

# **Shem Pete's Alaska**

*The Territory of the Upper Cook Inlet Dena'ina*

Second Edition

by **James Kari** and **James A. Fall**

*Principal contributor*

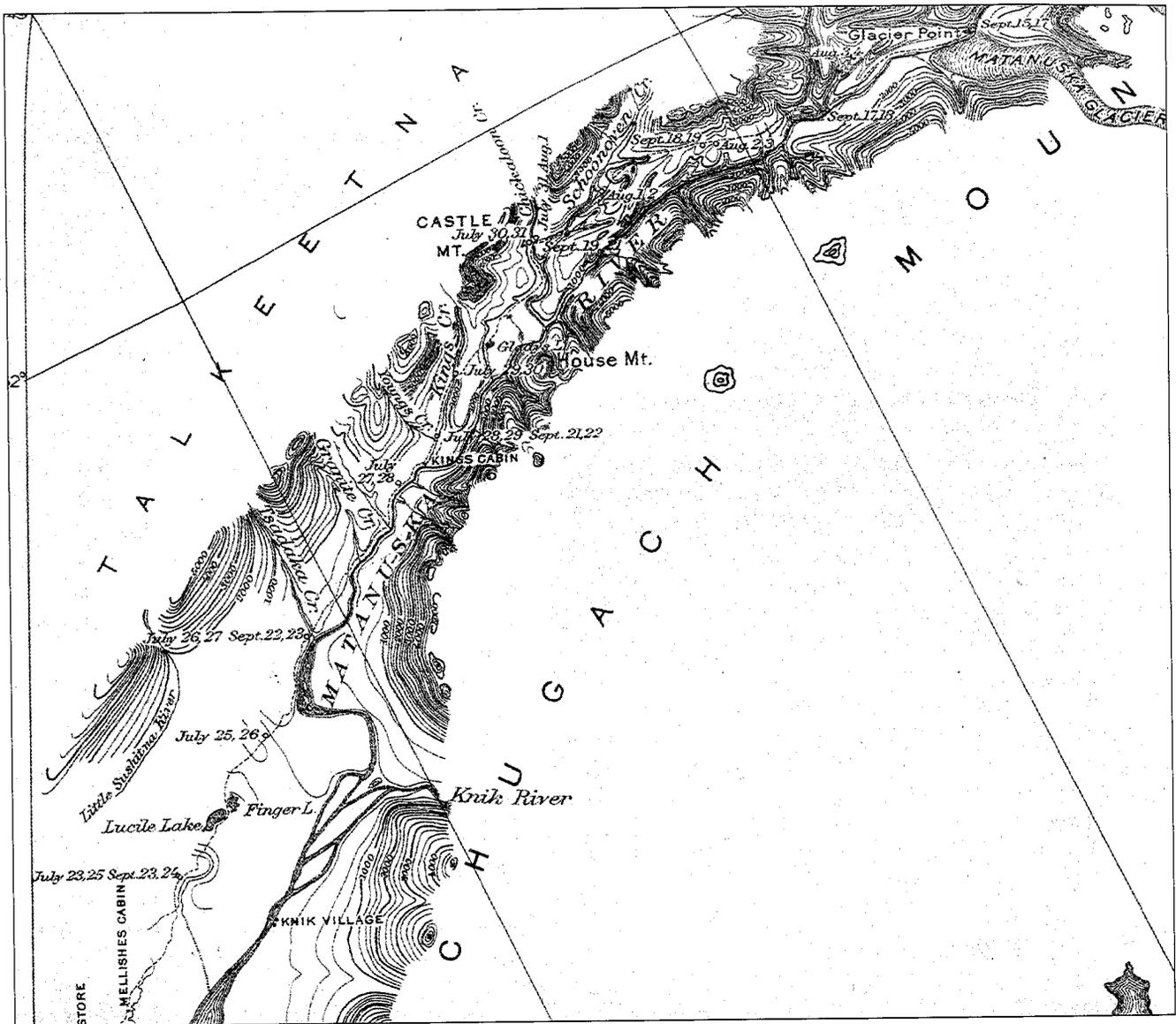
**Shem Pete**

*Additional place names and commentary by*

|                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Mike Alex           | Alec Peter         |
| Nickafor Alexan     | Henry Peters       |
| Emma Alexie         | Annie Ronning      |
| Alexandra Allowan   | Fedosia Sacaloff   |
| Tommy Allowan       | Morrie Secondchief |
| Harry Balluta       | Jim Sinyon         |
| Pete Bobby          | Johnny Shaginoff   |
| Sergei Californsky  | Mary Shaginoff     |
| Maxim Chickalusion  | Alberta Stephan    |
| Nellie Chickalusion | John Stephan       |
| Ella Chuitt         | Leo Stephan        |
| Fedora Constantine  | Pete Stephan       |
| Peter Constantine   | Sava Stephan       |
| Miska Diaphon       | Terry Stephan      |
| Bobby Esai          | Frank Stickwan     |
| Hester Evan         | John Stump         |
| Fred Ewan           | Jake Tansy         |
| Betty Gilcris       | Arthur Theodore    |
| Peter Kalifornsky   | Bailey Theodore    |
| Ben Neeley          | Lillian Theodore   |
| Dick Mishakoff      | Mike Theodore      |
| Jim McKinley        | Andy Tyone         |
| Katherine Nicolie   | Jack Tyone         |
| Feodoria Pennington | Jim Tyone          |
| Billy Pete          | Katie Wade         |

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**MAP 57**

Detail from Mendenhall map of 1898: Matanuska River.

USGS geologist William Mendenhall was on loan to the U.S. Army during the 1898 expedition. His map with his 1900 report accurately depicts topography from Resurrection Bay north through Isabel Pass. In his field notebook of 1898 Mendenhall recorded several Dena'ina place names, between Finger Lake and Chickaloon. This was the best map of the Matanuska River of that period.

