

Many of Alaska's mountains, rivers, and other geographic features were named for people who never set foot in Alaska. Mount McKinley may be the best example. In 1897, a prospector named the peak after President William McKinley, because he was a champion of the gold standard -- and happened to be a distinguished son of Ohio. While most Alaskans prefer Denali, the Athabaskan name, Ohio's congressional delegation has sandbagged every attempt to [rename the mountain](#).

But most of the time Alaskans don't know who named a prominent feature or why. Take the Glenn Highway, one of Alaska's busiest highways, named after Capt. Edwin F. Glenn.

In 1898 and 1899, Glenn commanded several expeditions along routes that later became four of Alaska's highways. In 1898 Seward was a town, but none of the other towns built along the Seward, Parks, Richardson, or Glenn highways -- including Anchorage, Fairbanks, Palmer, Wasilla, and Glennallen -- yet existed. Glennallen was named by merging the surnames of Glenn and Lt. Henry Allen, an earlier explorer of the Copper River valley.

Three years after leaving Alaska, Glenn became one of the few American officers to be tried and convicted of waterboarding or other war crimes. Most of the following is from *Compilations of Narratives of Explorations in Alaska, Lt. Castner's Alaskan Exploration, 1898: A Journey of Hardship and Suffering*, and Glenn's service records.

Glenn's first Alaska expedition

Before Canada's Klondike Gold Rush, miners were finding gold in placer deposits scattered along the Yukon River and some of its tributaries in Alaska. American miners were accessing the Alaska gold fields from Skagway and Juneau, but these mapped routes, via the headwaters of the Yukon River, were through Canada. The government wanted an all-Alaska route.

In 1898 the U.S. Geological Survey combined forces with the U.S. Army to explore potential transportation routes along the territory's large river valleys. Glenn was tasked with finding a route to interior Alaska up the Matanuska and Susitna rivers.

Glenn had graduated from West Point in 1877, the year after George Armstrong Custer's defeat on the Little Bighorn River. He was posted to the 25th Infantry Regiment, one of the famous "buffalo soldier" units -- with black enlisted men and white officers -- doing duty in Texas, Montana and the Dakotas. Apparently tiring of Indian fighting, Glenn cast about for ways to advance his career. He became a professor of military science and tactics at the University of Minnesota, where he also attended law school, from 1888 to the early 1890s. He wrote a book on international law, published in 1895. When he received orders in 1898 to lead an expedition to Alaska, he was with the Judge Advocate Corps, although still nominally affiliated with the 25th Infantry.

Glenn headed up Alaska's Inside Passage. His party, consisting mostly of soldiers from the 14th Infantry, stationed in Southeast Alaska, eventually numbered four officers, 22 enlisted men, and three civilians. The expedition was supposed to acquire 50 reindeer and their Lapp handlers in Haines. Congress had purchased the reindeer from Norway for the Army to use in relief expeditions to the upper Yukon, where tales of widespread food shortages were filtering back to the United States. Many of the reindeer had died in transit; the remainder nearly dead from a diet of hay. Glenn deemed the reindeer unsuitable for his needs and went looking for other pack animals.

He found a large assortment of army horses and mules in Dyea, but almost all of these animals were heading back to the United States. The U.S.S. Maine had been sunk in Havana harbor, and American newspapers and some politicians were agitating for war against Spain. Glenn obtained four

mules and one horse considered "too worthless for transport."

Glenn was in Valdez on April 20 when President McKinley forwarded a joint resolution by Congress to Spain, which the Spaniards considered a declaration of war. At the first news of hostilities, Glenn and his officers asked to be reassigned to their units but received no response until the war was over. Glenn was still in Prince William Sound on June 22, when U.S. troops landed at Daiquiri, Cuba.

Glenn sent lieutenants Henry Learnard and Joseph Castner in several directions across the Kenai Peninsula, looking for road and railroad routes from the ice-free ports of Seward and Portage Bay, in Prince William Sound. After a fruitless search for feasible routes between Prince William Sound and Alaska's interior over the glacier-encrusted Chugach Mountains, Glenn moved his expedition's base into upper Cook Inlet. He then sent Learnard and several enlisted men by boat up the Susitna River, with orders to find a route to the Tanana River.

