

**ALASKA**

A  
TRAVELOGUE

OF THE  
RICHARDSON  
AND  
STEESE  
HIGHWAYS



CONSTRUCTED AND MAINTAINED  
BY  
THE ALASKA ROAD COMMISSION



*Compliments of*

**Richardson Highway  
Transportation Co.**

**ALASKA**

# Accommodations Along The Highway

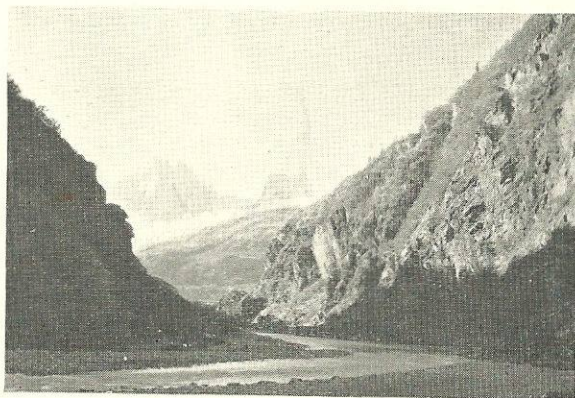
LOCATION OF ROADHOUSES now  
open for business:

| Miles from<br>Valdez |               | Miles from<br>Fairbanks |
|----------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| 52.0                 | Tiekel        | 319.0                   |
| 80.0                 | Upper Tonsina | 291.0                   |
| 103.0                | Copper Center | 268.0                   |
| 128.0                | Gulkana       | 243.0                   |
| 150.0                | Sourdough     | 221.0                   |
| 175.0                | Meiers        | 196.0                   |
| 191.0                | Paxson        | 180.0                   |
| 233.0                | Rapids        | 138.0                   |
| 280.0                | McCarty       | 91.0                    |
| 301.0                | Richardson    | 70.0                    |
| 320.0                | Fox Farm      | 51.0                    |
| 353.0                | 18 Mile       | 18.0                    |

| Miles from<br>Chitina |               |       |
|-----------------------|---------------|-------|
| 15.0                  | Lower Tonsina | 302.6 |

| Miles from<br>Circle |               |       |
|----------------------|---------------|-------|
| 151.9                | Fox           | 10.7  |
| 148.8                | Gilmore       | 13.8  |
| 140.4                | Summit        | 20.2  |
| 133.5                | Chatanika     | 29.1  |
| 121.6                | Lingo's       | 41.0  |
| 106.0                | Cassiar       | 56.6  |
| 92.8                 | Faith Creek   | 69.8  |
| 73.1                 | 12 Mile       | 89.5  |
| 46.6                 | Miller House  | 116.0 |
| 33.6                 | Central House | 129.0 |
| 14.3                 | Birch Creek   | 148.3 |

TELEPHONE MESSAGES may be sent along the route from all the roadhouses listed above, as well as from Beale's Cache, (Mile 262.0).



KEYSTONE CANYON, MILE 41.0, RICHARDSON  
HIGHWAY

## The Richardson and Steese Highways

Locally Called

“The Trail”

The following travelogue, (read as you go), gives in order, a brief description of each of the main points of interest which the traveler will encounter in a trip over this historical trail.

The subject matter has been arranged so that it can be conveniently followed from either Valdez, Chitina, Fairbanks, or Circle, as a starting point.

Please note that Mile 92.4, (Willow Creek), (El. 1380) is the junction of the Highway and the Edgerton Cutoff.

Part I, page 3, covers the route between Valdez and Willow Creek.

Part II, page 8, covers the Edgerton Cutoff, Willow Creek to Chitina.

Part III, page 9, covers the route between Willow Creek and Fairbanks.

Part IV, page 20, covers the Steese Highway, Fairbanks to Circle City.

## Of Historical Interest

"May 28.—Had a little paste, rotten and wormy meat for dinner; rotten goose eggs and a little rice for supper. Each meal about one-fourth of what we needed. We went into camp. Whole party played out.

"May 29.—Party nearly played out for want of food. Can just crawl. Had to stop middle of p.m. to make a flapjack for each and a little beef tea. Decided to abandon boat at the next Indian house.

"May 30.—Temperature of water 43. Course NE by E. Arrived at an Indian house at 11 a.m. hungry. Decided to abandon boat. Indian gave us a dinner of boiled meat, from which he scraped the maggots by handfuls before cutting it up. It tasted good, maggots and all."

\* \* \* \*

The above, written near Gulkana on the Highway, (see page 10), is an extract from the journal of Pvt. F. W. Fickett, Signal Corps, U. S. Army, a member of the courageous party of explorers (headed by 2nd Lt. Henry T. Allen, 2nd U. S. Cavalry) which in 1885 made a reconnaissance of the Copper, Tanana and Koyukuk Rivers.

\* \* \* \*

The Highway between Valdez and Fairbanks is named in honor of General Wilds P. Richardson, U. S. Army, who was President of the Alaska Road Commission from 1905 to 1917.

In those days there was no railroad to Fairbanks and this route was the most important means of access to the Interior, because the Yukon River is closed to navigation for so much of the year.

Under the direction of General Richardson, the Highway was located and improved so that by 1907 it was passable throughout for dog teams and horse sleds. In 1910 wagons could make the trip, and about 1913 the first automobile made a through trip from the coast to Fairbanks.

After the slump due to the War, the entire Alaska transportation system was rehabilitated under the able direction of General James G. Steese, (President of the Alaska Road Commission 1920-1927) and the Highway was improved, widened, and reconstructed to automobile standard throughout with up-to-date mechanical equipment.

Thus for 24 years this famous trail has been giving service and its improvement has steadily kept just ahead of the demands of transportation.

\* \* \* \*

The highway between Fairbanks and Circle is named in honor of General Steese in view of the fact that it was originally conceived by, and almost entirely constructed under the direction of this able officer.

## The Richardson Highway

### PART I.

#### Valdez to Willow Creek

Miles from  
Valdez

0.0 VALDEZ, the southern terminus of the Richardson Highway, is a town as rich in history-legends of Alaska as it once was in the stream of Alaska gold that poured through it from the mines of the interior. Situated on Port Valdez, it is the most northern port in Alaska that is open all year round. As is evident from the name, this port was discovered and named by the Spaniards, (circa 1790).

Valdez in the days of '98 was the starting point for thousands of prospectors in their search for fortune. It was also a southern terminus of several horse sled stage and freight lines. Through a part of the winter seasons, every day more than a hundred sleds laden with supplies and equipment would leave on their trip to the interior, traveling over the same route which we follow in modern automobiles. Their goal was the interior with the ever present hope of making a strike—they had neither time nor inclination to marvel at the splendors of nature; to them the trip meant a period of hardship, to us it means a restful journey, each day filled with new and more wonderful sights, as the ever changing panorama of the trail opens before our eyes.