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Creek. When Matanuska [Ahtna] Indians used to come down the river, those people used to meet 'em there. That's the name of the old village there. Big patch of timber below Wolverine Creek. I don't know how far it is. Maybe two or three miles. There's a little stream runs through timber there. That's why they call it **Cizdlenden**. Kind of a hot spring through the timber in there, and it's kind of a village meeting place."

**14.11 Kisidlentnu** • 'Point Current Creek'

*Wolverine Creek*

**14.12 Kisidlen Bena** • 'Point Current Lake'

*Wolverine Lake*

**14.13 C'ek'aali Cene'** (Ahtna) • 'Whetstone Flat'

*long bluff on north side of Matanuska River between Palmer and Moose Creek*

Jim Tyone: "It is like it has been filed by the wind."

Johnny Shaginoff reported that a village site was located on this bluff near the mouth of Moose Creek. "It was a well known place for Natives. All big high bluffs have names."

**14.14 Chidaq'atnu** (*Dena'ina*); **Tsidek'etna'** (*Ahtna*) •

'Grandmother's Place Creek'

*Moose Creek, formerly called Tsadaka Creek*

This name is distinctively Dena'ina in origin, based upon the word **chida** 'old lady, grandma.' Note however that Orth (1971:987) stated, "Tanaina Indian name meaning "moose," reported in 1898 by Capt Glenn." Mendenhall (1898, Map 58) wrote this as "Tsadaka."

Castner (1899:199): "Above Moose Creek on our [north] side of the Matanuska was an old camping place of the Matanuskas used in their journeys up and down the river."

According to Johnny Shaginoff and Katie Wade, there are burials on both sides of the mouth of Moose Creek. Some graves have washed out. Several people died here during the 1918 flu epidemic.

There is a modest king salmon run in Moose Creek. The fish were harvested with spears, according to Katie Wade.

**§14.78 Chidaq'a Denyi** (*Dena'ina*); **Tsidek'e Dyii** (*Ahtna*) •

'Grandmother's Place Canyon'

*Tsadaka Canyon on Moose Creek*

Cole et al. 1985:75: "As early as 1894, trappers and prospectors heard about the rich coal veins in the Matanuska Valley from local Indians."