Blazing a trail up the Matanuska River

Some Athabaskans and Russians knew of a trade route between Cook Inlet and the Copper River. In 1885, Ahtna Indians on Tazlina Lake told Lt. Allen that Cook Inlet was a 12-day portage down the Matanuska River. Flour in an Ahtna settlement near the present location of Glennallen had been obtained from a trading post near the mouth of the Susitna River. But the future route of the Glenn Highway wasn't mapped.

Lt. Castner started up the Matanuska River with eight soldiers, two civilians and the five pack animals. His mission was to blaze a trail from Knik to the Yukon River, via the Copper River valley. Indians in Knik village, some of which had never seen a horse or mule, told Castner he'd never make it. They said he and his men would be confronted with blood-thirsty savages, huge bears, voracious mosquitoes, unfordable streams, impassable mountains, and monsters who left 12-foot-long footprints on muddy river banks -- all of which the Indians had seen.

By all accounts Castner had drawn a difficult assignment. The party had to hack its way through thick underbrush for 80 miles, and they were constantly pushing, pulling, and prying the pack animals out of bogs. In Turnagain Arm, Castner had found and hired the only white man to have been up the Matanuska River and lived to tell about it. Like the Indians, this guide was pessimistic about the party's prospects.

Castner characterized his men as "good, bad, and indifferent." Most were utterly disenchanted and wanted to quit. Complaining constantly, some actively conspired against Castner. When he overheard a man saying he'd throw a pack animal over a cliff at the first opportunity, Castner sentenced him to two weeks of bread and water, which, according to Castner, "caused him to lose considerable of the fat on his head."

Ironically, the punished soldier's diet wasn't much worse than that eaten by the rest of the party. Continually running out of food, Castner shuttled men and mules back and forth to Knik for more supplies. By the time he had reached the Matanuska Glacier, he realized that the returning men were eating most of the food carried by the pack animals before they could rejoin the rest of the party. He had too many men and too few pack animals. The solution was to send most of the men back to Cook Inlet. He also sent all the pack animals back for one last supply mission.

During this ordeal, Castner kept waiting for orders from Glenn to proceed beyond the headwaters of the Matanuska River. Glenn's last letter, in early July, had expressed a desire to return to the United States, and Glenn's subsequent silence led Castner to assume that's exactly what had happened. He decided if no orders were brought by the last resupply effort, he would forge on to the Yukon River without Glenn's permission. The season was getting late, and he had a long way to go. His commanding officer, meanwhile, was lingering in upper Cook Inlet, rarely out of sight of a boat. After his July letter, Glenn bought 25 horses and mules at Sunrise City, without official authorization, and decided to follow Castner into the mountains. His party left Knik a few days after Castner's last pack train headed up the Matanuska valley.

About three weeks earlier, on July 1, Col. Teddy Roosevelt had led the Rough Riders on a charge up San Juan Hill. Glenn's unit, the 25th Infantry, had captured a nearby hill to great public acclaim. The

San Juan Hill. Glenn's unit, the 25th Infantry, had captured a nearby hill to great public acclaim. The war in Cuba was almost over.

Castner's worn-out pack animals made remarkable progress on their return trip, 80 miles in five days. Glenn's party, equipped with "sleek" pack animals in Castner's words, was unable to catch up. Glenn sniped at the absent Castner in his journal: "I fear that Castner has departed from orders and has gone too far for me to overtake him." A couple of days later, Glenn wrote, "Castner will certainly kill all his stock at his present rate of travel." Not finding Castner at the headwaters of the Matanuska River, he finally concluded "It is of course useless to try to catch Castner," and veered off on a slightly different course across the Nelchina Basin.

On Aug. 12, the day the peace treaty was signed with Spain, Glenn was camped near the largest lake they had seen in Alaska. A week or so earlier, Castner had named the lake Adah, after a pretty girl he knew. Glenn renamed the lake Louise, after his wife.