0.5 VALDEZ GLACIER (El. 33). At the city limits we cross the Valdez Dike, which protects the city from the streams of the Valdez Glacier. The glacier is plainly visible from the trail, the face of it being but two miles away. Although receding at the rate of about 150 feet per year, its disappearance is still far distant, considering that it extends back over a distance of forty miles into the mountains. From 1898 to 1901 the trail from Valdez to the Interior went up the glacier, over into the Klutina River Valley to Copper Center. (see page 9) So many were lost in the crevasses that in 1901 the route was changed to its present location through Thompson Pass. From Valdez to Keystone Canyon the present road follows the old right of way of the Home Railroad, made famous by Rex Beach in his "Iron Trail." In the first three miles are twen-

## The Richardson Highway

Miles from  
Valdez

ty-one bridges under which in summer the streams from the melting glacier race and roar.

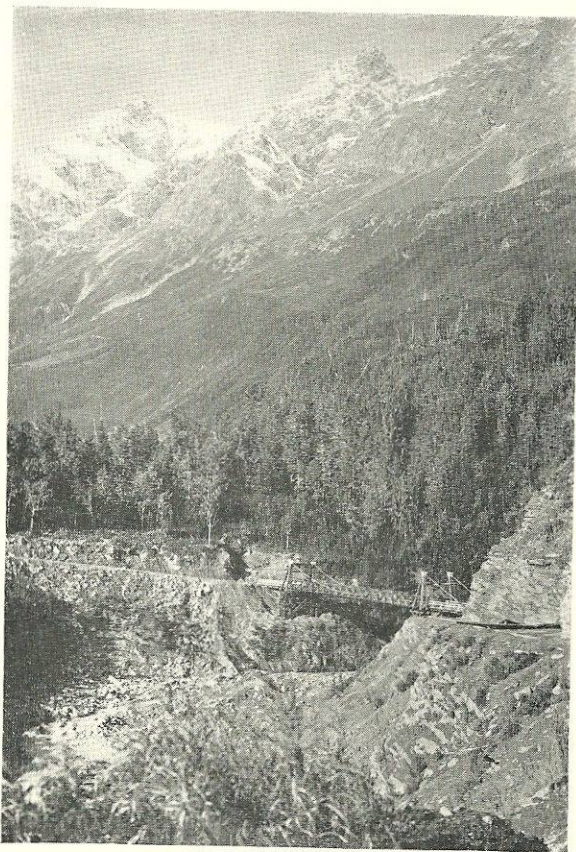
- 5.0 LOWE RIVER (El. 70). The Trail follows the banks of this famous glacier stream for ten miles.
- 10.0 COMFORT (El. 251). Although now deserted, it serves as a reminder of the time when a day's travel was limited by the distance a man could mush. As we glide smoothly over the small hills that mark our ascent we sometimes catch glimpses of the Lowe River in the valley below.
- 13.0 KEYSTONE CANYON (El. 307). Perhaps you recall the name from "The Iron Trail," as this is the canyon in which the fight for the right of way took place. The almost perpendicular walls of the canyon tower a thousand feet above us while below we see the Lowe River twisting through the winding path it has cut in the rock. Traces of the old railroad right of way can still be seen in the canyon. Originally the mushers used the ice at the bottom of the canyon for their path.
- 14.0 HORSE TAIL FALLS (El. 370). A wonderful sight as it plunges through its rainbow mists for 300 feet. Looking across the river toward Mile 13.0 on clear days we can view the rent said to be made in the mountain peak by a meteorite in 1927, the force of the impact being so great that the valley was filled with dust for several days, and the mass of debris that fell was sufficient to create a small lake in the gulch.
- 14.3 BRIDAL VEIL FALLS (El. 400). Another beautiful display, as the water tumbles down to the rocks below, spreading out to a width of a hundred feet at the bottom.
- 15.0 SNOWSLIDE GULCH (El. 600). Here the road is about 300 feet above the river. This little bridge has to be renewed annually on account of tremendous snowslides from the mountains above. Note how the surface of the rock has been swept clean by the snow.
- 17.0 BEAR CREEK SUSPENSION BRIDGE (El. 650). A neat sample of the work of the engineer.
- 19.0 WORTMAN (El. 662). Here was the first stopping place for the musher, after his

## The Richardson Highway

Miles from  
Valdez

day's hike from Valdez. One of the many connecting links with the interior, the Wortman Telegraph Station, was also located at this point. Deserted now, it remains as a reminder of days long passed. Mountain goats are often seen from this point.

- 19.3 SHEEP CREEK SUSPENSION BRIDGE (El. 650). Here starts the real climb of about 2,000 feet which will place us at the summit. Beautiful views are to be had between here and the summit.
- 25.4 DEAD HORSE GULCH (El. 2700). The name is derived from the skeletons of the pack horses of '98 which may still be seen along the old trail, marking the spots where the tired animals gave out in their battle against the elements.

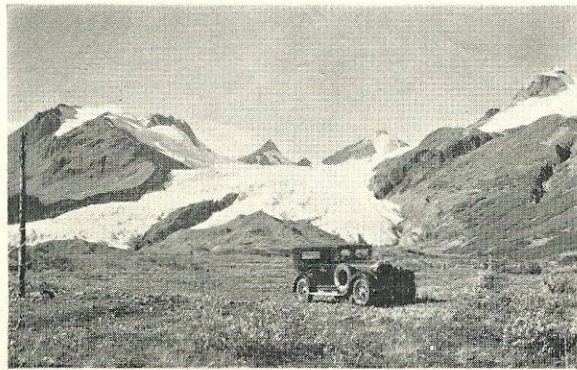


BEAR CREEK SUSPENSION BRIDGE, MILE 17.0,  
RICHARDSON HIGHWAY

# The Richardson Highway

Miles from  
Valdez

- 25.5 THOMPSON PASS (El. 2722). This is the highest point on the Trail in the Chugach Range. Note how the stones have been flattened down like a smooth pavement by the weight of an extinct glacier. To the west are seen the Sawtooth Mountains, so named from their jagged silhouette; thousands of feet below us the Lowe River flows onward to the sea, while looking northward we see the Tsaina River Valley extending toward the interior. The old stone relief cabin at this point marks the spot where countless travelers have taken shelter during blizzards. The snow gets so deep here that the cabin is often completely out of sight.
- 28.0 CRATER LAKE (El. 2360). A picturesque pool formed in the crater of an extinct volcano, which is now filled with sparkling, cold water from the melting snow on the hills above.
- 30.0 WORTHINGTON GLACIER (El. 2070). About 500 yards from the road. Here we are able to inspect a glacier at short range, and may be lucky enough to see a glacier bear off in the distance.



