

Chapter Six: Postwar McKinley, 1946-1956

The decade that followed World War II brought numerous changes to Mount McKinley National Park. Visitation moved from virtually nothing during the last wartime year to a new high of 6,672 just five years later. The Korean War then intervened, bringing with it major changes to the operation of the McKinley Park Hotel. The end of that war brought on a crisis at the park hotel, the impacts of which had a marked effect on park visitation. During this decade, almost all visitors accessed the park via the Alaska Railroad; at the same time, however, a park access road (the Denali Highway) was planned and built. NPS officials, in response to road construction, prepared for a sharp increase in automobile-based tourists.

A Challenging Transition to Peacetime

To some extent, Alaska began to de-emphasize its strong military role soon after Allied troops drove Japanese forces from the Aleutian Islands in the spring and summer of 1943. Not long thereafter, total U.S. troop strength began to fall as part of transfers to other theaters of war, and by 1945 the number of active-duty troops in Alaska had fallen from 152,000 to about 60,000.¹ Beginning in 1944, various civilian government agencies—the Alaska Railroad and the National Park Service included—reacted to the increasingly optimistic war news by making postwar plans.

Americans throughout the country rejoiced on August 15, 1945 (V-J Day) when the U.S. government accepted Japan's surrender terms, and on September 2 Japanese officials officially ended the war with the signing of a treaty on the U.S.S. *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay.² On October 4, officials with the U.S. Army's Alaskan Department declared that emergency wartime travel restrictions were being relaxed.³

Given those developments, the NPS and various development interests looked forward to seeing a full resumption of tourism in the summer of 1946. But major structural problems remained. The 16-ship fleet of the Alaska Steamship Company, for example, had been requisitioned during the war by the U.S. Maritime Commission, and by August 1945 two-thirds of those vessels had been sold or lost. Many of those vessels remained in government hands after the war ended, and it was not until late 1948 that the company regained full control of its fleet.⁴ Compounding these difficulties was a series of maritime strikes—either in Alaska ports or on the Seattle waterfront—that crippled commerce for portions of the 1946, 1947, and 1948 tourist seasons.⁵

The volume of Alaska's maritime business during this period was so limited that the number of Alaskan steamship companies decreased from four in 1947 to just one (the Alaska Steamship Company) in 1950; this reduction, in turn, brought higher maritime passenger rates.⁶ This period, to be sure, offered new, alternative ways to get to and from Alaska; commercial air transportation between Alaska and the U.S. had begun in June 1940, and the Alcan (Alaska) Highway had been open between Fairbanks and the main North American road network since November 1942.⁷ Both of these newfangled travel methods, however, had yet to prove themselves; although three different airlines during the late 1940s connected Alaska to the U.S., few tourists used these services, and the long, challenging Alcan route was closed to civilian traffic until 1948.⁸

Despite those impediments, officials with the Alaska Railroad (which had operated the hotel since it opened in June 1939 and had held the park's concession since December 1941) did what they could to attract tourists to Mount McKinley National Park. (See Appendix D.) Anticipating a substantial increase in tourist volume, the railroad in May 1945 announced plans for a 72-room addition—each room with a separate bath—that would provide for a total of 320 guests. NPS landscape architect Alfred Kuehl, from the agency's regional office in San Francisco, assisted by providing preliminary drawings and lay-out plans. The following March, the railroad issued bid proposals for the expansion project. Perhaps due to the bevy of other territorial construction projects, however, all of the submitted bids were rejected as “way over budget,” and shortly afterward, funds for the project were deleted because of a Presidential directive to reduce non-essential expenditures.⁹

Railroad officials, meanwhile, showed mixed feelings about the upcoming visitor season. In early 1946 the line's general manager, Col. John P. Johnson, “indicated a strong possibility” that the tourist facilities would not open that summer due to a rate squabble with the Alaska Steamship Company. Soon afterward, however, the railroad reversed its position and stated that the hotel would open after all. When a maintenance crew arrived at the hotel on May 1, it was dismayed to discover \$8,000 in damages caused by frozen pipes.¹⁰ Despite that setback, the hotel opened as scheduled on June 10 and continued to operate

After the McKinley Park Hotel reopened to the public in 1946, it provided year-round accommodations and recreational activities. One of the ski runs is seen here overlooking the hotel complex. Charles Ott Photo, DENA 3548, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



The McKinley Park Hotel lobby in the 1940s. Candy Waugaman Collection

until September 30; during that time, the park received 1,145 visitors. Beginning in August, railroad officials discussed with Fort Richardson's commander the possibility of keeping the hotel open that winter for both military and civilian use. The idea of a ski area development was broached during those discussions. The ski-area idea, however, was abandoned as being too costly, and the hotel closed down that winter.¹¹

By the time the hotel opened the following spring, Johnson was well aware that the hotel was a financial albatross; Supt. Been recalls that Johnson was "frank in expressing desirability for the railroad to get out of the hotel business" and hoped that the hotel could be taken over by a private concessioner. Ickes's decisions of a decade earlier were now irreversible, however, so the railroad soldiered on.¹² During the summer of 1947, the rail carrier raised hotel rates by 20 percent and found "local and college people" to staff the facility. To further improve the bottom line, it pushed for a year-round hotel operation, hoping to gain enough Army patronage to cover winter operating expenses. Officials also hoped that the introduction of a new, streamlined train—the *Aurora*, which connected Anchorage with Fairbanks in one day instead of the previous two—would boost visitation. To dedicate the new train, they held a highly popular 1898-style costume ball at the hotel on Alaska Day, October 18.¹³ For the remainder of the winter, Alaska residents descended on the hotel for holiday

weekends, and both newlyweds and conventioners flocked there as well. Otherwise, however, crowds were sparse, primarily because the military chose not to be involved. By the following May, railroad officials gamely declared that wintertime operations had been "satisfactory." Hotel operations, however, remained a losing proposition; they resulted in about \$150,000 of red ink to be spilled each year.¹⁴ Railroad officials, trying to be optimistic, planned to keep the hotel open during coming winters as well, stating that it was "reasonable to expect an uptrend of winter patronage from the States, particularly if winter sports are provided." No such sport facilities were provided, however, until the winter of 1948-49, when the hotel management installed a ski tow and a "fine little ice rink" nearby. The



The McKinley Park Hotel Dining Room. Candy Waugaman Collection

skating rink was resurrected the following year as well. But despite those amenities, and despite reduced room rates and discount "excursion fares" on railroad travel—the hotel continued to lose money throughout this period.¹⁵ Spurred on by year-round visitation, the number of annual

park visitors reached unprecedented heights during this period; the 1947 total of 3,466 was far higher than in any previous year, and during the next three years the number of visitors almost doubled, to 6,672. The high cost of staffing and heating the hotel, however, plus the lack of wintertime visitation accounted for its negative cash flow.¹⁶

Korean War Impacts

In 1950, events half a world away reverberated across Alaska and, in time, brought changes to Mount McKinley National Park. On June 25, North Koreans troops made a surprise attack across the 38th parallel, and three days later U.S. President Harry Truman ordered American troops to assist South Korean Army troops. The Korean War was on.¹⁷

Alaskan troops, whose primary purpose was to guard against a Soviet threat to North America, played a marginal role during the three-year war. Nevertheless, troops throughout the U.S.—Alaska included—were placed on a state of high alert and were constantly ready for battle.¹⁸ Given the country’s commitment to its military obligations, the Army showed a renewed interest in using the park hotel during the off-season, and in the early fall of 1950 it formally decided—in a report to the NPS’s regional office—to take over the hotel on December 1 for use as a rest camp. “High ranking military personnel” briefed NPS staff about the plan in late October—and visitation to the hotel—described as “negligible” during most of October—increased significantly as Army officials prepared for wintertime management.¹⁹

On December 1, as scheduled, the Army inaugurated the McKinley Park Recreational Rest Camp under a joint operation agreement with the Alaska Railroad, and for the remainder of the winter the hotel was filled—often to capacity—with armed services personnel. Just who filled the hotel, however, changed abruptly in January, when the Air Force replaced the Army; and perhaps because of that change, the military’s last occupancy date was moved back from April 1 to May 1.²⁰ Upon leaving, the Air Force brass declared their intention to return again that fall. They kept that promise, and from 1951 to 1953 the hotel was typically booked nearly all year round with either civilian tourists from early June through late September, or Alaska Air Command (i.e., Air Force) personnel from November 1 through April 30. May and October were the only slack months except during the winter of 1951-52, when the military operated the hotel all the way from early October through late May.²¹

By all accounts, the hotel was a lively place, summer and winter, during the three-year Korean War period. Year-round activities included the NPS’s interpretive films, shown at the hotel, and visits to the dog kennels and the agency’s small museum, both located at headquarters. Summertime activities included sightseeing out the park road, hiking, and camping.²² Wintertime guests, on the other hand, were able to take advantage of the skating rink that was laid out near the hotel and, beginning in the winter of 1950-51, the military offered a ski run and toboggan slide on the slope just west of the hotel. The skating rink apparently remained for several years, but the military’s “skiing activities,” in the spring of



During the years the McKinley Park Hotel operated year-round, ice skating was one of the recreational activities available to visitors. DENA 30-13, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

1951, temporarily shifted to Mile 6 on the park road due to the lack of snow at McKinley Park Station.²³ Folk and square dancing, conducted by the NPS staff and their wives, was also a winter-time staple during this period.²⁴ The hotel was enlivened by several major conventions; of particular interest was the Alaska Science Conference, which was held there for the second time in September 1951 and the third time a year later.²⁵ Despite the relatively high, year-round tourist levels at the hotel during this period (in 1950, in fact, the hotel was booked “almost to capacity for the summer”), the railroad continued to lose money. According to a contemporary report, the reasons for the red ink were simple:

The hotel season is very brief . . . there have been days during the [summer] season when the number of guests registered at the hotel dropped to as low as one person. Nevertheless it is necessary to maintain the full staff day in and day out during the season as it is not possible to estimate the number of guests.²⁶



This rope tow pulled skiers up the slope just west of the McKinley Park Hotel, seen in the background. DENA 30-8, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

As a consequence, the railroad raised its hotel prices but skimped on maintenance. In 1950, therefore, visitors intending to go out into the park could “not do so in a satisfactory manner because transportation means and other accommodations out in the park are practically non-existent.” In 1951, in a similar fashion, the railroad ran bus and passenger-car trips out into the park “on a demand basis only.” Camp Eielson, which had not operated since the summer of 1948, continued in its mothballed state.²⁷ The following year matters got considerably worse when Congress slashed its annual railroad appropriation from \$16 million to \$4 million, and as a complement to that action, it recommended that the hotel, for the first time ever, be placed under a concession contract. As a result, the railroad on June 12 issued an Invitation for Bid Proposals,

asking for bid submittals to be completed by September 10. Meanwhile, the railroad continued to run the hotel, but it asked the Matanuska Bus Lines to provide a bus for service out the park road; that bus seldom went past Camp Eielson.²⁸ That August, E. W. Lauesen, who represented certain “interested parties in Anchorage,” visited the park with an eye to its economic possibilities; later that year, he incorporated McKinley Park Services, Inc. for the purpose of submitting a bid for the concession contract.²⁹ Lauesen’s outfit and three other companies submitted bids by the September 10 deadline, but by December, Lauesen had emerged as the only serious bidder. Park staff, in response, met repeatedly with the group and learned what it could about its finances. The investigation revealed that Lauesen’s group was severely undercapitalized, and it also discovered that the bidders had precious little hotel management experience. On the basis of those findings, the NPS’s regional director recommended against awarding Lauesen’s group the hotel contract; if granted, he asked that the bidders secure \$200,000 in additional financing. But the Interior Department, fully aware of the railroad’s ardent interest in divesting its burden, soft-

pedaled those suggestions, and on June 13, 1953, the agency awarded McKinley Park Services a 20-year contract to operate the hotel and ancillary services (see Appendix D). The contract, significantly, went into effect even though an important signatory, Interior Secretary Douglas McKay, did not approve it.³⁰

Concessioner Difficulties

During the summer of 1953, military officials approached the new concessioner and discussed the idea of operating the hotel during the upcoming

winter. Perhaps due to the end of the Korean War, however, they decided not to exercise that option. The railroad, hoping not to repeat the money-losing winters experienced during the late 1940s, orchestrated a “vigorous advertising campaign, via radio and news papers” in Fairbanks and Anchorage “in hope of stimulating winter travel.” And as an added inducement to attract visitors to the hotel, the railroad offered a room free to any person staying over between December 1 and December 22; guests merely needed to pay for their meals and any other services obtained. Despite that incentive, however, business at the hotel during the winter of 1953-54 was fairly quiet; monthly visitation ranged from just 117 to 423, or between four and fourteen guests per night. Given such a sparse

On November 7, 1953, ownership of the McKinley Park Hotel was transferred from the Alaska Railroad to the National Park Service. Signatories were, from the left, E.W. Lauesen of McKinley Park Services, Inc., Acting Park Superintendent Oscar Dick, and Elroy F. Hinman of the Alaska Railroad. DENA 12-28, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



visitor count, financial losses were again heavy that winter.³¹

During the fall of 1953, the National Park Service—which up to this point had been just an interested observer in hotel operations—became the owner of the hotel and more than 200 acres of surrounding land. (See below.) Based on that reality, and given the fact that the contract signed in June had never been consummated, the NPS and the new concessioner worked out a new contract regarding the operation of the hotel facilities. But as the fall wore on, the financial difficulties of the concessioner became increasingly obvious, and the contract that the House Interior Committee chair approved on February 2, 1954 had just a five-year time frame. And as the contract wound again through the administrative channels within the Interior Department, a stipulation was inserted giving the Secretary the ability to terminate the contract in 90 days “if the company became involved in financial difficulties to the extent that it would be in the public interest to do so.” The Department finalized the new contract on July 6, 1954, but by this time, the concessioner’s plight was so desperate—and complaints about that summer’s hotel operation were so numerous—that Secretary McKay decided to not sign the contract.³²

