, he had established a visitor program by selecting a park concessioner, and he had done his best to inform both residents and visitors what was allowed (and prohibited) within the park’s boundaries. The logistics of his job, however, were so daunting that anyone but a self-sufficient Alaskan would have resigned under the strain, and those same difficulties brought a high turnover to the one or two rangers that worked for him. The park headquarters, moreover, was poorly located and poorly constructed, and due

to poor railroad scheduling and a balky concessioner, park visitation was virtually nonexistent. It had been a hard, disheartening three and a half years. But a new era of optimism, stability, and development—both in infrastructure and tourism—was on the horizon. This era is described in more detail in Chapter 4.

### Notes - Chapter 3

1 Horace Albright, in his *Creating the National Park Service*, p. 205, noted that “Sadly, McKinley was treated like our other new parks, Lassen and Hawaii. No money was made available to staff, operate, or improve them. Not a red cent to hire a superintendent and rangers. Nothing for protection of the wild animals [and] nothing to make it possible for visitors to enjoy ... the magnificent Alaskan wilderness.”

2 The railroad’s progress, to be fair, was more illusory than real. In order to gain access to the Matanuska coal fields, the line from Anchorage to the Matanuska coal fields was completed in August 1916. But due to the absence, or poor quality, of track south of Anchorage, and because of a labor shortage brought on by World War I, the first train did not run from Seward (the line’s southern terminus) to Matanuska until September 1918. Walter R. Borneman, *Alaska: Saga of a Bold Land*, 264-65.



The Savage Camp tourist facility had grown significantly by the 1924 season. B88-52-50, Anchorage Museum of History & Art

3 Franklin K. Lane to Secretary of the Treasury, February 27, 1917, in 64th Congress, 2nd Session, Senate Document 742, pp. 1-2.

4 Alexander T. Vogelsang to Sen. Thomas S. Martin, June 19, 1918, in “Appropriations, estimates” file, Box 109 (MOMC), Entry 6, RG 79, NARA CP; John Ise, *Our National Park Policy* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1961), 227.

er, March 12, 1937, 9.

25 Alaska Railroad, *Map of S4-T14S-R7W-FM Showing ARR Reserve-at McKinley Park Station* (1935/1951), drawing R-1082-134, AKRO Lands Division files; Brown, *A History*, 154.