WORTHINGTON GLACIER, MILE 30.0, RICHARDSON HIGHWAY

- 31.0 TSAINA RIVER (El. 2050).
- 33.0 PTARMIGAN DROP (El. 1755). Another deserted hostelry, very important in the old days.
- 37.8 TSAINA RIVER (El. 1550).
- 38.0 DEVIL'S ELBOW (El. 1600). The waters rush and surge through a cleft in the rock apparently dropping into a subterranean channel, to reappear a short distance down the canyon.

# The Richardson Highway

Miles from  
Valdez

- 42.0 BEAVER DAM (El. 1305). Another deserted roadhouse and telegraph station. To the east may be seen an excellent example of the work of the beaver in building his house and dam.
- 46.0 THE BAD LANDS. A skilful piece of road location through a jagged, rocky place.
- 47.0 STEWART CREEK (El. 1124). Where we leave the Tsaina River and follow the Tiekel.
- 52.0 TIEKEL ROADHOUSE (El. 1250.) Now open for meals and lodging. The roadhouse is typical of the hostelries of the early days. Excellent meals are served here.
- 57.5 TIEKEL TELEGRAPH STATION (El. 1440). Abandoned.
- 62.7 ERNESTINE (El. 1480). Another relic of the days of '98, on the headwaters of the Little Tonsina River.
- 78.0 SULPHUR SPRINGS. Very mild.
- 80.0 TONSINA LODGE (El. 1500). Here you may be assured of an excellent meal, or night's lodging, and should you have the time, good trout fishing is found in the stream by the roadside.
- 80.1 TONSINA RIVER (El. 1480). At the foot of a long hill to the table land above. The road passes the remains of a deserted Indian village part way up.
- 84.0 LAKE PIPPIN (El. 1980). A nesting place for geese, ducks and wild swan. From here we have a wonderful view of the superb Wrangell Range, with Mounts Drum (El. 12,002), Sanford (El. 16,208), Wrangell (El. 14,005), and Blackburn (El. 16,140) towering far above the clouds.
- 89.0 WILLOW LAKE (El. 1430).
- 92.4 WILLOW CREEK (El. 1380). The meeting point of the Chitina and Valdez sections of the Richardson Highway. The road to the east, known as the Edgerton Cutoff, leads to Chitina, a description of this trail being found in PART II.

(NOTE: Turn to page 9 if going to Fairbanks)

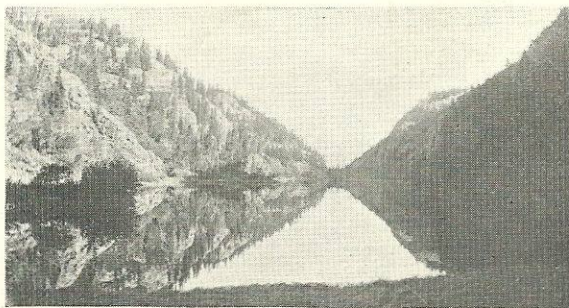
# The Edgerton Cutoff

## PART II.

### *Willow Creek to Chitina and Cordova*

Miles from  
Chitina

- 39.0 WILLOW CREEK (El. 1380). Junction of the Highway and the Edgerton Cutoff—which was located by Major Glen E. Edgerton, C. of E., while he was chief engineer of the Alaska Road Commission.
- 33.0 PLEASANT LAKE FOX FARM (El. 1280). Closed.
- 27.0 KENNY LAKE (El. 1250).
- 15.0 LOWER TONSINA ROADHOUSE (El. 760). Very good meals are served here. Mountain goat are found on the range to the southward.
- 14.5 TONSINA RIVER (El. 750).
- 10.0 LIBERTY FALLS (El. 1300). One of Nature's gems, at the source of an excellent stream for fishing, grayling and trout being in abundance near its mouth.
- 4.5 WRANGELL RANGE. Excellent view of Wrangell Range, left to right, Mt. Drum (El. 12,002), Mt. Wrangell (El. 14,005), and Mt. Blackburn (El. 16,140).
- 3.2 The northernmost of the Chitina Lakes (El. 680). On clear days a beautiful view of Mt. Wrangell is seen from the south end of this lake.
- 1.0 LAKE CHENAN (El. 650). The southernmost of a series of three beautiful small lakes that the road follows. "Chenan" means "thank you," the lake having been named by the natives in appreciation for the bountiful supply of grayling contained in its waters.
- 0.0 CHITINA (El. 545). Indian for "Copper River." Located on the Copper River



LAKE CHENAN MILE 1.0. EDGERTON CUTOFF

# The Richardson Highway

and Northwestern Railway. 131 miles from Cordova, Chitina serves as a center from which trappers and prospectors in this section of the country carry on their operations. A short trip to Kennecott on the railroad will enable one to see the richest copper mine in the world. Incidentally the largest placer copper nugget ever found in Alaska (weighing 2,850 pounds) may be seen near the Chitina Hotel. Chitina is hemmed in on all sides by mountains, with one gap to the southwest, through which one may see Spirit Mountain, forty miles away. A pleasant half-hour walk from Chitina will be found to the south along a road leading to the Bureau of Education schoolhouse. From this road a beautiful view of Mt. Blackburn and Spirit Mountain can be had. The trip to Cordova is made over the Copper River and Northwestern Railway, passing through country of unsurpassable beauty, with the Abercrombie Canyon and Childs and Miles Glaciers alone well worth the entire trip. This is the railroad described in Rex Beach's "Iron Trail."

## PART III.

### *Willow Creek to Fairbanks*

Miles from  
Valdez

- 92.4 WILLOW CREEK (El. 1380). North of Willow Creek the road passes through sparsely timbered tablelands with the Chugach Range in view to the south and the stately Wrangell Peaks to the east. We catch a fleeting glimpse of the Copper River now and then.
- 100.0 COPPER RIVER (El. 1320). Here we have an unobstructed view of the Copper River for miles and also a perfect view of the Wrangell Range, Mt. Drum (El. 12,002) being 20 miles away.
- 102.8 KLUTINA RIVER (El. 1010). Another glacier-fed stream.
- 103.0 COPPER CENTER ROADHOUSE (El. 1020). Mrs. Barnes' cooking will surprise you.

Located on the Klutina River, where the trail originally came out from the Chugach Mts. (see page 3), it was at one time an outfitting point for prospectors in

# The Richardson Highway

Miles from  
Valdez

this region. A look around Copper Center is well worth while. It is the first townsite that was recorded in Alaska. The main street is still distinguishable and many of the old cabins are still standing—of particular interest is the one with the original owner's name ("The Tennessee Kid") carved in the door. One can still see the light openings which were glazed with bottles (this being the most ready source of glass at the time). There is also a good swimming hole at Copper Center.