As Glenn predicted, all but one of Castner's diseased and trail-worn pack animals died by the time he reached the Delta River. Grassy forage was scarce in much of Alaska, and frost-nipped grass was almost worthless nutritionally. Almost out of food again, Castner stopped to build a raft to float down the river. Glenn caught up with him here in late August, naming a nearby glacier after his prodigal lieutenant. During supper, Castner explained to Glenn why his drive to complete the mission wasn't insubordination. The supper consisted of Dall sheep and mule. Reaching a mutual understanding, both men also agreed that the mule was tastier than the sheep.

Two different ways of following orders

A week later Glenn took all but two of the men and retraced their trail to Cook Inlet, arriving in late September. He remained in Cook Inlet for about a month, and half of his 1898 journal is devoted to the gossip circulating among the local civilians. He often admired the ladies he encountered. Like the captain of the Starship Enterprise, Glenn was seeking out new life and new civilizations. But he was not boldly going where no man has gone before.

His doppelganger, Castner, took the two enlisted men and two of Glenn's relatively sleek mules and struck out down the Delta River toward the expedition's objective. After reaching Circle City, they planned to catch a stern-wheeler to the mouth of the Yukon, followed by a steamer to the United States.

Reality intervened. Both mules were dead in less than two weeks, and misleading directions left the men without food in nearly impassable mountains between the Tanana and Yukon rivers. It was October. Their summer clothes were rotting off their backs, they were sleeping on the ground without blankets, their shoes had worn out and they were hiking in stockings. They shot a wolf and ate it. Finally, they stumbled across a group of Tanana Indians who fed and cared for them, and then ferried them in canoes to the confluence of the Tanana and Yukon rivers. Castner credited the Indians with saving their lives.

But the last steamer of the season had gone downriver. Castner believed his maps and other information would be invaluable to any follow-up expedition in 1899, and didn't relish marking time on the Yukon River until breakup. He resolved to leave his two men at a military post at Rampart and return to the United States by dog team. He bought a dog team and sled and hired a Canadian to take him to Skagway via Dawson City. This added 1,300 miles to the 700 miles or more that he had already trekked. They arrived in Skagway in late February 1899. His commanding officer had caught a steamer out of Cook Inlet and returned to Washington state three months earlier.

Glenn's second Alaska expedition

Glenn was ordered to mount a second expedition in 1899, with essentially the same objectives as the first. Lt. Castner was not a member of the 1899 expedition. He was replaced by Lt. Joseph Herron. Herron and his men also labored under Glenn's peculiar brand of leadership.

In late May, Glenn dispatched Herron with three men, dogs, sleds, snowshoes, and other gear to explore a route from Portage Bay to Knik, via the headwaters of the Twentymile River, Crow Pass, and Eagle River. Glenn's men had mapped a much easier route over the low pass between Portage

Bay and Portage Lake in 1898. In his report, Herron alluded to the inanity of his assignment "to explore a supposititious local route." Disembarking on the beach across the bay from the present location of Whittier, Herron found no snow for the sleds. He left two men with the dogs and most of the gear on the beach. He found the going difficult, post-holing through soft snow in the pass to Carmen Lake, taking so long to get to Turnagain Arm that he gave up on the bulk of his mission and hitched a boat ride down the inlet to Fire Island, where he met Glenn. Several weeks later Herron was able to charter a boat around the Kenai Peninsula to rescue his remaining men. Left for a month with insufficient rations, the two men had survived by digging clams at low tides, shooting a goose with a revolver, and eating dog food.

Next, Glenn sent Herron and several men to find a route from Cook Inlet to the Tanana River via the headwaters of the Kuskokwim River. Like Castner in 1898, Herron got a late start, but doggedly pursued his objective. Unable to feed his pack horses with winter coming on strong, he abandoned them, was rescued by a party of Athabaskans near Lake Minchumina, and completed his mission on snowshoes in December, more than five months after leaving Cook Inlet.

Once again, after dispatching several expeditions inland, two of them inexplicably led by a civilian and a private, Glenn rarely left the settlements in upper Cook Inlet. Instead, he complained about his subordinates in his journal -- remarking, for example, that the Susitna River expedition turned back a few miles up the Tanana River after "its members saw a comparatively insignificant swamp ahead of them." He returned to the United States in November 1899.

