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PRELIMINARY REPORT ON A RECONNAISSANCE
ALONG THE CHANDLAR AND KOYUKUK
RIVERS, ALASKA, IN 1899

BY

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Approximate distances by river along South Fork of Koyukuk.

Locality.	Distance from confluence of Middle and South forks of Koyukuk.	Distance from mouth of Koyu- kuk, on Yukon.
	<i>Miles.</i>	<i>Miles.</i>
Confluence of South and Middle forks of Koyukuk.....	0	487.60
Union City.....	1	488.60
Fish Creek.....	31	518.60
Seaforth.....	45	532.60
Soo City.....	50	537.60
Jimtown and Jim Creek.....	65	552.60
Cripple Creek.....	94	581.60
Mosquito Fork.....	107	594.60
Hungarian Creek.....	115	602.60
Summit of portage between South Fork of Koyukuk and West Fork of Chandlar....	145	632.60

*Approximate distances from mouth of Slate Creek on Middle Fork of Koyukuk to mouth of
Hungarian Creek on South Fork of Koyukuk.*

Locality.	Mouth of Slate Creek.	Mouth of Hungarian Creek.
	<i>Miles.</i>	<i>Miles.</i>
Mouth of Slate Creek on Middle Fork of Koyukuk.....	0	20
Mouth of Myrtle Creek (up Slate Creek).....	8	12
Summit of portage between Slate Creek and Hun- garian Creek.....	13	7
Mouth of Hungarian Cr. on South Fork of Koyukuk.....	20	0

ROUTES AND TRAILS.

The Chandlar and Koyukuk River regions form no exception to the rule of Alaskan travel. The almost invariable means is by boat or canoe along the waterways in summer, and overland by trail with the use of dog sleds in winter. The term "trail," as used in Alaska, refers more particularly to the passable condition of the country than to any foot-beaten path or well-worn line of travel. This is especially true of the Chandlar and Koyukuk regions.

CHANDLAR RIVER BASIN.

Fort Yukon to Indian village in flats.—A native trail is known to lead from Fish Camp, on the Yukon, to the Indian village in the flats on the Chandlar River, about 8 miles above its mouth. This same

point is reached by overland trail in winter from Fort Yukon across the Porcupine River.

Fort Yukon to East Fork of Chandlar River.—From Fish Camp, above mentioned, the route continues up the Chandlar River to near the edge of the flats, thence more directly northwestward through the low mountains to East Fork village, a distance of about 80 miles from Fort Yukon. In winter the East Fork natives, it is reported, sometimes travel eastward to the Porcupine and then descend that river to Fort Yukon.

Lake Creek, Grave Creek, and Middle Fork trail.—This is a short route of about 20 miles between the main Chandlar River above the lake and the headwaters of Middle Fork, by way of Lake Creek and Grave Creek. So far as known, it is used only by the natives in their hunting and fishing trips.

Granite Creek and Swift River trail.—On the Chandlar River below West Fork the country is reported to be easily passable up Granite Creek and by way of a low portage down "Swift River," and possibly the lower part of the Dall to the Yukon near Fort Hamlin. The Chandlar River natives are reported to use this route occasionally in going to Fort Hamlin for trading purposes.

Grove Creek and Sheep Creek trail.—This merely denotes that the country is passable with light pack over the mountainous divide between the heads of these two creeks, the latter of which drains westward, finally reaching the Koyukuk. The rise seems to be considerable. The distance is about 15 miles.

Baby Creek and Sheep Creek trail.—This leads from the region about the head of Chandlar Lake by way of Baby Creek to the head of Sheep Creek, above mentioned. The divide, however, seems to be high and rugged. The route is probably but little used, even by the natives, and then only in their hunting trips. The length of the trail, from the mouth of Baby Creek to the mouth of Sheep Creek, is about 20 miles.

Robert Creek portage.—This is the route used by the party during the past summer (1899) in portaging from practically the head of navigation on the Chandlar River to that of Robert Creek, on the Koyukuk River, a distance of 15 to 20 miles. Considering the ruggedness of the surrounding country, the portage is good. On the Chandlar River side it follows along the slope of a prominent sway in the divide, shown in Pl. LXI, *B*. At the bottom of the sway a steep-walled canyon has been entrenched to a depth of 100 feet or more. The summit of the portage has an elevation of about 3,000 feet, the rise being about 1,000 feet above the Chandlar River.

Chandlar River-Dietrich River trail.—It is also possible that by ascending Chandlar River above the sixty-eighth parallel to very near its headwaters, and going light, a portage could be made across to the

Dietrich River. The natives, however, denounce this region as very rough.

West Fork of Chandlar to South Fork of Koyukuk.—From reports of a few prospectors who have crossed this portage it is known to be easy and the divide low (see map, Pl. LX), so that during the wet season or at high water the distance of actual portage between points of canoe navigation is reduced to 10 miles or less. The creek through which the western side drains into the South Fork of the Koyukuk is said to be called Eldorado. During the past season (1899) many of the miners on the Upper Koyukuk were contemplating sledding their supplies from Fort Yukon up the Chandlar River and into the Koyukuk by this route. It traverses little if any rough country, but the distance is about 150 miles from Fort Yukon.

Chandlar River and Rampart route.—This name is here given to the route followed southward by some of the Chandlar natives, along the divide between the Koyukuk and the Yukon to Fort Hamlin, at the head of the Lower Ramparts, for trading purposes.

KOYUKUK RIVER BASIN.