Twenty-five miles west, at Klutina Lake, the source of this river, is an abandoned camp where 2,000 gold stampeders spent the winter of 1898-1899.

In winter this is one of the coldest spots on the trail.

- 104.5 NATIVE VILLAGE (El. 1025). Inhabitants subsist by fishing and trapping.
- 111.0 TAZLINA RIVER (El. 1010). Another glacier stream of undecided temperament. At the head of this river, Tazlina Lake has been formed by the junction of two arms of a glacier blocking up the valley. In the winter of 1926 this lake broke through and the rising ice swept the bridge far down the Copper River. One of the spans now in the bridge was later found on a bar downstream and hauled into place for the new structure. From the bridge we have a splendid view of the Wrangell Range, with Mt. Drum (El. 12,002) in the foreground.
- 113.0 SIMPSON'S (El. 1190). Located in the midst of good moose hunting country. At the top of the grade just north of Simpson's we have a bird's eye view of the Copper and Tazlina River Valleys, with the different ranges in the background.
- 118.0 This is the only point on the trail between Valdez and Fairbanks from which Mt. McKinley may be seen. On very clear days its towering peak is visible to the northwest.
- 128.0 GULKANA (El. 1385). Located on the Gulkana River, one of the few clear water streams which we pass. Here we may enjoy a swim, or perchance we may cross the river and inspect the Indian Village. Gulkana is an outfitting point for trappers and prospectors, and is considered the starting point of the Abercrombie Trail.

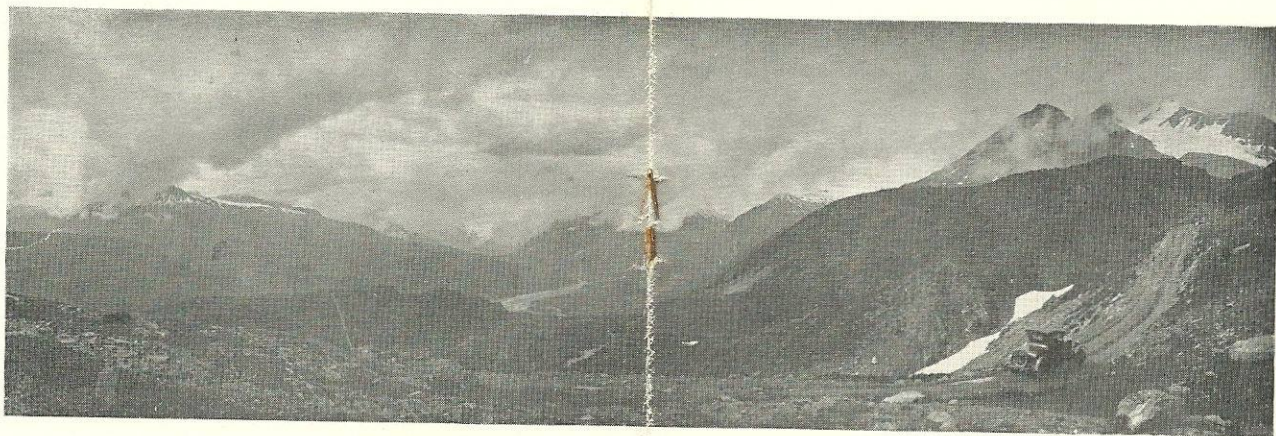
# The Richardson Highway

Miles from  
Valdez

An excellent roadhouse is maintained here, for meals or lodgings.

Private Fickett wrote his remarks of May 28, 1885, (see page 2), while at this point on the Copper River just a few miles northeast of Gulkana.

- 131.0 ABERCROMBIE TRAIL (El. 1640). Used in former days as the route to the Eagle and Fortymile country. This trail is now being rapidly developed into a road to serve the vast mineralized section lying north of the Wrangell Range.
- 140.0 POPLAR GROVE (El. 1805). A deserted roadhouse of days gone by near which we catch glimpses of the Gulkana River far below us.
- 150.0 SOURDOUGH ROADHOUSE (El. 1870). Here we may stop and indulge in some of the best grayling fishing along the trail. Excellent meals and lodgings may be had here. The stove now used in this roadhouse was brought in by sled from Fairbanks in the early days, and finally cost, delivered, five hundred dollars. The road passes through gently rolling country south of Sourdough until the foothills of the Alaska Range are reached.
- 160.0 HOGAN'S HILL (El. 2450). From here we may get an unsurpassed view of the surrounding mountain ranges. The Wrangell Range lies to the east, to the west we have the Talkeetna Mountains, to the north the Alaska Range, while looking to the south we see the Chugach or Coast Range. To the immediate west lies a vast lake region, home of moose and numerous fur bearing animals. Thruout this region, blueberries, low bush cranberries and wild raspberries grow in great profusion.
- 165.0 HAGGARD TELEGRAPH STATION (El. 2370). Now used by the Alaska Road Commission for housing road crews.
- 175.0 MEIER'S ROADHOUSE (El. 2717). In the foothills of the Alaska Range. Good meals are served here.
- 181.0 PAXSON LAKE (El. 2500). Twelve miles long, and famous for lake trout, grayling, whitefish and Lynn Cod. A nesting place for many water fowl. The Gulkana River flows into the lake from the north and carries off the surplus water to the south.
- 191.0 PAXSON LODGE (El. 2697). Recently remodeled and enlarged, this inn is now equipped to take care of about fifty tour-



VIEW OF LOWE RIVER FROM THOMPSON PASS, MILE 25

Miles from  
Valdez

ists, and the fishing, hunting and scenery in the near vicinity are a guarantee of a very pleasant stop. If you should take the time to hike down to the Gulkana River, half mile distant, it is very probable that you will run across a bear feeding on salmon in one of the many small streams emptying into the river at this point.

196.0 FISH CREEK (El. 3230). Which truly lives up to its name, contains an almost unlimited supply of trout and grayling.

196.5 SUMMIT LAKE (El. 3230). One of the most picturesque sights on the trail. It too, teems with fish, and also offers excellent hunting for wild fowl. The road follows the edge of the lake for five miles, between Mile 196 and Gun Creek.

201.0 GUN CREEK (El. 3230). When light conditions are favorable, the view from here to the northeast is indescribable. Nowhere in the world are to be seen mountains painted with such superb combinations of soft colorings.

201.5 SUMMIT GLACIER (El. 3241). This is the dividing point between the Yukon and the Copper River watersheds, the water from Summit Glacier sometimes flowing down Gun Creek into Summit Lake and thence down to the Copper River into the North Pacific Ocean, or again, into the Delta River, thence down to the Tanana River, and finally via the Yukon into Bering Sea.

