

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	
DATE ENTERED	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Onion Portage Archaeological District (AHRs AMR-001)

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Alaska

VICINITY OF

CODE

02

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Alaska

COUNTY

Kobuk Div.

CODE

140

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY (see continuation sheet) phone: 907-277-1561

NAME

Alaska State Office, Bureau of Land Management

STREET & NUMBER

555 Cordova Street

CITY, TOWN

Anchorage

VICINITY OF

STATE

Alaska

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Alaska State Office, Bureau of Land Management

STREET & NUMBER

555 Cordova Street

CITY, TOWN

Anchorage

STATE

Alaska

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Alaska Heritage Resource Survey (AHRs)

DATE

1971

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Alaska Division of Parks, 323 E. 4th Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Anchorage

STATE

Alaska

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partically excavated	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

5 Environmental consideration are important in the long temporal span of occupation at Onion Portage.



The Onion Portage site proper is a deeply stratified series of [redacted]. In portions of the site the stratigraphy is as much as 20 feet deep, undoubtedly the most extensive vertical stratigraphy to be found in the interior of Alaska.

[redacted] The site has been partially excavated but the majority of it remains in unaltered condition.

Site type: Multiple occupations suggest this site was a seasonal camp utilized annually for the purpose of fishing and intercepting caribou on migration. The nature of these activities suggest that it would have been occupied in spring, summer and autumn. Houses in several levels suggest the possibility of semi-permanent villages.

Cultural groups and dates: Onion Portage has revealed that nine different cultural groups have lived here. The occupations reflect both inland Eskimo and Indian utilization. Cultures identified are, from youngest to oldest:

Arctic Woodland Eskimo (1000-1700 A.D.), Norton/Ipiutak (c.400-800 A.D.) Itkillik (Indian ? c. 400 A.D.), Choris complex (1500-500 B.C.), Denbigh Flint complex (2200-1800 B.C.), Portage complex (2600-2200 B.C.), Palisades II complex (4000-2600 B.C.), Kobuk complex (6200-6000 B.C.), and Akmak complex (? 10,000-6500 B.C.). Many of these cultures and complexes compliment the horizontal stratigraphy of the Cape Krusenstern sequence, strengthening with vertical control the information gained previously. There are, in addition, several occupations not previously recognized nor formalized from other Alaskan sites. These are the Itkillik, Portage, Kobuk and Akmak complexes. The site has been almost continuously occupied over the past 10,000 years.

Present condition of the site is excellent. There are minor ground disturbances from occasional recent occupants, such as a couple who

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES **8000 B.C. to present** BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Significance

Union Portage is unique among arctic archeological sites because of the unusual circumstances which preserved deep stratigraphy revealing almost continuous occupation during Holocene times. Most early coastal sites in the north are believed to have been destroyed about 5000 years ago when sea level was higher than at present. The majority of early riverine sites in the interior have been eroded or buried by shifting channels.

Public access to the site is unrestricted.

Background

The site has yielded considerable information on arctic life and living during the past 10,000 years and, since most of the site has not been excavated, has the potential of yielding much additional information. Caribou by the thousands swim the Kobuk River near here on their seasonal migrations between tundra and taiga. Drawn by these herds, hunters both ancient and modern stationed themselves at the vantage point afforded by the site's location to await their coming. Fishing is and has been good, offering several species of salmon which migrate up the Kobuk River and also the prized sheefish. The subsistence activities of the past are compatible with those of today.

At present this is the only site known in northwestern Alaska that can contribute in the setting up of a reliable cultural sequence of this magnitude. The comparative value of relating Union Portage to complexes in other arctic sites is too great to enumerate here. Suffice it to say that with final publication of investigations to date (expected shortly) this site should become of supreme importance of all arctic archeologists. Preservation of the site will be served best by scientific excavation.

The Union Portage archaeological district was entered on the National Register June 20, 1972

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

UTM REFERENCES

A _____
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C _____

B _____
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Karen Wood Workman, State Archaeologist

ORGANIZATION

Alaska Division of Parks

DATE

December 15, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

323 E. 4th Avenue

TELEPHONE

272-4401

CITY OR TOWN

Anchorage

STATE

Alaska

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL _____

STATE _____

LOCAL _____

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 4

PAGE

1 of 1

Owner of Property:

5 acres owned by:

Mrs. Ruth W. Giddings
Hoffenraffer Museum of Anthropology
Brown University
Bristol, Rhode Island 02809

Remainder in public domain:

State Office Bureau of Land Management
555 Cordova Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

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expanded a semi-subterranean house for their living quarters during the 1960's. The area is too isolated to be subject to heavy damage from recreational use. The peoples of nearby villages recognize and respect the significance of this locale, thus damage from human use is minimal.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Anderson, Douglas D.

- 1967 "Dating and Archeology of the Onion Portage Site, Alaska: Continuing Excavations," ms.
- 1968a "The American Paleo-Arctic Tradition: New Evidence for Early Man in Alaska." Paper read at the 33rd Society for American Archaeology, Santa Fe. ms.
- 1968b "Early Notched Point and Related Assemblages in the Western American Arctic." Paper read at the American Anthropological Association, Seattle. ms.
- 1968c "A Stone Age Campsite at the Gateway to America." Scientific American 218(6): 24-33.
- 1970a AKMAK: AN EARLY ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSEMBLAGE FROM ONION PORTAGE, NORTHWEST ALASKA. Acta Arctica, vol XVI. Copenhagen.
- 1970b "Microblade Traditions in Northwestern Alaska." ARCTIC ANTHROPOLOGY 7(2): 2-16.

Giddings, James L.

- 1964 "Eskimo-Indian Contacts in 30-Layer Stratigraphy." Paper read at the 29th Society for American Archaeology, Chapel Hill.
- 1965 "A Long Record of Eskimos and Indians at the Forest Edge." pp. 189-205 in CONTEXT AND MEANING IN CUTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY, Melford E. Spiro, editor. Free Press, New York.
- 1967 ANCIENT MEN OF THE ARCTIC. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

All manuscripts are in the possession of Douglas Anderson and/or Mrs. Ruth Giddings, Heffenreffer Museum, Providence, Rhode Island.