26 SMR for October 1922, 2; December 1922, 1, 6; and January 1923, 5.

27 Brown, *A History*, 138, 140; SMR for Octo-

- 5 *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior*, Fiscal Year 1937, Table 4. From 1917 through 1919 inclusively, NPS funds came from the War Department as well as the Interior Department; beginning in fiscal year 1920, all NPS funds were funneled through the Interior Department.
- 6 Vogelsang to Martin, June 19, 1918, see above; Arno B. Cammerer to John Burnham, in “Wild Animals, Part 1 & 2” file, Box 112 (MOMC), Entry 6, RG 79, NARA CP; Brown, *A History*, 94.
- 7 Nelson to Stephen T. Mather, December 9, 1920, in “Wild Animals, Part 1 & 2” file, Box 112 (MOMC), Entry 6, RG 79, NARA CP; John Burnham to Mather, December 10, 1920, in “Rules and Regulations” file, Box 111 (MOMC), Entry 6, RG 79, NARA CP.
- 8 Charles Sheldon, “To the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives,” in “Appropriations, estimates” file, Box 109 (MOMC), Entry 6, RG 79, NARA CP.
- 9 Borneman, *Alaska; Saga of a Bold Land*, 266.
- 10 Mather to William J. Rogers, February 1, 1921; John B. Burnham to Mather, February 10, 1921; both in “Rules and Regulations” file, Box 111 (MOMC), Entry 6, RG 79, NARA CP. Late in 1921, an NPS official stated that “it was only last year, after the most insistent and combined efforts on the park of the Park Service and the friends of the Alaskan game” that an appropriation was obtained. Arno Cammerer to Dan Beard, November 1, 1921, in “Wild Animals, Part 1 & 2” file, Box 112 (MOMC), Entry 6, RG 79, NARA CP.
- 11 Carl C. Tousley to Mather, February 12, 1921, and Horace M. Albright to Dan Beard, October 27, 1921, both in “Wild Animals, Part 1 & 2” file, noted above. Congress, in its FY 1922 allotment, was quite generous with the NPS; it granted \$1.43 million to an agency that had never before received more than \$1.06 million. Funding for Mount McKinley was one fortunate by-product of the additional funding allotment. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior*, Fiscal Year 1937, Table 4.
- 12 Various items in “Rules and Regulations” file, Box 111, noted above.
- 13 Various items in “Rules and Regulations” file, Box 111, noted above; Arno Cammerer to Dan Beard, November 1, 1921, in “Wild Animals, Part 1 & 2” file, noted above; Mather to Karstens, April 12, 1921, in “Instructions” file, Box 110 (MOMC), Entry 6, RG 79, NARA CP; A. E. Demaray to Mr. Cammerer, June 20, 1922, in “Inspection” file, Box 110, noted above; SMR, August 1921, 2, 4; September 1921, 2.
- 14 Grant Pearson, *The Seventy Mile Kid; Wilderness Superintendent of Mount McKinley National Park* (Los Altos, Calif., 1957), 1; Sheldon, *Wilderness of the Upper Yukon; a Hunter’s Exploration for Wild Sheep in Sub-Arctic Mountains* (New York, C. Scribner’s Sons), 1911; Albright to Beard, October 27, 1921, noted above.
- 15 William E. Brown, *A History of the Mount McKinley-Denali Region*, 135.
- 16 Brown, *A History*, 135-37; Mather to Karstens, April 12, 1921, in “Instructions” file, Box 110 (MOMC), Entry 6, RG 79, NARA CP.
- 17 Mather to Karstens, April 12, 1921, in “Instructions” file, noted above; Cammerer to Beard, November 1, 1921, in “Wild Animals, Part 1 & 2” file, noted above.
- 18 Superintendent’s Monthly Report (hereafter SMR), Mount McKinley National Park, June 1921, *passim*.
- 19 Brown, *A History*, 138-39.
- 20 SMR, June 1921, 2; September 1921, 2.
- 21 Borneman, *Alaska, Saga of a Bold Land*, 266; Ann Bischoff Kain, *Cultural Resource Management in Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska*, unpublished M.A. Thesis, Antioch University, March 2001, 162-63.
- 22 Borneman, *Alaska, Saga of a Bold Land*, 266; SMR, September 1921, 2; March 1922, 2; Frank Norris, *Gawking at the Midnight Sun; the Tourist in Early Alaska*, Alaska Historical Commission Studies in History No. 170 (Anchorage, the Commission, June 1985), 46; Brown, *A History*, 104. The Tanana River bridge was completed a year later, in February 1923, and in June of that year, the completion of a track-widening project between Nenana and Fairbanks (inasmuch as the Tanana Valley Railroad had been a narrow-gauge line) allowed the first through trains to travel from Seward to Fairbanks.
- 23 In the October 1921 SMR, p. 2, Karstens noted that the decision for the headquarters location was made “after considerable study” ... seeing as the park boundary was 15 miles west of the railroad at this time, “building in the Park would necessarily make it very hard to be prompt with reports and correspondence.”
- 24 SMR, August 1921, 3; September 1921, 3-4; Karstens to Director NPS, January 25, 1923, in “Lands-General” file, Box 110 (MOMC), Entry 6, RG 79, NARA CP; *Fairbanks Daily News-Min-*

ber 1921, 6.

28 In a story that appeared almost 30 years later (Harold E. Booth's "Discovery of Mount McKinley," *National Parks Magazine* 23 (January-March 1949), 23), Karstens once told the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce that except for salary costs, his total expenditures during 1921 amounted to \$35. According to Booth—who served as a park ranger during the mid-1940s—Karstens "had succumbed to the lure of a highly colored mail order catalog describing a wood-burning stove particularly suitable for the new cabin, and priced at \$34.00. Then, having gone that far, he decided to buy two hinges for the cabin door."

29 SMR for September 1921, 4; November 1921, 2; December 1921, 2; January 1922, 3; February 1922, 2; March 1922, 2; and April 1922, 2, 6.