Miles from  
Valdez

203.0 ISABELLA PASS (El. 3310). The highest point on the Richardson Highway.

206.5 DELTA RIVER (El. 3020).

208.0 McCALLUM (El. 2920). Formerly a Signal Corps Station, but now abandoned. A bell which has saved many a life may be seen above the station. On the river bank is the deserted roadhouse where this bell was originally placed. Along the line of stakes still visible on the bars of the river, was stretched a wire, one end of which was fastened to the bell. During the winter, when the roadhouse was sometimes completely covered by drifts, the gale blowing down the valley kept the bell ringing continuously, thus guiding the exhausted musher to shelter.

212.0 RAINBOW MOUNTAIN (El. 2700). Numerous slides, each with a different coloring, give this mountain the appearance of a huge rainbow. This is one of the most beautiful sights in Alaska.

214.0 GLORY HOLE (El. 2600). May be seen after a fifteen minute climb and a thirty minute walk up the trail to the east. From the edge of the basin, we see a beautiful lake nestling hundreds of feet below us, and should the caribou be running at this time, we are certain to see countless numbers of the roving animals.

214.0 to 233.0 Between Glory Hole and Rapids the road crosses many turbulent glacier streams, passing over some on bridges, and fording others. The glaciers are quite close to the

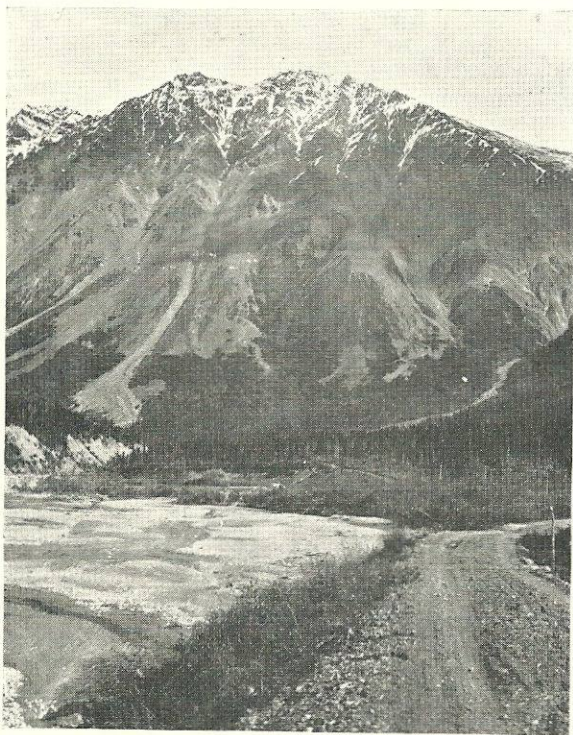


# The Richardson Highway

Miles from  
Valdez

road. Endless trouble is encountered in maintaining bridge crossings over these streams, due to the continuous shifting of the channels and the flashiness of the flow. They often change over night from tame, dry creeks to raging torrents 10 to 12 feet deep. Two interesting phenomena to be seen in this stretch are, first, the Pot Hole of Castner Glacier, a most impressive sight after a spell of warm weather; second, the four bridges south of Rapids Roadhouse, which instead of being over streams at the bottoms of valleys, are actually on the tops of the hills! Who has ever before heard of climbing hills to get to bridges?

233.0 RAPIDS ROADHOUSE (El. 2130). The hunter's paradise of this section of the country. The mountains on all sides, with their diversified coloring, abound in mountain sheep and brown bear, while the valleys and hills are the feeding grounds for



RAINBOW MOUNTAIN, MILE 212, RICHARDSON  
HIGHWAY

# The Richardson Highway

Miles from  
Valdez

bands of caribou. This section also has mineral possibilities; several deposits of gold bearing quartz and silver lead ore having recently been found. We feel that we are out of the most rugged part of the Alaska Range, after looking off to the north and seeing the wide valley of the Delta River. North of Rapids the road traverses the flats of the Delta River through open, park-like stands of small spruce and poplar. It is not at all unusual in the fall of the year to meet huge herds of caribou on these flats, and often drivers of cars have raced down the road with the animals, getting so close to them that their flying hoofs have thrown gravel against the windshield.

243.0 DONNELLY TELEGRAPH STATION (El. 1770). Now abandoned as a telegraph station, and used by the Alaska Road Commission for housing maintenance crews in the summer. The region surrounding Donnelly is an excellent trapping area, the principal fur bearing animals being fox, lynx and mink.

244.5 DONNELLY ROADHOUSE (El. 1700). There are a few remnants of some of the buildings of this old roadhouse but they cannot be seen from the new road. They stood on what was once a wide flat of the Delta River which in 1926 shifted its course, taking out the main buildings and part of the road. During winter travel of pre-railroad days this was a very important stopping place, as it marked the end of the winter cutoff trail leading from Washburn, 75 miles north of Donnelly.

253.0 PILLSBURY DOME (El. 2875). This mountain is named after Colonel Pillsbury, one of the early Chief Engineers of the Alaska Road Commission. Looking off to the west, over and beyond the valley of the Delta River, one sees a continuous wall of snowclad mountains (a part of the Alaska Range), the principal peaks of which (from south to north) are Mt. Hayes (El. 13,940), and Mt. Deborah (El. 12,540), (locally known as Cathedral Mountain).

Pillsbury Dome, with its slopes dotted with lakes formed by ancient glaciers, its herds of caribou, flocks of ptarmigan, its wild flowers and its wonderful views of the range to the west and of the far-dis-

# The Richardson Highway

Miles from  
Valdez

tant, broad valley of the Tanana to the north is in itself well worth the trip from Valdez to Fairbanks. The road summit over the dome is at an elevation of 2,350.0 feet. From various points 20 to 30 miles north of the Dome, one can see it standing out like a huge mound, apparently in the center of a vast plain, with the majestic Alaska Range forming the background.

- 262.0 BEALE'S CACHE (El. 1600). Now deserted, is used as a jumping-off point for hunters in going from the main road into the Jarvis Creek country for moose, sheep and bear. It is not uncommon to see moose along the road at any place between Beale's Cache and Grundler.
- 269.5 JARVIS CREEK (El. 1200). Where the road again comes within the broad valley of the Delta River, which is carpeted with an enormous acreage of spruce.
- 280.0 McCARTY or GRUNDLER (P. O. BIG DELTA) (El. 1000). This is one of the most important centers of trade along the road, being the supply point for the inhabitants of the entire region of the headwaters of the Tanana River. Here also is located a commodious roadhouse boasting of such luxuries as fresh milk, and domestic fowls including chicken, geese, ducks, and turkeys, as well as all kinds of wild meats, berries, fish, etc. The Tanana River never freezes over at this point, however cold it may be in the winter. This is due to the warm springs emptying into it above McCarty. The river is navigable, in summer, for small steamboats between Fairbanks and Grundler, providing there is a wise and careful pilot at the wheel. We cross the river on a ferry at this point. The ferryman, like Charon, works 24 hours a day, but serves a very different realm. North of McCarty the road skirts along the edge of low hills for two or three miles, then crosses the low, marshy valley of Shaw Creek. Coyotes, foxes, caribou and ptarmigan abound in this stretch.
- 292.0 SHAW CREEK (El. 920). Here we find the remnants of a roadhouse of the days gone by and a shelter cabin provided for the relief of linemen in winter. The creek is

# The Richardson Highway

Miles from  
Valdez

clear and languid and provides excellent fishing, while its broad valley is a luscious feeding ground for the moose. At this point the road climbs a steep, rocky bluff, from which we have an excellent view of the Tanana River with the Alaska Range to the south. Half way up Shaw Creek Hill we cross a large cleft made by an earthquake in 1926.