Instead, he vowed that the facility should be transferred to its (new) owner, the National Park Service. Acting on those orders, NPS Director Conrad Wirth requested that a company called National Park Concessions, Inc. (NPCI) begin managing the hotel. (According to Don Hummel, a longtime concessioner at several national

parks, NPCI was “a non-profit-distributing membership corporation,” founded in 1941, whose purpose it was “to furnish adequate accommodations for the public at reasonable rates and to develop these facilities solely in the interest of the public welfare.” According to NPCI’s president, the company served “at the request of the National Park Service” and “was asked to go” into various parks after the NPS had been “unsuccessful in interesting others to provide the concessioner services.”³³ On August 4, just a week after Wirth’s request, NPCI official Garner Hansen arrived at the hotel along with NPS officials, Justice Department representatives and U.S. District Attorneys. Park Superintendent Grant Pearson then gave E. W. Lauesen a letter stating that McKinley Park Services was no longer managing the hotel and other concessions operations. Lauesen responded by bringing his attorney into the discussion, and a legal wrangle then ensued. Finally, on August 25, Lauesen’s company ceded its control over the concessions operation (see Appendix D.) NPCI, operating on a contract effective July 28, managed the hotel until the end of the season. That season was soon coming to a close. Hansen, in his brief time at the hotel, quickly recognized the economic limitations of operating the hotel in the winter-time, so he closed it on September 12 and left the area after placing it in a “caretaker status under the direction of the NPS.” By October, the hotel was “closed and locked to prevent unauthorized use,” but the hotel continued to be heated and otherwise maintained.³⁴

Because NPCI was the designated entity to rescue fiscally-challenged concessions opera-

Fuel for the hotel's power plant, shown here, was delivered by the Alaska Railroad on a wye from the depot. DENA 12-52, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

tions, its role was to cut costs, increase operations efficiency, and prepare a transition to a new, private concessioner. In order to speed that transition, however, it had a special relationship with both the NPS and with Congress. That relationship enabled the company to tap into government funding if continued losses were incurred (although it likewise had to reimburse the government if profits were incurred), and it also meant that the government lent a kind ear to the company's request for any infrastructural improvements that were necessary to ensure concessioner profitability.³⁵

Given that relationship, the NPS added \$20,000 to the park's budget for hotel maintenance (see Appendices B and C); this figure allowed the superintendent to hire a power plant engineer, maintenance men, and firemen as needed to minimize winter hotel maintenance costs. At first, this maintenance was provided by existing NPS staff, along with much-needed help from Alaska Railroad personnel; in time, however, the NPS hired a full-time power plant operator (or "operating engineer") named Claude Sanders, along with a maintenance man, Charles Ott.³⁶ A maintenance crew remained until early May 1955; meanwhile, the agency called in regional-office personnel to assess the hotel's infrastructure needs.³⁷

The hotel's financial viability during this period was clearly tenuous, and reports surfaced in the spring of 1955 that the hotel might not open that summer. The hotel, in fact, opened later than usual (on June 15), and perhaps because its reputation was "still smarting from the 1954 operation," visitation was low through the summer of 1955. Nevertheless, Hansen did what he could. Recognizing that the park's busses were in deplorable shape, he tried to either rent busses or obtain surplus military busses. Rebuffed in these attempts, he received a chorus of visitor complaints because the "wornout busses were continuously breaking down and on most occasions had to be towed into the hotel area to be repaired." Finally, in August, he was able to rent a bus in Fairbanks that served until Labor Day, when bus tours stopped for the year. The combination of bad publicity, poor bus service, bad weather, and washouts (which stopped railroad service during August) meant for a poor visitor season; just 3,400 people visited the park in



1955, the fewest number since 1946, and despite its cost-cutting measures, NPCI lost money that year.³⁸ Given the hotel's rocky finances, reports again surfaced that the hotel would close down for good. Matters were brought to a head in mid-September 1955, when several members of the U.S. House Subcommittee on Territorial and Insular Affairs, headed by Rep. Leo O'Brien (D-NY), visited McKinley Park Station as part of an Alaska-wide tour; the subcommittee held an impromptu hearing in the hotel lobby "on the merits of continued operation and needs of accommodations for the visiting public." Those who spoke at the hearing included Assistant Superintendent Duane D. Jacobs, Park Naturalist Richard G. Prasil, and Garner Hansen of NPCI. Sufficient financial progress had been made by this date that the hotel would remain open the following year, if only on a seasonal basis.³⁹

During the winter of 1955-56, as it had the previous winter, the Interior Department made a pro forma exercise of advertising for bidders to operate the hotel.⁴⁰ (Given the hotel's poor financial track record, apparently no qualified bidders stepped forward.) After 1955, however, prospects for the hotel began to improve. A post-season report on the hotel's management recommended a rehabilitation and restoration program, and in response, the federal government authorized \$147,000 to modernize the hotel's power and heating systems. In November 1955, a Fairbanks firm contracted for the job, and by the end of the following February, Superintendent Pearson proudly noted that "ample heat is now evident throughout the building under a full hot water hookup."⁴¹ That spring, the hotel's grounds were regraded and drained, and the old hotel garbage dump was cleaned up; as a result, Pearson proudly noted in June 1956 that the hotel area was "gradually beginning to take on an air of respectability."⁴² Visitors, fortunately, began to return to the park. More than 5,200 arrived in 1956; that total was the most since 1953, when

the hotel had been open all year long.⁴³

During the midst of the 1956 season, further improvements to the hotel began when the NPS let a contract for a “general rehabilitation of the hotel” to an Anchorage construction company. That contract began in July and was completed in mid-October. The following year, the agency tendered a bid for a hotel fire alarm system, which was completed just two months later. And to replace the old worn-out buses that had caused so much grief to both concessioners and visitors, two new 12-passenger buses were finally acquired during the winter of 1956-57.⁴⁴

NPCI, during this period, continued to manage the park concession, and thanks to an improved visitor count, the company made its first profit—about \$3,200—in 1956. The company, however, had no long-term interest in the concession, so the agency began casting about for a new concessioner. The first to show an interest were Charles “Chuck” West of Arctic Alaska Travel Service in Fairbanks, and Stanley Chinn, who currently operated the Healy Hotel under an Alaska Railroad contract. And in the summer of 1956, two new parties showed an interest in the contract and visited the park to learn more details about its operations. None of these consummated a contract, however, so in February 1957, NPCI signed a contract to operate the hotel and the park transportation system for the upcoming summer.⁴⁵

Congress, recognizing the difficulties under which NPCI was forced to operate at the Mount McKinley facility, provided some fiscal relief to

the company during this period. In previous years, there had been no guarantee that revenues gained through the hotel’s operation could be kept and used to offset operating expenses. That changed, however, in June 1956, when Congress included a provision in the 1957 Interior Department appropriations bill stating that “all receipts for the fiscal year 1957” for the hotel “may be applied to, or offset against, costs of managing, operating, and maintaining the hotel and related facilities. . . .” This provision was renewed for the following two years; as shall be seen, the hotel’s return to profitability in later years made a continuation of this clause unnecessary.⁴⁶

Constructing the Denali Highway

A major factor that affected the decisions of both park personnel and concessioners during the postwar decade was the Denali Highway. This road, which was intended to connect Mount McKinley National Park to the larger road system, held great promise because of its potential to boost park visitation. Ever since the idea had first been suggested during the 1930s, the Territory of Alaska had showed great interest in the highway’s potential to boost Alaska tourism. Despite efforts to the contrary, little more than planning and surveying took place during the 1940s. Thereafter, however, the road benefited from a consistent funding stream that provided for new road construction each year until the project was completed.

So far as is known, the idea of this highway was first broached in the early 1930s. In 1929, boosters in both Fairbanks, Alaska, and Dawson, Yukon Territory had formed twin chapters



The two new buses for the hotel concession arrived on Alaska Railroad flatcars in February, 1957, at -40 degrees. DENA 12-41, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



This photo shows a portion of the new Cantwell to McKinley Park road and the Nenana #2 Bridge, in August 1952 (near the present Crabbie's Crossing). The Nenana River is the park boundary, making all lands to the left of the river within the park. Harpers Ferry Center, #1348, National

of the International Highway Association, with a mutual goal of connecting interior Alaska to Prince George, B.C. via a 1,350-mile gravel road. Development groups continued to hawk the idea for the next several years, and in 1933, Superintendent Harry Liek noted that the park “would surely come into its own in the event that the highway is constructed, although it would require a feeder running from the Richardson Highway to McKinley Park Station in order to make connections. . .”.⁴⁷ Four years later, the need for such a highway was reiterated as part of a congressional report related to Alaska resource planning. That report was written while the park hotel was still being constructed, before the park road was completed all the way to Kantishna, and just before a rough route between Cantwell and the Valdez Creek (Denali) mining district was laid out. The report noted that

at some future date a connecting highway may be built between the park road system and the Richardson Highway. The construction of such a connecting link will undoubtedly stimulate traffic to the park. A recommendation that this approach highway be constructed is made in this report. These future demands can be met by an increase in the size and variety of the tourist facilities at McKinley Park Station and at Wonder Lake.⁴⁸

Between 1938 and 1941, the gathering war clouds forced both the U.S. and Canada to talk more

seriously about an international highway, and talk about a connecting road to McKinley Park Station was often a byproduct of those discussions. The appointment of Ernest Gruening, an avowed McKinley booster, as Alaska’s governor in December 1939 kept the idea alive, and during the following year the first maps, plans, and field inspections of possible routes took place. Those who surveyed the route between Paxsons Roadhouse⁴⁹ (on the Richardson Highway) and the Cantwell area noted that there was already a “well known trail” used by Valdez Creek-area gold miners for much of this route, and that the Alaska Road Commission, in 1938, had improved the route between Cantwell and Valdez Creek from a trail to a tractor road. Between Cantwell and the park hotel, however, there were “two reasonable entrances into the park;” one paralleled the Nenana River and the railroad right-of-way, while the other ascended Windy Creek and reached the park hotel via the Riley Creek watershed.⁵⁰ Frank Been, the park superintendent at the time, clamored for the road because road access would guarantee freedom from the “high railroad fares and hotel rates” then in force. The looming war, however, meant that scant attention was paid to a park connecting road between 1941 and 1945, inclusive; during that period, however, both the Alcan (Alaska) Highway was built as well as a road connecting Palmer (and thus Anchorage) with the Richardson Highway.⁵¹

Once the war was over, however, interest in the road returned. In its annual report for fiscal

year 1945, which was prepared before V-J Day, the Alaska Road Commission recommended three new road construction projects “should the war terminate before the beginning of fiscal year 1947.” One of those three projects was the 155-mile-long, \$3,875,000 Paxsons-McKinley Park road. The ARC recommended that \$1 million be spent on that project during fiscal year 1947.⁵² Road construction was not funded that year, so it was again recommended the following year, with similar results. When the ARC wrote its 1947 annual report, the road’s projected cost had risen to \$4,650,000, and it requested \$1,800,000 for the 1949 fiscal year.⁵³ The NPS was fully supportive of this project; as it noted in the park’s November 1946 *Development Outline* (master plan), “By constructing an approach road connecting [the park] with the Alaska road system, it will become accessible to many Alaskans and also help solve transportation difficulties of visiting tourists from the States.” The agency, at that time, anticipated that the road would be built through the Windy Creek and Riley Creek watersheds, so it planned for “suitable quarters” for a ranger “at the Cantwell entrance of the proposed approach road.”⁵⁴

The ARC finally began survey work on the 155-mile road in September 1947. About 45 miles of survey work was completed, including the segment between Cantwell and the park hotel via Windy and Riley creeks. The following September, an inspection was made of the alternate route between Cantwell and the park hotel. Also in 1948, the ARC authorized the construction of a road between Paxsons and Cantwell. After Commission personnel conducted additional survey work at the eastern end of the proposed road, the Anchorage firm of Smith, Brown and Root, Inc.—under contract to the commission for construction of the road project—was ready to proceed as soon as funds could be allotted.⁵⁵

The year 1949 began with high hopes; in March, park staff heard that an ARC survey crew “will work out from Cantwell toward Valdez Creek” and the Commission “will probably begin construction work later in the summer from Cantwell. . . . Construction work would start this spring from the Richardson Highway toward Valdez Creek.” But the Commission ran into problems, and “in June a decision was reached to suspend work on the east end of the . . . Road until further surveys could be made. . . . Construction had not been planned for the west end of this project during 1949 because of [its] inaccessibility [by road] and the lack of base camp facilities on that end.” The ARC, meanwhile, continued to mull over the best route for an approach road between Cantwell and the park ho-

tel, but no decision was reached that year.⁵⁶ Part of the reason for the lack of progress in 1949 was that the ARC considered an alternate route at the proposed route’s eastern end; that route would have headed west from the Richardson Highway at Meiers’ Roadhouse (16 miles southeast of Paxsons) until it angled north at the Susitna River. In the fall of 1948, the Commission had briefly flirted with another alternate route—of accessing the national park via a route south from Fairbanks that paralleled the Alaska Railroad. That idea was quickly discarded in favor of an east-west route, although it was revived less than a decade later (see Chapter 7).⁵⁷

By early 1950, the ARC had made a final decision on the Paxsons-Cantwell portion of the route, and construction that year began at each end. In Cantwell, the Commission constructed an equipment depot, and from that base it built 20 miles of road toward Valdez Creek; at Paxson, it worked westbound and opened 14 miles of road to traffic. Between Cantwell and the park hotel, the ARC continued to dither over the best route, and early in the year it surveyed two routes between Carlo and the park hotel: one via “Carlo Pass” (three miles north of Carlo) and Riley Creek, the other paralleling the Alaska Railroad right-of-way. A final route decision, which (according to the ARC) was “coordinated with plans of the National Park Service,” was made in the late summer of 1950, and in October, a six-mile segment of this “alternate approach road” was constructed between Cantwell and the Nenana River crossing near Windy.⁵⁸

In 1951, construction crews concentrated their efforts at the road’s western end. East of Cantwell, crews pushed east and graded 13½ miles of new road, four of which were opened to traffic. North of Cantwell, ARC officials hoped to complete the approach road that summer. Work began in April. By the end of May a wooden bridge had been completed over the Nenana River near Windy, and work was “progressing rapidly” between Cantwell and the park boundary (at the so-called Yanert Crossing). By August, construction had proceeded to the point that the ARC started moving equipment to the Yanert Crossing bridge site. Work also progressed in the McKinley Park Station area, although more slowly. The ARC worked with an architect from the NPS’s regional office on where to locate the park road, and in June, that office approved the route and construction commenced. As the summer wore on, both agencies were hopeful that the Yanert Crossing bridge would be completed that year and that trucks would be able to travel between Cantwell and McKinley Park Station. High water on the Nenana River and ARC budget cutbacks, however, forced all bridge work to be

postponed until the following year.⁵⁹

In 1952, the 29-mile road segment between Cantwell and McKinley Park Station was completed and opened to traffic. The work, however, proved challenging. In March, the ARC began work on the pile bridge at Yanert Crossing; a month later, it completed the bridge and began work on the smaller bridge across Riley Creek. The latter bridge was completed in late May. Disaster, however, struck on May 21, when the ice-choked Nenana River washed away both of the newly-constructed Nenana River bridges during breakup. The ARC, forced to improvise, installed

advantages that both park staff and park visitors utilized in the years to come.⁶¹