30 Brown, *A History*, 140; Jane Bryant, in a December 7, 2005 telephone call, suggests that "Morris" was a variant of "Maurice," which was Morino's first name.

31 Mather to Karstens, April 12, 1921, in "Instructions" file, noted above

32 Cammerer to Beard, November 1, 1921, in "Wild Animals, Part 1 & 2" file, noted above.

33 *Congressional Record* 67:1 (1921), 504; *Congressional Record* 67:2 (1922), 364. The term "Sutherland Bill" was quoted in SMR, June 1921, 2.

34 A. E. Demaray to Mr. Cammerer, June 20, 1922, in "Inspection" file, Box 110 noted above.

35 SMR, September 1921, 2; June 1922, 2; September 1922, 1.

36 Executive Order 3617, January 13, 1922. A year later, on March 2, 1923, Harding signed another directive (Executive Order 3800) that granted—for the same purposes—an additional 80 acres of land just south of the Riley Creek railroad bridge.

37 64th Congress, 1st Session, Report No. 440, p. 2; SMR, June 1921, 1-2.

38 Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report of the Alaska Road Commission, Fiscal Year 1921*, Part II, 39; John C. Gotwals (Engineer Officer of the Board of Road Commissioners) to President of the Board, November 9, 1921, in Box 371 (General Files), Entry 6, RG 79, NARA CP.

39 Superintendent to "Sir," October 3, 1921, in Box 379 (General Files), Entry 6, RG 79, NARA CP.

40 Brown, *A History*, 107-08; SMR, June 1921, 3; Gotwals to President of the Board, November 9, 1921.

41 ARC, *Annual Report, Part II*, for 1922 (p. 56), 1924 (pp. 104-05), and 1926 (p. 73); Gotwals to President of the Board, November 9, 1921.

42 Arno Cammerer to Karstens, March 30, 1922, in Box 379 (General Files), Entry 6, RG 79, NARA CP.

43 James G. Steese (ARC) to Stephen Mather, April 20, 1922, in DENA Historical File.

44 ARC, *Annual Report*, 1922, Part II, 56-57.

45 SMR, October 1921, 6.

46 SMR, June 1922, 2-3; August 1922, 2, 6.

47 SMR, September 1922, 4.

48 Karstens' letter to his superiors (Superintendent to "Sir," October 3, 1921, p. 2 in Box 379 [General Files], Entry 6, RG 79, NARA CP) suggests a low-elevation road, inasmuch as his proposed route "offers numerous ways from the East fork to the summit of Polychrome Pass (6 miles) it is a good hard bottom and easy road building; the numerous streams to cross will give very little trouble."

49 SMR, June 1921, 1-3; August 1921, 3.

50 SMR, September 1924, 3; December 1924, 2; September 1925, 2.

51 SMR, November 1925, 9.

52 Borneman, *Alaska, Saga of a Bold Land*, 266; Brown, *A History*, 103-04, 118-19; Norris, *Gawking at the Midnight Sun*, 46.

53 NPS, *Public Use of the National Parks; a Statistical Report, 1904-1940* (Washington, the author, 1963), 5.

54 Arno Cammerer to Edward C. Finney, June 20, 1922, in "Inspection" file, Box 110 (MOMC), Entry 6, RG 79, NARA CP; Woodbury Abbey to Stephen Mather, May 9, 1922, in "Privileges" file, Box 111 (MOMC), Entry 6, RG 79, NARA CP.

55 George A. Parks to Secretary of the Interior, November 10, 1922, 11-20 in "Inspection" file, Box 110 (MOMC), Entry 6, RG 79, NARA CP.

56 Borneman, *Alaska, Saga of a Bold Land*, 267; Norris, *Gawking at the Midnight Sun*, 46. Borneman, somewhat quixotically, noted that "The first train chugged across the [Tanana River bridge] on November 23, 1922, and it was hailed as complete on February 27, 1923."

