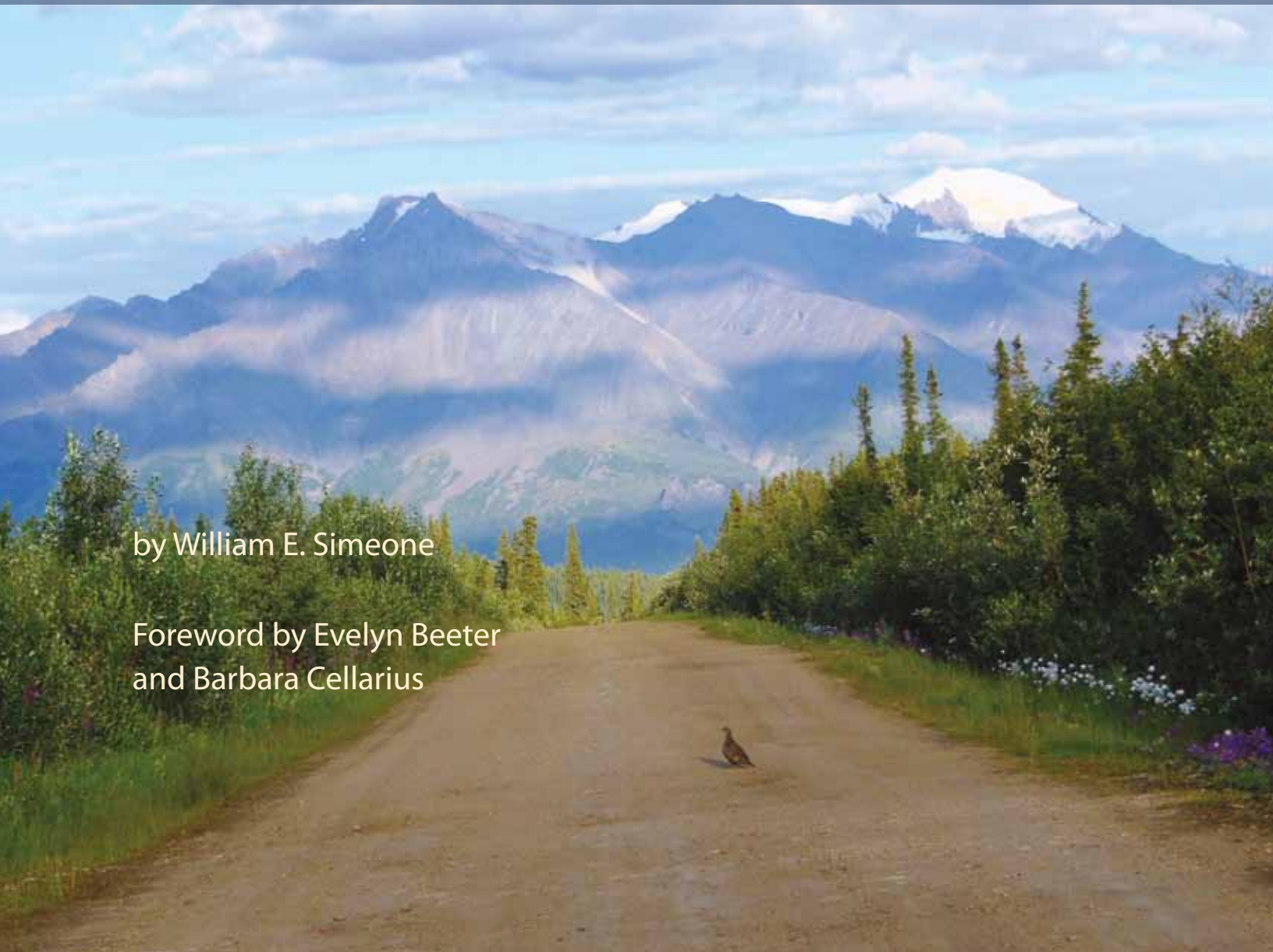


Along the Ałts'e'tnaey- Nal'cine Trail

Historical Narratives, Historical Places

by William E. Simeone

Foreword by Evelyn Beeter
and Barbara Cellarius



Along the *Alts'e' tnaey-Nal'cine* Trail: Historical Narratives, Historical Places
Produced by Mount Sanford Tribal Consortium, 2014

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Front cover: Nabesna Road and the Nutzotin Mountains. Photo by Wilson Justin.

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Foreword

ENCOMPASSING MORE THAN 13 MILLION ACRES OF LAND and some of the highest peaks on North America, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve is the largest conservation unit managed by the National Park Service. Given the park's size and its location in Alaska, many visitors view it as an uninhabited wilderness. Yet to Athabascan and Tlingit people, much of the park is home—a cultural landscape within which they have hunted, trapped, fished, gathered, and lived for generations, a landscape crisscrossed with networks of trails and travel routes.

The report that follows is the result of collaboration between Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, the Cheesh'na Tribal Council and Mount Sanford Tribal Consortium (MSTC). It tells the story of connections that Upper Ahtna people have to the northern part of the park, focusing on the early years of the 20th century. The tribal council approached park staff with the project idea, and MSTC has taken the lead in carrying it out.

Mount Sanford Tribal Consortium (*Kelt'aeni*) is a tribal consortium of two federally recognized Tribal Councils of Cheesh'na (Chistochina) and Mentasta Lake. The consortium was established in 1992 under a joint effort by the villages to advance and protect common interests of the descendants of the Upper Ahtna indigenous people. Ahtna cultural heritage is one of MSTC's program areas.

The objective of this project was to prepare an anthology of community histories of several sites in the northern portion of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve that are associated with the present day Upper Ahtna community of Chistochina. From the standpoint of the park, the goal was to document the ties that Upper Ahtna have to the park to help visitors and park staff better understand these connections and to aid the park in making informed decisions about the management of natural and cultural resources in the area.

MSTC involvement in this project is to make sure that the original people of this area have a voice in management decisions and that their hunting practices and hunting areas have been documented as part of history in a research report. It is important that we have a document that can be used in making decisions—the state and federal agencies as well as tribes need reports to use for the management of the park.

The report is based in large part on oral history interviews with current and former residents of the Upper Ahtna territory. In addition to making use of previously recorded oral histories in various archival collections, seven new interviews were conducted specifically for this project by Cecil Sanford of Mentasta and Evelyn Beeter of Chistochina. Anthropologist William Simeone, who has done fieldwork in Ahtna and Upper Tanana communities for many years, was asked to write the report based on the oral histories, written reports, and archival information. Wilson Justin contributed a description of the boundaries of the Headwaters people territory.

While this report had an independent origin, it also contributes to NPS Director Jon Jarvis' Call to Action, specifically the "History Lesson" action item, which seeks to "provide an opportunity for communities to learn more about their heritage . . . using oral histories and other methods." This is an Upper Ahtna contribution to using oral histories and other methods so people can learn about the history of the Upper Ahtna and their connection to places that are now within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.

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Introduction

THIS REPORT PRESENTS AN ANTHOLOGY OF COMMUNITY HISTORIES from locations in the Nabesna District of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve that are associated with the present day Upper Ahtna community of Chistochina. Community histories are about narratives and storytelling. They can reveal histories hidden in the folds of remembrance. For an example of such a remembrance by someone who saw and lived the last of the uprooting and relocation traumas of the era described here, see Justin (2014).

Along the Ats'e' tnaey-Nal'cine Trail based on a series of interviews conducted in 2012 with Ahtna elders from the communities of Chistochina and Mentasta. The time period covered is 1915, when the oldest of these elders was born, to 1940, when World War II came to Alaska. At the center of this story are two women: Sarah (whose Ahtna name was *Nelggodi*), the wife of Charley Sanford, and her eldest daughter Daisy (whose Ahtna name was *Kendesnii*). Under difficult circumstances these women raised large families, and their closest surviving relatives are the primary source of information for this report.



Figure 1. Charley Sanford and family at Batzulnetas. In order from left to right: Charley Sanford, his wife Sarah, and their children Susie, Frank, Ina, Katie and Lena. (Lena may have also been called Daisy.) Photo by A.M. Bailey, 1919, courtesy of the National Archives.

Sarah was born in 1877 at King City on the Chisana River and married Charley Sanford in 1899 (Ainsworth 2002). Daisy was born in about 1902 near the mouth of the Sanford River. At some point Charley Sanford moved his family to Slana where Katie John (Daisy's sister) was born in 1915. Photographs taken at Batzulnetas in December 1919 show Katie standing next to Daisy (see Figure 1). Sometime after 1919 Daisy married Jack Nicolai, the son of Chief Nicolai, and she moved to her husband's place on Indian River. Jack and Daisy had several children, including Johnny, Lena, Ruby, and Laura. In 1930 Daisy's husband died, and rather than accepting a forced marriage, Daisy left Indian River with her small children and walked back to the headwaters country.

In the meantime Daisy's mother Sarah had become estranged from her husband Charley Sanford and had moved, with her children, to Tanada Lake. That is where Daisy joined her mother. In Ahtna culture children belong to their mother's clan, so it was natural that Sarah and Daisy's children stayed with their mothers. The combined families spent time at Tanada Lake, Twin Lakes, Chalk Creek, and Lost Creek. Together the women raised their children living off the land with the support of various relatives and their older children. Ruby Sinyon (2012) recalled that her mom Daisy worked all of the time to support the children. During the summer they fished for salmon. Daisy made dried fish and her son killed moose so she could make dry meat. In the fall she picked berries. They lived in a canvas tent and used a Yukon stove that was purchased in Chistochina. Ruby's older siblings cut all of the wood and hauled it with a dog team.

Daisy later married Jack John Justin, who was a member of the *Ddhal Tot'iin* clan (Among the Mountains People). His father was Nabesna John and his mother was Long Lucy Charley of Mentasta. In about 1934 Daisy and her children moved to Jack John's home at Nabesna Bar. Sarah died in 1938 in a cabin at Lost Creek built by her son-in-law Fred John Sr., Katie's husband. After they had grown up, Daisy's children moved back to Chistochina but continued to hunt and fish in the headwaters country. In the fall of 1955 Daisy became ill and went to Anchorage for medical treatment. She died in Anchorage on April 17, 1956 and was buried in Chistochina.

Background

THE HEADWATERS COUNTRY ENCOMPASSES THE HEADWATERS of both the Copper and Tanana rivers (see Figure 2). It is an extremely rugged terrain composed of a series of intersecting mountain chains cut by fast flowing rivers. To the west curve the southern slopes of the Alaska Range, to the north are the Mentasta and Nutzotin mountains, and to the east and south the glaciated peaks of the Wrangell Mountains.

The Copper River rises out of Copper Glacier on the northeast side of Mount Wrangell, a massive shield volcano almost entirely covered by glaciers. Initially the river flows almost due north, before turning west to form the northwest edge of the Wrangells, separating them from the Mentasta Mountains to the northeast. The largest glacier on Mount Wrangell is the Nabesna Glacier, the source of the Nabesna River. The Nabesna River runs 22 miles before cutting through the Nutzotin Mountains and entering the low country at the head of the Tanana Valley. The Chisana Glacier is not as large as the Nabesna, and the Chisana River is a smaller stream than the Nabesna. Like the Nabesna, the Chisana River follows a deep narrow valley through the Nutzotin Mountains before joining the Nabesna to form the Tanana River.

■ Cultural Background

Native people living on the upper reaches of the Copper and Tanana rivers speak two different Athabaskan languages: Upper Ahtna and Upper Tanana. Upper Ahtna is one of four dialects of the Ahtna language (the others are Lower, Central, and Western). Upper Ahtna territory includes all of the tributary drainages of the Copper River above the mouth of the Sanford River (for a complete description of Upper Ahtna territory see Appendix A). As the name indicates, Upper Tanana territory includes the headwaters of the Tanana River as far down stream as the mouth of the Tok River. The boundary between Upper Ahtna and Upper Tanana territory seemed to have been the west bank of the Nabesna River, since there are Upper Tanana place names on Platinum Creek, which flows into the Nabesna from the west. Relations between the two groups were cordial, with affiliations strengthened through marriage, so that today many Upper Ahtna have relatives in villages along the upper Tanana River (Wheeler and Ganley 1991). In the Upper Ahtna language the upper Copper River is called *Tatl'ah Nene'* or 'main-river headwaters,' and the people are called *Tatl'ahwt'aenn*, or 'Headwaters People.'

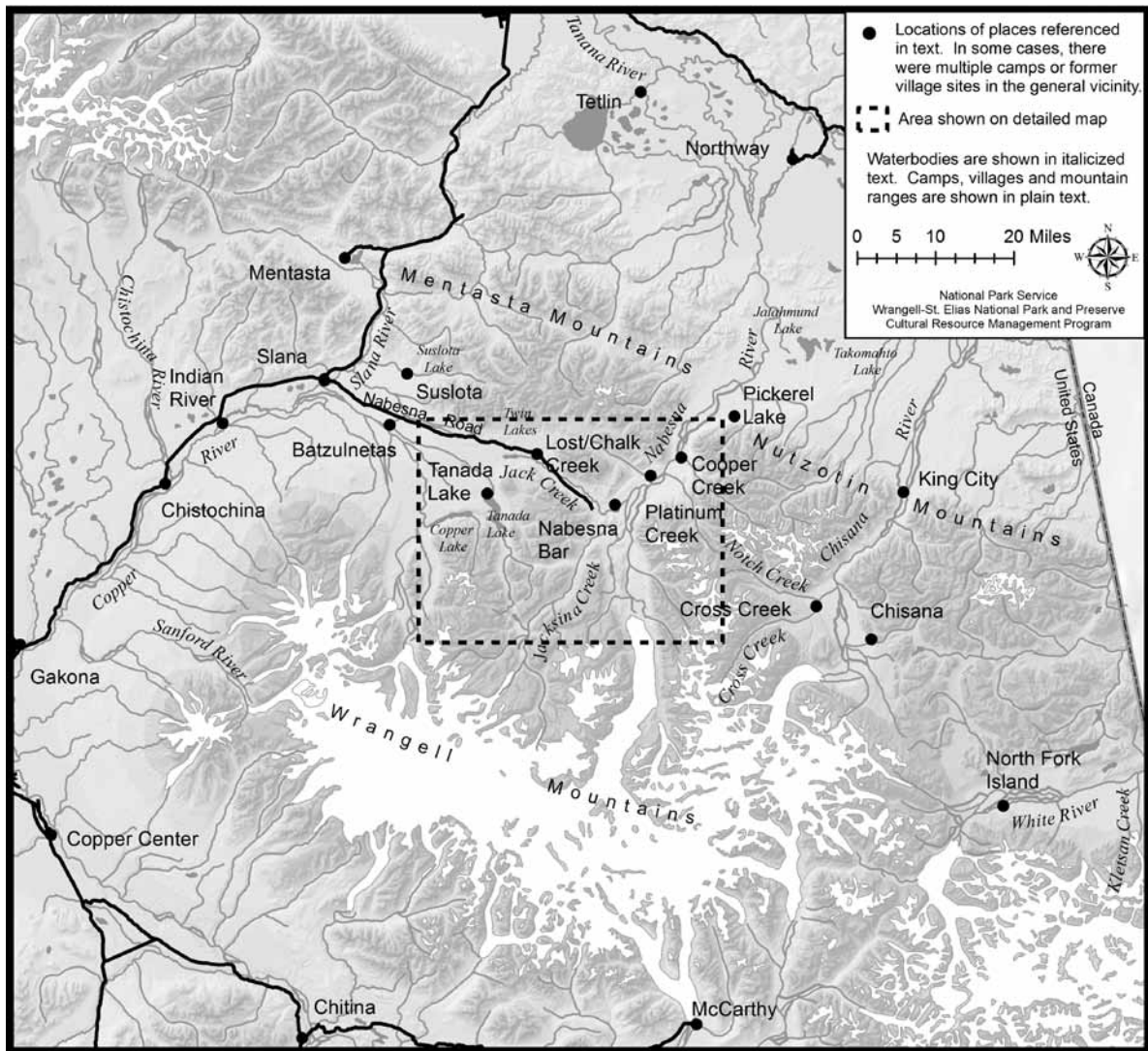


Figure 2. Map of Headwaters Country. NPS map

The Upper Tanana living at the headwaters of the Tanana are the *Ddhal Tot'iin* or 'Among the Mountains People.'

Ahtna society is organized into several matrilineal clans arranged in moieties or halves called sea gull and raven. Children are born into their mother's clan and remain members of that clan throughout their lifetime. Members of clans in opposing moieties intermarry, help each other during life crises, and give each other potlatches (de Laguna and McClelland 1981). People of the opposite moiety and clan are called *c'aats'ne*, which is derived from the word *c'aa* or opposite (Kari 1990). Those people in clans of the opposite moiety are classified as one's 'cross-cousins' and possible marriage partners. They are therefore treated differently than members of one's own clan, who are considered one's brothers and sisters. Members of several different clans reside in a village, but often one particular clan is dominant. For example, *Nataelde* or Batzulnetas was dominated by the *Alts'en'Tnaey* clan as reflected in this list of chiefs stretching back over 120 years (Kari 1986). Note that only two of the chiefs were from different clans.

- *Yalnii Ta'* 'Father of He is Carrying It (wealth)' —died circa 1825 (*Alts'en'Tnaey* clan)
- *Ts'alnes* 'Someone is Carrying a Blanket' —died circa 1835 (*Nitsusyu* clan)
- *Dayaan Ggaay* 'Little Chief, Little Spokesman' —died before 1849 (*Cecaelyu* clan)
- *Ei C'alnes Ta'* 'Father of Wrapped in Cloth' —died circa 1883 (*Alts'en'Tnaey* clan)
- *Ke'Koli* 'No Feet' —died circa 1900 (*Alts'en'Tnaey* clan)
- Banzaneta Billy —died 1942 (*Alts'en'Tnaey* clan)
- Charley Sanford —died 1945 (*Alts'en'Tnaey* clan)

The Ahtna have a strong sense of territoriality. Non-Native explorers traveling in the Copper Basin at the end of the 19th century noted the strength of territorial boundaries. One explorer thought the Ahtna had

by common consent or conquest, divided the valley into geographical districts. Each band keeps to its own territory while hunting and fishing, and resents any intrusion on the part of a neighboring band (Abercrombie 1900).