Beginning in the winter of 1953-54, the ARC crews in Cantwell decided to stop plowing the road north of town each fall; they kept it closed until the following spring. (This closure affected relatively few drivers, inasmuch as the road was accessible to fewer than 200 area residents during this period.)⁶² The road between Cantwell and the park gradually improved; in late 1954, the ARC replaced its original Nenana River bridge near Cantwell with an improved structure, and in early 1955, the Bailey Bridge at Yanert Crossing was removed in favor of a new, more permanent span.⁶³



The Nenana River #2 bridge at Yanert Crossing has been replaced several times. This photo shows serious damage by ice during spring breakup in May, 1954. DENA 2-9, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

Meanwhile, construction proceeded on the remaining mileage needed to complete the Denali Highway. Peter Bagoy, the government foreman on the project, noted that construction in one area west of the Susitna River slowed because of one particularly obstinate hill that held out for three years despite the continual thawing and scraping process. At one time, the mud was so bad that six of the crew's eighteen large D-8

a 180-foot-long Bailey Bridge at Yanert Crossing beginning in July and made similarly improvised repairs on the bridge near Cantwell. The road was finally completed in September and was kept open most if not all of the following winter. Also in 1952, the road—previously known as the Paxsons-Cantwell-McKinley Park Road—was renamed the Denali Highway.⁶⁰

“cats” were put out of commission, buried above their tracks.⁶⁴

In 1953, work picked up again at the Paxson end of the road after two years of relative quiet; at the western end, sufficient new road was constructed that the road terminus, at the end of season, was 34 miles east of Cantwell. The Commission that spring completed another road project—a nine-mile segment from Cantwell southwest to Summit Airfield—that was important to park residents. This airfield, located in the Broad Pass area, had been built before World War II, and ever since, it had served as a flight service station and had been staffed on a 24-hour basis by Civil Aeronautics Authority (CAA) personnel. The airfield, which had a runway almost 5,000 feet long—some 2,000 feet longer than the McKinley Park Station airstrip—was midway between Anchorage and Fairbanks and had long served a valuable emergency function. Given its road access to the park, Summit Airfield offered many

The major remaining obstacles were four bridges. They included the Rock Creek Bridge, 25 miles west of Paxson; the Maclaren River Bridge, 42 miles west of Paxson; the Canyon Creek Bridge, 41½ miles east of Cantwell, and the Susitna River Bridge, 58 miles east of Cantwell. Of these, a 1000-foot bridge over the Susitna River promised to be most challenging, so test drilling for the bridge pilings began during the winter of 1953-54. During the summer of 1954, road construction had been completed as far as the Rock Creek Bridge (from Paxson) and the Canyon Creek Bridge (from Cantwell), halting further work until these bridges could be completed. Operating under two different contracts—a \$156,000 contract for the two Paxson-area bridges and a \$524,000 contract for the two Cantwell-area bridges—work began on all four structures in the spring of 1955.⁶⁵ By the end of June of that year, the Canyon Creek Bridge was sufficiently complete that the road was “under construction but passable” all the way from Cantwell to the Susitna River Bridge. Work then focused on the Susitna River Bridge, which was finished in May 1956; and by the end of June, the two bridges closest to Paxson were also complete.⁶⁶ Anticipating the

The damaged Nenana River #2 bridge was replaced by fall of 1954. The present bridge is slightly upstream of the earlier bridges, and is the fifth bridge built at this general location. DENA 2-10, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



completion of these bridges, the Commission in late 1955 prepared a contract for the construction of the last 37½ road miles between the Susitna and Maclaren rivers.⁶⁷ That contract, totaling \$1.86 million, was awarded in mid-May 1956. All signs now pointed toward a speedy completion of the Denali Highway; in March 1956, the ARC predicted that the road would be “open for public use” on June 1, 1957.⁶⁸

The Park Plans for New Visitors

As noted above, the Alaska Road Commission had kept NPS officials abreast of all developments during the Denali Highway construction period, and the ARC and NPS had worked together on all phases of road construction within the park boundaries. Because of those information exchanges, NPS staff had ten years or more to prepare for the increased visitation that the highway would bring.

The agency made a series of responses during the postwar decade on how they would exercise their development options. Its November 1946 *Development Outline* stated that no new roads should be built except for the proposed park approach road. It did, however, recommend that “development should ultimately include designated camp or picnic grounds at Savage River, Igloo Creek and Toklat River and possibly one near the approach road entrance.” In addition, “adequate rest room facilities should be built at the approximate half-way point on the highway [between] McKinley Station and Wonder Lake.” A Project Construction Program (PCP) request to fund the rest room project, in fact, had already been submitted to the agency’s regional office.⁶⁹

So far as is known, the 1946 *Development Outline* was the first NPS document that specifically planned for a series of automobile camps along the park road. Camps, of course, had been a staple in the park since its earliest days; the major camps had been Savage Camp and Camp Eielson, but the pre-war concessioner had also established other, smaller camps, both along the park road and up the Savage River valley. During World War II, the military had also provided for camping at selected points along the park road. None of these, however, had been planned with the individual traveler in mind. The reason, of course, was that automobile traffic within the park had always been miniscule in comparison to those who traveled by the concessioner’s guide-driven “passenger car” or bus. Before World War II, only the wealthiest tourists brought their automobiles to Alaska, and those who wanted to drive on the McKinley park road had to load their auto onto a railroad flat car at either Anchorage or Fairbanks.

Despite those hurdles, a few intrepid souls came by car. As noted in Chapter 3, Supt. Karstens had driven the first tourists by auto into the park in August 1924, and in July 1935, Mr. C.E. Long of Mariposa, California earned the distinction of “being the first tourist to drive a car bearing a license from the United States” within the park. Few others were seen prior to World War II, but by 1947 the park superintendent was noting that “private cars [were] becoming more common” on the park road, and the following summer, 30 private cars—a new record—were offloaded at McKinley Park Station. (Particularly notable

In September, 1955, fourteen concrete fireplaces were installed in the Savage River campground, along with this comfort station, which was still under construction. DENA 41-49, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

was a July day that year in which six private cars were in the park at the same time.) Given the increasing number of these cars, and recognizing that large numbers of autos would be arriving with the Denali Highway's completion, NPS staff began to plan accordingly. As early as 1951, a visiting consultant noted that "the Alaska traveler does not expect the same high type tourist facilities in Alaska as in the States, especially if the trip to Alaska has been made over the route of the Alaska Highway." He therefore hoped that "tourist accommodations in McKinley Park could be developed on a more modest scale" than was currently available at the McKinley Park Hotel.⁷⁰

To accommodate the new demand, the NPS moved in early 1948 to have "its first public campground" in place by summer. That June, rangers tidied up an area along the Teklanika River, repaired an existing "frame hut,"⁷¹ and opened Teklanika Camp to the public. Amenities were few; fire places and tables were noticeable by their absence, and the water supply was a small, nearby brook. Some visitors, however, camped at ranger stations, at abandoned ARC construction camps, or wherever else they chose to pitch a tent.⁷² During 1950 and 1951, regional office personnel inspected future campground sites. Those inspections bore fruit in early 1952, when a "temporary" site was chosen for a Wonder Lake campground. (This is not surprising, inasmuch as most early automobile tourists liked to camp where—given good weather—the best views of Mount McKinley could be found.)⁷³ NPS personnel spent much of that summer improving that site; that summer also saw the first, small improvements at Igloo Campground and Morino campgrounds.⁷⁴ A number of these improvements were salvaged from Camp Eielson, which was finally being disassembled after years of neglect.⁷⁵ In 1954, the agency decided to establish improved park campgrounds at Savage River and Wonder Lake; those improvements, which included tables, fireplaces, water lines, and septic tanks, were completed in the late summer of 1955. Given these developments, the NPS was able to boast two major campgrounds plus three smaller ones by the time the Denali Highway neared completion.⁷⁶ Because there were never more than 200 cars per year in the park during this period, automobile campers in the early- to mid-1950s had no worries about traffic along the park road, and the various park campgrounds were seldom crowded.⁷⁷

The Alaska Road Commission did its part during this period to prepare for the increased traffic by maintaining the park road and the accompanying bridges. The park road, which was completed to Kantishna in the late 1930s, demanded a high



degree of maintenance, and most years brought washouts that closed portions of the road for several days; to quickly respond to those emergencies, and to carry on all of their other tasks, the ARC stationed a crew at Toklat (Mile 54) beginning in 1944.⁷⁸ The commission's major springtime challenge remained the huge snow-removal operation in order to clear the road in time for the park's June 10 opening; in some years conditions were cooperative, and traffic could move to Wonder Lake as early as April 28, but in other years the road opening was delayed until late June.⁷⁹ An ice layer covering the road at Mile 3 remained a periodic springtime headache; in 1949, 1950, and 1954, for example, crews scattered a thin layer of cinders, ashes or coal dust on the ice, which "hastened the melting of this glacier."⁸⁰ But in other years, ice on the roadway was not a problem. By the spring of 1956, the ash-and-cinder treatment had been abandoned in favor of earlier ice-removal methods.⁸¹

Beyond the day-to-day problems caused by weather and the seasons, however, engineers recognized that the roadway needed help. This problem first came to light in the spring of 1948, when Supt. Been noted that the park's road and bridges were in "critical condition" because they had been "inadequately maintained for several years." Later that year, Been helped prepare a proposal to modernize the road infrastructure.⁸² Perhaps in response to that proposal, most of the park's bridges were replaced between 1950 and 1957. Some of these bridges, over small unnamed creeks, were timber-stringer replacements of the originals, but a few old bridges were replaced by corrugated metal culverts. Major projects during this period (see Appendix G) included steel bridges over Savage River (1950-51), East Fork (1952-54), Toklat River (1953-56), Teklanika River (1955), Sanctuary River (1956), Upper Igloo Creek (1956), and Stony Creek (1956-57).⁸³ There were no road paving projects during this period, but the highway was widened and straightened between Mile 53 and Mile 69 during the summer of 1946; it was widened between Mile 66 and Mile 69 during the summer of 1951; and also in 1951, a new right-of-way was



The original East Fork bridge, built by the Alaska Road Commission in 1929-30. DENA 2-73, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

bladed out for a short distance at Mile 6.⁸⁴

Wonder Lake Lodge: Further Considerations

While some observers, as noted above, recognized the need to develop tourist accommodations at the park on a “modest scale,” many development advocates clearly remained enthusiastic about a hotel or lodge at the western end of the park road. As noted in Chapter 5, several sites had been considered for hostleries in that area during the early to mid-1930s, but an August 1938 trip out the park road by Interior Secretary Harold Ickes and Territorial Chief Ernest Gruening had resulted in a firm decision to back a site on a knoll just south of Wonder Lake, and other sites were discarded after that time. Funding of the hotel seemed increasingly certain during 1940 and 1941, but the Pearl Harbor bombing put the project on hold for the duration of the war.

In early 1945, as the war was winding down, the Alaska Railroad—now the park’s concessioner—and the NPS dusted off their prewar plans for a “lodge and cabins” at Wonder Lake. Col. Otto Ohlson, the railroad’s general manager, stated his intention “to construct a comfortable lodge camp” where “we’ll build several log cabins, capable of housing from two to eight persons apiece, located in a semi-circle around the main lodge.”⁸⁵ Survey parties were sent out, Congressional parties visited the site, NPS architects collaborated with railroad engineers on design elements, and hotel advocates pressed their case within the Interior Department.⁸⁶ Revised plans called for a much larger lodge complex, with over a hundred rooms within various-sized

buildings.⁸⁷ Alaska newspapers soon got wind of the project. Even Alaska Airlines—which, at the time, flew only in Alaska except for charter business—did its part to publicize the area; it erected a display showing the proposed lodge at the National Aviation Show in New York City.⁸⁸ Funding stalled, however, because funds were scarce for many Interior Department agencies during the postwar years. In September 1946, acting Superintendent Grant Pearson glumly noted that Wonder Lake lodge construction had been “deleted from the Railroad program for [the] 1948 fiscal year in compliance with the President’s directive to reduce non-essential expenditures.” The following year, railroad officials held out some hope for a construction allocation in the 1949 budget, but no such funding came forth.⁸⁹

Bradford Washburn then entered the fray by suggesting a new development idea. By this time, Washburn was well-known for his mountaineering expertise; he had climbed Mount McKinley several times, his most recent summit effort (in the spring of 1947) being a well-publicized expedition in which his wife Barbara had climbed to the top. Washburn, in 1942, had been part of the Army Test Expedition, whose leaders had been so enthralled with the “Clearwater River country” that they had convinced Superintendent Been that the area “should be accessible by a branch road from the park highway.” The beauty of this area, located south and west of Wonder Lake, had first been publicized by Charles Sheldon, and in 1927 Harry Karstens—who had tramped through the area with Sheldon—had recommended a site in this area for a hotel.⁹⁰ Given the agency’s extensive postwar planning for a

Wonder Lake hotel, therefore, it should have come as no surprise that Washburn would again advocate access to the Clearwater country south of Wonder Lake; he did so in a meeting with NPS Associate Director Demaray in June 1944 (Washburn, according to Demaray, stated that “visitors to the park should be entitled to get close to the mountain”) and again, to Superintendent Been, before his 1947 climb. After he returned, he expressed a similar sentiment to Interior Department officials in Washington, noting that “the building of a road over to the bottom of McKinley should be considered as an integral part of the recreational development program necessary to the construction of a Lodge at Wonder Lake.” Agency officials, however, threw cold water on the idea; they had little interest in new roadbuilding in the park, they were concerned about the high cost of a bridge across the McKinley River, and there were “several hundred projects which we feel are more urgent and will benefit greater numbers of park visitors.” Ernest Gruening, who was a friend of Washburn, initially backed the climber’s stand. Later, however, Gruening went along with the NPS’s explanation that it “was not opposed to the road as a project but public use pressure in other parks compelled preference to those areas so long as funds had to spread out to do the most good.”⁹¹