- 296.0 TENDERFOOT CREEK (El. 950). Placer gold was discovered on this creek in 1907, and during the next few years it produced over a million dollars, practically all of the ground which could be handled profitably by expensive hand methods having been worked during that period. There are still a few miners to be seen working at their claims in the old fashioned way. Mile 297 is called the "Million Dollar Mile" as it is surfaced with tailings from the workings and is therefore even now the most valuable piece of road in the world.
- 298.8 Good view of Tanana Valley.
- 301.0 RICHARDSON (El. 800). Named in honor of General Wilds P. Richardson, the first President of the Alaska Road Commission. This small town with its one store, abandoned telegraph station and partly occupied log cabins, was born with the finding of gold on Tenderfoot Creek and small creeks nearby, and is still occupied by a few old timers who live in hopes of finding good "pay dirt." Little of the original town remains. Due to the ravages of the river, it has twice been forced to move. From this point a branch trail leads to Banner Creek, Democrat Creek and Redman Creek, all of which still produce small quantities of placer gold.
- 302.0 RICHARDSON ROADHOUSE (El. 875). The largest roadhouse on the trail, with accommodations for seventy people. From its windows one sees beautiful panorama of the Alaska Range with its snow-capped peaks, chief among which is Mt. Deborah (El. 12,450).
- 303.0 GASOLINE CREEK (El. 860). So named because it marks the spot where on account of the steep grade it used to be necessary, in coming from Fairbanks to refill the gas tank of your "Model T." Gasoline Creek will now have to be shifted farther south.

## The Richardson Highway

Miles from  
Valdez

- 306.5 CANYON CREEK (El. 840). A small stream flowing through a tiny, narrow valley; the hills rising precipitously on either side.
- 312.0 BIRCH LAKE (El. 810). A large lake, lying in a setting of low, rolling hills covered with small timber, with the general flatness of its irregular shore line being broken by sharp promontories of age-old, yellow granite. The lake affords a wonderful summer camping place for the citizens of Fairbanks and others in the nearby country. The shallow water near the shore becomes comfortably warm for swimming, and the gently sloping bottom provides a pleasant playground for children.
- 320.0 FOX FARM (El. 720). Here we may see one of the many fox farms scattered throughout Alaska, engaged in the breeding and raising of silver, blue, white and black fox, as well as mink, and chinchilla rabbits. Very good meals are also served here.
- 325.5 LAKE HARDING (El. 700). Named in honor of our late President. It is situated about one mile from the main road, and is a playground for people living in Fairbanks, furnishing fishing, hunting, swimming and boating. There are also gold prospects here.
- 331.0 SALCHAKET RIVER (El. 640). We stop here long enough to watch the grayling lying at the bottom of 15 feet of water, and then continue our journey. At the northern end of the bridge there is a small Indian settlement where one can gather some idea of the life of the primitive people of the Territory.
- 338.0 SALCHAKET TELEGRAPH STATION (El. 610). Now used as headquarters for a road maintenance crew. North of this point the road traverses the heavily timbered flats of the Tanana River, winding sloughs of which may be seen at intervals.
- 343.0 PILED RIVER SLOUGH (El. 600). This slough, carrying a part of the overflow from the Tanana River, winds for fifteen miles through the flats, empties into the Chena River, and with its waters finally returns to the Tanana fifty miles below the point where it first left. The twistings and turnings of these many channels can be appreciated only from an aeroplane.

## The Richardson Highway

Miles from  
Valdez

- 350.0 TERRILL'S RANCH (El. 600). Where an enterprising pioneer used to summer his horses, working them on the stage line during the winter.
- 353.0 18 MILE ROADHOUSE (BERGMAN) (El. 500). Which, as the name implies, is just 18 miles from Fairbanks. This is one of the few places along the trail to which the word "roadhouse," as used in the States, really applies; here we may dine and dance, whereas ordinarily in Alaska, a roadhouse is a place to eat or put up for the night, corresponding to the "inn" of olden days.
- 362.0 NINE MILE ROADHOUSE (El. 400). Now used as a farmhouse.
- 371.0 FAIRBANKS (El. 455). The ultimate goal of all travelers in Alaska, no trip being complete until one has visited this famous old mining camp. Although only 455 feet above sea level, it is over 1200 miles from the sea by river and truly deserves its name of "Alaska's Golden Heart." It is the terminus of the Alaska Railroad, the Richardson Highway and the Steese Highway. Although it still shows marks of the early mining camp activities, the many modern structures and other improvements clearly show the present day progress. Before leaving Fairbanks one should see the gardens, farms, placer mining on nearby creeks, the Government Experimental Farm, the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines (the most northern institution of higher learning in the world), the plant of the Fairbanks Exploration Company, and the airport known as Weeks Field where one may engage a plane to any part of the Territory. It is becoming quite fashionable for tourists to take an afternoon "hop" from Fairbanks to see the Yukon River and cross the Arctic Circle. Fairbanks is the center of the fertile Tanana River Valley agricultural district, and is the main distributing point for all Interior Alaska. From here we may visit Gilmore, Fox, Cleary City, Chatanika and other communities which at one time were humming mining camps, and some of which still retain a part of their activity. These places may be visited in a 30 mile trip, either by auto or by railroad.

# The Steese Highway

## PART IV.

### *Fairbanks to Circle City*

Miles from  
Fairbanks

0.5 On the outskirts of Fairbanks a branch road leads to the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines. The Government Agricultural Station is also well worth a visit.

The scattered fields of wheat and other grains through which we pass for about two miles give a promise of future agricultural development of this section, for altho the season is short, the long hours of sunlight force early maturity, and little difficulty is experienced in producing a fine crop.

8.2 ENGINEER CREEK (El. 870). From here to Mile 17, the road passes near numerous piles of rocks which have been hoisted by early-day miners from depths up to 150 feet.