Territorial rights were held by common consent and could not be easily infringed upon. At the same time intermarriage carried obligations to share so that members of several bands might have access rights to a particular territory (Reckord 1983b). Territories included a variety of subsistence resources that could be exploited as those resources became available in the different seasons of the year.

Up until the beginning of the 20th century there were four winter villages in the headwaters country: *Slana* (*Stl'aa Caegge*); *Nataelde*, also known as Batzulnetas; *Suslota* (*Sasluuggu*); and *Mentasta* (*Mendaesde*) (Kari 1986). Winter villages were relatively permanent settlements with one or more substantial semi-subterranean houses called *nitsiit*.

Slana, located at the mouth of the Slana River, was occupied until the 1920s or '30s. The archaeologist Froehlich Rainey (1939) found a group of house pits containing the remains of houses made of bark, but also found many trade beads, wood chips made by a steel ax as well as stone scrapers, bone awls, bone combs and beaver teeth tools used to carve wood. The village of Suslota, situated at the foot of Suslota Pass, was occupied until the first decade of the 20th century when residents moved to the mouth of Suslota Creek, creating a new village called Big Bank or *Bes Ce'e*. The old village at Suslota was at the nexus of several trails: one through Suslota Pass to the Tanana River, another that led to *St'aa Caegge* (mouth of Slana River) and on down the Copper River, and another to *Nataelde*, or Batzulnetas. Located on Tanada Creek, Batzulnetas was an important summer fish camp and winter village before it was abandoned in the 1940s when the people moved to Mentasta. Batzulnetas was an important trade location for salmon. Mentasta was located at the outlet of Mentasta Lake. In 1898-99 all but two residents of the village died of influenza, but by the 1950s the village had revived and had been reestablished in its present location on Mentasta Lake. All four villages were closely allied through marriage and formed a primary political group with the name *Tat'ahwt'aenn*, or headwaters people (Strong 1972).

Winter villages were often at the center of a territory that encompassed upland hunting camps, winter trap lines, spring lakeside camps, and summer salmon fishing sites. The chief of Slana and Batzulnetas had a territory stretching from the Slana River to the head of the Copper River including Tanada and Copper lakes. The chief of Suslota was in charge of the passes across the Mentasta Mountains, and the Mentasta chief controlled the upper Slana and Tok rivers (Kari 1986:21). In the Ahtna language chiefs who controlled a large territory were called *Nen'ke hwdenae'*, literally 'on the land person.'¹ They held inherited titles that were a combination of a place name and the title *ghaxa* so, for example, the chief of Mentasta was known as *Mendaes Ghaxen*, 'Person of Shallows Lake.' *Ghaxa* indicated that the man who held the title was a 'rich man' who controlled that village and the surrounding area (Kari 1986:15; Kari 1990:150). Other terms for leader man were *kaska*, interpreted as spokesman or judge, and *denae*, a 'leader, boss, or wealthy man.' Female leaders were called *kuy'aat*. Leaders often had more than one wife and an entourage of poor, male relations, called *uciile'* ('brother or male parallel cousin'), who did much of the arduous work, such as packing meat or trade goods.

The headwaters country can be thought of, not simply as a set of separate or distinct historical sites, but as a country. Not in the sense of a nation-state but as multidimensional space consisting of people, animals, plants, earth, water, and air. It is a terrain that is lived in and lived with. From Wilson Justin's point of view, the headwaters country is not just a physical place, a 'street address,' but an 'idea,' an 'area' integral to a people's identity and existence.

So when I say "Nabesna" I'm not talkin about WHERE I was born, I'm talking about the IDEA that my family and my clan lived, hunted, died, and spent

¹ The term "chief" is an inexact translation. A complex system exists for giving authority to an individual (Wilson Justin, personal communication, December 2014).

their time in the AREA called Nabesna. Not just where I was born, but the whole AREA.

. . . When I say Nabesna, I'm not talking about a specific plot of ground, 20 or 30 acres that I was born in. I'm talking about the trails that led THROUGH to Nabesna, the trails that lead up and down the river, the hunting trails that go to the sheep [hunting] sites—the camps that we . . . have used for hunting areas for centuries. . . .

So you don't say "I'm from Nabesna" in a street sense. You say, "I'm from the area where my clan has OBTAINED exclusive use and jurisdiction over many, many, many thousands of years ["] (quoted in Ainsworth 1999:43).

■ Historical Background

In the aftermath of the Klondike stampede of 1898 and Chisana gold rush of 1913, the headwaters country remained relatively isolated with no towns, no schools, no electricity, no stores, no churches, and no hospitals. But throughout the Copper River Basin the presence of non-Natives was beginning to have a profound influence on Native life. The old hierarchy was undermined as government officials and missionaries took over the various roles of the *kaska*e and shaman. Disease was rampant, and in 1919 the Spanish influenza broke out. Entire villages were depopulated, particularly on the upper Copper River where there were no medical facilities (Reckord 1983b). After 1898 prospectors inundated the area looking for gold and copper and competed with Ahnta relying on local wildlife to feed themselves.

According to the geologist Stephen R. Capps (1916:21), who visited the area in 1908 and again in 1913, there were only between 45 and 50 Native people living at the headwaters of the Copper and Tanana rivers. Although he described the area as "exceptional for the abundance and variety of game," he observed that by his second visit Dall sheep had been almost completely exterminated in the vicinity of the Chisana mines and that caribou numbers had been reduced due to constant hunting.

In 1930 the Nabesna gold mine opened. Unlike the Chisana gold strike, which developed into a series of placer mines run by individuals, attracted around 5,000 people offering a wide variety of services, and was short lived, the Nabesna Mine was run by a corporation, employed between 50 and 60 men, and was relatively self-contained (see Figure 3). To transport the ore, mine operators first built an airfield on the Nabesna River, which later became an important transit point to the upper Tanana River and was used extensively during World War II. Eventually a road was built linking the mine to the Richardson Highway, so that the ore could be transported by truck to Chitina or Valdez.

The road began as the Eagle Trail connecting Valdez with the town of Eagle. A branch led up the Copper River to Batzulnetas, then down Platinum Creek to the Nabesna River. Over time the trail was improved and became a wagon road known as the Abercrombie Trail, which began at a point on the Richardson Highway a short distance north of Gulkana (Moffit



Figure 3. Nabesna Mining Company's main camp and mill site. Photo courtesy of Bleakley Collection, Makawao, HI.

1936:141). In 1934 the road was opened to automobile and truck traffic. Some Ahtna worked for the Alaska Road Commission improving the road. Fred John Sr., for example, ran a team of horses used to pull stumps. The mine itself offered limited economic opportunity, however. A few Ahtna worked as support personnel around the mine, some obtained contracts to run the mail from Chistochina to Nabesna or sold cord wood to the mine, while others sold meat and fish to the miners. But as a group the Ahtna were never a source of manual labor for the mine.

To make a living the Ahtna relied on their traditional pattern of moving across the landscape hunting, fishing, gathering and trapping. When asked how her parents made a living, Ahtna elder Lena Charley said

. . . animal like sheep, moose, caribou, all those little rabbit, porcupine, gopher, Ptarmigan, spruce hen, all those thing, that's where, that's all they used to eat. There, they have a tea, I know, I remember they had tea and stuff, sugar. I don't know how they get 'em but they got it anyway (Charley 2012).

Tea, sugar, and the other 'stuff' described by Lena Charley were obtained by selling fur. Ruby Sinyon said

[Trapping] That only way a Native got money. They sell lots of skin, make money enough. My mother, [s]he trap for rats [muskrats] and [s]he sell lotta rat skin. You know, that-them days, them tent are really cheap and Yukon [stove], that's what he buy, tent in that [stove], kinda Yukon [stove], they use that all the winter sometimes, them boys and they make them drums [stove] (Sinyon 2012).

Ahtna became involved in the international fur trade sometime during the 18th century and by the 1840s were making regular trips to trading posts in Prince William Sound and on Cook Inlet to sell their fur. By the beginning of the 20th century trapping was an integral part of the Native economy, and canvas tents, tea, sugar, tobacco, steel traps, and ammunition became staples in the lives of Ahtna born after 1900. Trips to distant trading posts ended after stores were opened in the Copper Basin. In 1910 Lawrence Dewitt (see Figure 4) opened a store at the mouth of the Slana River in a house he purchased from local Ahtna leader Charley Sanford (Kari 1986). Stores were also opened at Chisana and Chistochina, providing the Ahtna with a variety of outlets for trade goods. Trapping began in mid-winter, and in the spring Ahtna trappers exchanged their furs for sugar, tea, salt, and flour.

Today, elders remember life as hard, often with little to eat. Ahtna elder Robert John Sr. (2012) recalled it was “Hard time. Hardly anything, and hard them days, hard to get moose. Nobody just shoot moose like right now, take about week sometime to get a moose.” Spring was often the most difficult time. Food stored the previous winter was used up, and warm weather made travel difficult. During the spring people gathered at lakes to hunt returning migratory waterfowl and muskrats, and to catch trout, burbot, and grayling. Salmon were harvested in May, June and July. In August families moved to the mountains to hunt Dall sheep (*Ovis dalli*), marmots (*Marmota caligata*), Arctic ground squirrels (*Spermophilus parryi*), and caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*), and to pick berries.

Ahtna elder Katie John provides details about the seasonal round. She begins by talking about spring fishing at the outlet of Tanada Lake and how her mother used a piece of wire as a hook to catch ling cod (burbot) and trout. Katie notes that her elders had precise knowledge of when the fish would run. In the summer the family moved to “Banzaneta” to fish for salmon and then up to the mountains above Tanada Lake to hunt Dall sheep. Katie mentions specific places where they hunted sheep, such as Camp Creek, Jacksina Creek, and Flat Cabin, and that the family used dogs to pack the meat. She ends by saying that people could spend the winter at Copper Lake catching fish.

They have a fish net, they use fish net and they catch trout (*baet*), sucker (*dahts'adye*), grayling (*segele*), round whitefish (*xasten'*), pinnose. Spring they go to outlet [of Tanada Lake] until fish came to Banzaneta [Batzulnetas]. Just like they keep track; they know when fish coming.

Tanada Lake outlet they know winter time five days no fish going, all winter fish go back and forth [migrate through] that creek. Five days no fish go through. They know that too, I don't know how they know.



Figure 4. Dewitt's Roadhouse in Slana. Photo courtesy of Bleakley Collection, Makawao, HI.

My mother used [to] live with us there [at Tanada Lake] a long time. Used to fishing trout, she catching through the ice. They make hook themselves with wire, they put fish [bait] in, and they catch trout, ling cod, lotsa fish.

In winter men who are trapping go up there wintertime. Spring [they] come back to Banzaneta [Batzulnetas] June for salmon. August back to Camp Creek. Fall time through Jacksina [Creek], get all the sheep we want. We use lota dogs [to pack meat].

Flat Cabin place on other side of [Tanada] lake, house way back, Tommy Jackson stayed there above Camp Creek there. Last end of lake, another creek coming in there, overnight camp here, fish camp there, big timber coming down they got house end of lake all flat, that's why they call it Flat Cabin. Copper Lake outlet have fish camp there, stay all winter there (John 1989).

World War II brought an end to this way of life. The war changed the local economy; it brought increased government interference and competition over wild resources. After 1941 new sources of wage labor opened up, and seasonal labor, working in construction or fighting forest fires in the summer, became a part of the local economy. Beginning in the 1940s

the government began to enforce strict game laws, limiting when and where people could hunt and how many animals they could kill. The government also insisted that children attend school, so rather than taking their kids out of school people spent less time on the land. New roads connected Ahtna territory with Anchorage and Fairbanks, providing access to hundreds and later thousands of non-Natives who hunted and fished for the same food the Ahtna had depended on to live. Improved transportation brought goods and foods directly to the Ahtna and made it easier for them to travel between city and village. By the 1950s the availability of jobs, the desire to have their children attend school, and the difficulties of continuing a life on the land pushed most Upper Ahtna into settled communities, like Mentasta and Chistochina.

■ Organization of the Report and Sources of Data

The report is organized by drainages so that Batzulnetas and Tanada Lake are discussed under the heading of Tanada Creek, while Twin Lakes, Chalk Creek and Lost Creek are considered under the heading of Jack Creek. Platinum Creek, Cooper Creek and Nabesna Bar are all within the Nabesna River drainage. Outliers, such as Chistochina, Pickerel Lakes, and White River, have separate sections.

Much of the information comes from interviews conducted in 2012 by Cecil Sanford and Evelyn Beeter of the Mount Sanford Tribal Consortium. They interviewed Ahtna elders Katie John, Lena Charley, and Ruby Sinyon, who were born before 1930 and grew up in the area, as well as Robert John Sr., Wilson Justin, Smitty Sanford, and Gillam Joe, who also grew up in the headwaters country but are of the next generation. Elders not interviewed specifically for this project but who are quoted include Jack John Justin, Bell and Maggie Joe, Gene Henry, Houston Sanford, Laura Hancock, and Fred John Sr.

Some of the places described in this report are well documented in the historical and anthropological literature, while others are not. For example, there seems to be no published reference to King City, while Batzulnetas is well known, first appearing on a Russian map compiled in 1839 (Wrangell 1980 [1839]; Kari 1986). Cooper Creek, or Upper Nabesna, is well described by the anthropologist Robert McKennan who visited in the winter of 1929/30 (McKennan 1959; Mishler and Simeone 2006). Information about other sites is found in Holly Reckord's (1983a) *Where Raven Stood: Cultural Resources of the Ahtna Region*, an annotated list of place names that includes information from Ahtna elders and written sources. Additional material about many sites was collected in the 1980s and 1990s by researchers working for the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs 14(h)1 project. They visited most of the sites and compiled information through interviews with Ahtna elders and a search of relevant literature. Their reports are listed in the reference section.

Other sources of documentation are Frederica de Laguna's unpublished manuscript *Ahtna Territory* (1970), a list of Ahtna place names annotated with information provided by Ahtna elders and data from written historical accounts. De Laguna's work was expanded by Constance West (1973), who worked closely with Ahtna elders to produce an *Inventary of*



Figure 5. Chisana Natives at Quartz Creek Camp looking west, August 16 cc 1902. Photo by F.C. Schrader; USGS.

trails and habitation sites in the Ahtna Region. The most comprehensive list of Ahtna place names is the *Ahtna Place Names List* (Kari 1983; revised 2008), which was edited by the linguist James Kari and compiled by Kari and Ahtna elder Mildred Buck. Two other important works edited by Kari include *Tat'ahwt'aenn Nenn*, *'The Headwaters People's Country'* (1986) and *Ahtna Travel Narratives* (2010).

Additional information came from monographs published by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) (Mendenhall and Schrader 1903; Capps 1916; Moffit and Knopf 1910; Moffit 1936). Soon after the Klondike stampede of 1898 the USGS sent geologists to Alaska and the headwaters country. While they focused on geology, the geologist provided information about the local inhabitants; made some of the first maps, which often included Native trails; and took photographs (see Figure 5).

Upper Copper River Places

■ Chistochina Fish Camp (*Tsitu' K'et* or 'on main river')

THE MODERN VILLAGE OF CHISTOCHINA owes its existence to the Valdez-Eagle Trail and the establishment of a telegraph station by the U.S. Army in 1902. In the 1920s and 1930s Chistochina had a trading post and a post office (see Figure 6), and mail destined for the upper Copper River, the Nabesna Mine, and the mining town of Chisana came through Chistochina. The 1930 census shows 31 Native people in 6 families living at Chistochina. Included on the census are the families of Theodore and Adam Sanford, brothers of Charley Sanford, and the families of Chief Nicolai and his son Jack (see Appendix B).

While Chistochina village is new, Ahtna have inhabited the area for generations. The anthropologist Frederica de Laguna (1970) listed a number of settlements between the Sanford and Indian rivers. One was located at the mouth of Tulsona Creek (*Taltsogh Na'*), another at the mouth of Caribou Creek (*Szedi Na'*), and a third at Mile 26 on the Tok Cutoff. According to



Figure 6. Chistochina Trading Post—Paulson and pelts. Photo by A.M. Bailey, 1919, courtesy of the National Archives.

an elder interviewed by de Laguna, the settlement at Caribou Creek was on the east bank of the Copper River and had a run of king salmon. According to Bell and Maggie Joe, caribou could be found in the vicinity of Caribou Creek throughout the winter, and migrating herds passed by attracting people from Gulkana and Copper Center. Besides caribou, a fence used to snare moose was located on Caribou Creek, and Chief Nicolai had a fish trap for salmon in the creek (Joe 1988).

There were also winter houses on the west bank of the Copper River above the mouth of the Chistochina River and another village or winter house at the mouth of Boulder Creek. According to de Laguna's informant, all of the land up Boulder Creek belonged to Chief Nicolai, who was a member of the *Alts'en'Tnaey* clan, and the village located on Indian River was an *Alts'en'Tnaey* village.

In an interview recorded in 2012, Ruby Sinyon said that her father, Jack Nicolai, was born at Indian River and that her mother, Daisy Nicolai, was born "under Sanford Mountain."

They make village up there, other side the [Copper] river where that creek [Boulder Creek] come down. Little hillside this way, they had house. That's where all them people grown up. All my grandpa, my grandma, all Katie's [John] family, she didn't [she was not born there], [but many others] they all born right there over on the Sanford mountain (Sinyon 2012).

Ruby went on to talk about how Chistochina is her real village but that her mother, Daisy Nicolai, left Chistochina in 1928 [after her husband died]. She points out that her grandfather, Charley Sanford, and many others were born near the Sanford River, but that they moved up to Batzulnetas to harvest salmon. She also explains how Adam Sanford married his wife, Katie, who was from Gakona.