Perhaps I'm being a little too hard on Glenn. Morgan Sherwood, in his book *Exploration of Alaska: 1865-1900*, concluded the Army was the wrong agency for exploring Alaska. The 1898 and 1899 expeditions under the U.S. Geological Survey -- with fewer men, less red tape, and clear scientific goals -- were much more successful. Army expeditions typically employed too many men and, unlike the scientists, the enlisted men were often more interested in surviving the experience than gaining useful information. The Army considered the impending war with Spain a much higher priority than exploring a remote territory. But Sherwood also believed part of the fault was Glenn's.

In March 1900 Glenn was sent to the Philippine Islands. A year after his return from the second Alaska expedition, Glenn committed the act that resulted in his court martial for torture.

Capt. Edwin Glenn, the man the Glenn Highway is named after, resented his lost opportunity. While he was in Alaska, ordering expeditions up the Susitna and Matanuska rivers, his unit, the 25th Infantry Regiment had distinguished itself in the brief Spanish-American War. Glenn believed other officers in the unit had been promoted in his stead because he had missed the climactic battle in Cuba.

The 25th Infantry -- the famed "Buffalo Soldiers" -- had been transferred in 1898 from posts in Indian country to Florida, where they were poised to attack Cuba about the time Glenn was organizing his first expedition to Alaska. After Cuba was pacified, the regiment returned to posts in the southern Rocky Mountains in 1899. Later that year, however, they shipped out to the Philippine Islands. After returning from his second Alaska expedition, Glenn was ordered to follow his unit to the Philippines in March 1900.

Spanish-American and Philippine-American wars

One of the most unjust wars in U.S. history -- started by Americans to acquire territory, resources, and influence in the Caribbean and the western Pacific Ocean -- was the Spanish-American War. The United States provoked a war with Spain after an American battleship, the U.S.S. Maine, was sunk off Cuba, a possession of Spain, on Feb. 15, 1898. Although conspiracy theories still abound, the most likely explanation for the loss of the warship was a spontaneous fire in its coal bunker that spread to the ship's gunpowder magazine. But never mind the details: Americans had been whipped into a war frenzy by newspapers, led by William Randolph Hearst's New York Journal. The war, fought primarily in Cuba and the Philippine Islands, another Spanish colony, was over in less than a year.

Filipino guerillas, believing they were fighting for their nation's independence, helped the U.S. Army defeat the Spaniards. However, Uncle Sam had no intention of leaving the Philippines; the islands were too valuable as an extension of American power across the Pacific Ocean. Recognizing their struggle had merely substituted one master for another, two days after the Spanish-American peace treaty was ratified, Filipino insurgents attacked U.S.

Army units. Americans called this war the Philippine Insurrection. Filipinos called it the Philippine War for Independence.

Like American soldiers and marines in the Vietnam War, distinguishing friend from foe was frustrating in a guerilla war, provoking rage against both insurgents and civilians. In addition to the frustration of a regular Army officer forced to engage guerillas, Glenn chafed at what he believed to be a gross personal oversight. He desperately wanted to be promoted, and he believed his advancement had withered during his two-year assignment in Alaska. In a letter to his brother-in-law shortly after he arrived in the Philippines, Glenn proposed raising a regiment of Filipinos to fight under American officers. The regiment would require a colonel -- him -- for a commanding officer. This appointment would have jumped his rank up three grades. His brother and others forwarded Glenn's request to various politicians. Glenn was still agitating for the regiment and colonelcy two years later, after he had been promoted to major.

Instead, probably because of his legal training and prior experience, Glenn was assigned as a judge advocate with the 5th Infantry Regiment. During [three years of campaigning](#), the 5th Infantry lost 86 enlisted men, six in battle and most of the rest from cholera. Based on casualties, his regiment was not hard pressed by the insurgents. But Glenn believed it was, and he quickly resorted to an interrogation method unfamiliar to most Americans.

Waterboarding

Waterboarding, or the “water cure,” as it was known to Glenn, was used during the Spanish Inquisition. The U.S. Army probably adopted the technique from the Spaniards or Filipinos. High-ranking Army officers in the Philippines did not sanction waterboarding, but some junior officers ignored their warnings.