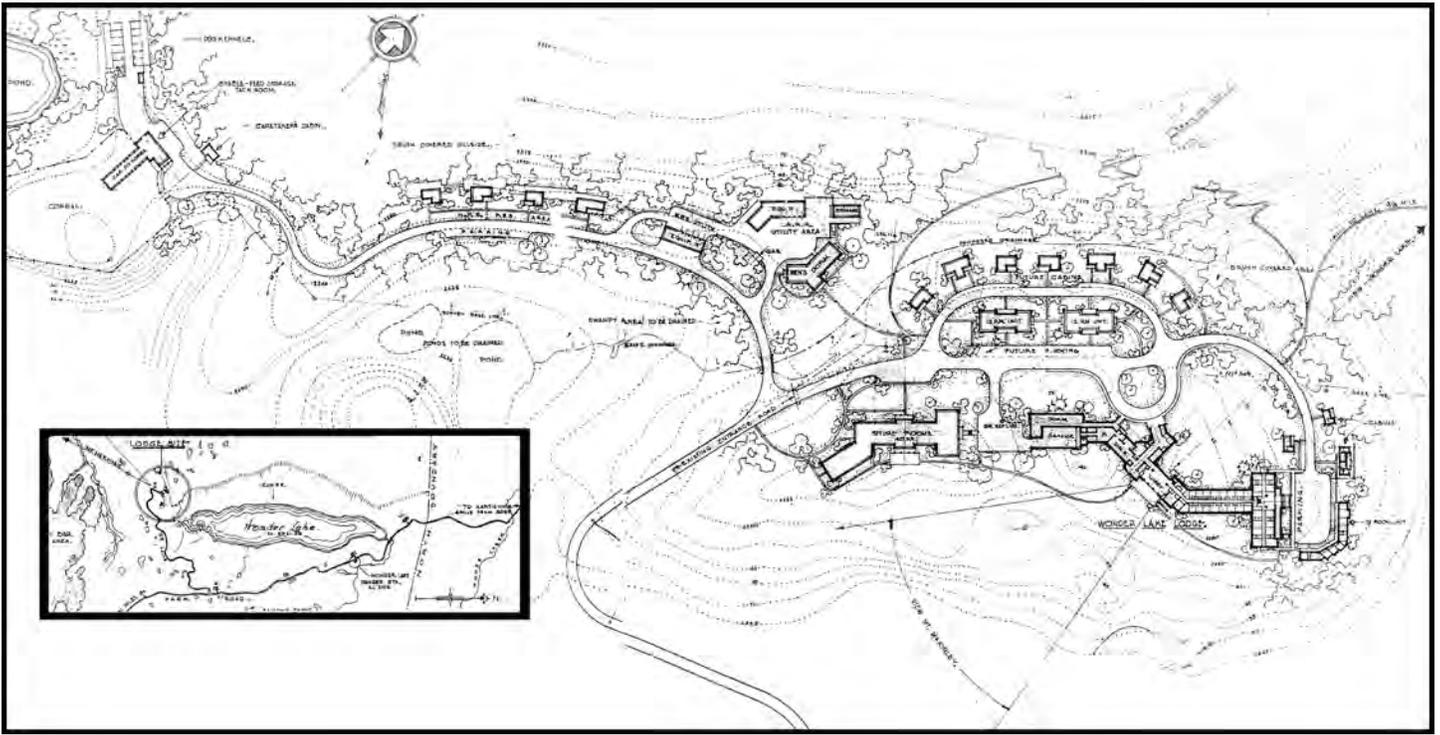
Between 1947 and 1950, the idea of a Wonder Lake lodge remained high on the priority list of railroad and Park Service officials, and these officials did what they could to court potential developers.⁹² But Congressional authorizing committees had little interest in the project.⁹³ Given that change of heart, other ideas were

considered. Alaska Airlines briefly proposed Wonder Lake as a site for a tourist camp, and Superintendent Pearson unsuccessfully urged NPS officials to reconsider the construction of a lodge on the western flank of Mt. Eielson, much as Major Gillette of the ARC had suggested back in 1927.⁹⁴

In December 1951, Conrad Wirth became the new NPS Director. His appointment signaled a major new direction for the agency; inasmuch as the man who had directed the agency throughout the 1940s, Newton Drury, “came nearest to the purist attitude” of all the park directors,” Wirth by contrast was a landscape architect who had long been involved in the construction of roads, visitor centers, and other park development projects.⁹⁵ Perhaps in response to that appointment, the agency made new attempts to promote the idea of funding a lodge on park land near Wonder Lake. In 1952, for example, both Superintendent Pearson and San Francisco-based agency officials hoped that an impending change in the park’s concessioner (from the Alaska Railroad to the privately-financed McKinley Park Services) might result in a lodge that would be jointly financed by the concessioner and the NPS; in response to the Congressional report issued the previous year, however (for tourist accommodations to “be developed on a more modest scale”), a small, eight-cabin lodge was proposed.⁹⁶ Two years later, the NPS repackaged the lodge idea and presented plans for a Wonder Lake Roadhouse Development. Unfortunately, however, development funds during the Korean War era and its aftermath were no easier to obtain than they had been during the late 1940s, and conces-



The original East Fork bridge was replaced by this concrete and steel structure, shown under construction in July 1954. DENA 2-81, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum



This 1947 architectural drawing of the proposed Wonder Lake hotel development was one of several plans for the site on a knoll south and west of Wonder Lake. NPS, Drawing MCK-2018, TIC Aperture Card

sioners during this period were similarly in no position to finance anything beyond their own bare-bones operations. The lodge idea, therefore, never got beyond the planning stage during this period.⁹⁷

Camp Denali Opens for Business

That is not to say, however, that no accommodations were built in the Wonder Lake area. Just north of Wonder Lake, and less than two miles north of the park boundary, three Alaskans decided to homestead a bench, partway up a ridge, that had a commanding view of the central Alaska Range. As Ginny Hill Wood, one of the trio noted, “it all started in . . . 1951 when Celia Hunter came down from Fairbanks to visit Woody [Morton Wood, an NPS ranger] and me at McKinley Park.” Hunter and the Woods flew out to the Kantishna Airstrip and soon hiked up to a ridge just north of Moose Creek. The three were well aware that “on the drawing boards was a . . . hotel to be constructed near Wonder Lake which . . . would specialize in attractions designed to isolate guests from the genuine delights of nature and its wildlife. . . .” But recognizing that “many people came to McKinley Park to see its glaciers, mountains, and wildlife,” they decided to “build our own resort,” based on the notion that “there are those who seek experiences genuinely Alaskan . . . and catch the spirit of the bush country – even if it means living without running water and electric lights, and taking the mosquitoes with the scenery.”⁹⁸

Based on those ideas, the trio went to work. By early July 1951, Ms. Hunter had decided to stake

the site with the Bureau of Land Management, and on October 29 she applied for a trade and manufacturing site.⁹⁹ Before the snow closed the road that fall, they had “a miner bulldoze a road within 400 yards of our campsite.” They also cut and hauled timbers for two tent foundations and built a cache to store their tools and a tent. Their eventual goal was to offer “both sleeping and housekeeping tents with wooden floors and walls, and a mess-hall tent of similar construction where family-style meals will be served. . . .”¹⁰⁰ Early in 1952, Hunter asked the NPS for permission to transport guests along the park road; hoping that the Alaska Railroad would haul visitors as far west as Camp Eielson or Wonder Lake, Hunter’s initial request was only for permission to conduct “excursions from my camp . . . for hiking, camping, game photography, etc.” The railroad, however, stated that it would not be handling transportation in the park during the upcoming season; therefore, Hunter had to amend her earlier request and ask for permission to carry guests to her camp all the way from McKinley Park Station. Inasmuch as the park superintendent was “certain that Miss Hunter’s place of business will be a decided asset to the park,” NPS officials looked favorably on her request. Superintendent Pearson initiated the request for a special use permit to transport passengers and freight on the park road. That permit was not approved until after the summer season was over; meanwhile, however, Pearson allowed the three to use the park road on an informal basis that year.¹⁰¹

The following spring, Morton Wood resigned

Ginny Wood, Morton “Woody” Wood, and Celia Hunter began building Camp Denali by hand in 1951. In this September 1953 photograph, the large canvas tent frame at center is where the lodge building currently stands. The cache beside Nugget Pond, left, is a feature of Camp Denali today. National Park Service, #2307, Harpers Ferry Center



from the NPS to devote his efforts to the new business venture, and the trio redoubled their efforts to open their rustic tent assemblage—to be called Camp Denali—as soon as possible. All three were at the site and hard at work on June 13, just one day after the road opened. Less than a week later, the camp received its first customers. That summer they built “four 10 x 12 house-keeping tent-cabins and a 14 by 16 lodge-tent,” along with various “plain white wall tents on the ground.” Just prior to the end of that first (1952) season, they completed an aluminum warehouse for equipment storage. Looking back on their shared experience, Hunter noted that “we had over 150 visitors to our camp;” they included climbers, University of Alaska students, scientists, Sierra Club members, and other lovers of the outdoors. Hunter candidly noted that “we didn’t make much money – didn’t expect to, because we realize that this is going to be a long-range proposition.” Wood noted, “We can’t tell now what coming seasons will bring,” but proudly stated that “we had demonstrated to our own satisfaction that Camp Denali filled a need,” and she was happy to say “that we are helping appreciative visitors to enjoy the park.”¹⁰² The camp, indeed, proved increasingly popular in future years, and it has remained a fixture along the western end of the park road.

Consolidating Park Ownership

By the time World War II was over, the vast majority of Mount McKinley National Park was

in public lands; the NPS, in fact, had clear and undisputed ownership of more than 99.9 percent of the 2,193,765 acres within the park boundaries. Since the boundaries had been expanded in March of 1932, the agency had made some progress in clearing up title difficulties in the McKinley Park Station area, and it had also purchased a key inholding toward the western end of the park road. The only parcels that remained in non-NPS were four private claims, which totaled almost 295 acres, along with various Alaska Railroad properties (away from the right-of-way corridor) which totaled slightly over 205 acres. Most, although not all, of both private and railroad lands were located in the McKinley Park Station area. During the next decade, actions by both the NPS and the various landowners would result in more than two-thirds of that acreage being transferred to NPS jurisdiction.

The largest private claim at McKinley Park Station was that of Maurice Morino, who had been in the area prior to the establishment of the park and prior to railroad construction. Morino, who had run a rustic roadhouse along with a trading post and post office, had gained title to his land on August 1, 1934. Three years later, on March 6, 1937, he had died in Everett, Washington. After that date, his estate was left to his nephew, also named Maurice Morino; perhaps because the younger Morino was a minor, the estate was administered by Mary Liek, wife of the park superintendent, Harry Liek.¹⁰³ Soon after the elder

Morino's death, the NPS canvassed his 120-acre tract and identified "1 large log building used as roadhouse and trading post, 1 log building used as bunkhouse and store room," and 7 log cabins. Supt. Liek, at that time, estimated that the land and improvements were worth \$5,000.¹⁰⁴

A year later Liek's replacement, Frank Been, wrote to Director Arno Cammerer urging the agency to purchase the Morino property and describing the many virtues of completing that purchase. The following March, Been again urged action, and during the next year he made two additional pleas to have the agency purchase the property. The financially-strapped agency, however, could offer little encouragement; its leadership could only promise that his correspondence would "be held for consideration in the event an opportunity to obtain additional . . . funds is presented."¹⁰⁵ A further complication was that the younger Morino, who was living in Canada, "wanted to comply with his uncle's wishes as stated in the will that he carry on the road house under the name of Morino."¹⁰⁶

Shortly after World War II, Been's fusillade of memos finally brought action, and by the spring of 1946, the Morino property was considered "one of the highest in priority in our proposed land acquisition program." Based on actions begun in the fall of 1944, an opportunity arose in 1946 to purchase this property. On May 24 the NPS, "through unusually favorable circumstances," secured a 90-day option from the Morino estate to sell the property to the NPS for just \$3,800.¹⁰⁷ NPS Director Newton Drury, who also served as the secretary of the National Park Trust Fund Board, recommended that the Trust Fund Board authorize that expenditure. (The National Park Trust Fund Board, which was signed into law by President Roosevelt in July 1935, was "authorized to accept gifts and bequests for the Park Service." It was thus a small-scale predecessor to today's National Park Foundation, which Congress established in December 1967.)¹⁰⁸ By July—midway through the option period—the need to purchase the property became even more apparent when Superintendent Pearson wrote that "a private interest with substantial backing (\$200,000) is going to try to purchase the Morino Homestead and develop tourist facilities. Plans call for building utilities, a store and cabins, and lots would be advertised for sale." Perhaps because of that extra incentive, the Trust Fund Board, "by a majority vote of its

membership," authorized the expenditure of up to \$3,800 for this purpose. Given the availability of those funds, Acting NPS Director Hillory Tolson approved the option and sent it on to Interior Secretary Oscar Chapman for final approval. Chapman approved the action on August 14, just eight days before the option was set to expire.¹⁰⁹

Securing the option, however, did not complete the sale because of title complications. Most of these complications were procedural rather than substantive, and by May 1947 the Acting NPS Director wrote that "all requirements . . . concerning the title to this land, have been met except the furnishing of the customary department report on possessory rights." In order to clear up this issue, NPS staff conducted a brief field investigation and obtained statements from the tract's tenants and informal residents that they had no possessory interest in the land or its improvements. The agency still had a few small items to clear up—related to graves and the legal rights to cabins on the property—and by August 1947 was well on the way toward resolving those issues.¹¹⁰ But by this time, Mary Liek (the estate's administratrix) was clearly losing patience, and in early September she curtly informed the NPS Director that she had sold the property to someone else because Maurice Morino was "pressed for money." Tolson, in a response the very next day, stated that the attempted resale was invalid (because it was in violation of the option contract) and "should not be consummated." Meanwhile the last problems related to property title were finally resolved, and on October 24, 1947 the Interior Secretary accepted title to the Morino tract.¹¹¹ (See Map 5.)