My mother that's all tell us, where we were raised up really. [S]he tell us when Jack John come to us, that's when we go up Nabesna. That one 1942, we move out. My mother, [s]he left uh down here [Chistochina], 19-, I don't know when. Twenty, 1928 I think. That's why we live Chistochina, that's where our village should be. You know that Adam Sanford and Charley Sanford, they all, that's their village in here and my mother, that's all raised in here. Stay with them all the time. That's what Adam told me. That's their own village here. And he made to Katie [Adam's wife] come up here. They're [Katie

Sanford] from Gakona them, they live in Gakona. All the family, Gakona. Sanford people the one find this village and they live and Batzulnetas, that's, that's somebody, I don't know this way, that Charley Sanford, he fish 'em, he make, he catch fish, that's when all them, his people move it up there [to Batzulnetas]. And they make bridge, they make that fish trap, they start catchin' fish. Teddy Sanford, that's all live in here, up, over-over old village (Sinyon 2012).

Lena Charley said she was born right here in Chistochina,

back here in the old, we had old village there. The fish camp right now where they fish 'em, passed there 'bout, two, couple, three mile I think. Back, way back there, that's where I born. In the old house, used to, last summer, I look for it, I didn't seen 'em. Too much brush grow up (Charley 2012).

The area between the mouths of the Sanford and Indian rivers is rich in salmon resources, and there are 9 different named salmon streams in the area (see Kari 1986). One of these sites, called *Ciise K'aet* or 'dip net hole,' was located at the mouth of the Sanford River (Kari 2008). This was an important fishing site used by both Ahtna and non-Native fishermen. Katie John recalled how her father, Charley Sanford, built a platform (*nic'a'iltsiini*) in the Copper River and used a dip net (*cisse*) to catch salmon. Because high water frequently washed out the platform, Charley Sanford moved up river to Tanada Creek. Katie John remembered that,

Down Sanford River that's where my dad raised, fished right there—other side of river though. Mom used to fish around Chistochina—they tell me story—spring time before fish going to come, they use those log—drive down big log [into the bed of the river] in spring when water low—they make bed on top [platform]. When water get higher, when salmon comin that's when they use dip net, use dip net in river. Hard to get fish with dip net, [so they] looking for creek where they can get fish easy. [They used to] Fished in Copper River. That's what my mother say—my Daddy and his uncles fixed up that place—sometimes when high water and wash out—sometimes they cannot fix that because of high water. They got hard time getting fish in river—can't get fish in river—just that dip net they use. That's why nobody fishing in that river—look for creek where creek come out and salmon go so they use a fish trap (John 2005).

In a narrative recorded by Kari (1986; 2010), Adam Sanford mentions a number of places in the vicinity of the present day community of Chistochina. Adam was born across from the mouth of the Sanford River (*Ts'itaet Na'*), where there was a substantial winter house. He and his family traveled up the Sanford River to hunt sheep and then over to the mouth of Boulder Creek (*Tsedghaazi Caegge*) where they fished for salmon. There was a fish camp there called *Tsitu' K'et* ('on the main river') that had been inhabited by people "who died ahead of us."

In 1906 Adam said his family moved to the mouth of the Chistochina River (*Tsiis Tl'edze'* *Caegge* or 'blue ocher mouth'). Frank Charley had a fish camp at *Nitc'axuni'aaden*, opposite the mouth of Boulder Creek, and there was a village at the mouth of Indian River (*Di'idaedi Caegge* or 'many [fish] go in river'), which was the home of Chief Nicolai.

According to Ahtna elder Maggie Joe (in West 1973), "Indian River is old people," meaning that the area had been inhabited before the 19th century epidemics. Constance West (1973) records a site on Indian River upstream from the highway bridge and another at the bridge. Maggie Joe told West of a site at the mouth of Indian River, she said "a bunch of Indian in summer time, them all fish there. Indian River way down mouth is better [for fishing], and Bell's [Bell Joe, Maggie's husband] mother used to fish there, 1929 [was the] last time I see. Every year they fish there."

Wilson Justin said his uncle Johnny Nicolai used to talk about Chistochina all the time.

Wilson: He was very attached to that place so it was, his memory of it was like my memories of Nabesna even though Johnny Nicolai spent half of his life on trails, you know, Chisana, Nabesna, he worked for about fifteen years as a surveyor with Lou Anderton. So, he spent a lot of time in the Yukon area, Matanuska [River] but he had a very close attachment to the old village site across there. I barely remember it but my grandmother Daisy used to be over there and Bell Joe used to tell me about it. Bell Joe always talked more about that trail went up to Fox Lake and he always talked about the bootlegger up there at Fox Lake as opposed to anything else and Bell Joe talked a lot about sheep hunting. He said one time him and Johnny Nicolai went to the old village up Drop Creek.

Batzulnetas Billy shot that, they were up at sheep camp and a bunch of caribou came by and they shot four or five caribou I think late in the fall, first snow, and they had all that sheep to take back to Batzulnetas so they sent word down to Bell Joe. So Bell Joe grabbed Johnny Nicolai and they hooked up a team and took off to retrieve that caribou before they lost it. So, that's the kind of stories I heard about the old village over there. I only been there once or twice myself and I heard a lot [about] Adam Sanford and all them across the river, you know, the trapping, hunting, gold mining, gold digging, not mining. Across the Chistochina River on the east side, on the west side where we are, that's pretty modern World War II, nobody really has stories about this place you know, they're always over there except for the old trading post down here.

Cecil: So, they moved the village, when did they move the village?

Wilson: I suspect around 1940 because the trading cabin at the mouth of the [Sinona] creek was built 1942 I think. Chistochina start just after World War II. So, in Indian memory, this is pretty modern day village compared to those older places (Justin 2012).

Tanada Creek Drainage

Batzulnetas (*Nataelde* or 'Roasted Salmon Place') and Tanada Lake (*Tanaadi Menn'* or 'Moving Water Lake')

AROUND THE TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY CHARLEY SANFORD moved his family from the Chistochina area to the mouth of the Slana River. The family spent winters trapping around Slana, summers at Batzulnetas fishing for salmon in Tanada Creek, and the fall hunting in mountains above Tanada Lake.

Tanada Creek is a slow, meandering stream that flows out of Tanada Lake into the Copper River. During the summer thousands of sockeye salmon, called luk'ae in the Ahtna language, swim up Tanada Creek to spawn in the lake. Because of its location on Tanada Creek, Batzulnetas was the premier salmon fishing site on the upper Copper River, attracting Native people from a wide area. In a recent interview Katie John said that a lot of people fished at Batzulnetas, people from Nabesna and down the Copper River as far as Chistochina.

People comin' down fishin', from Chistochina, fish in [Batzulnetas] there. Down Copper River way, they don't, they can't catch fish. They got dip net but ain't enough to get fish so they all pile Batzulnetas all the time. Them fish come in, they get enough fish, way, lot of fish there (K. John 2012).

Up until the 1940s many Upper Ahtna families fished at Batzulnetas during the summer, and then moved to Tanada Lake and the Wrangell Mountains in August to hunt for Dall sheep (*debae*) and trap ground squirrels (*tseles*) or gophers. Batzulnetas was also located at the intersection of several major trails and was an important stop on trade routes leading into and out of Upper Ahtna territory.

■ Batzulnetas

Batzulnetas encompasses three different localities: (1) *Nataelde* or 'roasted salmon place', which refers to roasted salmon, a specialty prepared by the men of the village (Reckord 1983a:203); (2) *C'ecenn' gha* ('by the stumps'); and (3) *C'ecaegge* ('river mouth'). Both *Nataelde* and *C'ecenn' gha* are located on Tanada Creek, while *C'ecaegge* is located on the Copper River just below the mouth of Tanada Creek. The entire site became known as Batzulnetas after the American military explorer Lt. Henry A. Allen named it for the chief or *kaskae* and shaman *Bets'ulnii Ta'* or 'Father of Someone Respects Him' (Allen 1887; Kari 1986:116).

At the beginning of the 20th century there were two separate communities at Batzulnetas. Charley Sanford and his family lived at *Nataelde* on Tanada Creek while Billy Henry and his family lived on the Copper River at *C'ecaegge*. Billy Henry was born on the Tanana River at Salchaket, a village near the mouth of the Salcha River. He married a woman named Jessie who was from the Upper Tanana village of Tetlin and had several children including Gene Henry and Jimmy Henry (see Figure 7). Both the 1920 and the 1930 census show 27 people living at Batzulnetas (Appendix B). Many of those enumerated in 1920 appear in photographs taken by Alfred Bailey of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in December of 1919 (see Figures 8-10). Bailey described an evening visit to Charley Sanford's cabin (the "finest" in the village) as follows: "in the darkness relieved by the glow of the great log fire and the flickering light of a solitary candle, we discussed the scarcity of fur, the salmon run, dogs and hunting in general" (Bailey n.d.).

Both Charley Sanford and Billy Henry were considered *kaska'e'* or rich men. Billy Henry's grandfather, *Ke' Koli* ('No Feet'), was headman at Batzulnetas, and Billy Henry and Charley Sanford also became 'chiefs' (Kari 1986). *Kaska'e'* had considerable managerial and hunting skills. These skills, combined with luck, enabled them to produce a surplus of food that they gave away when times were hard. Ahtna elder Bell Joe said that Charley Sanford was considered a *kaska'e'* because he gave a lot of food away to people who had nothing to eat.

Charley Sanford used to take care of a lot of people, take care of food, give



Figure 7. Titochna Jesse Klutch and two of Batzulnetas Billy's boys. Photo by A.M. Bailey, 1919, courtesy of the National Archives.



Figure 8. Nushch-yet Klutch (possibly Lucy Albert), Idomay, Sargent, and Jolot. Photo by A.M. Bailey, 1919, courtesy of the National Archives.

them something to eat all the time. Not only one place, Mentasta [chief] do that, Copper Center [chief], Chitina [chief], any place. He just, [those people] who got nothing, they know, they give so much food to people, them days no work [no way to make money] (Joe n.d.).

■ Salmon Fishing At Batzulnetas

The source of Charley Sanford and Billy Henry's wealth was the fish and wild animals. In the summer they fished for sockeye salmon that spawned by the thousands in Tanada Lake. Gene Henry, who was born at *Tsitaell Na'* (Flat Head Creek) on the upper Copper River in 1911, described two different ways to harvest salmon at Batzulnetas. In the clear, slow moving waters of Tanada Creek people built a fish weir (*hwtsiif*) across the creek; in the turgid, fast moving current of the Copper River they used a fish wheel (*ciisi nekeghalts'eli*, lit. 'the dip net that revolves'). Gene recalled that his family lived at *Nataelde* until about 1930 when



Figure 9 (left). Nabesna Charlie. Photo by A.M. Bailey, 1919, courtesy of the National Archives.



Figure 10 (right) Batzulnetas family—possibly Jimmie Betchinita (Batzulnetas), his wife Annie, and sons Alfred (left) and Red (right). Photo by A.M. Bailey, 1919, courtesy of the National Archives.

they moved to *C'ecaegge* at the mouth of Tanada Creek. While living at Batzulnetas the family fished in Tanada Creek using a weir, but when they moved to *C'ecaegge* Gene's father began using a fish wheel.

It's quite a ways back. I was a young man; I was twenty years old. My dad put fish wheel when I was nineteen or twenty years old when we started to get fish like that, them time. Before that we live on, put fish trap in the creek, you know (in) Batzulnetas (Tanada) Creek. We got big fish wheel; we got bridge cross (Tanada Creek), old people know how to do it, to get salmon, all stuff like that. That's ways back, long time before everybody (Henry 2000).

A man named Frank Carroll introduced fish wheels to the Ahtna in about 1911 (Simeone and Kari 2002). Fish wheels have four arms attached to an axle, like spokes on a wheel. Two

arms have baskets, and two have paddles (See Figure 11). The current pushes the paddles so that the arms revolve and the baskets sweep through the water, lifting fish out of the water. A slide in the basket guides the fish into a box located beside the wheel. Fish wheels work well in the Copper River, which has a strong current and water deep enough that the baskets do not hit the bottom. By contrast, Tanada Creek is shallow with an even, slow current and level bottom, which is the perfect environment for a fish weir. Katie John (1984) remembers her parents fishing at *Nataelde* and building the weir across Tanada Creek. First her father drove posts into the bed of the stream, while her mother prepared the wooden lattice that would be tied to the posts. In the meantime the children gathered willows, which their mother then tied into bundles and secured to the lattice. Just before the salmon arrived, long, cylindrical traps (*tiz'anni*) were set into the openings of the fence. When the first salmon arrived Charley Sanford yelled "Wey xoo xoo," a special call only used at the start of the run. Katie recalled, "all day long, all day long the salmon were pushing into the trap." Once the trap was full, it was pulled out of the water and reset only after all of the harvested salmon had been processed.

While the run was strong both men and women were fully occupied in catching and preparing fish. The objective was to catch as many fish as possible at the beginning of the season, before the presence of the flies and damp weather in July and August made drying fish difficult.

Salmon were prepared in several steps. After they were caught the fish were buried in a sandy hole so the outside skin would soften and come loose from the meat. After 20 hours they were removed from the hole, and sand was rubbed onto the scales. The fish were then strung through the gills and hung in the river where the silt literally blasted the scales off. After a night in the river, the fish were cut and smoked. The dried fish were then placed in birch bark-lined underground caches and stored for the winter. Dried salmon were bundled into bales with between 40 and 42 red salmon or 20 king salmon per bale.

Salmon heads were also boiled to render fish oil, which was used as a condiment, mixed with berries to protect them from frost, and used for medicinal purposes. The backbones of salmon were dried and used for dog food. Fresh salmon heads were also laid in spruce bark-lined pits and covered tightly for a couple of days. The hole was cold, and the fish fermented. Once fermented the fish were boiled about ten minutes.

The Ahtna believed that fish, along with all other animals, were sentient beings, able to divine human intention. Salmon were to be treated with respect so that they might freely give themselves to human beings. In addition to sacred songs asking consent and permission under the covenants between clan and creator, the Ahtna practiced a number of rituals and taboos regarding salmon fishing. The first fish caught was boiled, and willow leaves were placed on top of it. Before sitting down to eat, the people took a bath and put on new clothes. Some older people remembered that a few men bathed in salmon blood "a little bit, so that you won't get sick." After eating the first fish, people were not allowed to rest but had to work until the run was over in order to maintain good luck. Throughout the fishing season, the fish camp had to remain clean and not smell, otherwise the salmon would swim by and not be caught. When caught, the fins of the king salmon were thrown into the river so they would



Figure 11. Fish wheel at Batzulnetas. Photo by Richard Cellarius.

return. Women, during their monthly period, were not allowed to go near the fish camp or to cut fish lest they offend the fish. Young children were told not to play near the riverbank in case they disturbed the fish, and Ahna elders recall that this was one of the only offenses for which they could be severely punished.

■ Tanada Lake

Tanada Lake (see Figure 12) was a stop on the way to the uplands and a staging area for upland hunting expeditions. The lake was known as a starvation place because one could almost always get something to eat from the lake. It was especially important during the early spring when large animals were scarce and soft snow made travel difficult. During that time of year, people harvested burbot and lake trout through the ice. Houston Sanford said that his mother used the leg of squirrel on a piece of wire as bait and caught between 200 and 300 pounds of fish that way (US BIA 1995a). Katie John recalled that

. . . Tanada Lake, you can catch lotta trout in one night time. And you get lotta fish there, in that creek. Used to be just a little creek. My mother used



Figure 12. Tanada Lake. NPS photo by Barbara Cellarius.

to be, make little fish trap and they just put it overnight and catch fish that way (John 1992).

In the Ahtna language Tanada Lake is called *Tanaadi Menn'* or 'moving water lake,' because of the giant fish that once inhabited the lake. The outlet of Tanada Lake is called *K'eseh* or 'outlet.' Little Tanada Lake is called *C'amen* or 'opposite lake.' Tanada Lake is sometimes referred to as Benzaneta Lake (Reckord 1983a:207– 212).

There are several different sites located in the vicinity of Tanada Lake. These include: (1) Tommy Jackson's cabin; (2) *Xayde Sdelts'iixde* ('where we stay in winter'), referred to as a tent camp; (3) the outlet of Tanada Creek, referred to as *K'eseh*; (4) *Cen Ce'e*, also known as Flat Cabin or 'big flat,' a camp for staging Dall sheep hunts; and (5) *Men Diiteni caegge*, described as another base camp for staging sheep hunts. Although used extensively in the early 20th

century, these places were well known to Ahtna and used for generations well before 1900 (US BIA 1995a).

According to the testimony of local Ahtna, Tommy Jackson's cabin was built around 1930, but the location had previously been the site of a winter camp. Tommy Jackson was an Upper Tanana man from the Upper Nabesna/Upper Chisana area who was married to Susie Sanford, one of Charley Sanford's daughters. Although the site is called Tommy Jackson's cabin, he actually built it for his mother-in-law Sarah (US BIA 1995a).

Sarah separated from her husband Charley Sanford in about 1929 and moved to *Xayde Sdelts'ixde* ('where we stay in winter'), a camping place that had been previously used during the winter and late spring. Houston Sanford, Sarah's youngest son, recalled that "everybody moved right here" including his oldest sister Daisy Nicolai, who left Chistochina after the death of her husband. Sarah stayed at *Xayde Sdelts'ixde* for two years living in tents year-round, when she and her children moved to Tommy Jackson's cabin in 1931 (US BIA 1995a).

The third site is the outlet of Tanada Lake. Located on either side of narrow passage connecting Tanada Lake with a smaller lake called *C'amen* ('opposite lake'), this site was optimal for harvesting fish during the summer and hunting migratory waterfowl and muskrats during the spring and early summer. For a long time the narrows between the two lakes was small enough that people could fish using dip nets, but the narrows eventually widened so a bridge was built across the opening in 1930 or 1931. People could stand on the bridge and fish. The place was so productive that people from as far away as Gakona came there to fish for burbot, grayling and lake trout and to hunt for muskrat (US BIA 1995a).