Koyukuk River route.—The easiest and most practicable way of entering the Koyukuk region in summer, especially with freight, is to ascend the Koyukuk by flat-bottomed steamboat. About 1,500 people entered the country in this way during the season of 1898. Bergman (see Pl. LXII, A), 440 miles above the mouth of the river, is reached by steamboat throughout the open season. This may, in a general way, be considered the head of steamboat navigation on the Koyukuk. Above Bergman certain sections of the river contain bars and shallows which render navigation more or less difficult except at high water. During high water, however, steamboats ascended to above Tramway Bar, 100 miles or more above Bergman, and also for considerable distances up the Allen and other large northwest tributaries during the summers of 1898 and 1899.

Dall River trail.—This route leaves the Yukon River at the head of the Lower Ramparts, near Fort Hamlin, leads northward up the Dall River, then northwestward over the divide, and descends Fish Creek to the South Fork of the Koyukuk near the Arctic Circle, a distance by trail of about 100 miles from the Yukon. Up to the present time this has apparently been the principal overland route used by prospectors in entering the Koyukuk. By continuing farther up the Dall some have descended Jim Creek, thus reaching the South Fork of the Koyukuk at Jimtown. It is reported to be also feasible to cross from the Dall to Oldman Creek and down this stream to the Koyukuk below Bergman. This latter, however, seems questionable, as the portage must be very long.

Rampart and Hoyn Creek trail.—This route is known by report only, but it is said to be easier and shorter than the Dall River trail. It is reported to ascend Hoyn Creek, a tributary of the Yukon, near Rampart, cross a low pass in the mountains, and thence a wide, level stretch of country, a total distance of about 90 miles, and to come out on the Koyukuk about 80 miles above Bergman, probably at Fish Creek, the same as the Dall River trail.

Tozi¹ trail.—This route leaves the Yukon about 6 miles below the mouth of the Tozi River and leads nearly northward, mostly along the low divide between the Tozi and Melozi rivers, to near the head of Oldman Creek, which it descends to the Koyukuk, near Bergman. This is the route followed by Lieutenant Allen in 1885. Its length from the Yukon to the Koyukuk is about 90 miles. The Tozi may also be ascended by canoe nearly to its headwaters, and the route continued thence by portage to Oldman Creek, as above.

To Fort Yukon by way of Chandlar River.—This route has already been noted under the Chandlar River region trails. Leaving the South Fork of the Koyukuk by way of Eldorado Creek and crossing the low divide, it descends the West Fork of Chandlar River, thence down the river as directly as practicable and across the Yukon Flats to Fort Yukon, about 100 miles distant from the Koyukuk.

Middle Fork route to Chandlar River.—This route, as explained on page 454, is up Bettles River and Robert Creek, and thence by a 15-mile portage to the headwaters of the Chandlar, about 50 miles by river above Chandlar Lake. The portage is fair, but the current in Bettles River and Robert Creek is too swift and the bed too bowldery to permit a safe or easy ascent with a loaded canoe or boat.

Allen¹ River to Kowak River.—A route is known to exist by way of Allen to the headwaters of the Kowak, but as it seems to be used only in winter, the length of the portage is not known. Some Kowak River prospectors sledged across it to the Koyukuk in March, 1899. The Allen is a large stream and can be ascended nearly 40 miles by a light-draft, flat-bottomed steamboat.

The country is also said to be portageable between the headwaters of the Alashuk and the Kowak rivers, and also between the Dagitli and the Kowak. This latter portage was made by Captain Stone in 1885.

Nulato trail.—This is a "cut-off" or short overland trail of about 25 miles from the west bend of the Koyukuk about 7 miles above the mouth of the river to Nulato. In winter a sledge trail leading directly north from Nulato up the Koyukuk is sometimes used.

Koyukuk and Arctic coast trail.—According to reports which seem to be authentic, the Malamut natives of the Arctic coast have been known to visit the head of the Koyukuk Basin. They are supposed

¹ Formerly "Tozikakat," "Allenkakat," etc. For Alaskan names see pp. 487-500 of this report.

to have found passage through the mountains at the head of Dietrich River and to have descended this stream, but of this there is no certainty. The country in this region, however, is too rugged to be of promise for a practicable route of any sort, as shown in Pl. LXV, A, and on the map (Pl. LX).

POPULATION.

CHANDLAR RIVER.

Natives.—By estimate the Chandlar River natives number about 50 in all. A small settlement, of which the nucleus is a couple of cabins, is found in the flats about 7 miles above the mouth of the river. Most of the natives, however, live beyond the flats, in the mountainous part of the country. Their principal village is on East Fork, remote from the influence of the Yukon travel and traffic. For subsistence they depend principally upon game and fish. A few months during the coldest part of the winter are spent in log cabins or winter tents, and the remainder of the year in roaming about, wherever game or fish may furnish food. In winter the skins collected during the year are exchanged for tea, tobacco, clothing, and other necessities, at Fort Yukon and Fort Hamlin. Though the natives subsist almost exclusively upon game and fish, with some berries during summer, they have a keen relish for white man's food. They are shiftless and improvident, and their destitution and suffering are occasionally great. They are, however, comparatively intelligent. Some who have attended mission schools at Fort Hamlin have learned to read and write.

Whites.—Four white men, all prospectors, were the only whites in the region in 1899. Two of these were connected with the natives by marriage.

KOYUKUK RIVER.

Natives.—The Koyukuk natives, also known as Koyukons, number fewer than 200, so far as can be judged. The Eleventh Census places the number at 174. Their habits of life are much the same as those of the Chandlar natives. They have no cabins on the extreme upper waters much above the sixty-seventh parallel. At present the population, so far as observed, is scattered along the river in small villages containing but a few families and cabins, generally near the mouth of some tributary. There are also some on the Allen and other tributaries. So far as learned, there are no missions nearer than Nulato and Fort Hamlin.

Nulato seems to have been their chief trading post before the location of the post on the upper river. At these upper posts the natives are frequently employed by the whites, and some are also employed