Once the transaction took place, the NPS recognized that it needed to deal with the scattered collection of improvements on the Morino property. The large, ramshackle roadhouse was the major feature; it was more than 25 years old (and had once been featured in Cap Lathrop's 1924 motion picture *The Cheechakos*) but had been abandoned since Morino's death in 1937. But



Mary Liek and Maurice Morino appear here in front of the McKinley Park Post Office, a log cabin attached to the back of the Morino Roadhouse. DENA 3947, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

the post office, trading post and an assemblage of cabins also stood, most of which were in woeful shape. During the late 1930s, at least one visiting official, Rep. James M. Fitzpatrick (D-N.Y.) hoped that the NPS could buy the parcel so that the buildings could “be preserved as an exhibit of Alaskan settlement . . . an excellent exhibit . . . of early Alaskan development and building construction.”¹¹² Most, however, regarded the buildings as a potential nuisance. Indeed, drifters continued to live in them, and in August 1940, one such passer-by lit a lamp that exploded and burned a cabin down.¹¹³ Shortly after the NPS acquired the property in 1947, rangers sealed the buildings and installed signs warning the public to stay clear. Those measures, however, did not prevent further incursions. On the evening of May 30, 1950, a transient named Jessie Shelton dropped a lit cigarette on the Morino Roadhouse floor, which set off a blaze that turned the old landmark to a charred ruin. The following May, another cabin on the property also caught fire.¹¹⁴ In the years that followed, the NPS completed the job that chance and circumstance had begun; rangers tore down two Morino cabins in 1952, they burned down two more in early 1953, and in the fall of 1953 they dismantled most of the remaining improvements on the Morino property.¹¹⁵ By this time, the newly-cleared area—located as it was in a scenic clearing near the hotel and train station—had become an informal campground and picnic ground. The area was subject to an additional cleanup and improvement in 1957, just prior to the Denali Highway’s completion, but it was not until February 1959 that the parcel’s last cabin—which had once belonged to Maud Hosler, the former McKinley

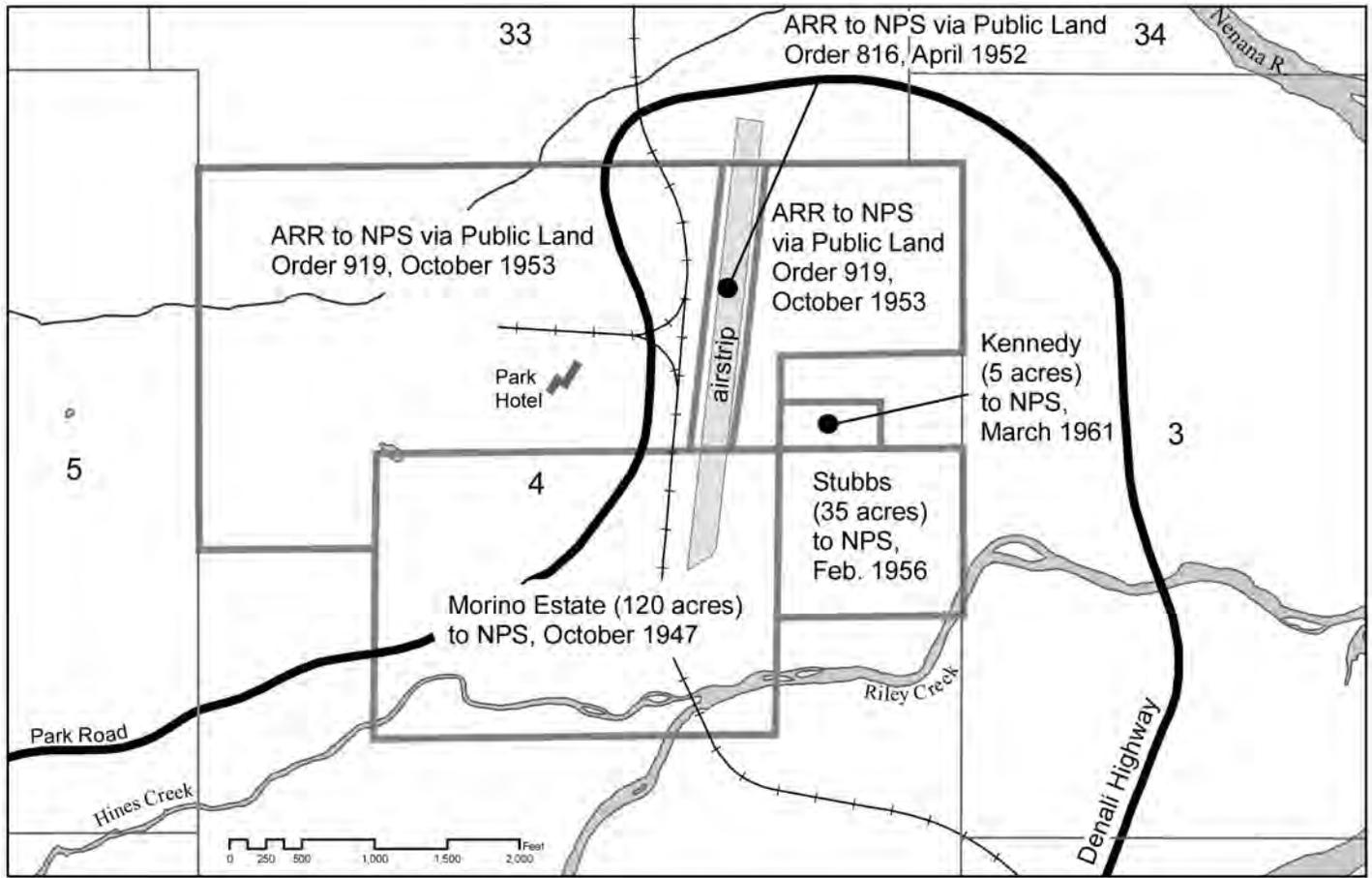
Park Station postmaster—was finally burned and cleared away.¹¹⁶

The other major landowner to work out an agreement with the NPS during this period was the Alaska Railroad. As noted above, the railroad had been active to some extent in park affairs ever since the 1920s, but in June 1939 the line assumed management over the McKinley Park Hotel, and in December 1941 the agency became even more prominent in park affairs when it became the park’s sole concessioner. Since January 1924, when President Coolidge had signed Executive Order 3946, the railroad had also been a substantial landowner in the McKinley Park Station area; it owned more than 220 acres in the area which included most of the land north of the Morino, Kennedy, and Stubbs tracts. For the next quarter-century, the railroad showed no interest in letting go of those properties. In 1946 the Alaska Railroad, as noted in an NPS report, was seen as “very cooperative regarding park administration and there appears no reason why they should not so continue.” But for the next several years a minor source of irritation complicated matters between the two agencies; NPS staff, hoping to enforce agency rules and regulations on railroad properties, repeatedly tried to work out a cooperative interbureau agreement with railroad officials. That effort failed. The extensive correspondence on the subject, however, doubtless forced railroad officials to reconsider their need to own and manage properties that were located well away from their rights-of-way.¹¹⁷

The Civil Aeronautics Administration, ironi-



The Morino Roadhouse and the McKinley Park Hotel are both visible in this photograph taken during the 1940s. DeArmond Collection, B98.7, Anchorage Museum of History & Art



Map 5. Major Land Actions, McKinley Park Station Area, 1947-1961

cally, started the process that resulted in these property transfers. During the summer of 1950, an Anchorage-based CAA employee visited the airport at McKinley Park Station and spoke about its operations with Col. John P. Johnson, the Alaska Railroad's general manager. The two men recognized that the airport was then under a split jurisdiction; the north end was railroad land, while the south end was NPS land (which had, until recently, been owned by the Morino estate). Johnson then averred that "he did not consider the airport particularly important to the functions of the Railroad and would be pleased to dispose of it for any reason whatsoever." The CAA official then wrote the NPS's Washington office and asked the agency "to take the necessary action to have the ownership of the entire facility transferred to the Park Service."¹¹⁸ Six months later, that office announced that "the Alaska Railroad, at the McKinley Park Station, was ready to transfer to this Service the adjacent airstrip consisting of 16.40 acres." That recommendation was sent on to the office of Interior Secretary Oscar Chapman, who on April 14, 1952 issued Public Land Order 816, which partially revoked E.O. 3946 by transferring the 16.40

acres at the airstrip from the railroad to the Park Service.¹¹⁹ Throughout this period, the airstrip remained the same length (about 3000 feet); inasmuch as the Alaska Flight Information Manual (the basic pilot's guide at the time) designated the field for "emergency" use, operations at the field were limited to necessary NPS, concessioner, and military use. NPS Architect Thomas Vint, in a May 1956 memo, advocated discontinuing the airstrip, inasmuch as Summit Airfield (southwest of Cantwell) was now accessible by road. But Supt. Pearson curtly replied that "we do not favor the removal of the airstrip," and the NPS continued to use and manage it, at least until such time as a better-quality airstrip could be built close to McKinley Park Station.¹²⁰



By the morning of May 31, 1950, the aging Morino Roadhouse had burned to the ground. DENA 8-8, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum

By the time Chapman had signed that public land order, others were beginning to pressure the railroad to divest the remainder of the holdings that the railroad had received via the 1924 executive order. As noted above, the hotel operation had been bleeding considerable red ink during the late 1940s and early 1950s, and the economics of that operation had been a particular embarrassment during annual hearings before Congressional appropriations committees.¹²¹ Given those losses, discussions began in the fall of 1951 to have the NPS assume ownership over the hotel property as part of the same process in which a private concessioner (and not the Alaska Railroad) would operate the hotel and the park transportation system. As noted above, the government moved to establish a private concessioner when it began soliciting bid proposals in mid-June 1952; it took a full year, however, before that concessioner (McKinley Park Services, Inc.) became the park concessioner. But it was not until late 1952—shortly after the Alaska Railroad announced that it had lost almost \$800,000 in the recently-completed fiscal year, compared with a small profit a year earlier—that the government’s General Accounting Office moved to recommend an immediate land transfer. The GAO’s report, completed in early 1953, soon found its way to the office of the Interior Secretary, and on October 12 of that year, Assistant Secretary Orme Lewis issued Public Land Order 919, which transferred some 205.20 acres of land within the 1924 withdrawal from the railroad to the Park Service. The order included the transfer of “all improvements thereon” (including the hotel, other buildings, equipment, and vehicles); it was redundant, moreover, because the above acreage included the 16.40 acres that had already been part of Public Land Order 816. All that was not included was a narrow right-of-way strip (18 acres) along with an additional 0.4 acres for the railroad wye and the side track leading to the hotel’s power plant. Less than a month later, railroad official Elroy F. Hinman arrived at McKinley Park Station and turned over the hotel, along with all railroad-owned equipment and vehicles, to Chief Ranger Oscar Dick. The railroad’s 29-year ownership of McKinley Park Station land, and its 14-year management of the hotel, had come to a close.¹²²

By the end of 1953, therefore, the NPS had made major strides in consolidating the ownership of the property within its boundaries. At this time, there were only three remaining non-NPS parcels in the park, all privately-owned; these were tracts owned by Duke Stubbs (35 acres), Dan Kennedy (5 acres), and the estate of John Stephens (133.76 acres). Agency officials, by

they were modern frame homes—and thus a distinct departure from the usual log structures that had dominated headquarters for the past 25 years—they drew a mixed reaction from park staff. As Superintendent Pearson noted, “The new quarters are very comfortable, roomy and light. Unfortunately from the outside they look very much like tool sheds on a construction job. They are squat, ugly and look as foreign in the scenery of Mount McKinley as would the Empire State Building.”¹²⁶ Like it or not, however, more were on the way; two additional residences, which looked much like the first two, were begun in the 1950 and 1951, respectively, and each were completed a year later.¹²⁷

These buildings were completed none too soon because on November 3, 1950, the residence occupied by Chief Clerk Marvin Nelson and his family burned to the ground, perhaps because of defective wiring.¹²⁸ The fire, similar to the one that engulfed Supt. Been’s residence in November 1939, forced park personnel to institute a fire protection program; they obtained a fire truck from the Alaska Railroad, they purchased new fire extinguishers for all headquarters-area buildings, and they instituted a program of fire drills, fire planning meetings, and annual fire hazard inspections.¹²⁹

Recognizing that the new Denali Highway would bring even more growth to the park, a new “Residential Loop Road” was bladed out at headquarters during the fall of 1953; this road angled away from the existing road between the two new residences completed in 1950 and rejoined the existing road near the old plumbing shop. Shortly afterward, they converted the old rangers’ dormitory into an office building.¹³⁰ Given the shortage of seasonal housing space, the Alaska Road Commission offered—and the park gladly accepted—six small house trailers that had previously been used at various local road camps. These trailers were installed at headquarters and were used beginning in 1954. Trailers remained a fixture at headquarters up to the mid-1960s, and at “C-Camp” (the former CCC camp) several trailers—of a more modern vintage—can still be seen.¹³¹

The park also made necessary upgrades to its infrastructure. As noted in Chapter 5, the Civilian Conservation Corps had installed water and sewer lines around the headquarters area in 1938 and 1939; then, in the summer of 1943, a company of military engineers had overhauled the utility system. When it worked properly, the system relied on a pump at Rock Creek which connected to the park’s 20,000-gallon reservoir via a 2-inch steel pipe; between the reservoir and



Superintendent Grant Pearson, left, started as a ranger in the park in 1926. Harold Booth, right, was a wildlife ranger from 1944 to 1947. DENA 4844, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

this time, had made numerous entreaties to the various landowners, but land transfers had not yet taken place. Actions taken by both the government and landowners that resulted in the properties being acquired by the government are described in Chapter 7.

Changes at Headquarters

During the closing months of World War II, just six people worked at Mount McKinley National Park; they included Superintendent Grant Pearson (who doubled as the chief ranger); rangers John Rumohr, Harold Rapp, and Harold Booth; Principal Clerk Louis Maupin; and Clerk-Stenographer Faith Cushman. Under that setup, housing was not a problem. But during the next two years, the park added four new positions.¹²³ To create room for the new staff, empty cabins were occupied and a storage shed was converted into a residential cabin, but by late 1947, the superintendent noted that “hopes [were] high that a residence at headquarters might be built.”¹²⁴ Such hopes were dashed, however, so the agency did what it could; it spent \$2000 to convert an old CCC building at headquarters into a “family dwelling,” although it was soon afterward designated for use by “single men and seasonals.” (This is the present-day Administration Building office.) In the summer of 1949, space was so tight that four tent frames were brought in from the old Savage River concessions camp; after a quick repair, two were made available to visiting government employees. Another six tent frames were brought down to headquarters the following spring.¹²⁵

Finally, in the fall of 1949, Congress appropriated funds for two new residences. Excavation on basements for the houses began immediately. Contractors began work the following May, and that November they completed them. Because

the various headquarters buildings ran a series of utilidor—i.e., wooden tunnels dug several feet underground—which contained the water and sewer lines. The sewer lines, in turn, led down to a large septic tank located several hundred yards southeast of the headquarters buildings.¹³² In order to keep the lines from freezing the utilidor



This new employee residence was the first of two modern frame homes at park headquarters, completed in late fall of 1950. DENA 7-21, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

also contained steam lines that were warmed by a steam boiler, which typically ran from October to April. But the severity of McKinley’s winters, plus the increasing age of the system’s components, meant that keeping the system in operation was a seemingly constant struggle, and park reports dating from the postwar years include a long series of complaints about breakdowns in the system—usually during an unusually severe cold snap—and of frustration at being forced to resuscitate the system with poorly-trained staff and an inadequate funding base.¹³³ Typical problems included the freezing of the water line between the creek and the reservoir, which soon depleted the reservoir; frozen water and sewer lines; leaks or ruptures in the water and sewer lines; and a frozen septic-tank intake.¹³⁴ Under such conditions, which seemed to manifest themselves for several days or weeks each winter, park staff was forced to melt snow for household use,