Houston Sanford said that his family fished at *K'eseh* from the spring to August or September and then moved over to a place called Flat Cabin or *Cen Ce'e* in Ahtna. From there the family hunted sheep and dried the meat. Some of the people who lived at *K'eseh* in the 1930s were Sarah, Billy Henry, Grandma Lucy, Tommy Jackson and his wife Susie, and Daisy Nicolai and her children. Houston commented that there were lots of caches located along Tanada Creek used to store food and implements. Some of these caches were pits lined with bark, while others were high caches built up off the ground (US BIA 1995a).

Both *Cen Ce'e* and *Men Diteni caegge* were used to stage hunts in the mountains where people harvested sheep, mountain squirrels, and marmots. Katie John described how people constructed tents in which a family lived on either side of the tent with a fire in the middle. The men assisted by the older boys and girls did the hunting. Meat from the hunts was carried back to the villages (US BIA 1995a).

■ Hunting the Uplands: Dall Sheep, Ground Squirrels, and Marmots

When summer was over, families left the lowlands around Batzulnetas for the mountainous country at the head of the Copper River. As Katie John points out, after the salmon stopped running in Tanada Creek there was nothing to eat around *Nataelde*. Most of the animals were

found in the mountains, and fish, such as grayling, burbot, and lake trout, were more plentiful in Tanada and Copper lakes. Katie said,

Nothing you can get Batzulnetas.

Just that fish [salmon].

That moose, everything, that way out of river, [i.e. out of the river valley] [and on the] Sanford mountain side of the Copper River. Those place, that's all moose. We stay [in Batzulnetas] 'til after August, 'bout middle of the August, we move up to Tanada Creek, and we go all way up [to the lake], and we go around hill and come back other way for sheep, that one (K. John 2012).

In the early decades of the 20th century, moose were scarce on the upper Copper River while Dall sheep were plentiful. Katie John remembers that when she was a child “. . . gee, there's a mountain just white with sheep. Just lot of sheep.” Today sheep are less plentiful, and Katie thinks that has to do with the presence of non-Native hunters (K. John 2012).

Recent discoveries of projectile points and other artifacts in receding ice patches high in the headwaters country shows that upland hunting has been important to the Ahtna for hundreds of years (Vanderhoek et al. 2012). Sheep was a mainstay of the traditional diet, providing meat, skin for winter clothing, and bone and horn for tools. The animals were snared, ambushed at salt licks or creek crossings, or approached from above and driven downhill to be killed. Hunters noted where sheep approached salt licks then set snares or killed them using bows and arrows or firearms. Families hunted together, and kids helped set the snares. According to Wilson Justin, the preferred way to snare sheep was by the feet as they crossed gullies. Jack John Justin remembered killing sheep with a bow and arrow and described how hunters ambushed sheep as they crossed the Cooper Creek trail on Notch Creek, a tributary of the upper Chisana River. Jack John said that

Sheep crossing trail, what that means *Nach'itay Cheeg* ('game trail across mouth') [the name of Notch Creek]. That is why we go up to little flat place; we gotta stay up there. Sheep go across way down where brush is and cross over [the creek]. You gotta stay away from that trail you know [so the sheep do not become alarmed]. Notch Creek, [there are] willows that hunters can hide behind, as a blind and ambush the sheep as they cross (Justin 1991b).

Sheep do not flee when one has been shot, so the remaining animals are good targets, and they respond less to sound. They are not bothered by landslides, but use their eyes, and when the animals see a threat they tend to run uphill. When hunters spot sheep, they separate, one holding the sheep's attention while the second hunter climbed above them. Hunters usually limited their harvest to the number of people present in camp and did not try and kill every sheep. The animals were butchered and the meat dried at base camp and shared

between everyone present. Sheep hunting camps were often at tree line where fuel and water were available. Hunters established spike camps further in the mountains.

In the following interviews Katie John and Gene Henry describe hunting in the Wrangell Mountains at the head of the Copper River. Katie's father, Charley Sanford, had a hunting territory that included Tanada Lake and the mountains east and south of the lake. Gene Henry's father, Billy Henry, had a hunting territory further west, included the main Copper River that flowed out of Copper Glacier in an area called *Ts'itu' Tl'aa ngge'* or 'Major River Headwaters.' Included in this area was Copper Lake, called *Dzah nii Menn* or 'rarely said lake,' and a mountain called *Sez'aann* or 'Heart', also translated as 'Inside Me' (hill 6580).

After leaving Batzulnetas, Katie John recalled that her family stopped at the outlet of Tanada Lake, camping at a creek called Camp Creek (*Men Diteni* or 'one that flows into lake'). From there the family proceeded up various creeks flowing into Tanada Lake from the east. If they found no sheep, or only killed a few animals, they walked to the end of Tanada Lake and traveled up Goat Creek (*Ledidleni*), heading for upper Jacksina Creek (*Tsec'etggodi Na'*).

Katie: Yeah, up, we go about five, I think six, seven mile, creek coming down (*Men Diteni*), take that creek, water hit that lake, I think they say six mile long that lake [Tanada Lake]. Then that place we move over we stay there and we go up creek they catch sheep. We stay two, three days there and then we move over to that lake. I see, I think I know, kle-dee-klen, oh no, *Men Diteni*, that creek that name. He had a leak they say, that's what that name mean, *Men Diteni* (Katie makes a joke) (K. John 2012).

In essence the family circled through the mountains moving up Goat Creek to a creek called *Ts'akae Ggan* ('The Thin Lady Was Lowered On A Rope')²—a creek coming off of Tanada Peak, then continuing upstream past a series of small lakes called *kedelyaade* ('Where Little Lakes are Together'). From there they moved into upper Jacksina Creek (see Figure 13 next page) and then down Jacksina Creek to Wait Creek (*Tsae Taax Na'*) and through Pass Creek (*Kats'etses Na'*) and back to Goat Creek. At Goat Creek there was a meat cache. Fred John Sr., Katie's husband, said that families would also travel down Monte Cristo Creek (*Gguun' Tsann' Na'*) to the terminus of the Nabesna Glacier (*Nabaes Tl'aat*) and stop at Nabesna Bar before going back to Batzulnetas (Kari 1986).

Families wanted to harvest between 15 and 20 sheep, but they usually got 8 or 9 (Justin 2004). Katie John recalled that they killed both rams and ewes but also lambs, especially if

² According to Wilson Justin, the story of the 'thin lady with a string' is a well-known starvation story, which amongst various storytellers had morphed into something of a narrative of change and comedy. The location of the event is actually on the east side of the Nabesna River near a spring that comes out of or next to a outcrop of rock. That was the camping spot mentioned, but the cliff was above that location and is named now after the young lady who dangled over the ledge in pursuit of a dying sheep. She took a moose-hide rope and somehow was able to climb down the side of the cliff and tie the rope to the sheep. She then was pulled back up with the rope tied to her and the sheep. She was the only one thought to be light enough to keep the rope from breaking (Wilson Justin, personnel communication, April 2013).



Figure 13. Looking up Jacksina Creek. Photo courtesy of Wilson Justin.

they had already killed the mother, since the lambs would not likely survive anyway. To transport the meat, they packed dogs while the men pulled a toboggan.

Evelyn: How many sheep you guys usually get?

Katie: I don't know, maybe twenty [laugh]. Maybe fifteen. Lots of people they get, lot of people, lot of though. All in different camp, got as many they want.

Evelyn: Male or female sheep? Any kind?

Katie: Uh-huh any kind. Those little one [lambs] that their mom get kill[ed], so they kill 'em too. They don't let live, maybe he can't go himself [cannot fend for themselves]. [laugh]

Evelyn: Then, how you guys get it all home?

Katie: Dog pack. My mother had about ten dog or twelve dog and them dog, old timer dog. They used to pack fifty pound, sixty pound, big dog used to be all.

I miss them dog. [laugh]. They're really nice and they little, they got no chain, they never tie up dog, they use rope but they chew cross all the time.

They put rope at their neck.

That's the way they used to keep dog.

Winter time, they still packing them dog and man pull toboggan [her parents did not have a dog team and basket sled].

They got those camp and teepee, [*elbaal*] they call 'em.

They use that kind, they put together out all that stick and they pack it on the soil and where they make camp, and they just put down (K. John 2012).

Gene Henry's family spent the entire winter at the headwaters of the Copper River living on sheep meat and trapping. Gene and his father spent all of their time hunting, while his mother prepared the meat and skins used for mattresses and winter clothing. The family killed about 30 sheep, both ewes and rams. Gene makes the point that moose were scarce, and people lived primarily on sheep with a few caribou "on the side."

Gene: Long time ago, you know, my father lived Batzulnetas, down Batzulnetas village. . . . [F]all time we go up mountain kill sheep, dry them for winter. We come back. We might get few caribou on the side too. We get little caribou meat, but isn't very much moose them years. Now moose all over. That time, no moose over there, way up there in the mountains sometime, mountain side somewhere you see moose but not too many around here, nothing no moose them days. And, we out hunting, hunting sheep way up in the mountain, we get quite a few sheep and dry them for winter and we get caribou on the side too sometime.

Gene: *Sez'aann*, he call it *Sez'aann* ('heart'). That's on top there we get sheep. Pretty bad rocky mountain but we [have a] few place to get up there. We get on top there, we kill sheep all the time. And the other place, on the other side. *Tsitael* ('wide head' or Mt. 5530 east of Tanada Lake) he call, on the other side. A creek comes down out of that mountain there, every creek we go for sheep hunting. We move around to get sheep all the time, that's the way we get game. That's my young days. I just ten, fifteen, twenty years old them days. Healthy, strong, not [like] today.

[We killed] about thirty [sheep], something like that. We would dry them right in the camp there. We camp out, make *dzazes*, *daxi c'ezax*. We would dry the meat. That's the way we used to do it. Even when we get caribou meat, we get fat caribou sometimes over there. We go across there and get some caribou. We dry [the meat], same thing. Every game we get we dry [the meat], we not wasting anything I tell you them days. We take care of our food. That's the way we do it a long time ago.

Oh, yeah we all go out sheep hunting, but [the] family [mother and little children] stay in the camp, but me and old man go out get game, me and my father go out. My brother is too small them days, but he goes out to get meat with us though. He does a lot of different work.

She [his mother] was cutting meat, drying, old lady working on cutting meat, everything. Making them sheepskin, *c'eggan* you know, tan [she tanned the skins]. [S]he using them sheep skin for mattress. [S]he drying them sheepskin for mattress, dry up them, and we got lots of them in the wintertime, we're making mattress out of sheep, old fur skin. Sheep skin, caribou skin, young calf, we make parka out, we make moccasin out of them moose hide, caribou skin, stuff like that, old people, our old people know how to do it.

Interviewer: When they were hunting, would they kill the rams and the ewes? Did they kill all the sheep or just certain ones?

Gene: We get all the sheep we want; mostly we get them big rams. We kill little ones too sometimes, if we get into [big bunch], not too many though, we go after big ram all the time, big ram sheep. Big ram has got lots of meat on, fat. We kill little one once in a while too.

Interviewer: What do you do with the horns?

Gene: We throw away, we don't use horns in them days. Old people bring horn so they make spoon out of. Old people make spoon out of. My dad make lots of spoon out of them horns.

Interviewer: Did you go towards Mount Sanford?

Gene: Yeah, up in the mountain, way up there, way up headed toward the mountain Sanford. Little creek up there he called *Ts'oo Dzaay Na'* (Drop Creek) that creek come down to Copper River, way down there. About two or three miles from Batzulnetas. Right across, we break trail at that creek there. It's our hunting ground for wintertime. We kill caribou up there, head of that river. That's the way we used to live, get a little game for winter. Get a little meat once in awhile. We live on game but we take care of them (Henry 2000).

Hunting in the uplands included snaring or shooting small game such as Arctic ground squirrels, called gophers (*tseles*), and marmots, or whistlers (*c'udelyiisi*). These animals provided meat and fur for clothing. Small children and women harvested these animals using snares (*ggaał*) made from an eagle wing or sinew (see Figure 14) or with a 22 rifle. During warm fall days, when the men were off hunting sheep, the women and children snared gophers and marmots in the alpine tundra. Ruby Sinyon (2001) recalled that the best times when she was young were when all of the young girls put up a tent and trapped for gophers and rabbits on

the hillside. The animals were either air dried or roasted. If dried the meat was wrapped in birch bark and put into dog packs. After skinning and skewering the carcasses on a green stick, the women arranged them around a fire, and during the roasting the grease was collected in a pan made either of birch bark or wood and mixed with berries (Reckord 1983a:33).

The anthropologist Frederica de Laguna (1960) observed Martha Jackson making a snare from sinew. Martha made the snare cord of two pieces of sinew,

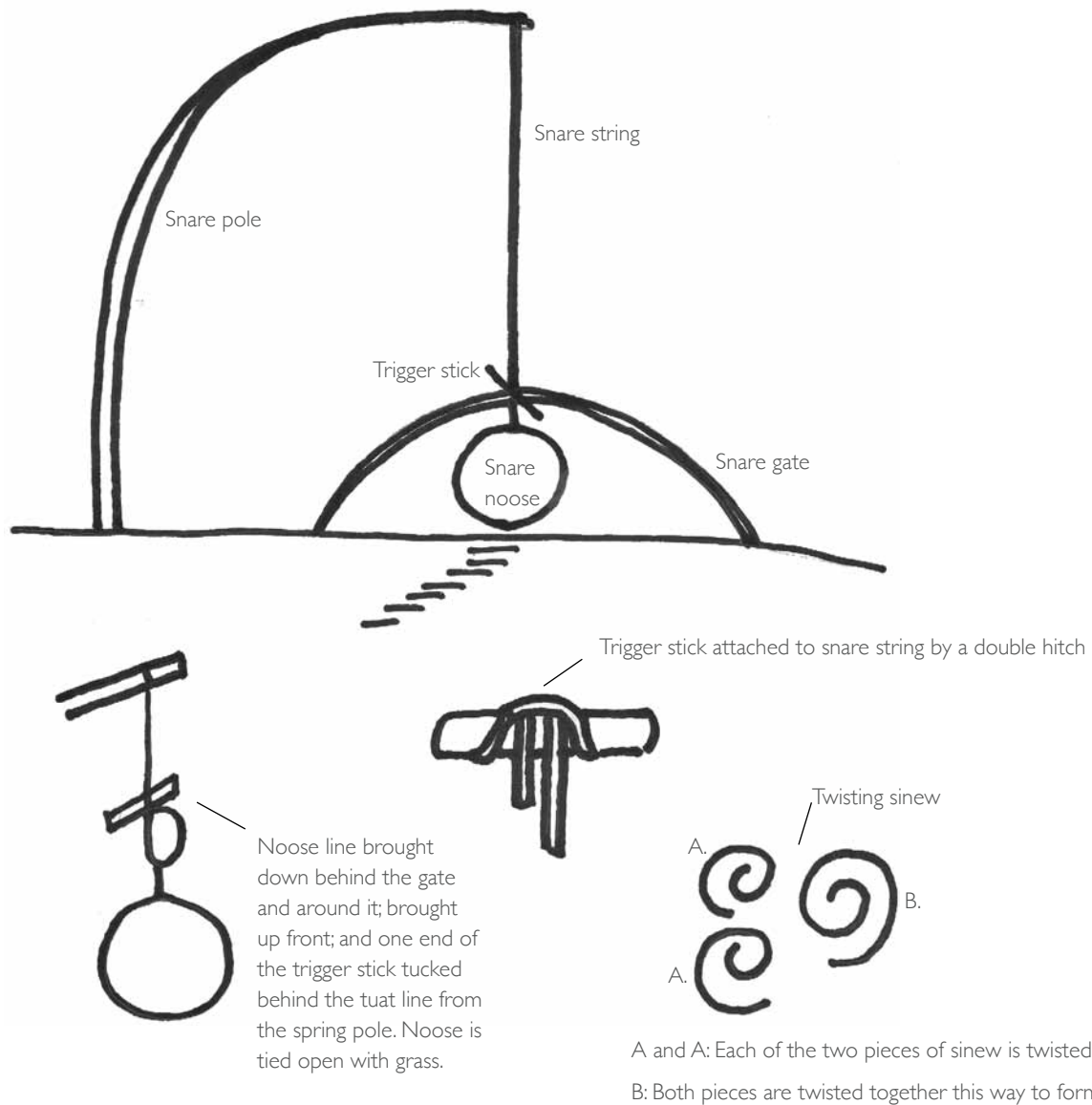


Figure 14. Gopher snare. From de Laguna fieldnotes 1960.

each of which was twisted on itself, while both were twisted together. She held the strands in her left hand and twisted each with her right hand. She twisted the nearer of the two strands, with the right thumb on top of her fingers, rotating the strand towards herself (counter-clock-wise). Then she wound this strand over and behind the other strand (clockwise). Then the second was in front and she this between her right thumb and fingers . . . etc.

The snare needed to be stiff so the sinew was wetted, then twisted, wetted again, twisted again, and then wound around a stick.

In this narrative, Katie John describes her first encounter with a whistler.

Evelyn: So, you guys, your family, when you guys move up to Tanada Lake, you hunt on the mountains above Tanada? And there's lots of sheep on that side?

Katie: We went up that Tanada hill that side there. Your grandma and me. We went up. You know those oh, uh the, now what they call them, *c'udelyiisi*. There's a big, on that one, I hear about, my mother tell story [about Whistler]. I never see it [a Whistler] before. We go up, and then your grandma, [s]he build fire, then make tea there. Lots of them gopher hopping up on top them hill up there. I go up with twenty-two [rifle], pretty soon, that one whis-. What they call 'em, whis-it?

Evelyn: Whistler?

Katie: Whistler?

Evelyn: Yeah. Marmot.