57 Cammerer to Karstens, December 11, 1922 and January 2, 1923, in "Privileges" file, Box

111 (MOMC), Entry 6, RG 79, NARA CP; SMR, July 1922, 5; December 1922, 4; June 1923, 5. Karstens, in his July 1922 report, noted that Chandler “has the distinction of being the park’s first real visitor.”

58 Karstens to Director NPS (telegram), January 4, 1923; Edward C. Finney to Cammerer, January 22, 1923; B.L. Vipond to Karstens, February 20, 1923, all in “Privileges” file, Box 111 (MOMC), Entry 6, RG 79, NARA CP; SMR, January 1923, 2, 4; April 1923, 2, 4; May 1923, 2, 3; George S. Stroud, *History of the Concession at Denali National Park*, unpub. mss. (Anchorage, NPS, March 1985), 1.

59 Norris, *Gawking at the Midnight Sun*, 48-49; SMR, January 1923, 6-7; April 1923, 2; May 1923, 1-2; Brown, *A History*, 155-56.

60 SMR, May 1923, 3-4; June 1923, 5, 6, 8; July 1923, 4, 7, 8, 10; *Seward Gateway*, June 27, 1923, 4.

61 Norris, *Gawking at the Midnight Sun*, 106. The DENA historical collection contains a 1923 Savage Camp photo, courtesy of the Candy Waugaman Collection.

62 Brown, *A History*, 155.

63 SMR, July 1923, 2-6.

64 SMR, July 1923, 7; Borneman, *Alaska, Saga of a Bold Land*, 268-69; Brown, *A History*, 156.

65 SMR, April 1923, 3; July 1923, 7.

66 SMR, January 1922, 2; February 1922, 2; Brown, *A History*, 154.

67 SMR, October 1922, 3; November 1922, 4; January 1923, 4; March 1924, 3, 5; April 1924, 3, 7; May 1924, 6; July 1924, 2; November 1924, 6; Grant Pearson, *A History of Mt. McKinley National Park* (n.p., NPS, 1953), 56. The community hall was a reconverted cabin; it opened in April 1924 for “dances and other meetings” and continued to function in that capacity until July 4 of that year. The school apparently operated only through the 1924-25 school year.

68 SMR, April 1922, 2; September 1924, 4; Brown, *A History*, 118-19 (photos).

69 ARC, *Annual Report*, 1924, Part II, 116; SMR, April 1923, 3; June 1923, 6; September 1923, 2.

70 ARC, *Annual Report*, 1925, Part II, 88-89.

71 Cammerer to Steese, April 9, 1924, in File 630 (Roads), in Box 1412 (MOMC), Entry 7, RG 79, NARA CP. The NPS’s early attitude toward roads is set forth in Horace M. Albright and Marian Albright Schenck, *Creating the National Park Service: the Missing Years* (Norman, Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 298-99.

72 SMR, May 1924, 2, 3, 5, 6; June 1924, 3, 4.

73 SMR, April 1924, 6; May 1924, 4-7, 9; September 1924, 7; November 1924, 5; ARC, *Annual Report*, 1925, Part II, 89.

74 Norris, *Gawking at the Midnight Sun*, 48-49, 51.

75 SMR, January 1924, 2; March 1924, 3.

76 The company was organized beginning in December 1923 and was a reality by mid-March 1924. SMR December 1923, 3; March 1924, 2.

77 SMR, May 1924, 8; June 1924, 3, 6. The southbound train arrived at 1:15 a.m., while the northbound train arrived at 2:40 a.m.

78 SMR, June 1924, 3, 6; July 1924, 2; November 1924, 2.

<sup>79</sup> NPS, *Public Use of the National Parks; a Statistical Report, 1904-1940*, 5. Not all who entered the park traveled by horseback, however. As noted earlier, miners going to and from the Copper Mountain and Kantishna areas often walked or traveled by dogsled; ARC crews entered on construction vehicles; and the first passenger cars entered the park. Karstens noted that on July 20, 1924, he and ranger Ernest McFarland “took the auto and drove out the park road [and] before we realized it we were at Savage Camp, the first auto to go into the park.” The following month, the superintendent drove several ladies to the head of Savage River; they thus had “the distinction of being the first visitors to go into the Park by auto.” SMR, July 1924, 4; August 1924, 3.