Frozen water and sewer lines were a constant problem at park headquarters. Here the ground is being thawed in order to dig up and repair a leaking water line, March 1955. DENA 41-41, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



carry drinking water in from Rock Creek, and use outdoor toilets.¹³⁵

To keep the system functioning, park staff repaired and replaced critical items from time to time. In January 1946, Pearson lamented that “all utilities and motor driven equipment are in need of repair,” and he particularly noted the woeful condition of the 39-year-old steam boiler. Eight months later, Lou Corbley—the now-retired chief ranger—returned to the park staff and installed a new one.¹³⁶ Some utilidor rehabilitation took place in 1948, and a new 50,000-gallon reservoir and septic tank were built in 1950 and 1951.¹³⁷ In 1952, the 2-inch pipe from Rock Creek to the reservoir was replaced by a 3-inch pipe, and a year later, the Rock Creek pump house was replaced.¹³⁸ In late 1954 “electric immersion and space heaters” were installed to keep the septic tanks from freezing, and in 1955 the main 16-year-old wood-stave water line running down from the reservoir was finally replaced with insulated steel pipe.¹³⁹ Despite those improvements, there were just two winters during this period—of 1950-51 and 1954-55—in which no major freezups were noted in the water and sewer system.¹⁴⁰

Regarding electricity, military renovations during World War II had left the headquarters area with both DC and AC-powered systems. But in 1948, the park was advised that the headquarters distribution system “should be completely overhauled and converted to AC throughout,” so the

in persuading park visitors to view bears along the park highway.¹⁴⁷ Bears, however, continued to return from time to time; in April 1953, for example, grizzlies were seen there “quite frequently.” In 1956, the agency bulldozed over its old dump, cleaned up the area, and opened up a new dump immediately adjacent to the old one. That “temporary” dump would remain until the fall of 1964, when the agency would open a new site, located just east of the Denali Highway (now the Parks Highway) and two miles south of Riley Creek.¹⁴⁸

The decade following World War II was singular at Mount McKinley National Park because it marked major changes to its staff. Two of the best-known, iconic figures associated with the park’s pioneer days—John Rumohr, who had served as a ranger since 1930, and Grant Pearson, who had served as a ranger since 1926 and as the superintendent or acting superintendent since 1943—stepped down during this period; Rumohr retired in July 1951 and opened a trading business in Cantwell, and Pearson retired in November 1956 and moved to his home in Los Altos, California. And on a sad note, the park’s guiding light—its first superintendent, Harry Karstens—passed away in Fairbanks in November 1955. Other important figures, however, were just beginning their careers during this period; Oscar Dick, who served at the park off and on from 1942 to 1967, served two of his four job stints during this period, and in June 1948 William Nancarrow began a career at the park that would continue, off and on, until his retirement in April

following spring, AC motors were shipped in and soon all utility machines operated on AC current. Throughout this period, electricity had been available at headquarters on a less than full-time basis, but beginning in August 1950, it was available around the clock; as Pearson proudly noted, “this is the first time we have had power available on a 24-hour basis.”¹⁴¹

At the close of World War II the primary heating source for the headquarters buildings remained coal; the Alaska Railroad periodically left gondola cars with coal on the McKinley Park Station wye, and rangers then shoveled coal onto a pick-up and hauled it up to headquarters. Wood was also used at headquarters, primarily for the steam boiler, and each fall rangers were asked to cut and stack enough wood for the upcoming winter. This arrangement remained until September 1950, when the headquarters building switched over from coal to oil heat, and a year later—perhaps in reaction to the recent fire that destroyed the Nelson residence—the park announced its intention “to install oil burning equipment in all our residences as soon as funds are available.”¹⁴² The use of firewood was drastically curtailed after the early 1950s, and so far as is known, coal was last used at the headquarters residences during the winter of 1953-54.¹⁴³

Garbage, during the postwar period, was initially hauled to an isolated area east of the park hotel; this dump was adjacent to the hotel’s cesspool and septic tank, and just north of the 5-acre Kennedy tract.¹⁴⁴ This area was accessed by an east-west cul-de-sac that, in the early 1940s, was just north of the old airstrip; but after the Army lengthened the strip in 1943, the road remained, much to the annoyance of pilots and park officials.¹⁴⁵ Inasmuch as the dump remained small during this period, the only downside related to dump operation was an occasional grizzly or coyote attracted by food odors. Most of these sightings had no impact, either on visitor safety or bear behavior.¹⁴⁶ But in August 1952, a “black bear was observed fighting with a mother grizzly” at the dump, and perhaps in response, rangers—hoping to capture a wolf—placed snares there. The following spring, two adult grizzlies and a yearling appeared at the dump and “fed for several nights until a weekly program of burning the dump was inaugurated.” A “burning cage” for papers and light boxes was also put into use. The NPS, worried about visitor safety, closed the dump to the public; park officials “hoped that this [action] may have some effect

1981. Many others remained at McKinley for shorter periods. During the postwar decade the size of the permanent staff roughly doubled, and beginning in 1950, the park began a sustained seasonal employment program which, by 1956, included two rangers, a ranger-naturalist, and a maintenance man.¹⁴⁹

The superintendency during this period was relatively stable; from 1939 to 1956, in fact, just two men held that position, Frank Been for six years and Grant Pearson for eleven. In the spring of 1948, higher-ups decided to transfer Been to Crater Lake National Park in light of his paucity of skills “in all phases of administrative work, including fiscal and administrative procedure.” Been, feeling slighted and fearing a loss of rank and pay, fought the transfer in a series of actions that involved the Civil Service Commission and the General Accounting Office as well as the NPS’s Washington office. Recognizing that he was on the verge of insubordination, Been agreed to the transfer in early 1949 after a meeting with Director Drury. The matter was not settled, however, for several months after his move to Oregon.¹⁵⁰

Boundary Revision Proposals

During the years that followed World War II, NPS officials were thoroughly occupied with managing the 2.2 million acre expanse that Congress had entrusted to their care via legislation that had passed in 1917, 1922, and 1932. So far as they could tell, park employees were unaware of any particular ecological threats outside the park that brought forth the need for new acreage, and few if any outside advocacy groups clamored to have the park’s boundaries either expanded or reduced.

That is not to say, however, that no boundary-change proposals were ever seriously considered. A number of proposals came to the fore, perhaps the most worrisome being related to a long-running proposal to develop a limestone mine in the Windy Creek drainage in the southeastern corner of the park. As is noted in greater detail in Chapter 14, advocates of this mineral develop-



Coal, which arrived on the railroad from Healy, was the main source of heat in the park headquarters area until after 1950. Shoveling coal was one of the park rangers’ duties. DENA 15-5, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

In March 1952, Superintendent Grant Pearson (right) presented former Chief Ranger John C. Rumohr with a citation for Commendable Service. Mr. Rumohr retired on July 13, 1951, after serving in Mt. McKinley National Park for over twenty-one years. Mrs. Luella Rumohr is seated on the left. DENA 27-23, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



ment pressed their case primarily between 1947 and 1952, although it resurfaced from time to time in later years. In the midst of the process by which the NPS weighed the mine's prospects, Interior Secretary Oscar L. Chapman issued two different public land orders—dated December 16, 1948 and February 2, 1951—withdrawing thousands of acres in and around Mount McKinley National Park. At one time or another during this five-year period, NPS officials recognized that, if the mineral development was to proceed, they should seriously consider the idea of removing from the park one or both of the areas that Secretary Chapman had withdrawn. As shall be seen, however, the Interior Department never gave the go-ahead to develop the Windy Creek limestone deposits, so the park boundary in this area remained unchanged.¹⁵¹

The other area that received some discussion during this period was a possible expansion of the park to the south. NPS officials, both at the park and elsewhere, recognized that the park's southern boundary—located as it was near the crest of the Alaska Range—made little ecological sense. As a result, the idea of a boundary shift surfaced from time to time. As far back as July 1931, for example, landscape architect Thomas Vint wrote the director,

It appears that the boundary should be moved to the south to include some of the land beyond the terminals of the Glaciers. This would put the south side on a similar basis as the north side, so far as park lands are

acres. Pearson's proposal—which also would have deleted appropriate areas for the pending limestone-mine project—was broadly considered by NPS officials, but it was not forwarded either to DOI officials or to Congress.¹⁵⁴

Three other boundary-change proposals—two deletions and one expansion—emerged between 1952 and 1954. The expansion proposal, which was brought up during Wirth's visit in 1952, would have added a small triangle of parkland adjacent to the Kantishna Hills; specifically, it would include within the park all land southeast of the Clearwater Fork, Myrtle Creek, Willow Creek, and Moose Creek. Adding the area would allow park rangers to follow a more easily-definable boundary during their patrols between the Toklat River-Stampede Creek area and Wonder Lake, it would provide additional protection for the area's caribou population, and it would also "prevent the possible construction of an undesirable resort immediately adjacent to the park entrance." NPS officials, who had just witnessed the beginnings of Camp Denali, had only words of praise for "this camp [which] is entirely in keeping with park ideals." They cautioned, however, that "the 'average' resort, as operated in Alaska, falls considerably short of this standard." Expanding the boundaries north to Moose Creek would prevent the establishment of any such resort.¹⁵⁵

By the summer of 1953 another boundary-deletion proposal had come to light, that of eliminating most of the park's acreage east of 149 degrees of longitude. That area included much of the Little Windy Creek and Riley Creek drainages;

concerned. . . . I recommend that a field study of it be made. If such an extension is found advisable McKinley Park would ultimately have two systems of tourist facilities, one north of the range the other south.¹⁵²

Others arrived at much the same conclusion as Vint. Governor Ernest Gruening, for example, expressed his support for the idea in October 1940, and a year later, Supt. Frank Been had similar thoughts after reconnoitering the area in search of a soldier-recreation area. Been noted that “the impressiveness of Mount McKinley and the Alaska Range rivals the view in the park and aroused the desire to consider the practicability for extending the south park boundary to the south base of the mountains rather than having the crests as the south limit.” He further noted, somewhat ironically, that “several years ago . . . the Alaska Railroad [had] planned a publicity campaign for the south side of McKinley but was instructed by the then Secretary of the Interior to abandon the scheme.”¹⁵³

Gruening’s interest in a southern extension remained active, and because he remained as Alaska’s governor until the early 1950s, NPS Director Conrad Wirth knew of Gruening’s viewpoints when he visited the park in late June 1952. During that visit, Wirth asked Supt. Pearson to “show on a map a line which would include more of the glacial area south of Mt. McKinley.” That line, which was slightly modified by others, would have increased the park by some 574,000

as may be recalled, these drainages, along with adjacent acreage, had been added to the park in March 1932. Some critics, in the wake of that earlier expansion, had been dissatisfied that the park’s eastern boundary had been extended to the Nenana River and not to the Alaska Railroad right-of-way. It may have been unsurprising, therefore, that those who advocated an acreage deletion during the 1950s did so in the belief that “it would solve troublesome administrative problems as well as eliminate a prominent intrusion—the railroad—from the park.” (The “troublesome administrative problems” were not identified; it may have been related to either the battle over the Stubbs and Kennedy inholdings at McKinley Park Station or the long-running wolf-sheep controversy, as is described in greater detail in Chapter 12.) Plans called for this acreage to change from parkland to wildlife refuge.¹⁵⁶

A far larger boundary proposal emerged on January 21, 1954, during Senate Interior Committee deliberations of an Alaska statehood bill. A series of hearings were held that quizzed the directors of various land management agencies on what lands might be available for selection by the new state government. Sen. Clinton P. Anderson (D-N.M.), therefore, asked NPS Director Conrad Wirth to separate, if he could, genuine parklands from “ordinary western country.” Initially, Wirth stated that “I think all of it is park, sir.” But when asked if “there was any section of park that might be eliminated for Mount McKinley,” Wirth pointed on a map to the park’s northwestern corner and said that “there might be some up

On June 29, 1951, Park Ranger William Nancarrow, second from left, was promoted to park naturalist, the first permanent naturalist appointed in Mt. McKinley National Park. In this 1952 photograph, Bill is posed with a Mexican Red Cross Mountain Climbing Expedition at park headquarters. DENA 4687, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



Park Staff on October 15, 1956 included, left to right, back row: Thomas Adams, William Funk, John Galvond, Superintendent Grant Pearson, and Duane Jacobs; front row: Charles Ott, Warren Steenbergh, Richard Prasil, James Corson, Rosalie Friesen, Arthur Hehr, and Robert Branges. The Administration Offices were moved into the former 'Ranger Club' in 1954. DENA 27-40, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



in here.” (Wirth may have made this statement because both park staff and park visitors had seldom visited the area and because the area had few known resource values.) In response, Anderson upped the ante and stated that “I know of no reason why you cannot start just beyond Wonder Lake and take all that triangle” of lowlands away from the park. Wirth, thereafter, fought back; he openly worried about “what effect that [action would have] on the last stands of the Dall sheep,” but he also argued that officials of the future state would have little interest in the area because it had no agricultural potential and poor timber resources, and because hard-rock mining had never been prohibited in the park. Given that information, committee members showed no further interest in the area because it had little taxable potential.¹⁵⁷

In mid-August 1954, NPS Acting Director Ronald Lee responded to Congress’s interest in the proposed deletion of the park’s northwestern corner by asking agency biologist Victor Cahalane (who had made a similar boundary-proposal foray at Katmai National Monument a year earlier) to examine whether a large triangle of land—bounded by Wonder Lake, the northern base of the Alaska Range, and the corner of the park near Wolf Creek¹⁵⁸—had “important scenic, wildlife, or other qualities.” But Cahalane, also recognizing that other boundary-change proposals were being considered, decided to also visit and critique two other proposal areas. (He made no attempt to report on a fourth proposal area, a large swath south of the Alaska Range crest, because that area

was not perceived to have strong wildlife values.) The biologist, in response, arrived at the park on September 10 and spent a week there, operating primarily from a Wonder Lake base camp.¹⁵⁹

After flying over all three of the proposed sites and walking the ground several times at the western end of the park, Cahalane came away singularly impressed with the both the scenery and wildlife at the park’s western extremities. “The views of Mt. McKinley from Mile 66 on the park highway and from Wonder Lake are justly famed,” he noted. “One is hardly prepared, however, for the magnificence of the spectacle from many points in the western area of the park.” He called it a “magnificent region for wilderness trips” and “essential as a foreground for the culminating feature of the Alaska Range, Mt. McKinley.” He further stated that the proposal area “has significant wildlife assets which are well worth preserving in conjunction with the natural environment.” He saw these assets to be of increasing value, because with the Denali Highway’s construction, the “slaughter of caribou, moose and the other game has increased to considerable proportions.” Regarding the proposed deletion at the park’s eastern end, he saw little purpose in it; because of its shift in status from park to wildlife refuge, park rangers would still be patrolling the area, except as deputy game wardens. “What would be gained?” he asked rhetorically. Cahalane was more agreeable, however, to the proposal to expand the park near the Kantishna Hills; he felt that all of the reasons that had been advanced for the boundary



The park entrance sign near the depot is shown here in January 1956. DENA 39-7, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

change appeared “logical” and that the proposed expansion helped protect park values.¹⁶⁰

Despite all this activity, and perhaps because of the lack of strong, consistent pressure either inside or outside the agency, there was little sustained momentum to either expand or constrict the park boundaries. As a result, none of the above proposals were ever formalized into a Congressional bill during this period, and no boundary lines were changed. As shall be seen, however, the data gathered during this period proved helpful in future years, when boundary-change efforts were again considered.