Katie: Uh-huh, that one. I guess he see me come out and he stand there and make noise up there. We don't know, we never hear before. Your grandma know. But me I don't know. I don't I see it, I think my sister, what [s]he see? [S]he whistle today. I look down there. [S]he whistle today, I-I look down there, [s]he don't, [s]he don't look at him, look around. [S]he make tea or something.

Oh so that, I don't know what they [Whistlers] do. Whistle [whistle sound]. I thought a real man whistle.

And I walk back down, I got scared of it, I never hear that kind before. And I tell 'em, what's that I say, they tell me, that's *c'udelyiisi*, they tell me. What kind *c'udelyiisi* I said? [S]he talk. [laugh] Maybe he [the Whistler] talk, maybe he's up there, we don't know that kind up there.

Pretty soon [s]he go with me and we look for it, [s]he sit on the rock. He [the Whistler] fly out, we see.

They're big, bigger than porcupine. We never get it.

Evelyn: So you guys, get gopher too? What about gopher?

Katie: Gopher?

Evelyn: *tseles?* [laugh]

Katie: Yeah, that one too, lotsa on that hill there. We trap 'em. We always go up, your grandma and me went up, we trap 'em. Spring time, when first he come out (K. John 2012).

Jack Creek Drainage

Chalk Creek (*Tsabaey Ggaay Kulaand* or 'small fish exists creek'),
Lost Creek (*Tehee Baa Ndiig* or 'grey stone creek'), and
Twin Lakes (*Uts'en Kac'ilaegge Menn'* or 'from it fish swim up lake')

JACK CREEK IS CALLED DESUUN' NA' OR 'GOOD AREA CREEK,' referring to the relative abundance of resources. In the spring great schools of Arctic grayling migrate between Jack Lake and Jack Creek, so there was 'easy fishing,' and there are muskrats in the lake, along with ducks and geese. In the 1920s and 1930s several Ahtna families settled in the vicinity of the Nabesna Road where the road crossed Chalk Creek and Lost Creek. A third settlement called Twin Lakes came later and was where Daisy Nicolai and her daughters stayed (Reckord 1983a).

Jack Creek flows out of Jack Lake, which is fed by Little Jack Creek. Below Jack Lake, three creeks flow into Jack Creek and offer access to the uplands of the Mentasta Mountains that is prime habitat for sheep, caribou, moose, and ground squirrels. These creeks are Trail Creek, Lost Creek, and Chalk Creek. On upper Chalk Creek, near Big Grayling Lake (*Łuug Hooliin Mann'*), there was a salt lick that attracted sheep and made the area particularly attractive to hunters (see Figure 15).

Archeological evidence indicates that the Ahtna have inhabited the Jack Creek drainage for generations, and they continue to hunt in the drainage for moose and sheep (US BIA 1994c). Wilson Justin, who was born in the 1950s, described how, in more recent times, he and his family hunted moose and snared ground squirrels in the high country of Lost Creek. Wilson then goes on to describe the trail system that ran from Suslota across upper Trail and Lost creeks to the Nabesna River.

There are places up Lost Creek near where our horse trail crosses, actually just above there [there are] old time cuttings from old Indian camps and you'll find pots and pans that are probably a hundred years old still on the trees up the Lost Creek. Lena [Charley's] old moose hunting area is up Lost Creek. And we used to hunt moose up near the head of Lost Creek when I was young [in the 1950s]. So, there is, if there's any place where we had hunting overnight camps would be up Lost Creek rather than Trail Creek.

Trail Creek was always harder to hunt than Lost Creek. The one thing I remember about Lost Creek more than anything else, is that we used to go up there for gophers. Go all the way up to the, almost to the end of Lost Creek where it hits the mountains and then we'd spend four or five days up there with pack dogs snaring gophers. That'd be middle of July, for some odd reason, that it turned out to be more of them up there than Trail Creek.

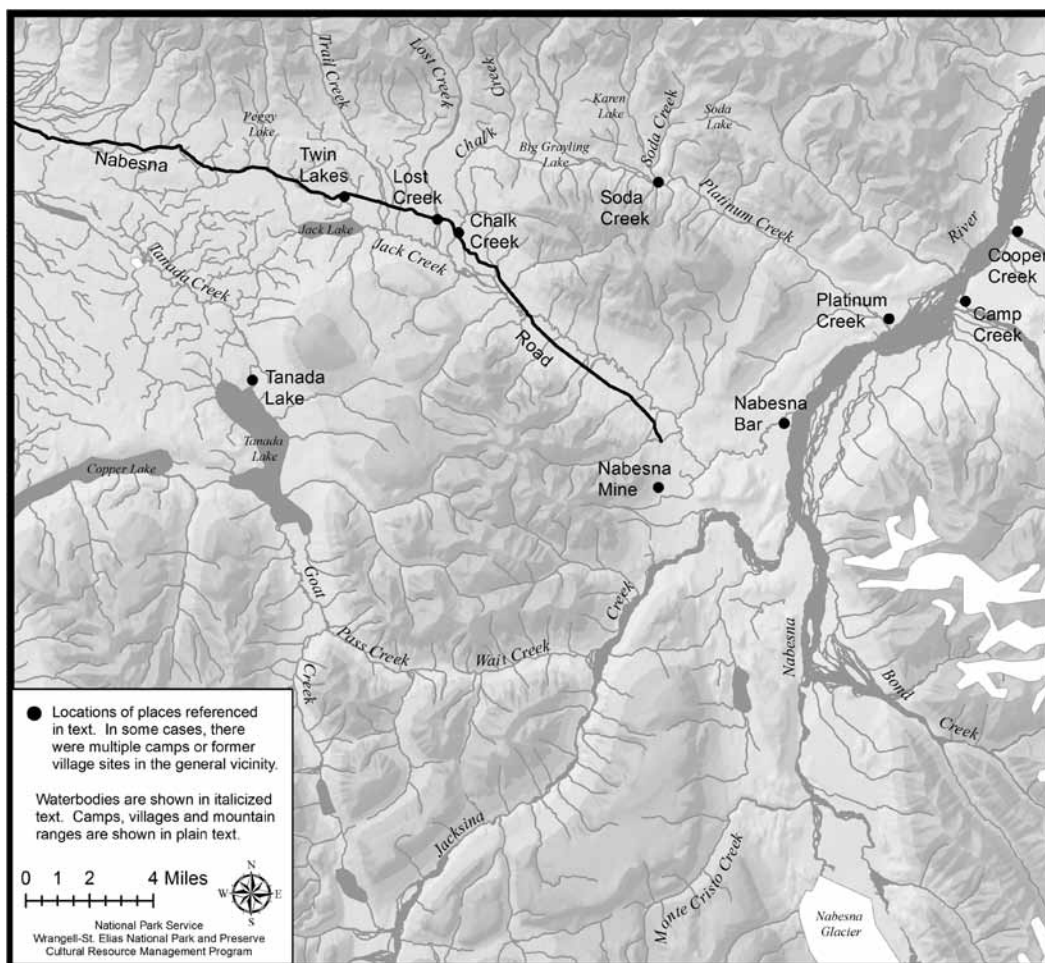


Figure 15. Detailed map of central Headwaters Country. NPS map.

So I remember Lost Creek more for what little moose hunting we did but I remember it more for trapping gophers and porcupine than anything else (Justin 2012).

From Lost Creek a trail led westward to Trail Creek and upper Suslota Creek, then down to Suslota Creek and Suslota Lake. Going east from Chalk Creek one could travel past Karen Lake, to Soda Creek, and down Platinum Creek to the Nabesna River. Wilson Justin described the trail system and recalled hearing “lots and lots” stories about Chalk Creek, because it was one stop on a trail system between Mentasta and the Nabesna River.

[If you were] from Suslota village, you go up Suslota valley come over the pass, hit Trail Creek, and come down Trail Creek. The trail [from Suslota was] joined [by] a trail from Mentasta around the lower end of Suslota Lake and on the north or the south flanks of the Mentasta Mountains about two, three miles to the left of the Nabesna Road.

. . . so the Suslota trail and Mentasta trail joins there [and] runs above Trail Creek and angles towards Lost Creek and hits Chalk Creek directly so about four miles after the Mentasta and Suslota trail join, straight up the valley, you're right on the trail, that's Chalk Creek. So, that trail has like five other trails too but that's the main one, that's the one they [use], winter trail and summer trail (Justin 2012).

■ Chalk Creek Village

Chalk Creek Village was established in the 1920s by a small group of Ahtna and a white man named Fred Chalk. The village was abandoned after 1930 when Chalk committed suicide (US BIA 1994c). In the early 1930s Daisy Nicolai and her children lived at Chalk Creek.

Wilson Justin said that Ruby Sinyon told him

about Chalk Creek, and she told me, well Jack John also told me about the time that one of the older people from Chalk Creek got poisoned up there at the [Nabesna] mine and died at Chalk Creek. He came back down and he had all the, all the foam coming out of his mouth. So, he was in a tent and died there. And also Houston Sanford, when he was young, he cut his feet open with a double bitted axe. He was working on a house log and I don't know if that was at Chalk Creek or up Lost Creek or towards, I hear three different locations about that, but he, cut through his moccasin and into his tendons so he couldn't walk and if they took care of him from Chalk Creek to wherever he was hurt, they went up, somebody stay with him all the time but went back and forth with food and stuff and he was there that whole summer (Justin 2012).

■ Lost Creek Village

Lost Creek was established in 1934/35 after Chalk Creek was abandoned. Jack John Justin said people were living at Lost Creek

since 1934 I think and before that here and there you know. They come in here [Lost Creek] in 1934, they built first house in 1936 here, no 1935 I guess. John Sanford and Frank Sanford built the first cabins.

He added that people left Lost Creek in 1941. Some moved to Batzulnetas and others to Nabesna (Justin 1991a).

The Lost Creek site is composed of a village, a cemetery, and camp. Lost Creek village was established to take advantage of the presence of the Nabesna Road. The cemetery is called Nocsit, and those buried there include Sarah Sanford, Elsie Sanford, and Alfred Jimmy. Those who lived at Lost Creek included Charley Sanford's estranged wife Sarah and her children; John Sanford, who later moved to Tanacross; Frank Sanford; and Daisy Nicolai. Daisy Nicolai had her children with her. Others who lived at Lost Creek were Lucie Albert; Jeannie Albert; Alfred Jimmy, also known as Nabesna Jimmy; and Shorty Frank, who was originally from Scottie Creek. The residents made a living by hunting and fishing and selling food and wood to the mine at Nabesna. They also worked on road maintenance, hauled freight, and carried the mail (US BIA 1994c).

Many of the residents left Lost Creek in the early 1940s, but Daisy Nicolai and her children remained. They had moved there in about 1934, living in a cabin provided by Otto Bloom.

Ruby Sinyon said she grew up at Batzulnetas and Tanada Lake and later Chalk Creek and Lost Creek.

Last time when my grandma [Katie John's mother, Sarah], they take [her] over, then they build house, Lost Creek. That's when we're big [grown up children], we end up [there]. We're not big. And we live it there forever, for long time we grown up there. My grandma gone and we move home [Chistochina], but uh, Tanada Lake, Batzulnetas, go back up that big house. We live right all in here. We never go another place. Chistochina, Batzulnetas, Tanada Lake, and Twin Lake and up Chalk Creek, where my grandma born (Sinyon 2012).

Here Katie John tells the story about the death of her mother at Lost Creek. The story reveals the nature of the relationship between the Ahtna and the Nabesna Mine. Katie begins by saying that her brother sold wood to the mine. She then goes on to talk about when her mother became ill, Fred John Sr. [Katie's husband] built a cabin at Lost Creek so they could be close to the road. After her mother died Katie used a truck driver to deliver a message to her brother telling about the death of their mother. She also passed along a message to the miners up at the mine, who then provided the lumber for her mother's coffin and dug the grave.

My mother started sick. And my brother John he work for mining, cutting wood, sell wood. And Fred [John] and he go out with his brother and he cut log, he build log house by road. My mother get start sick so we move over there. That's why we got to the road, then my mother die right there, that's why they bury her right there. Nobody us, just me, and your grandma.

We are two, we take care of him. And just lotta little kids [laugh] we got, all small kids.

Now my mother gone, I mixed up, truck big semi-truck comin', my mother gone. I tell [truck driver] you know that beach up there Little Jack creek they call. Yeah, they tell me. You see up there, you see little house. Yeah, I see little house there. You stop there, you go up see, my brother in there and tell [him] my mother pass away but about hour ago I tell him. Okay, I gon' tell him, he say. He go up, he go up that little house, [they are cutting] cut wood there, [the truck driver] he say my name, he take his brother's place and they, he, that truck go up, there's not much car that time that road rough.

And we, Houstie [Katie's brother] was pretty small that time. Gee, that one make us hard time.

My mom gone, iiiii, he just holler, he just roll around out there. [After his] sister hold him.

Now [today], you see when somebody die, all just full of people [there are many people around].

Oh, that truck I stop I say. I tell him you get to mining [the mine] that, you know that miner boys there, I tell him. Yeah, he [the truck driver] tell me. I say you tell his working boys there, you tell them Katie John's mom pass away down Lost Creek they say. You tell them I tell them. And they go back, they say yeah, we take care of [funeral] don't worry, he tell us. They go back and they bring truckload of some lumber, everything.

They dig hole, everything, they bury for us (K. John 2012).

Katie's son, Robert John Sr., also recalled his father had a house at Lost Creek and that they went down to Twin Lakes to fish for grayling and hunt muskrat.

That's, my dad had a home there and then from there 'bout, I don't know how far up, like a mile, or half mile or two, Twin Lake. Yeah, from there, we usually go to Twin Lake, grayling fishing, you know, and around first of June, everybody come out at muskrat camp, it's all around here (R. John 2012).

■ Twin Lakes

Twin Lakes is noted for its wildlife resources, especially fish species that are available during the spring. According to oral tradition, the grandmother of Harry Frank and Oscar Jimmy owned a cabin at Twin Lakes. Her name was '*Niscaks*,' and she used the site from about 1900 to 1920, fishing for grayling during the winter (US BIA 1994a). Sometime after 1930 Carl Whitman, owner of the Nabesna Mine, had a cabin built at Twin Lakes that was used by woodcutters supplying the mine with cord-wood (Justin, personal communication, 2013). Wood was purchased at \$4.00 a cord, but eventually the mine converted to oil, which was cheaper (Justin 1991a).

In a 2012 interview, Wilson Justin provided an overview of the area: who lived there and what they did. Wilson said that:

Twin Lakes is kind of new. Chalk Creek was the real Twin Lakes, but Twin Lakes come into being because of the road [Nabesna Road]. Before that Daisy Nicolai used to camp there along with couple other people, this older guy from Northway, I forget his name, but I think Shorty Frank had a cache down there between Twin Lakes and Jack Lake so it was a combination of a trapping site and a spring fishing site but once the road came in it started to become more and more of a settlement and the United States Postal Service built that old cabin at Twin Lakes for a mail stop. They had one down on Jack Creek and then they moved it up to Twin Lakes and the settlement came into being after World War II. Twin Lakes was primarily a winter trapping, spring trapping, spring fishing location because from Tanada Lake you came over to Twin Lakes for about two months and then went on to Nabesna [Bar] (Justin 2012).

Ruby Sinyon was with her mother Daisy at Twin Lakes in the early 1940s. She recalled that Jack John Justin came to stay with them. He eventually married her mother, and the family moved to Nabesna Bar.

Lost Creek, that's where we had house, they had house, Katie had house there too. When we, Jack John [Justin] come and stay with us [at] Twin Lakes, that house and we moved up Nabesna [Bar], that was forty-three, we all grown up before we went up and he, my mother makin' village up Nabesna. She stay there all the time with that old lady over, Lucy Albert they call her, Oscar John Jimmie's grandma. They stay there up that way all the time, we stay with them, Jack John come back. We go old village, we stay there, then we come back this side, they building house this side by Nabesna River where wash out now. That's lots of people there, gee, my brother's kids there over there, Nabesna, Twin Lake, and Lost Creek. My grandma and Fred Sanford's daughter and Lucy Albert's daughter, his mother named Jimmy, his daddy name Jimmy, and them other name Jenny (Sinyon 2012).

Later, after Ruby married Paul Sinyon, they moved back to Twin Lakes.

I come down here [Chistochina] first when I was single and I go around with him [Paul Sinyon], he buy that old house and we stay there all the time me and Paul we go up, he were was up Nabesna, he trappin' beaver, he trap-pin', we come back Twin Lakes and we stay there forever. That was '56 I think, Larry [Ruby's son] born, then started stay there (Sinyon 2012).

Platinum Creek Drainage

Platinum Creek Village (*Det'aan Caegge'* or 'falcon mouth'),
Soda Creek (*C'enaagga Na'* or 'salt lick creek').

PLATINUM CREEK HAS ITS HEADWATERS in the Mentasta Mountains and flows southeast through a narrow canyon onto the Nabesna flood plain. There was a village located at the mouth of Platinum Creek and a trail that went up Platinum Creek leading to Soda Creek, and on to Chalk Creek, Lost Creek and eventually to the village of Suslota at the outlet of Suslota Lake. A trail also ran from the mouth of Platinum Creek across the Nabesna River through Cooper Pass to Chisana, the White River, and beyond. Before construction of the Nabesna Road in 1933, the Platinum Creek trail was a major transportation artery used to haul freight (Mendenhall and Schrader 1903:43).

■ Platinum Creek Village

At the mouth of Platinum Creek was a village inhabited before contact with white people. Jack John Justin said it was the oldest of four sites on the upper Nabesna River, "way before white people came in, they didn't hear or speaking English or anything." No physical evidence remains of the village, but Justin described it as a "regular old village" with house pits, underground caches, and sweat baths (Reckord 1983a:219).

Wilson Justin relates this story told to him by Jack John Justin about Platinum Creek. Jack said there was a war between shamans, and one shaman put a spell on the people of Platinum Creek. As a result they all died. The chief from Batzulnetas sent someone to investigate and found the people all dead. He ordered the village burned (Ainsworth 1999).