10.5 GOLDSTREAM (El. 750). Millions of dollars in placer gold have been taken from this narrow valley.

10.7 FOX (El. 800). We cross the narrow gauge Chatanika Branch of the Alaska Railroad, which was constructed during the boom days to give the numerous gold camps access to Fairbanks.

13.8 GILMORE (El. 1000). North of this old camp the road leads up Pedro Creek, where gold was first discovered in the Fairbanks district. The improbable story of its discovery is told by one of the three discoverers who claims to have been hunting with his two partners some forty-odd miles to the north of Pedro Creek where they brought down a moose carrying an enormous nugget (now adorning the watch chain of the narrator), solidly wedged in the cleft of one of its front hoofs. They immediately started to back trace the moose and eventually came to the place where the track no longer showed the imprint of the widespread hoof holding the precious nugget. At this point (Pedro Creek) prospecting was commenced and gold was readily discovered.

# The Steese Highway

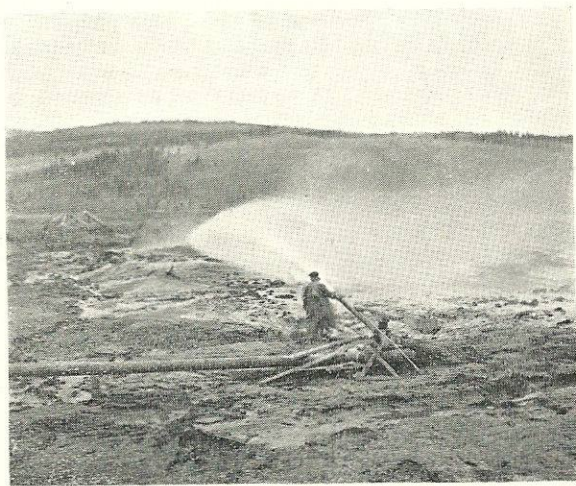
Miles from  
Fairbanks

20.2 SUMMIT ROADHOUSE (El. 2300). Excellent meals may be had here at any hour, while dancing to an orchestra is sometimes afforded guests during the summer. On a clear day, an inspiring view may be had of the Tanana Valley, the snow-capped Alaska Range forming a distinct background. Dwarfing its companions, Mt. McKinley, 20,300 feet high, dominates the scene, altho it is 180 miles away.

25.0 CLEARY CITY (El. 1000). This was once a large and notorious town, supporting seventeen saloons in its prime. Now there are only a few tumbled down shacks left.

27.5 CHATANIKA TOWNSITE (El. 1000). Here we pass one of the permanent camps of the large company which is dredging the gravel upon which the old town rested.

29.1 CHATANIKA (El. 850). This old mining town is the terminus of the narrow gauge branch of the Alaska Railroad. It is well worth taking the time to watch the huge dredge at work. It floats on water that has been brought from fifty miles up the Chatanika River, and is operated by electricity generated in Fairbanks from Alaska coal.

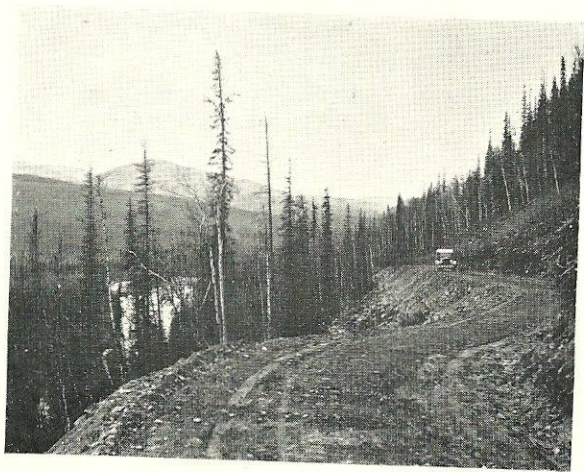


STRIPPING OVERBURDEN AT CHATANIKA, MILE 30,  
STEESE HIGHWAY

## The Steese Highway

Miles from  
Fairbanks

- 33.0 The siphon which we cross here is said to be the longest of its size in the world.
- 38.6 CHATANIKA RIVER (El. 860).
- 41.0 LINGO'S ROADHOUSE (El. 920). The traveler eats here amid surroundings reminiscent of pioneer days.



VIEW FROM MILE 52, STEESE HIGHWAY

- 56.6 CASSIAR ROADHOUSE (El. 1300). Far beneath us, on the opposite bank of the Chatanika, is this roadhouse, whose proprietor rows across to receive his guests.
- 69.8 FAITH CREEK (El. 1480). This roadhouse is an important stop on the winter sled route. Nearby is the junction of the three creeks which form the Chatanika River, and just below this, the intake for the eighty mile long mining ditch.
- 86.6 TWELVE MILE SUMMIT (El. 3225). The summit was so named by prospectors merely because it lay 12 miles southwest of their workings on Birch Creek. It is the divide between the Tanana and the Yukon Rivers. Herds of caribou, estimated to be at least 50,000 strong, sometimes pass over this summit during the autumnal migrations.
- 89.5 TWELVE MILE ROADHOUSE (El. 2450). This is a large and comfortable roadhouse located about midway between Fairbanks and Circle City.

## The Steese Highway

Miles from  
Fairbanks

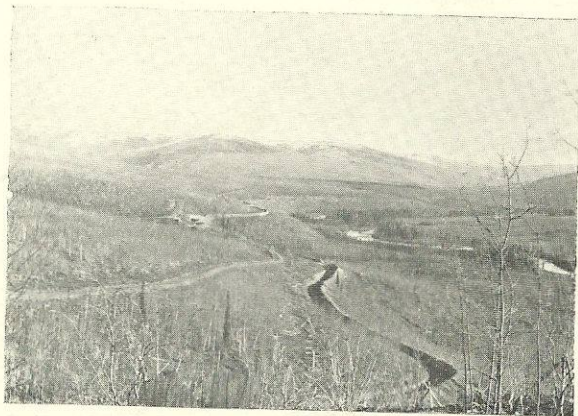
- 94.0 NORTH FORK (El. 2100). The north branch of Twelve Mile Creek.
- 105.0 Across the valley is seen an hydraulic mine which is still in operation altho \$20,000 annually has been recovered since 1903.
- 109.2 EAGLE SUMMIT (El. 3880). This barren summit is the highest point on the road between Valdez and Circle City.
- 115.5 MILLER HOUSE JUNCTION (El. 2100). To reach Miller House one must take a short road for a distance of about one half mile. Telephone communication is to be had here with Circle City. Miller House was once the center of a thriving group of hydraulic outfits, some of which are still running at a good profit.
- 117.2 MAMMOTH CREEK (El. 1820). This creek takes its name from the many specimens of mammoth ivory which have been found in its gravels.
- 129.0 CENTRAL HOUSE (El. 1220). Comfortable accommodations are provided for travelers by the genial proprietor who also runs a store for outfitting trappers and miners.
- One should not fail to visit the Circle Hot Springs, lying nine miles to the southeast, where reasonable and comfortable accommodations may be secured. The food served is almost exclusively Alaska grown. It is here that the prospector comes to recuperate after many years of hard work, for the healthful properties of the mineral waters are widely known. Excellent fishing and hunting are to be had in the vicinity.
- 148.3 BIRCH CREEK (El. 910). The proprietor of this roadhouse raises most of his own vegetables, to serve to the traveler who stops for a meal.
- 161.0 Here we obtain an excellent view of the mighty Yukon, four miles away.
- 162.6 CIRCLE CITY (El. 900). This is the remains of what was once a thriving city. From 1894 to 1904 it was the center of a flourishing group of placer mines, and most of the freight and passengers in the days of '98 passed through here on the way to and from Dawson, Nome and Fairbanks. The city was named Circle City because its founders believed that