Notes - Chapter 6

- 1 Naske and Slotnick, *Alaska, a History*, 123.
- 2 James A. Henretta, et al., *America's History*, third edition (New York, Worth Publishers, 1997), 854-55; Harry A. Butowsky, *Warships Associated with World War II in the Pacific*, National Historic Landmark Theme Study (Washington, NPS, May 1985), Chapter 6, Section 8.
- 3 Lyman L. Woodman, *Duty Station Northwest; the U.S. Army in Alaska and Western Canada, 1867-1987; Vol. Three, 1945-1987* (Anchorage, Alaska Historical Society, 1997), 25.
- 4 Lucile McDonald, “Alaska Steam; a Pictorial History of the Alaska Steamship Company,” *Alaska Geographic* 11:4 (1984), 92, 94, 97, 103.
- 5 McDonald, “Alaska Steam,” 102-03; SMR, April-December 1946; September 1947, 2; October 1948, 1.
- 6 McDonald, “Alaska Steam,” 105-06.
- 7 Borneman, *Alaska, Saga of a Bold Land*, 340; SMR, June 1940, 2.

8 Clarence C. Hulley, *Alaska, Past and Present* (Portland, Binfords and Mort, 1953), 344, 352-53.

9 SMR, May 1945, 2; September 1945, 2; October 1945, 2; November 1945, 2; March 1946, 2; April 1946, 2; September 1946, 3.

10 SMR, January 1946, 2; February 1946, 1-2; May 1946, 2.

11 SMR, June 1946, 1; August 1946, 1; September 1946, 1-2; NPS, *Public Use of the National Parks; a Statistical Report, 1941-1953*, 2.

12 SMR, September 1946, 1-3; April 1947, 2.

13 SMR, April 1947, 2; May 1947, 2; October 1947, 1. Alaska Day celebrations were held at the hotel until October 1950, when a “grand masquerade ball” attended by 200 people (including “many notables”) was held there.

SMR, October 1950, 2, 4. The Army’s initial plans called for soldiers to stay at the hotel “on a tourist basis,” presumably in the winter, and the rehabilitation of the “remnants” of Savage Camp in the summertime. Been to RD/R4, May 9, 1947, in File 201 (“National Defense, Part II”), Box 91, CCF/MOMC, RG 79, NARA SB.

14 SMR, October 1947, 2; November 1947, 1; December 1947, 1, 3; February 1948, 1; May 1948, 4; August 1948, 3.

15 SMR, February 1948, 2, 4; September 1948, 4-5; October 1948, 3; November 1948, 3; February 1949, 3; March 1949, 3; February 1950, 3.

16 NPS, *Public Use of the National Parks; a Statistical Report, 1941-1953*, 2.

17 Henretta, et al., *America's History*, 871.

18 Woodman, *Duty Station Northwest, Vol. Three*, 65-66.

19 SMR, October 1950, 2, 4; November 1950,

rior and Insular Affairs, *Alaska, 1955, Part 2; Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Territorial and Insular Affairs Pursuant to H. Res. 30...*, conducted September 20 to September 23, 1955 (Washington, GPO, 1956), 1-15.

40 NPS Press Release, "Proposals Invited for Operation of Visitor Facilities in Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska," December 29, 1954, in John Wise Collection, Box 1, HFC; *Anchorage Times*, April 2, 1956, 14. Don Hummel, in his book *Stealing the National Parks*, p. 170, notes that in 1954, George Collins wrote to him and "tried to entice me up to Alaska to run the McKinley concession." Thinking that "Alaska was sled dogs and year-around snow," he declined, but three years later, he changed his mind (see below).

41 SMR, November 1955, 3-4; December 1955, 3; January 1956, 3-5; February 1956, 3-4; March 1956, 1-2. When the job was done, the contractor's plumber-foreman noted, "I have worked on Alaska plumbing jobs for 15 years now, and this was the hardest, meanest job I

2. 20 SMR, December 1950, 2; January 1951, 3; April 1951, 2; August 1951, 3.
- 21 SMR, May 1951, 1, 2; June 1951, 1; August 1951, 3; November 1951, 2; May 1952, 2; November 1952, 3; April 1953, 2-3; May 1953, 2; Frank L. Yates, *Report on Survey and Review of the Operations of the Alaska Railroad for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1952*, 83rd Congress, 1st Session, House Document No. 95 (Washington, GPO, 1953), 19.
- 22 As noted elsewhere, ranger-accompanied bus trips and ranger-conducted films had been a staple since the 1930s, and the park had had a museum since 1943, but the dog-sled demonstrations—which had been abandoned after World War II—were reinstated during the winter of 1950-51.
- 23 SMR, February 1950, 3; December 1950, 1; April 1951, 3.
- 24 SMR, November 1951, 2; January 1952, 2; March 1952, 2; November 1952, 4.
 - 25 SMR, Sept 1951, 1; September 1952, 1; Kirk H. Stone, “Geographical Record,” *Geographical Review* 42 (January 1952), 151. The first Alaska Science Conference had been in Washington, D.C. in November 1950. These annual conferences continued until the mid-1980s, when they were gradually superseded by the Arctic Science Conference and other, more specialized scientific meetings.
- 26 SMR, April 1950, 4; William H. Hackett, *Alaska’s Vanishing Frontier, A Progress Report* (Washington, GPO, 1951), 46.
- 27 SMR, February 1949, 3; July 1949, 4; January 1951, 3, 4; March 1951, 4; April 1951, 2; May 1951, 3; June 1951, 3; George L. Collins, “Memorandum for the Files,” June 19, 1950, in File 600 (“Alaska Development, Part IV”), Box 237, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB.
- 28 Alaska Railroad, “Invitation for Bid Proposals,” June 12, 1952, in File 900 (Concessions, Part IV), CCF/MOMC, RG 79, NARA SB; Celia M. Hunter to Regional Office NPS, December 10, 1952, in File 900 (Celia M. Hunter), CCF/MOMC, RG 79, NARA SB.
- 29 Stroud, *History of the Concession*, 16; SMR, August 1952, 1.
- 30 Stroud, *History of the Concession*, 16; January 1953, 2; March 1953, 1; April 1953, 1; June 1953, 4; RD/R4 to Director NPS, December 11, 1952, in File 900 (Celia M. Hunter), CCF/MOMC, RG 79, NARA SB.
- 31 SMR, July 1953, 3; September 1953, 4; November 1953, 3; December 1953, 3; January 1954, 3; March 1954, 4.
- 32 SMR, October 1953, 3-4; November 1953, 3; June 1955, 1; Stroud, *History of the Concession*, 17-18; *Congressional Record* 100 (February 3, 1954), 1290. An audit of McKinley Park Services’ operations, completed after the company was no longer active at the park, showed numerous instances of slipshod accounting and poor if not shady management practices. But the audit also showed that these practices served only to exacerbate an already difficult situation, because given the worn-out facilities at the park, the concessioner could not have operated at a profit even if it had been able to operate with 100% occupancy during the tourist season.
- 33 Stroud, *History of the Concessions*, 17; Don Hummel, *Stealing the National Parks; the Destruction of Concessions and Park Access* (Bellevue, Wash., Free Enterprise Press, 1987), 117-18; 96th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, *National Park Service Concessions Policy; Hearings on Oversight – Concessions Policy Act of 1965*, conducted March 29 to April 27, 1979, Senate Publication 96-33 (Washington, GPO, 1979), 382-83.
- 34 Stroud, *History of the Concessions*, 17; SMR, August 1954, 1, 4; September 1954, 1, 3; October 1954, 4; November 1954, 4. In August, Supt. Pearson visited Anchorage and asked military officials about using the hotel, once again, as a rest and recreation center that winter; the military, however, was not interested. The hotel’s seizure made front-page headlines in the August 25 *Anchorage Times*; other *Times* articles detailing the change in operation were on August 24 (p. 9), August 27 (p. 9), September 9 (p. 5), September 10 (p. 1), and September 13 (p. 5).
- 35 Stroud, *History of the Concessions*, 19.
- 36 SMR, September 1954, 5; November 1954, 4. Both of these employees remained with the NPS for extended periods; Sanders worked at the park until his untimely death in the summer of 1961, and Ott—hired first on a “temporary intermittent” basis and later as a permanent employee—remained until he retired in 1974. Ott, who loved the park’s wildlife, was a well-known photographer and local “character;” he remained in the area until his death in October 1999. Kent Brandley, “Charles J. Ott, McKinley’s Personal Cameraman,” *Alaska Sportsman* 30 (August 1964), 30-31, 45; Tom Walker, “Affair of the Heart,” *Alaska Magazine* 70 (July 2004), 31-35.
- 37 SMR, January 1955, 2; May 1955, 1, 3.
- 38 SMR, June 1955, 1; July 1955, 2; August 1955, 4; September 1955, 3; Stroud, *History of the Concessions*, 19.
- 39 SMR, July 1955, 2; September 1955, 2; 84th Congress, 1st Session, House Committee on Inte-

66 SMR, June 1955, 4; May 1956, 4; ARC, *Annual Report*, 1956, 21.

67 ARC, *Annual Report*, 1955, 25, 32, 34.

68 SMR, March 1956, 1; ARC, *Annual Report*, 1956, 20-21.

69 Peterson, *Mount McKinley National Park Development Outline* (1946), 8-9.

70 SMR, July 1935, 1; July 1939, 5; September 1947, 2; July 1948, 1, 5; September 1948, 6; Hackett, *Alaska's Vanishing Frontier*, 45-47.

71 Longtime park employee Jane Bryant (email to the author, August 29, 2005) postulates that this hut was either part of a short-lived ARC camp that dated from the late 1920s, or part of a CCC "spike camp" or "side camp" dating from 1939.

72 SMR, February 1948, 3; June 1948, 4; July 1948, 2.

73 SMR, September 1950, 2; August 1951, 2; March 1952, 4. All evidence suggests that this "temporary" site grew into the present-day Wonder Lake campground.

74 SMR, July 1952, 6, 7. The Morino "campground" during this period was apparently very informal; as noted below, the NPS burned or tore down several buildings in this area during 1952 and 1953, and as late as 1956, amenities at the "Marino picnic area" were limited to two tables, a fireplace or two, and a pit toilet. Further improvements were made in June 1957, just before the Denali Highway was completed. SMR, June 1957, 4.

75 SMR, July 1952, 7; August 1954, photo. NPS made an additional cleanup at Camp Eielson in 1954, and by the end of August, the recreation hall was the only building still standing. That building was disassembled soon afterward.

76 SMR, April 1954, 2; May 1954, 2; August 1954, 2; May 1955, 3; June 1955, 3; August 1955, 3; September 1955, 3.

77 SMR, June 1955, 5; July 1956, 3.

78 SMR, June 1944, 2; September 1945, 2; June 1949, 2.

79 SMR, May 1948, 4; April 1953, 2, 4; June 1955, 3.

80 SMR, April 1949, 3; April 1950, 3; March 1954, photo.

81 SMR, April 1951, 4; March 1953, 4; April 1956, 4.

82 SMR, September 1947, 2; May 1948, 3; September 1948, 2.

83 As noted in Appendix G, the last bridges in this replacement program were Rock Creek (1959), Ghiglione Creek (1959-60), and Igloo Creek (1966).

84 SMR, August 1946, 3; September 1946, 3; May 1951, 4; June 1951, 4.

85 *Jessen's Weekly*, February 9, 1945, 27.

86 SMR, March 1945, 2; August 1945, 1, 3; September 1945, 3; October 1945, 2; November 1945, 2; June 1946, 4; September 1946, 1.

87 NPS, "Concessioner's Initial Development Program" (drawing #2018), 1946-47, NPS Aperture Card Collection.

88 SMR, September 1945, 2; May 1946, 3; August 1946, 2.

89 SMR, September 1946, 3.

90 SMR, July 1942, 3; Brown, *A History*, 179, 181.

91 A. E. Demaray to Director NPS, June 6, 1944, in File 503 ("Pictures, General"), Box 1409 (MOMC), Entry 7, RG 79, NARA CP; SMR, April 1947, 5; February 1948, 2; Washburn to J.A. Krug, September 23, 1947, in File 600-03 ("Development Outline"), Box 1410 (MOMC), Entry 7, RG 79, NARA CP.

92 SMR, September 1947, 3; July 1950, 1; September 1950, 3; August 1952, 1.

93 SMR, January 1951, 2.

94 SMR, February 1948, 2, 4; March 1950, 4.

95 Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 3; Dwight F. Rettie, *Our National Park System* (Urbana, Univ. of Illinois Press, 1995), 7, 116.

96 [Sanford] Hill to Lawrence Merriam (RD/R4), June 18, 1952, File 600-02, Box 1410 (MOMC), Entry 7, RG 79, NARA CP; SMR, August 1952, 1; Hackett, *Alaska's Vanishing Frontier*, 47.

97 SMR, July 1953, 1; July 1954, 2; July 1955, 1; NPS, "The Wonder Lake Roadhouse Development – A Preliminary Study" (drawings 2103, 2018A, and 3101), 1954-55, NPS Aperture Card Collection.

98 Ginny Hill Wood, "Wilderness Camp," *Alaska Sportsman* 19 (November 1953), 20-24. Wood wrote a revised article, "The Building of Camp Denali," for the *Sierra Club Bulletin* 39 (June 1954), 39-44.

99 Pearson to Sanford Hill, July 7, 1951, in File 900 (Celia M. Hunter), CCF/MOMC, RG 79, NARA SB. More than twelve years after she applied for the land, on January 31, 1964, Ms. Hunter received a patent to 67.306 acres surrounding her camp. BLM, "Case Abstract for AKF 009215" for U.S. Survey 4003, from BLM Alaska State Office, Anchorage.

have ever tackled.”

42 SMR, May 1956, 4; June 1956, 5.

43 NPS, *Public Use of the National Parks; a Statistical Report, 1941-1953*, 2.

44 SMR, July 1956, 6; October 1956, 5; July 1957, 5; August 1957, photo; September 1957, 7; Stroud, *History of the Concession*, 19.

45 SMR, July 1955, 1; January 1956, 1; May 1956, 1; August 1956, 1; February 1957, 5.

46 Alaska Planning Group, *Final Environmental Statement, Proposed Mount McKinley National Park Additions* (Washington, U.S. Interior Department, October 1974), 564-65.