In the winter of 1929 Nabesna John told the anthropologist Robert McKennan (1959:170) this story about Platinum Creek. At the time of Nabesna John's great grandfather, a raiding party came into the area from around Fairbanks. When the raiding party reached the upper Nabesna River, they looked for the people who were camped on upper Platinum Creek and could not find them. That night when the raiding party was camped, one old man discovered a trail. The next day they followed the trail and discovered the camp on upper Platinum Creek (probably the hunting camp on Soda Creek, see below). At the time all of the Upper Tanana men were out hunting, and only women and children were left. The war party murdered most of the women and children, keeping two girls as prisoners. Finally the raiding party thought it had killed everyone, eliminating the possibility of revenge. What they did not know was that ten men from Platinum Creek had been caught far away from home and were unable to return

to camp. The raiders also did not know that there were additional camps of Upper Tanana people at Chisana and White River.

The raiding party started on the journey home. Because it was cold they stopped to make a fire, and the two girls were able to escape and make their way back to Platinum Creek, where they met the returning hunting party. Immediately the men wanted to go after the lower Tanana war party, but the girls dissuaded them, saying the raiding party was too powerful for ten men. Instead the girls and men went to the camps on the Chisana and White rivers where they incited the men to war. Eventually the Upper Tanana men started out on the trail of the lower Tanana war party, catching them somewhere on the Tanana River above Fairbanks and killing them all.



Figure 16. Soda Creek salt lick. Photo courtesy of Wilson Justin.

■ Soda Creek

From Chalk Creek a trail led to Soda Creek, called *C'enaagga Na'* or 'salt lick creek.' Soda Creek is a tributary of Platinum Creek, which is bordered by the Mentasta Mountains on the north and Boyden Hills to the south. Where the valley widens at the confluence of Platinum and Soda creeks, there is a broad terrace that was the site of a large hunting camp used by Ahtna families in the fall and winter. Dall sheep were attracted to the salt lick on Soda Creek (see Figure 16 previous page) so large numbers of people congregated there from as far away as the Copper River, Mentasta, and Suslota (US BIA 1995b). Jack John Justin said that "Copper River Indians" from Suslota hunted along the edge of the Mentasta Mountains from upper Suslota Creek to Soda Creek. To reach Soda Creek from the Nabesna side, Upper Tanana people traveled up Platinum Creek.

From Platinum Creek we go way down, I don't know, 3, 4, 5 mile I guess then you hit Soda Creek. And that's the way people travel through. Whole village of Nabesna and whole village of Suslota get together there. In winter and fall, anytime there. (Justin 1991c).



Chisana River with the Nutzotin Mountains in the background. NPS photo by Barbara Cellarius.

Mount Sanford from Twin Lakes. NPS photo by Barbara Cellarius.



Upper Lost Creek. Photo by Barbara Cellarius.



Upper Trail Creek. Photo by Barbara Cellarius.

Hunting guide Lee Hancock, November 1983. Photo courtesy of Wilson Justin.



At the head of the Reeves Field Trail. Photo courtesy of Wilson Justin.

Looking up Totshunda Creek. Photo courtesy of Wilson Justin.



Ethnographic fieldwork near the outlet of Tanada Lake, circa 1974-75. Photo courtesy of Wilson Justin.

Horses grazing along the Nabesna River. Photo courtesy of Wilson Justin.





Old cabin at Twin Lakes. The cabin was originally constructed by Otto Bloom for his wife, Susie Nicolai. After Susie died, Otto gave the cabin to Daisy Nicolai. Photo courtesy of Wilson Justin.

Dog team on the Nabesna River.
Photo courtesy of Wilson Justin.



Dall sheep on the red rock along Soda Creek. Photo courtesy of Wilson Justin.

Nabesna River

Camp Creek (*Daxuhtaḡḡ' Cheeg*),
Cooper Creek Village (*Tsighaan Caegge* or 'brain mouth'),
Nabesna Bar (*Deshoo' Cheeg* or 'good area mouth').

IN THE AHTNA LANGUAGE THE NABESNA RIVER is called *Nabaes Na'*, referring to a type of stone. Jack John Justin provided a brief chronology of people's movement on the Nabesna River. Sometime before 1901 Native people living at the mouth of Platinum Creek moved across the Nabesna River to Camp Creek called, in the Upper Tanana language, *Daxuhtaḡḡ' cheeg* or 'flat topped mountain mouth.' After a shaman died at *Daxuhtaḡḡ' cheeg*, the people moved to the mouth of Cooper Creek (US BIA n.d.). Cooper Creek is called *Tsighaan Na'* in the Ahtna language and refers to the off-white color of the water, which resembles the solution of water and brains used to tan skins (Kari 1986:209). At the end of World War II, people living at *Tsighaan Na'* moved back across the Nabesna River to Nabesna Bar. Jack John said that the people living on the upper Nabesna had two special mountains that acted as banners or signs, and were referred to in potlatch speeches: *Taatsiig* or 'Ocher Water,' referred to as the happy face, on Totschunda Creek, and *Ttheet'aaniluu* or 'Out Beneath Rock' (Kari 1986).

■ Camp Creek

Jack John Justin reported a large village at the mouth of Camp Creek composed of people from Copper River, Batzulnetas, and Platinum Creek (US BIA 1995c). In the early 20th century the site was occupied by white prospectors, one of whom may have been named Sargent (see Figure 17 next page). The geologists Moffit and Knopf mention Camp Creek, describing the distance between Slana River and 'Sargent's cabin' at the mouth of Camp Creek as approximately 40 miles (Moffit and Knopf 1910:12). Camp Creek is also mentioned by McKennan (1959:18), who writes that a site older than Cooper Creek Village was located on the east bank of the Nabesna River two miles upstream but had been abandoned after the "death of a powerful shaman." According to Ahtna elder Laura Hancock, there was a source of red ocher on Camp Creek, which was used as face and body paint, for painting sacred pictures on doors and beams, and for decorating bows and arrows, snowshoes, and clothing (Reckord 1983a:224). Six grave houses are located somewhere near the Camp Creek site. One has a Russian Orthodox Cross and another was painted red, possibly with red ocher (US BIA 1995c).



Figure 17. Sargent's Cabin on Camp Creek. Photo by S. Capps, USGS.

■ Cooper Creek Village (Upper Nabesna)

The village of Cooper Creek was located on the east side of the Nabesna River near the mouth of Cooper Creek (see Figure 18). In her description of the community, Holly Reckord (1983a:225) writes that the history of Cooper Creek Village is “tied closely to the history of transportation and mineral development in the Alaskan interior.” A trail led up Cooper Creek, through Cooper Creek Pass to Chisana. Both a summer and winter trail led through Cooper Pass and was used to haul freight and mail to Chisana.³

³ The Cooper Creek Trail was impassable from late April until the end of June due to treacherous ice overhangs and swift water in the passages to the mail cabin at the confluence of the two Cooper Creeks. Blue Lake seemed much better for passage but even then was used lightly. The main spring early summer trail was down by Pickerel Lakes around to the Chisana River. This was called the Winter Trail (Wilson Justin, personnel communication, April 2013).



Figure 18. Village at the mouth of Cooper Creek or 'Tsighaan Caegge' "brain mouth." Photo by Robert McKennan, courtesy of William Workman.

According to Jack John Justin, Cooper Creek was first a tent camp occupied about 1910-1912. Andy Toby's great-great grandfather was said to have founded the community (Easton n.d.: 172), although he is not mentioned as an earlier resident by Jack John Justin, who said that some of the earliest residents were Nicholas Jackson, John Jackson, Albert Jackson and Oscar Jimmy (US BIA 1996a). Whatever the case, by 1929, when Robert McKennan visited Cooper Creek, none of these people lived in the village. Many may have died in the 1918 flu epidemic.

Fortunately there is considerable documentation about life at Cooper Creek during the early 20th century thanks to McKennan, who arrived at Cooper Creek Village on November 26, 1929, and stayed 54 days, leaving on January 18, 1930. To McKennan Cooper Creek village was a "picturesque spot" and met with "his dream of an Indian village." He goes on . . . to say that the "village sits on a cut bank overlooking the river bar. In the background are dark spruce trees while in the foreground are the Indian cabins with their little caches in front resting on stilts" (Mishler and Simeone 2006:51-52). At the time there was very little food in the village, and everyone was living almost entirely on meat from caribou they had killed in the fall. During his stay McKennan reported a large number of caribou in the area, some of which the Natives killed for fresh meat.

The Native population of Cooper Creek in the winter of 1929 was 16 people: 6 men, 5 women, and 5 children (see Appendix B). There were four families headed by Chisana Joe (see figure 19) and Nabesna John (see figure 20), who were brothers; Titus John (see Figure 21), their brother-in-law; and Andy Toby, whose deceased father was Joe and John's maternal uncle. McKennan described the living arrangements. John, his wife Lucy, along with their son Jack John Justin lived in a large cabin. In a smaller cabin lived Andy, his wife Lulu Belle, their two children, and old mama (Andy Toby's mother) (see Figure 22). Chisana Joe and his wife Polly lived in a tent as did Titus John and his wife Corinne. In addition to the Native inhabitants, McKennan recorded an assortment of non-Natives who lived more or less permanently in the area or passed through on their way to and from Chisana (Mishler and Simeone 2006:60).

The ethnic background of the residents reflected the fact that Cooper Creek was located on the boundary between the Ahtna and Upper Tanana, so everyone was trilingual speaking Ahtna, Upper Tanana, and some English. Titus John, also known as Scottie Creek Titus, was from the Upper Tanana village of Scottie Creek, located on the Canada-Alaska border close to the Alaska Highway. Chisana Joe, Nabesna John and Andy Toby were *Ddhal Tot'iin* (Among the Mountains People) who maintained year-round residence on the upper Nabesna and upper Chisana rivers (Kari 1986:208). Nabesna John was married to an Ahtna woman named Long Lucy Charley from Mentasta. Nabesna John and Chisana Joe's father was a man named Old Justin who lived on the upper White River and was married to an Ahtna woman from Chitina.

Titus John, Chisana Joe, and Nabesna John were all considered doctors or shamans. Nabesna John was also considered a leader, "a smart old man, [but] not a chief" (Laura Hancock cited in Reckord 1983a:226). McKennan said that Chisana Joe, who was older than Nabesna John, had considerable knowledge of material things, while John was something of a philosopher and metaphysician (Mishler and Simeone 2006:54). McKennan recorded several healing ceremonies conducted by Nabesna John.

Wilson Justin provided additional information about Cooper Creek:

I don't know much about [Cooper Creek]. I know it mainly because it's a trail, it's a mail trail and it's part of the old *Alts'en tnaey* trail and that's where the, 1918 epidemic hit and took out almost the whole village and right after that, originally everybody moved out either to Tetlin or to Northway or elsewhere, and over here [Chistochina] or what have you. When I last went down there maybe [in] 1983, [it was a] very ghostly place, all the buildings had been burnt down. There were still shovels under the trees, like about seven or eight shovels there, left under the trees.

There was, all the way up Cooper Creek, there was old traps, small traps hanging in trees and then on the trail that used to be from Cooper Creek to [Cooper] pass, that was washed out but there's an older trail, the *Alts'en tnaey* trail as I call it, about a mile and a half to the south of Cooper Creek that's parallel to that creek. Some people call it Game Trail but Jack John



Figure 19. Chisana Joe demonstrating how to make fire with a bow drill. Photo by Robert McKennan, courtesy of William Workman.



Figure 21. Scottie Creek Titus (a.k.a. Titus John) with snowshoe frames. The front of the frames are turned up by means of a lever. Photo by Robert McKennan, courtesy of William Workman.



Figure 20. Nabesna John showing anthropologist Robert McKennan the correct way to hold a bow and arrow. Photo by Robert McKennan, courtesy of William Workman.



Figure 22. "Old Mama," Corrine and Lulu Bell at Nabesna or Tsighaan Caegge "brain mouth." Photo by Robert McKennan, courtesy of William Workman.

said it was the old trade trail that went up the Nabesna River across to Jacksina [Creek] went up Wait Creek over Wait Creek went above Copper Lake or Tanada Lake above Tanada through Drop Creek, through Boulder Creek, through Sanford, hit the Dadina, went up the Dadina, went over the glacier, came back down the Dadina, then crossed the Copper River. That's that trail that come right alongside Cooper but I don't know that much about Cooper Creek except it was a trail and all the deaths that occurred around there and the families leaving (Justin 2012).

■ Nabesna Bar

Nabesna Bar is located near the mouth of Jack Creek on the Nabesna River. It is not an old settlement and was started by a non-Native named R.K. Stewart, who built the first cabin in 1927. Stewart then gave the house to Jack John Justin, who gave it to Jimmy Brown, another prospector, in the 1930s or early 1940s. Two other non-Natives, Harry Boyden and Andy Brown, built a second cabin at about the same time. Boyden had arrived in the area in 1911 and hauled freight, delivered mail and prospected. In the early 1930s an airstrip was built at Nabesna Bar for planes hauling ore from the Nabesna Mine. Beginning in 1941 Bob Reeve began flying freight from there to Northway to facilitate the construction of the military runway at Northway. Between June and October of 1941 Reeve flew 11,000 tons of equipment and supplies to Northway. During World War II the airstrip was lengthened to 10,000 feet and used as an emergency strip for lend-lease planes being flown to the Soviet Union (US BIA 1996b).

After the war the field and buildings were abandoned, and the Native people living at Cooper Creek moved across the Nabesna River to occupy the abandoned buildings (see Figure 23). One reason they moved was that in 1943 or 1944 an accidental fire destroyed the houses at Cooper Creek. Those who moved from the mouth of Cooper Creek to Nabesna Bar were Nabesna John, Jack John Justin, Lena Charley, Frank Sanford, Daisy Nicolai, Johnny Nicolai, Glenn Burrell and Andy Toby (Easton n.d.:173). Nabesna Bar was occupied until the 1990s when the last resident, Jack John Justin, moved to Chistochina (see Figure 24). Nabesna Bar was connected by road to the Copper Basin, and residents became increasingly oriented toward the Copper River communities of Mentasta, Slana and Chistochina.

Wilson Justin was born at Nabesna Bar and lived there when he was a child. In 2012 he told Cecil Sanford what he remembered about growing up there.

Oh Nabesna Bar is the same thing as Reeve Field but that's where I was born, but the one thing that really sticks out in my mind when we were kids up there is, besides gopher snaring is, picking cranberries and blackberries, *non'daz'ah* we call it and roots, digging roots fall time. That would be miles, and miles and miles of roots, you'd go out there, course the river would, it would be only knee high, it's not like later on in the sixties and seventies



Figure 23. Nabesna Indians, Alaska, August 1944. Photo by R.F. Black, USGS.



Figure 24. Jack John's cabin at Nabesna. Photo courtesy of Wilson Justin.

where you would have separate channels and shoving water for horses. When I was young the Nabesna still dropped down a lot in August when the roots ripened late August and September to where you could cross it. Cross over there with a little sharp stick and yet in one acre, you would pick up your whole winter supply of roots. So that's what I remember the Nabesna Bar about and of course the bears.

Oh, the newer, that Reeve Field family was Johnny Nicolai and Cherry Nicolai's family, Frank Sanford and family, Jack Justin, Lena Charley, Charley Toby, my mom [Laura Hancock] of course, several others. Before we came to Chistochina, we had a cabin there, third cabin down from Jack John's cabin, that was our cabin. Incidentally, Jack John's cabin was built by Johnny Nicolai, Lena Charley, Ruby Sinyon, and I think my mom was also helping but the primarily the cabin was built by the three older siblings of Daisy Nicolai. So, that cabin actually was put together by Daisy's kids and the cabin I was born in was Old John's.

I don't think Houston [Sanford] had a place at Nabesna. Houston Sanford primarily was working that area from Pickerel Lakes over to King City, the other side of Chisana. Houston was primarily a Chisana person but I know he spent time around the old village at Nabesna. I don't know how much time he spent at the new village or Reeve Field except for working up there.

Those are the people that were around Nabesna when I was growing up there, before that, of course, much larger, lot of Northway families are originally out of Chisana and Nabesna. All of the Demit's and Northway's, a lot of Walter Northway's family is out of Old Nabesna. So we have probably about eighteen family names that come out of Chisana, White River, Northway, relocated to Tetlin, to Northway. Don't know about Tanacross, I think married into Tanacross and even my uncle who was Old John's brother Chisana Joe, his name is known down in Nenana. Some of the folks in Nenana claim him as their grandfather. So, we have quite a wide reach. But those are the names I remember right off the bat from when I was at Nabesna.

Well, it's like a dream. The large [air] field right out in front of the cabins and horses out there all the time, so you always had a sense of company so to speak and when I was growing up there, we always, my aunt Lena and my uncle Johnny when he was around, and others, we was always out hunting, either well I shouldn't say hunting, they were hunting. I was trapping gophers and rabbits with sinew and other kinds of snares. So, I did all the small game trapping when I was with them and they hunted with twenty-two so I primarily remember being out and about on hunting expeditions or fishing up the river and down the river.

I don't know that we were deprived. I can't remember being in hardship although we had to be. And I do remember several trips from Nabesna to

Slana going for groceries with dog team, camping out and watching the fire dance against the trees. Had to be cold but I don't remember it being cold. I suppose I should remember hardships, and deprivations and cold but I don't I just remember good stuff.

Nabesna first um, left Nabesna, me and Godfrey Nicolai was the last ones out of Nabesna in 1957 and then um, came to Chistochina here for school for two years. Winters, summers, we went back to Nabesna, or Twin Lakes but in the winters, first two winters was here in Chistochina, the remaining of the uh school years was in Mentasta until 1964 then I left-left home in 1964 and went wandering for awhile. Ended up in Fairbanks at Lathrop High School winter of '64 got routed out by the Office of Children Services, I don't know what they were called then but they said I needed to uh get uh back with the family since I wasn't old enough to be out and about. So I rejoined the family went to Anchorage, finished up high school at West High. 1968, tried to join the army so I could get the free college, but they wouldn't let me in. Not even the army wanted me (Justin 2012).