Waterboarding consists of slowly pouring water into the nose and mouth of an immobilized victim in sufficient quantity to simulate drowning. Sometimes the victim’s face is covered with a cloth, and the victim is typically pinned in a supine position. In addition to the frantically overwhelming sense of suffocation, indistinguishable from that of drowning, the technique can cause severe pain, lung damage, or brain damage. As with most forms of torture, victims of the “water cure” often tell their captors anything they want to hear, true or not.

Capt. Glenn was assigned to the 5th Infantry on Panay Island as a judge advocate, a military version of a prosecuting attorney. At least one source claims Glenn often resorted to the interrogation technique. On Nov. 27, 1900, he administered the “water cure” on a mayor who was being held captive and questioned about the presence of insurgents in the town of Igbarras. The official divulged no useful information, so he was subjected to a second round, this time with salty water. The mayor then “confessed” he was a captain with the insurgents and led U.S. troops on a search into the bush for nearby insurgents. When they returned, [Glenn ordered the town of 10,000 souls burned](#) to the ground. Glenn received his long-awaited promotion to major about six months later.

Waterboarding was a controversial issue in America during the Philippine-American War. Historically, most Americans and the national media have considered the practice [torture](#). The controversy resurfaced in 2004 when the media reported its use at Abu Ghraib and revealed the Central Intelligence Agency was using the technique to obtain information from suspected terrorists. President George W. Bush’s administration concluded there was a range of acts that were considered cruel, inhumane, or degrading, and waterboarding was [something less than torture](#). After 2004, newspapers and many Americans softened their views on waterboarding, although the same newspapers called waterboarding torture when it was perpetrated by a country other than the United States. Since President Bush declared a war on terror, the attitude of most Americans and the national media seems to be if they do it to us, it’s torture; if we do it to them, it’s not.

Glenn’s court-martial

But in 1900, in the Philippine Islands, waterboarding was considered torture. Several enlisted men in a volunteer infantry regiment witnessed the November 1900 incident. After returning to the United States, one [described the incident](#) in a letter to a local newspaper. A long-cherished belief held that Americans treated prisoners of war with respect. However, soldiers returning from the Philippines were reporting hundreds of instances where U.S. forces employed various torture techniques or shot captives. The Armed Services and President Teddy Roosevelt’s administration initially denied the allegations. But the letter condemning Glenn tipped the scales. Several enlisted men were asked to testify before Congress. Embarrassed, in 1902, President Roosevelt directed that Glenn be brought back to the United States to stand trial.

Glenn objected to a trial in the United States because of the “high state of excitement” and misunderstanding about the interrogation technique. When he subsequently learned of the plan to bring the enlisted men, now civilians, to the Philippines to testify against him, Glenn argued that it would cost too much and, in effect, give the men a vacation at government expense. He admitted he had used the water cure so he could be [tried in the Philippines by officers who might have similar frustrations](#) with the war.

Glenn argued that the use of waterboarding was justified by military necessity. In his defense, Glenn claimed, “I found very soon after my arrival in Panay that every man, woman, and child in the islands was an enemy, and in my best judgment they are today, and always will be.” Like many British officers in the American Revolutionary War he mocked the Filipinos’ wish for independence as a “high-sounding phrase.” He concluded, “I am convinced that my action resulted in hastening the termination of hostilities and directly resulted in saving many human lives, and directly injuring no one.” He also argued that he was not guilty because the technique was not torture.

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Major Glenn was found guilty, suspended from command for a month, and fined \$50. A few months later President Roosevelt sidestepped further embarrassments by declaring victory in the Philippine-American War. However, the U.S. Army remained, and guerilla warfare continued until 1913. The Philippine Islands did not become an independent nation until 1946.

The Army's Judge Advocate General was dissatisfied with Glenn's lenient punishment. He complained to the Secretary of War that Glenn's testimony admitted that the water cure was "the habitual means of obtaining information," despite the fact that the technique was not sanctioned by his superiors, military necessity does not allow torture to extort a confession, and there was no compelling military need to torture the mayor to gain information that insurgents were operating in the vicinity.