# The Steese Highway

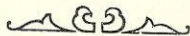
Miles from  
Fairbanks

they were within the Arctic Circle. Actually the city is 50 miles south of the Circle.

In summer river boats run on regular schedule from Circle. One line runs up the river to Whitehorse, the terminus of the White Pass and Yukon Railroad, and then down river to Nenana, on the Tanana River, the terminus of the Alaska Railroad.

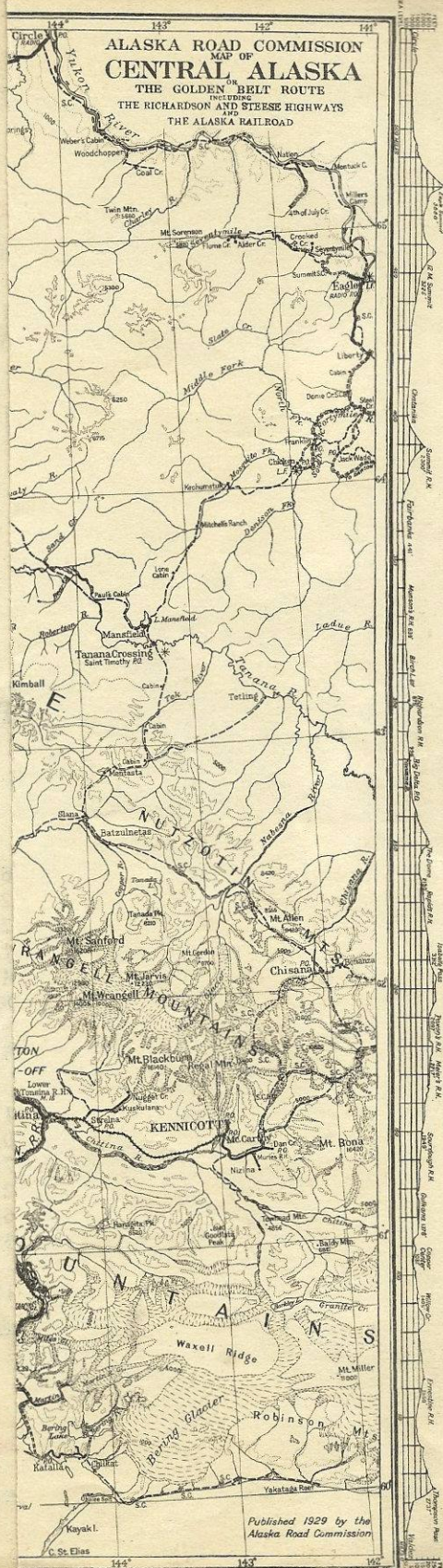
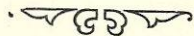


MILE 63. STEESE HIGHWAY. SHOWING ROAD, FAIRBANKS EXPLORATION CO. DITCH AND CHATANIKA RIVER



## THE INDIAN MEANING OF THE NAMES OF A FEW ALASKAN RIVERS SEEN ALONG THE ROUTE

- GAKONA—"Rabbit river."  
 GULKANA—"Saw tooth (or crooked) river."  
 KLUTINA—"Long way to head lake"; "river with big head."  
 SALINA—"Crooked river that carries the fish."  
 TANANA—"River of the mountain men."  
 TAZLINA—"Swift water."  
 TIEKEL—"No fish"; "no head"; "cup of tea."  
 TONSINA—(Old native "CONSINA"). "Cottonwood river"; "Big King Salmon River."





**ALASKA ROAD COMMISSION**  
**CENTRAL ALASKA**  
 THE GOLDEN BILT ROUTE  
 THE RICHARDSON AND STEESE HIGHWAYS  
 THE ALASKA MAILROAD

Published 1929 by the  
 Alaska Road Commission

Scale of miles  
 0 10 20 30 40 50  
 \* Contour 5000 ft. interval  
 ——— Contour 1000 ft.  
 ——— Contour 500 ft.  
 ——— Contour 200 ft.  
 ——— Contour 100 ft.  
 ——— Contour 50 ft.  
 ——— Contour 20 ft.  
 ——— Contour 10 ft.

**LEGEND**  
 ——— Main Motor Road, Richardson Highway  
 ——— Other Motor and wagon Roads  
 ——— Railroads  
 ——— Rivers (blue line)  
 ——— Lakes (blue area)  
 ——— Mountains (brown shading)  
 ——— Towns  
 ——— Camps  
 ——— Indian Villages  
 ——— Indian Trails  
 ——— Indian Paths  
 ——— Indian Routes  
 ——— Indian Trails  
 ——— Indian Paths  
 ——— Indian Routes

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Scale of feet  
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 ——— Contour 1000 ft.  
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Scale of kilometers  
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 ——— Contour 10 ft.

# ALASKA

## TRAVELOGUE

OF THE  
RICHARDSON  
AND  
STEESE  
HIGHWAYS



### ALASKA COMMERCIAL STATISTICS

Yearly Average  
1924—1928

#### EXPORTS

|                     |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Fish .....          | \$43,816,618.00 |
| Copper .....        | 9,510,233.00    |
| Gold .....          | 5,660,263.00    |
| Silver .....        | 399,154.00      |
| Furs .....          | 3,503,462.00    |
| Miscellaneous ..... | 1,793,805.00    |

TOTAL .....

---

\$64,683,535.00

#### IMPORTS

|                          |                 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Food Products .....      | \$ 8,290,118.00 |
| Machinery .....          | 3,053,051.00    |
| Vehicles .....           | 571,705.00      |
| Hardware .....           | 9,050,254.00    |
| Petroleum Products ..... | 7,940,656.00    |
| Miscellaneous .....      | 5,413,399.00    |

TOTAL .....

---

\$34,319,183.00

# ALASKA