Pickerel Lake

Tsüüh Ts'eegn Mann' or 'skinny Indian potato lake,' Upper Tanana language).

PICKEREL LAKE IS LOCATED JUST OFF THE NABESNA RIVER on the north side of the Nutzotin Mountains. The lake is situated close to the mountains and was used as a staging area to hunt sheep. It was also used in the spring to hunt muskrats and waterfowl, and to catch fish. Some people trapped and hunted this area in the winter as well. Use of the site predates contact, and it was used throughout the 1920s and 1930s and last regularly visited in the 1960s and 1970s. A number of campsites were located at Pickerel Lakes. People who used this area included Lena Charley, Ruby Sinyon, Laura Hancock, Calvin Justin, Andy Toby, Johnny Nicolai, Jimmy Nicolai, Larry Sinyon, Houston Sanford, Frank Sanford, Jack John Justin and Freddie Nicolai (US BIA 1994b).

Johnny Nicolai established a spring muskrat camp there in the 1920s. Other camps were being used long before 1912 when Jack John Justin went there. He said that Pickerel Lakes was used by his parents and grandparents and by Frank Sanford's parents and Andy Toby's father.

When Lena Charley was living at Nabesna Bar she regularly traveled by herself to Pickerel Lake (see Figure 25). She recalled catching fish and hunting muskrats.

Lena: Pickerel Lake, when I grow up, that's when I started [to] go down that way myself with dog team. [Catch] fish and . . .

Cecil: What kind of fish you got there?

Lena: Get muskrat. They got grayling and pike and I don't know if they got trout in that lake. There are two kinds fish I see, grayling. I never really want to eat pike [laugh] (Charley 2012).

Wilson Justin added additional information about Pickerel Lake.

Wilson: I don't remember too much about [Pickerel Lakes]. It was a winter location, or winter-spring location like Twin Lakes because of the fishing there, the muskrat trapping and because it was on the winter trail from Chisana to Nabesna.

It was an old Indian trail but it was converted into a trapper's trail that came over from King City into [the] Nabesna [River]. But we had two camps down there at Pickerel Lake. One thing I remember about Pickerel Lakes more than anything else was that people talk about being there for hunting

sheep because it was not even two miles from prime sheep hunting area. I wouldn't call it Pickerel Lakes, I'd call it sheep camp lake.

Cecil: [laugh] They say there's big pike up there huh?

Wilson: Yeah, yeah, there's pike all over in that system all those lakes down there, every lake had pike but Pickerel Lakes was the one place you can good solid walking right back up to the creek way, you can go up for sheep (Justin 2012).



Figure 25. Travelling the Nabesna River by dog team. Photo courtesy of Wilson Justin.

Chisana River

Notch Creek (*Nach'itay Cheeg* or 'game trail across mouth'),
Cross Creek (*Tsayh Cheegn* or 'oher creek mouth')
and King City

■ Notch Creek and Cross Creek

Notch Creek and Cross Creek join together and their combined waters flow into the upper Chisana River; where the two creeks combine was the village of Cross Creek (see Figure 26). Native occupancy of Cross Creek predates the discovery of gold at Chisana in 1913. Bureau of Indian Affairs' archaeologists report depressions at Cross Creek that represent semi-subterranean houses, and oral tradition says it was a former winter village. Nabesna John built the first log cabin in 1911 and eventually six cabins were built in a straight line from north to south.



Figure 26. Old Chisana. Cross Creek Village (a.k.a. Old Chisana), ca. 1914-1915. Photo courtesy of Tacoma Public Library.

These belonged to Charley Tobey, Joe Jedson, Peter Albert, Andy Toby, and Billy Jedson (US BIA 1993). There are two separate graveyards: one in the village itself and another on a nearby knoll (Reckord 1983a:238-239) (see Figure 27 and Figure 28).

Ruby Sinyon said she had never been to Notch Creek, but she knew many of the people who came from that area

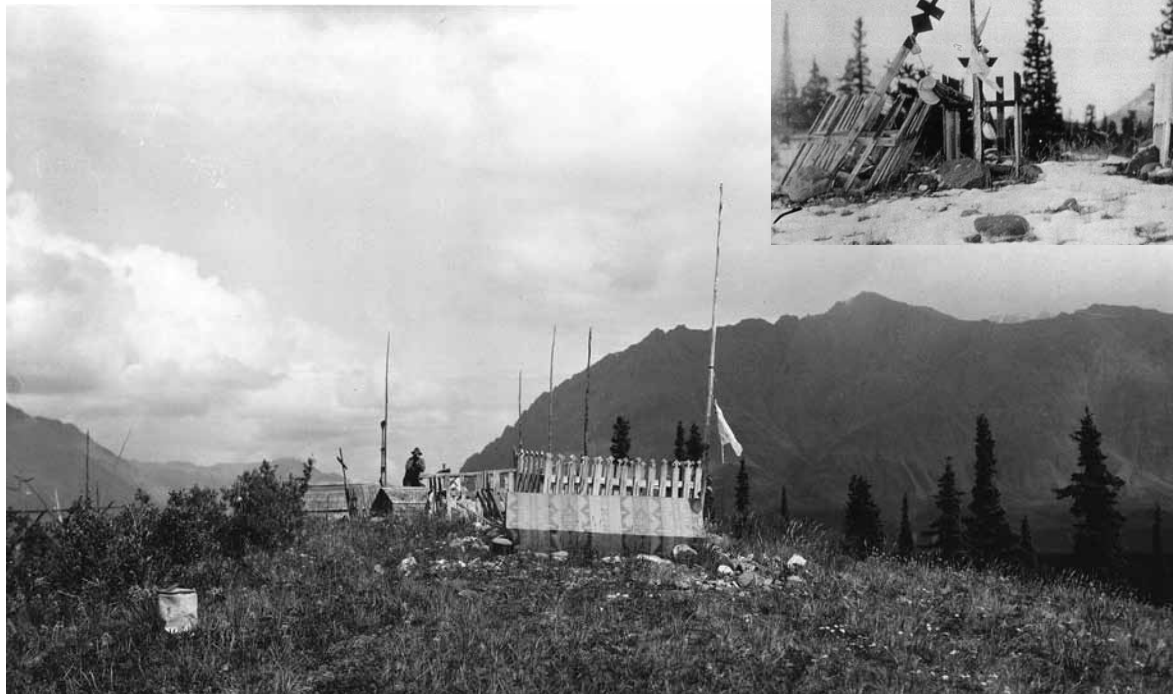


Figure 27 (right). Graves located near Cross Creek or Tsay Cheegn "ocher creek mouth." Photo by Robert McKennan, courtesy of William Workman.

Figure 28 (above). Indian burial ground near the junction of Notch and Cross Creeks, Chisana District, July 16, 1939. Photo by T.W. Ranta, USGS.

including Nabesna John, Chisana Joe and his wife Polly, and Chisana Billy and his wife. Andy Toby also lived there, as did Joe Justin. Ruby recalled:

That's from Nabesna village, other side of [Nabesna] river. No, all the way up from that village [Cooper Creek], you go up and Cooper Creek, Notch Creek, and Sanford's cabin and Chisana [the town]. That place I hear lotta grey house but I never see it. Sanford's cabin, that's where old village [Cross Creek] they said. All full grey house, they say, I never saw, I never walk around, I never see. The other side of [Chisana] river from Chisana [the town], two white people make store, and they make lotta house that's why that Wilson's daddy [Nabesna John] and Polly [Joe] and her husband [Chisana Joe], and [Chisana] Billy and his wife, and that's Cherry's [Nicolai's] mother, all them, those white people there that side, they move it. That's how they move other side. Chisana, no grey house nothing just only that Joe Justin, one his, his grandchild and Andy Toby's wife. I don't know how many kid there but they all the other side, that's all buried there. Four of them and his wife buried there. Lots of time, I ask Cherry, she don't know nothing (Sinyon 2012).

The geologist Stephen R. Capps visited the upper Chisana/Nabesna area two different times—in 1908 before the Chisana gold rush and in 1913 while the rush was on. Capps wrote that the whole area is “exceptional for the abundance and variety of game” Dall sheep “were formerly plentiful in all areas of rugged typography and are still abundant except in the vicinity of the mines. Moose were said to be “abundant” on the north side of the Nutzotin Mountains and are seen occasionally in other parts of the area.

Capps estimated that “2,000 sheep were killed within a distance of 20 miles of the placer camps during the winter of 1913-14, and in that area they have been almost completely exterminated. In the more remote valleys, however, large bands of sheep may still be seen.” Caribou were numerous in the less rugged areas of the Beaver and White rivers but “constant hunting has much reduced their numbers” (Capps 1916:21).

The wholesale killing of game forced some residents of Cross Creek to move, some moving to upper Nabesna or upper Copper rivers, others, attracted by the stores and promise of cash labor, abandoned Cross Creek and moved to Chisana City, where they worked as market hunters (Bleakley 2007). Reckord (1983a:236) notes that the gold rush attracted Native people from Cross Creek, Scottie Creek, and Cooper Creek on the Nabesna, who came to trade furs and buy supplies. They were also active in the freighting business, delivering mail, panning for gold, and selling meat.

According to Wilson Justin, Jake Butler, Houston Sanford, Frank Sanford, Fred John Sr., and Johnny Nicolai were all involved in market hunting for the mines. Wilson said that market hunters concentrated on killing lambs and ewes because it took too much time to kill rams. He said, “this kind of hunting was not selective—kill 30 to 40 sheep ewes and lambs. Mines did a lot by killing the “breeding stock.” Could take a 22 rifle and kill eight or ten ewes and lambs. This occurred in the 1920s and 30s. Chisana, Nabesna, McCarthy (Justin 2004).

■ Chisana

In 1920 the U.S. Census counted 95 Native people at Chisana, many from the lower Nabesna River, but by 1929 most had left the area, either moving back to the lower Nabesna River or over to the village at the mouth of Cooper Creek (McKenna 1959). In the 1930s the population shifted again, and during the '30s the town of Chisana contained a substantial Native community, with several cabins grouped just northeast of the airstrip. Residents included Chisana Joe, Jack John Justin, Charley Toby, Cherry Nickolai, Bessie Joe, Suzie Joe, and Martha Mark (Bleakley 2007). Although living in town and working in the gold diggings, the Native people continued to hunt and trap when these activities were productive and went back to cash labor at Chisana during the summer (see Figure 29 and Figure 30).



Figure 29. Andy Toby's cabin at Chisana. NPS photo by Barbara Cellarius.



Figure 30. Lena Charley and Gilliam Joe at Chisana Joe's cabin in Chisana. NPS photo by Barbara Cellarius.

Johnny Nicolai, who was raised by Nabesna John, recalled that he moved to Chisana in 1937, where he met his wife Cherry Toby. Cherry was the daughter of Andy Toby, who had lived at Cross Creek and who McKennan saw at Cooper Creek village in 1929. Johnny Nicolai said that in 1937 a number of Ahtna lived at Chisana including Jack John Justin, Chisana Joe, and Chisana Billy. Upper Tanana people also came to Chisana including White River Johnny, Bill John, Titus John, Joe Mark, Shorty, and Steven and Harry Frank. Johnny worked in the gold diggings at Chisana and trapped throughout the area from Beaver Creek to the upper Nabesna River. After World War II he became a big game guide, which took the place of gold mining as the primary method for making money (Easton n.d.:170).

■ King City

King City is located on the Chisana River just at the foot of the Nutzotin Mountains. To the north was the flat land where people trapped in winter and hunted muskrats in the spring. To the south were the mountains and Dall sheep. King City was cluster of cabins used primarily during the winter and spring. The anthropologist Norm Easton reported that King City was called *Taacheeg* in the Upper Tanana language. Lena Charley remembered how people moved around a lot and had houses at different locations, including King City.

Lena: People live there too it, one time, that's a long ways from Pickerel Lake, clear on to Chisana, they got trail all the way around. I been through there and we been through mountain, they had that trail through Chisana we went that way too. I see it there, all old camp, old house, I don't know if they are up yet right now.

Yeah, I forget, they build new house there, they got house there. Yeah, when I come through with dog team they working on it, even winter-time. They build it and put stove in there, they move in and I stay in there too. They're pretty good, they go where they [had] trap line, they put up little house and stay there. My uncle, another one, Frank Sanford, another one too, he go over Tanada [Lake], he got house and he move Twin Lake, he built one house and he move up Nabesna, he got one house there [King City] too. That house it's still up I think right now. I don't know, Nabesna I hear all water catch up [the village had washed away].

Cecil: Who used to have house there?

Lena: Chisana John, Joe, and Chisana Billy, all the brothers, they used to live Chisana and they move, they move around so much, they build house there and lot of old people but I don't know them. Lots of people used to be live up that way, they got Chisana then, they move down King City they got house there. I see that old house when I went through there.

Cecil: At King City?

Lena: Mmm hmm. Yeah.

Cecil: Who else had house out there?

Lena: I think that Chisana Joe and somebody house, they build house there in they stay and all the way to Sheep Creek, Pickerel Lake, back to Nabesna.

Cecil: What they used to do at King City or what was it?

Lena: Just hunt stuff like that, they go in the mountain too anyway, get that sheep and stuff.

Cecil: I used to hear my grandpa talk about it all the time.

Lena: Yeah and I been through there when that, with dog team with my uncles Houstie and Johnny. He stay up there, I stay down Sheep Creek, me. We trap so meet each other all the time.

Cecil: Hmm. Where Johnny and you, or your brother Johnny and Houston, they had house, where was this at?

Lena: King City (Charley 2012).

Ruby Sinyon had also been to King City. She remembered that people trapped fur-bearing animals, like marten, fox and wolf, in the winter and then hunted muskrat in the spring. Muskrat fur brought a lot of cash because the animals were plentiful and easy to kill. She also notes that her stepfather Jack John Justin was well acquainted with the country from the Canadian Border to the upper Copper River.

Ruby: Oh yes, we been trappin' around there and we go up, clear up to Chisana get stuff and never come back that way all, come back old village, and we come back this side of village with dog team. Not that much we do but we just, in 1943 or forty-six, we start go around down there, just trappin'.

Cecil: What kind of stuff did they have there?

Ruby: Oh, they got lots of, all kinds of game there. They trappin' for wolf and fox, we don't, us, we just trap for marten, and fox them, small stuff.

[laugh] Lots of game used to been down that way. Jack [John Justin], my step daddy, Jack, and his daddy, my brother Johnny [Nicolai] and Houstie [Houston Sanford], gee they make lots of money know how to trap and-and spring time, they start [musk] rats. They get big check, all us we used to get money just trappin' rats. We don't too much up there, cuz we just moved up 1943. That, my step daddy know all that country, never tell us nothing. All the way up to Canada, he used to travel. Before when he, before my mother, when he had woman, he had wife, [s]he come from Northway I think. Mostly, go down there then he go up Dawson River, with some white man, he trap-pin'. He go all over there, he never tell us story (Sinyon 2012).

Wilson Justin has never been to King City but when asked what he knew about it he said that Houston Sanford had asked him to go to King City to retrieve a copper kettle and some bear traps.

And copper kettles are used of course to cook whiskey so they got it from somebody, stash it up there and there's, there's a whole bunch of those big bear traps, not whole bunch, I think three. They weight about 200 pounds each. So, Houston wanted me to go to King City with a snow machine, haul out a big copper kettle and a couple big bear traps. Never did, that's a promise that I made that I never kept and um Johnny Nicolai and everybody talk about King City so however special it was, I don't know what made it special but it was high on everybody's list (Justin 2012).

White River

Nadzax Na' or 'murky river'

JACK JOHN JUSTIN, WHO WAS BORN AT CHISANA IN 1906, recalled that his family moved back and forth between the upper White and upper Copper rivers. In 1912 Jack lived at a village on North Fork Island called *Tl'oh'Gaihk'e* or 'On the White Grass' in the upper White River (Kari 1986). The island was a trading rendezvous for Ahtna, Upper Tanana, and Southern Tutchone people from the Yukon Territory (McKenna 1959). Jack also lived at Tchawsahmon or Tazamona Lake, just over the U.S. Canada border. In the Upper Tanana language the lake is called *Chidah leeh Männ* or 'fish channeled into weir lake.' Mary Tyone (1996) said there were lake trout, grayling, ling cod and pike in the lake, and people used to block the stream that flows out from the lake in order to catch fish. Mary's mother was born near *Chidah leeh Männ* at a place called *Naat'aayät's* cradle [Mt. Natazhat on the upper White River], and several of Mary's maternal and paternal relatives are buried at *Chidah leeh Männ*. Jack John Justin said that people came to the lake from various locations to fish and hunt Dall sheep and moose (US BIA 1992).

Rich in animal resources, the upper White River was also a source of raw copper that could be picked up off the ground on Kletsan Creek, a tributary of the White. Ahtna and Upper Tanana used the copper to produce arrowheads, awls, beads, personal adornment, knife blades, and copper wire (Pratt 1998; Cooper 2006). In 1898 the geologist Alfred H. Brooks ascended the White River and encountered a group of Native people digging for copper nuggets on Kletsan Creek.

. . . . except for their firearms, [the Natives] exhibited but little evidence of intercourse with the whites. Most of the men and some of the women were dressed entirely in buckskin, and their bedding was made of furs. Here I saw an Indian hunting with bow and arrow. His arrows were tipped with copper from the gravels of near-by streams. On this same stream, the Kletsandek, a tributary of the upper White River, I found a party of natives searching for the native copper pebbles in the gravels, their digging implements being caribou horns (Brooks 1900).