Nothing official came of the protest; however, Glenn was reassigned from the Judge Advocate Corps to command of a recruiting depot in Ohio. This seems to have been a step down, but may have fit Glenn's quirky sense of self-promotion.

A few years later Col. Glenn was back in the Philippines in charge of a detachment. He found himself in hot water when he scandalized members of his detachment with a series of alleged peccadillos involving other officers' wives who, by some accounts, were not really officers' wives, in his residence. A formal inquest was held. Several officers testified Glenn was a heavy drinker, but their assertions were contradicted by others who swore they never saw him drink a drop. In the end, nothing came of the allegations.

Pancho Villa and World War I

After returning from his second tour in the Philippines, Col. Glenn became the chief of staff for Gen. Leonard Wood, Teddy Roosevelt's commanding officer during the Spanish-American War.

In yet another ironic twist of fate, the Army War College asked Glenn to write *The Rules of Land Warfare*, published in 1914 and used, with revisions, through World War II. This was not a book on military strategy or tactics, but a detailed explanation of the legal basis for war and the treatment of combatants and noncombatants. The *Rules of Land Warfare* reiterated the legal principle in effect when Glenn was court-martialed -- that "military necessity" does not allow "torture to extort confession." Glenn never admitted that the "water cure" was torture, nor did he ever concede that Filipino insurgents were lawful belligerents. Still, at least one of the principles in his book must have triggered some serious introspection: "... in general, military necessity does not include any act of hostility which makes the return to peace unnecessarily difficult."

Glenn's ego continued to foment controversy. In 1916, on the brink of America's involvement in World War I, his speech at a public dinner was widely quoted in newspapers. Glenn averred it would take five years and 400,000 to 500,000 American troops to "stabilize" the Mexican government. With two-thirds of the regular army, about 22,000 men, pursuing Pancho Villa back and forth across the Mexican border, he claimed "the United States army is pathetic, and all the nations of the world know it."

But his genius for shooting himself in the foot was matched by his overweening self-aggrandizement. Whenever he learned a higher rank would soon be available, often before the position was vacated or advertised, Glenn would prod friends and relatives to send letters to politicians urging their support. The resulting avalanche of letters to the Secretary of War and other senior officers frequently resulted in reprimands for Glenn, who appeared undeterred. He eventually attained the rank of major general and commanded a division in World War I. However, the division never fought under Glenn; it was divided into [replacement units for other divisions](#).

Castner, a 2nd lieutenant when he embarked on the 1898 expedition to Alaska, also attained the rank of major general. He had been awarded two Silver Stars for bravery in action during the Philippine-American War. He was awarded another Silver Star and the Distinguished Service Cross during World War I after his brigade routed the Germans in the St. Mihiel salient, a major battle in France near the end of the war.

Naming the Glenn Highway

The pack trail that Castner blazed up the Matanuska River was used through the 1930s. It was upgraded to a gravel highway during World War II to connect Elmendorf Air Base with the rest of the Alaska Highway System and, via the Alaska-Canada Highway, to the contiguous United States.

I did my stint in the military and I've survived a number of bosses – good, bad, and indifferent – since then. I've always preferred leaders who lead to those who push from the rear. Although it can be difficult to take the full measure of a man by reading his journal, selected letters, and after-action reports, I'd pick Castner over Glenn as a supervisor, mentor, and friend.

So who named the highway after Glenn? I've beaten the bushes for the answer to that question, and I still have no idea. By the time the highway was built and named, Glenn was dead, but Castner lived until 1971. If I may be permitted a slight flight of fantasy after weeks of wading through reams of official records, I'd imagine that Glenn would have felt the honor was his due.

Alternatively, Castner, when he heard the highway was named after his commanding officer, might have recalled Jack, the last mule he had to shoot on the Goodpaster River, because it could no longer stand. Ten days later, he and his men had circled back to the rotten carcass to share what was left with wolves and ravens. Ten years after his adventure in Alaska, Castner confided that in overcoming the many natural obstacles encountered in Alaska, he had experienced "one of the best years of my life." I suspect Castner didn't lose much sleep when the highway wasn't named after him.