47 Borneman, *Alaska, Saga of a Bold Land*, 333; SMR, July 1933, 3; September 1933, 6. The distance to the park from Fairbanks is approximately 120 miles, which is about 35 miles shorter than the distance between the park and the Richardson Highway. During the Territorial period, however, both the Alaska Road Commission and the Alaska Railroad were Interior Department agencies, and the railroad's tenuous finances mandated that all new roads be built perpendicular to the railroad, to serve as feeder roads. Interior Department officials refused to fund roads that paralleled the railroad. See Alaska Road Commission, *Report to the Board of Road Commissioners, Part II*, 1925, 86.

48 National Resources Committee, *Regional Planning, Part VII, Alaska—Its Resources and Development* (Washington, GPO, 1938), pp. 134-35, 139, at ARLIS; 75th Congress, 3rd Session, House Document 485, *Alaska, Its Resources and Development*, January 20, 1938; ARC, *Annual Report*, 1938, 9.

49 According to Donald Orth's *Dictionary of Alaska Place Names*, p. 744, an individual named Paxson, by 1906, had established a roadhouse several miles south of the present roadhouse. Paxson's Roadhouse, by 1940, had become known as Paxsons Roadhouse or simply Paxsons, but by the early 1950s the "s" had been eliminated and the site was known simply as Paxson.

50 Borneman, *Alaska, Saga of a Bold Land*, 333-36; Sherwood Ross, *Gruening of Alaska* (New York, Best Books), 112-14; SMR, December 1939, 1; January 1940, 2; June 1940, 2-3; ARC, *Annual Report*, 1936, 9; ARC, *Annual Report*, 1938, 9.

51 Been to Director NPS, June 25, 1941, in File 501-3 ("Newspaper Articles"), Box 1408 (MOMC), Entry 7, RG 79, NARA CP; Borneman, *Alaska, Saga of a Bold Land*, 337-40; William R. Hunt, *Mountain Wilderness; Historic Resource Study for Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve* (Anchorage, NPS, 1991), 148.

52 Alaska Road Commission, *Annual Report*, 1945, 9. In early 1946, park staff heard that the ARC was "organizing two construction camps for work on the approach road from the Richardson Highway to Cantwell," and soon afterward, it was told that a road survey would commence that spring. Neither rumor was true, however. SMR, January 1946, 2; March 1946, 1, 3.

53 Alaska Road Commission, *Annual Report*, 1946, 10; 1947, 10.

54 Charles L. Peterson, *Mount McKinley National Park Development Outline*, November 15, 1946, 8-9, in Box 3, Bill Brown Collection, DENA.

55 SMR, September 1947, 2; September 1948, 3-4; ARC, *Annual Report*, 1948, 8; ARC, *Report of Operations for the Fiscal Years 1949, 1950, and 1951*, 10. The contractor's role is noted in Bill Prochnau, "The Home of the Sun," *Americas* 11 (February 1959), 20.

56 SMR, March 1949, 1; July 1949, 3-4; August 1949, 2; ARC, *Report of Operations, 1949-1951*, 11.

57 ARC, *Report of Operations, 1949-1951*, 14; SMR, October 1948, 3.

58 ARC, *Report of Operations, 1949-1951*, 20, 24-25; SMR, March 1950, 3; May 1950, 2; June 1950, 1, 3; July 1950, 5; October 1950, 3.

59 ARC, *Annual Report*, 1952, "Construction in Progress by Government Forces" section; SMR, February 1951, 4; April 1951, 3; May 1951, 3; June 1951, 3; July 1951, 3; August 1951, 3; September 1951, 3; *Anchorage Daily Times*, July 31, 1951, 4.

60 ARC, *Annual Report*, 1952, "Preparation of Plans" section; ARC, *Annual Report*, 1953, 14, 22-23; SMR, March 1952, 4; April 1952, 5; May 1952, 5; July 1952, photo; September 1952, 1; October 1952, 3; December 1952, 2; January 1953, 3; Prochnau, "Home of the Sun," 20.

61 ARC, *Annual Report*, 1953, 16, 23; SMR, August 1953, 2; September 1953, 4; "Summit FAA 50725" folder, historical files, FAA Airports Division, Anchorage.

62 SMR, March 1954, 3; January 1955, 3; April 1956, 2; U.S. Census, *Census of Population, 1950, Number of Inhabitants – Alaska* (Washington, GPO, 1952), Table 4, as noted in Alden M. Rollins, *Census Alaska; Number of Inhabitants, 1792-1970* (Anchorage, UAA Library, 1978), p. 1950-8.

63 SMR, October 1954, 3; March 1955, 4.

64 Prochnau, "Home of the Sun," 20.

65 ARC, *Annual Report*, 1954, 16, 24; ARC, *Annual Report*, 1955, 22.

125 SMR, March 1948, 3; May 1948, 4; August 1948, 3; March 1949, 2; May 1950, 3.

126 SMR, October 1949, 3; May 1950, 3; November 1950, 2.

127 SMR, July 1950, photo; September 1951, photo; October 1952, 3.

128 SMR, November 1950, 2-3.

129 SMR, December 1950, 2; March 1951, 3; April 1951, 3; May 1952, 4.

130 SMR, September 1953, 2; June 1954, 2. The old rangers' dormitory has served as an office since 1954. It now serves as a workplace for the superintendent and other park managers.

131 SMR, July 1953, 3; May 1954, 2; June 1954, 2; May 1965, 4. The present C-Camp trailers were brought to the site from Toklat Camp in 1982. Steve Carwile interview, January 12, 2006.

132 NPS, "Headquarters Area Fluid Systems," chart MOMC-5316A, January 1951, in NPS Aperture Card Collection; SMR, November 1948, 2.

133 Ranger William Clemons, called on to thaw a frozen water pipe in November 1948, caustically noted, "Welcome will be the day to the skeleton force of field men here when the higher echelons see fit to furnish this park with a maintenance crew as is customary in other national parks. The maintenance problem must be more severe here per unit than in any other park due to the long and cold winters." SMR, November 1948, 2.

134 SMR, February 1947, 2; March 1948, 2; February 1949, 2; February 1950, 2.

135 SMR, January 1947, 1; February 1947, 2; February 1948, 3.

136 SMR, January 1946, 1; September 1946, 2; October 1946, 2.

137 SMR, May 1948, 3; August 1948, 3; July 1950, 2; October 1950, 2; May 1951, 4; August 1951, 3.

138 SMR, August 1952, 2; August 1953, 2; September 1953, 2.

139 SMR, February 1955, 2; September 1955, 2; January 1956, 2.

140 SMR, January 1951, 4; April 1955, 3.

141 SMR, December 1945, 1; February 1946, 2; September 1948, 3; April 1949, 3; August 1950, 3.

142 SMR, September 1950, 2; September 1951, 4.

143 SMR, September 1951, 4; December 1953, 2; March 1954, 2. After 1954, coal was used to heat the headquarters garage; that practice continued until the winter of 1956-57. SMR, December 1956, photo.

144 Before World War II, the CCC and NPS had also dumped garbage near the park headquarters, but in May 1940, Supt. Been decided to eliminate the dump; he burned what he could and "buried ... or hauled away" the remainder. SMR, May 1940, 3.

145 SMR, April 1948, 2; Joseph W. Johnson to Conrad Wirth, February 16, 1951, in "McKinley Park 50470" folder, FAA Airports Division historical files.

146 SMR, June 1941, 3; October 1946, 4.

147 SMR, August 1951, 2; January 1952, 5; February 1952, 3, 5; May 1952, 3, 5, 6.

148 SMR, April 1953, 3; June 1956, 5; August 1959, 7; September 1964, 5; October 1964, 5; Jane Bryant email, August 29, 2005. The new (1964) dump site was located just south of the road-railroad crossing near Milepost 345 of the Alaska Railroad.

149 SMR, June 1948, 5; May 1951, 5; January 1953, 4; December 1955, 1; October 1956, 1; Jane Bryant to author, August 29, 2005.

150 File 206.06 (Been), Box 1404 (MOMC), Entry 7, RG 79, NARA CP.

151 Kauffmann, *Mount McKinley National Park*, 35-41; SMR, August 1953, 2.

152 Kauffmann, *Mt. McKinley National Park*, 33.

153 SMR, October 1940, 3; October 1941, 1.

154 Kauffmann, *Mt. McKinley National Park*, 41-42.

155 Kauffmann, *Mt. McKinley National Park*, 42; Victor H. Cahalane, *A Boundary Study of Mount McKinley National Park*, unpublished manuscript, December 30, 1954, pp. 7, 23-24; NPS-TIC Fiche Collection #184/D155.

156 SMR, August 1953, 2; Cahalane, *A Boundary Study*, 6, 22.

157 Kauffmann, *Mt. McKinley National Park*, 43; Cahalane, *A Boundary Study*, 7, 12; 83rd Congress, 2nd Session, Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, *Alaska Statehood: Hearings ... on S. 50, a Bill to Provide for the Admission of Alaska into the Union*, conducted January 20 to February 24, 1954 (Washington, GPO, 1954), 37, 42-46.

158 As noted on page 7 of Cahalane's study, the proposed deletion would have totaled nearly 430 square miles, which was almost one-sixth of the park's acreage at that time. Cahalane's 1953 work at Katmai is detailed in Frank Norris, *Isolated Paradise: An Administrative History of the Katmai and Aniakchak National Park Units* (Anchorage, NPS, 1996), 92-94.

159 Cahalane, *A Boundary Study*, 1-5; SMR, September 1954, 4.

¹⁶⁰ Cahalane, *A Boundary Study*, 7-26.

- 100 Wood, "Wilderness Camp," 21-22; Wood, "The Building of Camp Denali," 40-41; Hunter to Grant H. Pearson, January 8, 1952, in File 900, noted above. Hunter had originally hoped to build her camp by moving the abandoned buildings at Camp Eielson to her homesteading site. That plan fell through, however. Pearson to Hill, July 7, 1951; Pearson to Hunter, November 24, 1952; both in File 900, noted above.
- 101 Hunter to Pearson, January 8, 1952; Pearson to RD/R4, January 11, 1952; Hunter to Pearson, February 1, 1952; Herbert Maier to Director NPS, May 20, 1952; Lawrence C. Merriam to Director NPS, November 4, 1952; all in File 900, noted above.
- 102 Wood, "The Building of Camp Denali," 23-24; Hunter to Pearson, November 7, 1952; Hunter to Regional Office, NPS, December 10, 1952; both in File 900, noted above.
- 103 *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, March 12, 1937. In May 1939, Mary Liek (along with her husband) moved to Wind Cave National Park near Hot Springs, South Dakota (see Chapter 5), so all correspondence regarding the estate went to and from that location.
- 104 Harry J. Liek to F.A. Kittredge, November 16, 1938, in File 610 ("Mt. McKinley Public Lands"), Box 79, CCF/MOMC, RG 79, NARA SB.
- 105 Been to Director, October 17, 1939; A.E. Demaray to Been, June 12, 1940; Been to Director, January 22, 1941; Been to Director, March 26, 1941; Demaray to Been, April 23, 1941, all in File 610 ("Mt. McKinley, Morino Tract, 1939-1953"), Box 79, CCF/MOMC, RG 79, NARA SB; SMR, March 1940, 2; December 1940, photos.
- 106 Harry J. Liek to Director NPS, July 22, 1940, in "Entries, General" file, Box 1411 (MOMC), Entry 7, RG 79, NARA CP.
- 107 Drury to the [Interior] Secretary, June 24, 1946, in File 610, above; Conrad L. Wirth to Supt. WICA, October 10, 1944, in "Entries, General" file, Box 1411 (MOMC), Entry 7, RG 79, NARA CP. The \$3,800 offer was a bargain inasmuch as the property was valued at \$4,800 in January 1944 and \$6,000 in November 1946. Hillary Tolson to [Interior] Secretary, August 14, 1946, in File 610, above; Peterson, *Mount McKinley National Park Development Outline* (1946), 6.
- 108 Drury to the [Interior] Secretary, June 24, 1946, in File 610, above; Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 268-69; Frank Norris, *Legacy of the Gold Rush; An Administrative History of Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park* (Anchorage, NPS, 1996), 93.
- 109 Pearson to Director NPS, radiogram, July 29, 1946; Pearson to RD/R4, August 13, 1946; Hillary Tolson to [Interior] Secretary, August 14, 1946; Theodore Spector to Director NPS, November 20, 1946; all in File 610, above.
- 110 Theodore Spector to Director NPS, November 20, 1946; Hugh M. Miller to Mary Wahl Liek, May 15, 1947; Elmer Hosler to Frank Been, June 9 and September 12, 1947; Tolson to Supt. MOMC, August 5, 1947; all in File 610, above.
- 111 Mary Wahl Liek to Director NPS, August 18, 1947; Liek to Director, telegram, September 2, 1947; Tolson to Liek, September 3, 1947; Conrad L. Wirth to RD/R4, November 3, 1947; all in File 610, above; SMR, September 1947, 3; October 1947, 1.
- 112 SMR, July 1939, 2, photo; September 1939, 4; March 1940, 2.
- 113 SMR, August 1940, 5.
- 114 SMR, December 1947, 2; May 1950, 3; May 1951, 3; Brown, *A History*, 190-91.
- 115 SMR, May 1952, 4; November 1952, 4; March 1953, 2; October 1953, 4; November 1953, 5; December 1953, 2.
- 116 SMR, July 1939, photo; June 1957, 4; February 1959, 4.
- 117 Peterson, *Mount McKinley National Park Development Outline* (1946), 6; Grant Pearson to RD/R4, May 23, 1952, in File 857.08 ("Railroads"), Box 84, CCF/MOMC, RG 79, NARA SB.
- 118 Joseph W. Johnson (CAA) to Conrad Wirth, February 16, 1951, in "McKinley Park 50470" folder, FAA Airports Division historical files.
- 119 Lawrence C. Merriam (RD/R4) to Director NPS, July 14, 1952, in File 610, CCF/MOMC, RG 79, NARA SB; *Federal Register* 17 (April 19, 1952), p. 3495.
- 120 "McKinley Park 50470" folder, FAA Airports Division historical files; Vint to Chief WODC, May 18, 1956; Pearson to Chief WODC, July 5, 1956; Sanford Hill to Supt. MOMC; all in File D18 ("Master Plans"), Box 2, CCF/MOMC, RG 79, NARA SB.
- 121 Hackett, *Alaska's Vanishing Frontier*, 1951, 46-47; Yates, *Report on Survey and Review ... of the Alaska Railroad*, 18-20.
- 122 *Federal Register* 18 (October 16, 1953), 6592; Stroud, *History of the Concession*, 17; SMR, October 1953, 4; November 1953, 3.
- 123 These included an additional ranger position, an equipment operator, and an auto mechanic; in addition, the superintendent and chief ranger's positions were separated.
- 124 SMR, September 1946, 3; December 1946, 2; May 1947, 2; December 1947, 2.