Copper in various forms was traded throughout eastern Alaska, and a man known as Copper Chief controlled the trade in copper coming from Kletsan Creek. Evidence about Copper Chief suggests he was multilingual and married to several women, which was not unusual for a rich man or *kaskaë*. Jack John Justin said that Copper Chief "speak some of our

language [Upper Tanana] but is speaking Burwash language [Southern Tutchone].” He also said that Copper Chief was married to an Ahtna woman from Chitina whom he met when her family came to trade on the upper White River. Copper Chief raised his family at *Chidah leeh Männ*, and when Jack John was there in 1910 Copper Chief and his family was staying there (Justin 1992). The anthropologist Catharine McClellan (1975:30-31) said that Copper Chief lived on a mountain on the upper White River, and that he spoke the Upper Tanana language and the language spoken by the Han people living in Eagle. She also says that Copper Chief was married to a woman from Fort Selkirk. Other sources say that Copper Chief was an Ahtna from Copper Center but that he spoke the Upper Tanana language. Whatever the case, all sources agree that Copper Chief controlled the source of copper on the upper White River.

When asked about White River, Wilson Justin said,

Well I know about White River Johnny [an Upper Tanana man from the village of Scottie Creek] and that was your great-great grandpa (talking to Cecil Sanford). He married into our family but there's also, they also said he was taken in when he was young, he was promised over to the medicine man people. Whether they carried that through or whether he married in I have no idea. But the White River was my family's homeland from White River through Chisana to Nabesna on my dad's side. That whole area halfway down to White River and halfway to Kluane Lake was our country. White River was in the middle of it (Justin 2012).

Conclusion

WORLD WAR II BROUGHT AN END TO A WAY OF LIFE. Outlying areas like the White River and communities such as Batzulnetas, Chalk Creek, and Lost Creek were abandoned. Entire families no longer moved into the hills to spend the fall and early winter hunting sheep and ground squirrel or stayed at Tanada Lake in the spring. Some families moved to Mentasta or Chistochina to take advantage of schools. Others settled in Nabesna Bar, although it was eventually abandoned so the children could attend school. The last to leave was Jack John Justin.

While the people are scattered the headwaters country remains an intergal part of their existence. They are still *Tat'ahwt'aenn*, or the headwaters people (see Figure 31). In 2012



Figure 31. Great grandchildren at Nabesna, 1993. Photo courtesy of Wilson Justin.

Figure 32. Daisy and Sarah's descendants at Kendesnii Campground Dedication. Mentasta Traditional Council photo by Sarah Demit.



Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve dedicated a campground on the Nabesna Road to the memory of Daisy Nicolai, acknowledging the family's connection to the area. Many of the more than 100 guests at the event were members of Daisy's family (see Figure 32 and Figure 33). Daisy's closest surviving relatives -- a sister and three daughters—shared memories of Daisy, as did several grandchildren. Speaking on behalf of the Cheesh'na Tribal Council, Tribal Administrator Wilson Justin, who is also one of Daisy's grandchildren, said, "The honor of keeping a promise made a generation ago is privilege not always understood but vital to those who stand in shadows of our Traditions."



Figure 33. Daisy's daughters and grandchildren at Kendesnii Campground dedication. In order from left to right, Lena Charley, Evelyn Beeter (with her grandson), Wilson Justin, Ruby Sinyon, and Laura Hancock. NPS photo by Barbara Cellarius.

Epilogue

ALTHOUGH LIFE CHANGED, THE PEOPLE REMAINED ATTACHED TO THE LAND. Tethered to places with schools and jobs, they no longer moved with the season, but they continued to hunt, fish, and trap. Guiding big game hunters was one way to stay in touch with the old way of life. Big game guides had been through the area as early as 1919 (Young 1947), but the business received a boost in the 1930s when the landing strip at Nabesna Bar was used to bring clients into the area. Harry Boyden was one of the first to guide in the area, and he taught many Native people the business. Jack John Justin taught both Johnny Nicolai and Houston Sanford about camp life and wrangling horses, and Johnny worked for Boyden wrangling horses on guiding trips that crossed the Canadian border where Boyden picked up contraband whiskey (see Figure 34).



Figure 34. At Soda Lake with horses. Photo courtesy of Wilson Justin.

Figure 35. Hunting guides Lee Hancock, Lena (Nicolai) Charley, and Johnny Nicolai with bear harvested by a client near Trail Creek in 1958. Photo courtesy of Lena Charley.



Wilson Justin's stepfather Lee Hancock bought Boyden's guiding business in 1952. Earlier Hancock had come to the Nabesna country looking for a place where he could winter horses. Horses could feed on pea vine that grew naturally in the area. In 1952 Hancock made a trip to Fort St. John in Canada to purchase his first load of horses. He had a camp at Soda Creek in about 1954, and Paul Sinyon, Jack John Justin (who was the cook) and Johnny Nicolai all worked for Lee. So did Lena Charley, who stayed up in the Nabesna country during the winter to look after the horses (see Figure 35).

In the 1960s the small airplane changed the guiding business. Hunters could be dropped off for \$250 and fly in and fly out quickly, whereas a guided horse trip cost \$1200 and took time. The guide business also declined because people left Nabesna Bar in the mid-1950s, and there was no one to take care of the horses. In the 1960s Lee Hancock sold part of his outfit to Lee Holen.

When asked about guided sheep hunts, Wilson Justin made the point that guiding was a business and not like feeding the family. Wilson began guiding in the 1950s and worked with his aunt Lena Charley and his uncle Paul Sinyon. Don Dehart was a guide who worked out of Slana and had a hunting territory that included Copper Lake. Another guide named Bill Ellis lived at the end of the Nabesna Road.

Wilson: When I was starting out, sheep hunting with my uncle Paul and Lena, we used to hunt sheep up the Nabesna [River] and Jacksina [Creek]. Paul Sinyon was around Twin Lakes on the Nabesna Road, in the back of the cabins there or above Tanada [Lake]. And I should say Tanada is like six or seven miles long and a couple miles wide so when you say above Tanada, I should say we were hunting over toward the head of Tanada on east side between the Nabesna Road and the headwaters of the Tanada Lake.

There are two big valleys, or two high valleys right in there, which usually had a lot of sheep. When we went over there, we had to camp out, we couldn't just go up there and come back in one day, it was way too marshy. So, [we] spend the night, hunt sheep the next day and come out.

When we got into the guiding business, which is a totally different. Guiding is economic as opposed to feeding the family. When I started in the guiding business with Bill Ellis, we were all over the map, Wade Creek [Stone Creek]

over there between Nabesna and Chisana all over the Mentasta [Mountains] and when I started with the horse business in 1967, we located our primary sheep hunting area right out of Soda Creek or Big Grayling Lake, hunted that particular area over into the Tetlin [Reservation]. We had an understanding with the Tetlin Tribal Council beginning in the '50s that we could hunt the reservation which we did so. We hunted the Tetlin reservation, the Little Tok, Suslota [Creek] and I worked for Don Dehart and hunted up all the way up into the head of the Mentasta [Mountains] but that was basically grizzly bear and moose, hunted the Copper [River], hunted the over towards Nabesna Glacier and Jacksina [Creek], extremely large area. Not as much as my uncle Johnny [Nicolai], or Paul or Lena but still very large (Justin 2012).

Acknowledgements

THE EXPERIENCE OF RESEARCHING AND WRITING THIS REPORT has been rewarding. To me the headwaters country is one of the most beautiful places in the world. It is full of grandeur and ghosts. I have been fortunate to know many of the people who contributed their time and effort in helping me write this story. First I would like to remember the elders who are gone: Gene Henry, Jack John Justin, Bell and Maggie Joe, Adam and Kate Sanford, Houston Sanford, and Fred John Sr. Next I want to acknowledge those elders who consented to be interviewed: Katie John, Lena Charley, Ruby Sinyon, Robert John Sr., Smitty Sanford, and Gillam Joe. I especially want to thank Wilson Justin for his insight and his willingness to share. Thanks also go to Jim Kari whose work is without parallel in the documentation of Ahtna language and history. Of course the project would not have been possible without the help of Evelyn Beeter, Cecil Sanford, Ashley Hicks (who transcribed all of the interviews), and Barbara Cellarius. Finally I wish to thank my father, William E. Simeone Sr. who read a draft of the report and asked many questions.

Appendix A

Boundaries of Upper Ahtna Territory

By Wilson Justin

THE ORIGINAL BOUNDARIES FOR THE UPPER HEADWATERS PEOPLE began near Sanford River on the east side of the mountains and ran west and north. The first landmark was Tulsona Creek about mile 17 on the Tok Cutoff. The trail that winds up the creek to the Muskrat Lakes was used both by Chistochina and Gakona, and as a matter of fact there were minor disputes of trail ownership and uses for almost a generation finally quieting down after ANCSA [Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act] came into being. Both Buster Gene and Adam Sanford had trapping cabins on the lakes in the Tulsona Creek area. Bell Joe also had a trapping cabin in the same area. It should be noted that the Gakona River was not a boundary, although it is not far from the Tulsona Creek. From the lakes bearing north to Sinona Lake takes you to undisputed Headwaters People Territory. From Sinona Lake, all of the drainages of the Chistochina River, the Indian River and the Slana River were Headwaters People Territory.

Continuing along the Alaska Range down the Dry Tok River through Gillette Pass with a landmark at the head of the Tok River now called Tushtena Pass. The Tok River was a dividing line. Because the Tok Cutoff was built on portions of our trails, the highway crosses the river right underneath one of our "lookout points" which is halfway up the mountainside. When you cross the Tok River Bridge look straight ahead and up. You are staring directly at it.

The highway meanwhile takes a sharp right going on to Tok itself. We have a name for this lookout as we did for all of them. Jerry Charley knows the name of the point as does Robert John Sr. It was first told to me by Houston Sanford but I had long ago forgotten about it until Jerry Charley spoke of the place. From the lookout point we turn southeast. We will be working our way up the little Tok River to Tuck Creek now in the Tetlin Indian Reservation. From the Tuck Creek/Tetlin River we curve around the foothills, passing a hill now called Taixtsalda. Less than a day's journey takes us past the Nabesna River and over to Jatahmund Lake. Now deep into Medicine Men Territory we go due east into Canada and stop at a point midway to Kluane Lake and steer south by west until we hit the White River. Following the White we come to a fork. One will take us into the headwaters of the Chitina River; the other will take us to Chisana.

These are well known trails and were called the *Alts'en'Tnaey* Trail, although in the Yukon Territory, the White River and the upper Chitina, it was all *Naltsiine* Country. It was said, but I don't know, that the *Naltsiine* Trail came to within 50 miles of the old Village of Taral before control of the trail was relinquished. In the meantime the Chisana portion came over the

Cooper Pass, went up the Jacksina River, crossed over via Wait Creek into Goat Creek and then around Tanada Lake to the south. Staying south of Copper Lake, the trail, known here as the *Alts'en'Tnaey* Trail, continues east around the foot of Capital Mountain from where it was a straight run to the Sanford River. The trail then took the curious feature of going up the Sanford River and crossing over to and down the Dadina River. The crossover effectively ended the *Alts'en'Tnaey* trail system, however the trail continued in a much more complex pattern radiating out to Paxson Lake, Knik, Eyak, and Cantwell.

It is best to remember that it is more accurate to describe these trails as coming up to meet the Headwaters Trail, even though the halfway point for us was actually down at the Matanuska River. Matter of fact my father Nabesna John kept a camp some several miles below Caribou Creek for stopover and “dressing up” place. My Uncle Johnny [Nicolai] spoke of visiting the site when he worked in the area in the late forties. Great Uncle Houston [Sanford] named the site for me as did Jack Justin, however Jack used a different name for the site than Houston. We do know that the dialect used by Jack was more Kluane Lake than Nabesna, so that may have a bearing on it.

The boundaries in the Slana, Dry Tok and Tok River were relayed to me by Fred John Sr. The Tulsona, Fish Lakes, and Sinona Lake by Adam Sanford, Buster Gene, Paul Sinyon and Stewart Nicolai (all deceased). East of Suslota the boundary was told to me by Katie John, Bell Joe, Gene Henry and several others, including Houston Sanford. The Nabesna/Chisana and White River of course is well known to my family since that's where we are from.

The Chistochina River Trail was actually owned by Chief Nicolai, our great-grandfather. Indian River trail was disputed over by Chief Nicolai and Chief Sanford Charley. Fred John Sr.'s grandfather owned the trail over the Tushtena, a Chief with close ties to Healy Lake and to people in the lower White River into the Yukon. Matter of fact it was this Chief and the Healy Lake Chief I believe that negotiated the right for the Healy Lake people to come over and participate in the big caribou drives. One such rock fence supposedly is up the head of the Slana River or over by Mankommen Lake, but I have some doubts about the location. The real fence used by all was somewhere in the Paxson area. That one was famous even all the way to Knik and Nenana. There was also a distant echo of a smaller fence used for Chisana caribou, which were a province of the medicine people.

Appendix B

U.S. Census 1920 and 1930 for Chistochina, Batzulnetas,
and Cooper Creek (Upper Nabesna)

Fourteenth Census (1920) Betchinita (Batzulnetas)

| NAME | RELATION | AGE |
|-------------------|----------|-----|
| George Betchinita | Head | 35 |
| Dora | Daughter | 15 |
| Ben Keel Nah | Boarder | 60 |

| | | |
|-------------------------------|------|----|
| Billie Betchinita | Head | 45 |
| Jessie (Indian name obscured) | Wife | 38 |
| Fred (?) | Son | 10 |
| Gene | Son | 10 |
| John | Son | 8 |
| Jim D. | Son | 3 |

| | | |
|-------|------|----|
| Teddy | Head | 30 |
| Dolly | Wife | 18 |

| | | |
|-----------------|----------|----|
| Charlie Sanford | Head | 45 |
| Nell Kuddeh | Wife | 38 |
| Lena | Daughter | 16 |
| John | Son | 12 |
| Susan | Daughter | 10 |
| Annie | Daughter | 8 |
| Frank | Son | 7 |
| Katy | Daughter | 4 |

| | | |
|-------------------|------|----|
| Jimmie Betchinita | Head | 31 |
| Annie | Wife | 25 |
| Alfred | Son | 7 |
| Red | Son | 4 |

| | | |
|-----------------|----------|----|
| Lucy Betchinita | Head | 45 |
| Idamee | Daughter | 8 |
| Sargent | Son | 6 |
| Daisy | Boarder | 25 |

Fifteenth Census (1930) Batzulnetas

| NAME | RELATION | AGE |
|---------------|----------|-----|
| William Jean | Head | 39 |
| Jessie | Wife | 24 |
| Name obscured | Son | 16 |
| John | Son | 12 |
| James | Son | 11 |
| Name obscured | Daughter | 9 |
| Nellie | Daughter | 7 |
| Name obscured | Son | 3 |

| | | |
|-----------------|----------|----|
| Charlie Sanford | Head | 47 |
| Elaina | Wife | 44 |
| John | Son | 23 |
| Frank | Son | 16 |
| Kitty | Daughter | 13 |
| Justin | Son | 7 |
| Obscure | Daughter | 1 |

| | | |
|---------------|------|----|
| Tommy Jackson | Head | 30 |
| Susie | Wife | 24 |
| Name obscured | Son | 1 |

| | | |
|---------------|----------|----|
| Lucy Albert | Head | 50 |
| Annie | Daughter | 20 |
| Sargent | Son | 17 |
| Alfred | Grandson | 16 |
| Name obscured | Grandson | 9 |
| Name obscured | Grandson | 5 |

| | | |
|--------------|------|----|
| Shorty Frank | Head | 28 |
| Lilian | Wife | 24 |
| Stephen | Son | 1 |

Fifteenth Census (1930) Chistochina

| NAME | RELATION | AGE |
|----------------|----------|----------|
| Charles, Frank | Head | 38 |
| Minnie | Wife | 27 |
| Meena | Daughter | 3 |
| Cabam | Son | 4 |
| Jennie | Daughter | 7 months |

| | | |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Sanford, Theodore | Head | 30 |
| Avis | Wife | 23 |
| Walter | Son | 6 |
| Harlan | Son | 3 |
| Milo | Son | 10 months |
| Charles, Chustaki | Dependent | 89 |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|----------|
| Sanford, Adam | Head | 36 |
| Kate | Wife | 25 |
| Ralph | Son | 11 |
| Howard | Son | 3 |
| Frank | Son | 9 months |
| Naheta, Margaret (obscured) | Mother-in-law | 68 |
| Naheta, Margaret (obscured) | Sister-in-law | 20 |

| | | |
|---------------|------|----|
| Brown, Buster | Head | 28 |
| Jennie | Wife | 17 |

| | | |
|----------------|----------|----|
| Nicolai, Chief | Head | 61 |
| June | Wife | 40 |
| Susie | Daughter | 23 |
| Joseph | Son | 18 |
| Delia | Daughter | 12 |
| Thomas | Son | 10 |
| Irene | Daughter | 3 |

| | | |
|---------------|----------|----------|
| Nicolai, Jack | Head | 32 |
| Daisey | Wife | 23 |
| John | Son | 2 |
| Freddia | Daughter | 1 |
| No Name | Daughter | 8 months |

Fifteenth Census (1930) Cooper Creek (Upper Nabesna)

| NAME | RELATION | AGE |
|----------------------------|----------|-----|
| John Justin (Nabesna John) | Head | 50 |
| Lucy | Wife | 40 |
| Jack | Son | 22 |
| M. Tobey | Mother | 79 |

| | | |
|------------|------|----|
| Titus John | Head | 45 |
| Jesse | Wife | 60 |
| Charles | Son | 19 |
| Edward | Son | 12 |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|----------|----|
| Joseph Justin (Chisana Joe) | Head | 43 |
| Pauline | Wife | 35 |
| Mary | Daughter | 4 |
| Susie | Daughter | 1 |

| | | |
|--------------|----------|-----|
| Andrew Tobey | Head | 38 |
| Lulubell | Wife | 33 |
| Mary | Daughter | 1.5 |
| Godfrey | Son | 1 |

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Back cover photo: Nabesna River. NPS photo by Barbara Cellarius.