In the 1940s the Wade and Larson families lived near the Premier Mine and hunted and harvested berries throughout this area.

**14.15 Chidaq'ashla Bena** • 'Lake of Grandmother's Little Place'

*Wishbone Lake*

A trail leads up from the Moose Creek homestead of the Shaginoffs and Wades up to Wishbone Lake, a popular fishing spot.

**14.16 Chidaq'ashla** • 'Grandmother's Little Place'

*Wishbone Hill*

Katie Wade said that this is thought of as a dangerous area. Many hunters have gotten lost here. A giant with feet that are turned backwards is said to have lived in the area.

**§14.79 Tsida K'ae Dghilaaye'** (*Ahtna*) • 'Grandmother's Place Mountain'

*Arkose Peak and ridge*

The name of this ridge at the head of Moose Creek is implied from the suffix **-shla**, 'small, little' for 14.16, Wishbone Hill. Typically a hill or mountain noted as 'small' is paired with a nearby larger named feature.

According to Johnny Shaginoff, a trail led up Moose Creek and over the mountains to the upper Kashwitna River. The Larsons from Talkeetna used to travel this trail. "I know some people went through. Jack Larson went

up Moose Creek, came down Kashwitna. He used to trap beaver someplace on Kashwitna." See 8.44.

**§14.80 Tanilent** • 'Where Current Flows to Water'

*rapids probably above Moose Creek*

Name provided by John Stump.

**§14.81 Naak' Dghiltaazi** (*Ahtna*) • possibly 'Bar that is Round'

*bar on Matanuska River at Sutton*

Name from the text by Jim Tyone. See p. 226.

**14.17 Ts'es Tuk'ilaght** (*Dena'ina*); **Ts'es Tac'ilaexde**

(*Ahtna*) • 'Where Fish Run Among Rocks'

*Eska Creek; Sutton*

A name written by Mendenhall in 1898 as "Chistookalat," or "Spring Creek" is clearly the Dena'ina name for Eska Creek.

The salmon fishery on the Matanuska River was on a much smaller scale than it was for the Dena'ina peoples on Knik Arm or for the Ahtna on the Copper River (for which see Simeone and Kari 2002.). The Chickaloon Ahtna did not spend much time salmon fishing. Some salmon were harvested here and at a small stream now called Mile Seventeen Creek (ponds near Eska Creek mouth) and at Little Granite Creek. Mary Shaginoff noted that she did little fishing following her family's move to Chickaloon in 1915. Johnny Shaginoff said that the salmon are good only the first two or three days of the run. In the past, salmon from the Eska area were mainly used as dog food. The people in this area obtained dried salmon through trade with the people downstream at Niteh. See also Fall 1981:178, 203-205, and 1987:31, 36.

Katie Wade notes that the main traditional method of harvesting the salmon in the sidestreams and ponds along the Matanuska River was the fish spear. She also notes that the Ahtna-style **ciisi** or dip net did not seem to have been used for any salmon fishing on the Matanuska River. Katie has noted that along the Matanuska River **ba'** or spread and scored dry fish was made only when there were enough good quality fish, and that they did not make **dzenax** or **nelk'ohi**, the two styles of fermented fish that are made by the Ahtna on the Copper River.

**14.18 Neltsii Ce'e** (*Ahtna*) • 'Big One That Is Made Like a Face'

*"Mt. Sutton," mountain elev. 4,415', <Crag>*

**§14.82 Neltsii Ce'e Na'** (*Ahtna*) • 'Stream of Big One That Is Made Like a Face'

*creek above Wolverine Creek, off mountain elev. 4,415', <Crag>*

**14.19 Hdighilentnu** (*Dena'ina*); **Hdighilen Na'** (*Ahtna*) •

'Creek That Flows In (canyon)'

*Granite Creek*

Johnny Shaginoff said that there was a good source of ochre paint on this creek. Johnny Shaginoff: "A guy told me, a Russian guy long time ago, I used to work for him